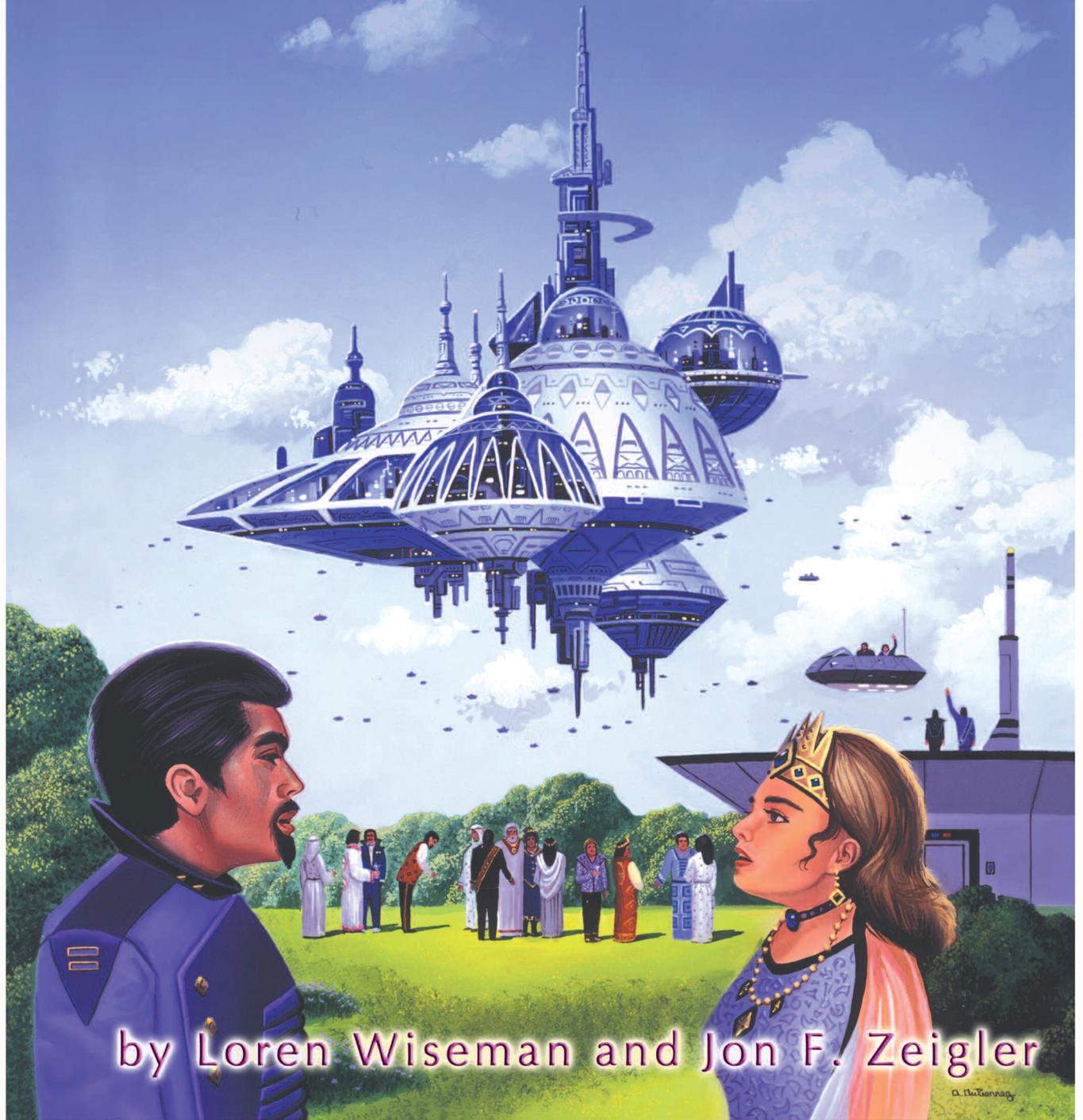


GURPS® *Traveller*®

# NOBLES™



by Loren Wiseman and Jon F. Zeigler

A. DuZanag

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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## THE NOBILITY:

Written by

**JON F. ZEIGLER  
AND LOREN WISEMAN**

Based on the award-winning **Traveller** science-fiction universe by

**MARC MILLER**

Edited by

**KIMARA BERNARD**

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**ANDY AKINS**

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# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

# Contents



<b>INTRODUCTION</b> . . . . .	<b>4</b>
<i>About GURPS</i> . . . . .	4
<b>1. HISTORY</b> . . . . .	<b>5</b>
<b>TERRAN PRECURSORS</b> . . . . .	5
European Nobility . . . . .	5
Non-European Nobility . . . . .	6
<b>VILANI PRECURSORS</b> . . . . .	7
The Bureaux . . . . .	7
Vilani Noble Titles . . . . .	7
<b>THE SECOND IMPERIUM</b> . . . . .	8
Admiral Estigarribia and the Naval Nobles . . . . .	8
The Rule of Man . . . . .	9
<b>SYLEAN PRECURSORS</b> . . . . .	9
Sylean Nobles . . . . .	9
Cleon Zhunastu and the Third Imperium . . . . .	10

Grand Prince . . . . .	20
Consort . . . . .	20
Emperor . . . . .	20
<b>ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD</b> . . . . .	21
Senior Orders . . . . .	21
Orders of the Domains . . . . .	23
Uniforms and Emblems . . . . .	25
<b>IMPERIAL PROTOCOL</b> . . . . .	26
Names . . . . .	26
Forms of Address . . . . .	26
Multiple Titles . . . . .	28
Courtesy Titles . . . . .	29
Precedence . . . . .	30
Alternative Titles . . . . .	30



<b>3. THE NOBLE LIFE . . .</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION</b> . . . . .	31
Schools . . . . .	31
<i>The Karbili School</i> . . . . .	32
Universities . . . . .	32
The Service Academies . . . . .	33
<i>Chess</i> . . . . .	34
<b>MARRIAGE</b> . . . . .	35
Marriage Customs . . . . .	35
Dynastic Considerations . . . . .	36
Inheritance . . . . .	36
<b>WEALTH</b> . . . . .	38
Assets . . . . .	38
<b>Deck Plan: Condor-Class</b>	
<b>Racing Yacht</b> . . . . .	39
<b>LIFESTYLES</b> . . . . .	40
Home Life . . . . .	40
Impoverished Nobility . . . . .	40
Servants and Seneschals . . . . .	41
Festivities . . . . .	41
<b>LUXURIES</b> . . . . .	42
Food . . . . .	42
Drink . . . . .	43
<i>The Imperial College of Arms</i> . . . . .	44
Textiles . . . . .	44
Furniture and Furnishings . . . . .	44
Decorations, Jewelry, and Ornaments . . . . .	44
Heraldry . . . . .	45
<b>PASTIMES AND PASSIONS</b> . . . . .	46
Sports . . . . .	46
Passions . . . . .	46
Fine and Literary Arts . . . . .	46
<b>BEHAVIOR AND ETHICS</b> . . . . .	47
Nobles and the Law . . . . .	48
<i>The End</i> . . . . .	48
Imperial Law . . . . .	48
Planetary Laws . . . . .	48
Local Customs . . . . .	48
Reinforcement . . . . .	49
<i>The Imperial Regalia</i> . . . . .	49
<i>Dueling</i> . . . . .	50
<b>LIFE AT CAPITAL</b> . . . . .	51
Ceremonies . . . . .	51
<i>Paging Through the Palace</i> . . . . .	52
The Imperial Palace . . . . .	54
<i>The Imperial Guard</i> . . . . .	55

<b>4. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>THE HIGH NOBILITY</b> . . . . .	57
General Responsibilities . . . . .	57
<i>Ducal Succession</i> . . . . .	58
The Imperial Mandate . . . . .	58
<i>Faalty and Homage</i> . . . . .	59
<i>The Fine Art of Bribery</i> . . . . .	62
Huscarles . . . . .	62
<b>THE IMPERIAL MILITARY</b> . . . . .	62
The Minister of Defense . . . . .	63
The Imperial High Command . . . . .	63
<b>IMPERIAL CIVILIAN MINISTRIES</b> . . . . .	64
Ministry of Justice . . . . .	64
Ministry of State . . . . .	64
Ministry of Colonization . . . . .	65
Ministry of Commerce . . . . .	65
<i>The Office of Calendar Compliance</i> . . . . .	65
Ministry of Conservation . . . . .	66
Ministry of Information and Communication . . . . .	66
Ministry of Technology . . . . .	66
<b>IMPERIAL COURTS</b>	
<b>AND IMPERIAL JUSTICE</b> . . . . .	67
Imperial Laws . . . . .	67
Criminal Courts . . . . .	67
Civil Court . . . . .	68
<i>War Crimes Trials</i> . . . . .	69
Admiralty Court . . . . .	70
High Court . . . . .	70
<i>Summary of Imperial Positions</i> . . . . .	71
<b>THE IMPERIAL MOOT</b> . . . . .	72
Local Assemblies . . . . .	73
Nobles and Voting Systems . . . . .	73
<b>NOBLE CAREER PATHS</b> . . . . .	74
Military Service . . . . .	75
Administrative Service . . . . .	75
Already Noble? . . . . .	75
<b>SOCIAL AND CULTURAL OBLIGATIONS</b> . . . . .	76
Local Customs and Requirements . . . . .	76
Social Duties . . . . .	76
Patronage . . . . .	76



<b>2. THE IMPERIAL NOBILITY</b> . . . . .	<b>11</b>
<b>CLASSES OF NOBILITY</b> . . . . .	11
High Nobility . . . . .	12
Rank Nobility . . . . .	12
Honor Nobility . . . . .	13
Letter Patents . . . . .	13
<i>What Is the Aristocracy For?</i> . . . . .	13
The Peerage and the Moot . . . . .	14
<b>NOBLE RANKS</b> . . . . .	14
Knight . . . . .	14
<i>Traveling Incognito</i> . . . . .	15
Baronet . . . . .	15
Baron . . . . .	15
<i>Noble Representation</i> . . . . .	16
Marquis . . . . .	16
Viscount . . . . .	16
Count . . . . .	16
Duke . . . . .	17
Archduke . . . . .	18
<i>Duchies of the Spinward Marches</i> . . . . .	18
<b>THE IMPERIAL FAMILY</b> . . . . .	19
Prince . . . . .	19
<i>The Great Seal of the Imperium</i> . . . . .	20

**5. VARIATIONS ON THE THEME . . . . . 77**

**NON-HUMANS AND FOREIGNERS . . . . . 77**  
 Aslan . . . . . 77  
 Darrians . . . . . 78  
*Order of Hlyuea* . . . . . 78  
 Droyne . . . . . 79  
 Hivers . . . . . 79  
 K'kree . . . . . 79  
 Solomani . . . . . 79  
 Sword Worlds . . . . . 80  
 Vargr . . . . . 81  
*Order of Gvadakoung* . . . . . 81  
 Vegans . . . . . 81  
*Order of Muan Gwi* . . . . . 82  
 Zhodani . . . . . 82  
 Intercultural Problems . . . . . 82  
**PLANETARY NOBILITY . . . . . 83**  
 Investiture . . . . . 83  
 Rank and Titles . . . . . 83  
 Local Titles . . . . . 84  
 Planetary Orders of Knighthood . . . . . 86  
 Duties and Responsibilities . . . . . 86  
**MINOR STATES . . . . . 86**  
 Imperial Client States . . . . . 86  
 Pocket Empires . . . . . 87  
*Tarsus* . . . . . 87

**6. BIOGRAPHIES . . . . . 88**

**THE IMPERIAL FAMILY . . . . . 88**  
 Emperor Strephon . . . . . 88  
 Empress Iolanthe . . . . . 90  
 Grand Princess Ciencia Iphegenia . . . . . 90  
 Prince Varian . . . . . 91  
*Prince Lucan* . . . . . 92  
**THE IMPERIAL ARCHDUKES . . . . . 92**  
 Archduke Norris of Deneb . . . . . 92  
**MAP: Norris' Retreat** . . . . . 94  
 Archduke Brzk of Antares . . . . . 96  
 Archduchess Isis of Ielish . . . . . 97  
 Archduke Adair of Sol . . . . . 98  
 Archduke Tranian of Gateway . . . . . 99  
**MAP: Archduke Tranian of Gateway's Penthouse on Capital** . . . . . 100  
 Archduke Ishuggi of Vland . . . . . 102



**THE TUKERA FAMILY . . . . . 103**  
*The Tukera and the Aramis Subsector* . . . . . 103  
 Count Blaine Trulla Tukera of Alekvadin . . . . . 104  
 Duchess Margaret of Delphi . . . . . 105  
 Marquis Leonard Bolden-Tukera . . . . . 105

of Aramis . . . . . 106  
**INDIVIDUAL NOBLES . . . . . 107**  
 Duchess Delphine Muudashir of Mora . . . . . 107  
 Marquis Robert Beaudoin . . . . . 107  
 Marchioness Alessandra da Silva of Terra . . . . . 108  
 Baroness Jynel haut-Kurshar . . . . . 109  
 Baron Marc hault-Oberlindes of Feri . . . . . 110  
 Doctor *Frater* Ganidiirsi Simalr, F.A. . . . . 111  
 Sir Mutava Tabari, C.S. . . . . 111  
 Lady Elia Hortalez Muendor of Lode . . . . . 112

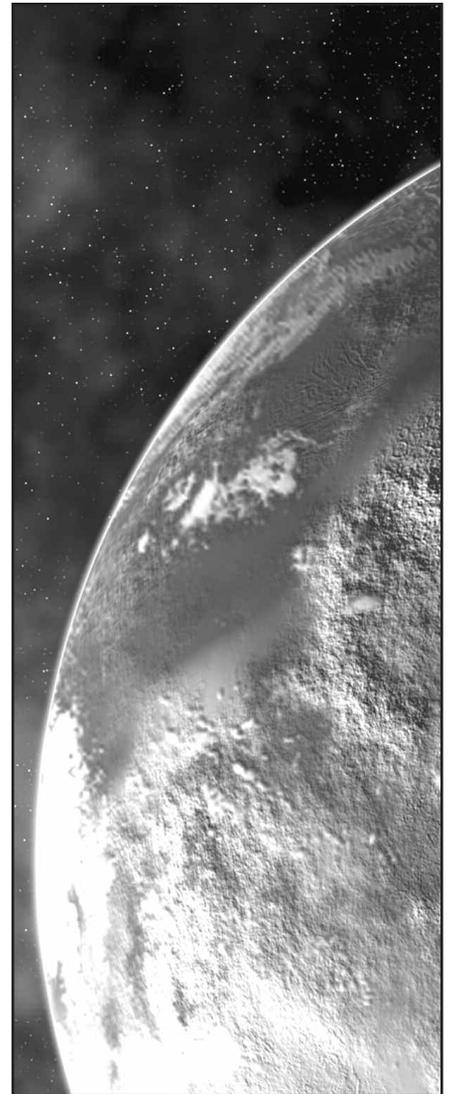


**NOBLE FAMILIES . . . . . 112**  
 The Aella Family . . . . . 112  
 The Delgado Family . . . . . 113  
 The Hortalez Family . . . . . 113  
 The Igsiirdi Family . . . . . 114  
 The Ling Family . . . . . 114  
 The Murdoch Family . . . . . 114  
 The Oberlindes Family . . . . . 115  
 The Schunamann Family . . . . . 116  
 The Shiishuginsa Family . . . . . 116  
 The Tancredi Family . . . . . 116

**7. CHARACTERS . . . . . 117**

Point Totals . . . . . 117  
**ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS . . . . . 118**  
 Advantages . . . . . 118  
**Extended Status Table** . . . . . 119  
 New Advantage . . . . . 120  
 Disadvantages . . . . . 120  
 Skills . . . . . 121  
**CHARACTER TEMPLATES . . . . . 122**  
 Noble Academic . . . . . 122  
 Noble Bureaucrat . . . . . 122  
 Noble Dilettante . . . . . 123  
 Noble Diplomat . . . . . 123  
 Noble Merchant . . . . . 124  
 Noble Naval Officer . . . . . 124  
 Noble Rogue . . . . . 125  
 Knight . . . . . 126  
 Impoverished Baronet/Minor Peer . . . . . 126  
 Wealthy Baronet/Minor Peer . . . . . 126  
 High Noble . . . . . 127  
 Loyal Retainer/Servant . . . . . 127  
 Bodyguard . . . . . 128  
 Seneschal . . . . . 128  
 Ministry of Justice Special Agent . . . . . 128  
 Court Legate . . . . . 129

Imperial Court Judge . . . . . 129  
 Moot Page . . . . . 130  
 Imperial Palace Page . . . . . 130  
 Imperial Palace Footman . . . . . 131  
 Calendar Compliance Officer . . . . . 131  
 World Ruler . . . . . 132  
**STARSHIPS . . . . . 132**  
*Wanderer-Class 100-Ton Yacht* . . . . . 132  
*Condor-Class 100-Ton Racing Yacht* . . . . . 133  
*Midas-Class 800-Ton Courier* . . . . . 133  
**Deck Plan: History's Pleasure** . . . . . 134  
**Deck Plan: Midas-Class Courier** . . . . . 135



**8. CAMPAIGNS . . . . . 136**

**BACKGROUNDS . . . . . 136**  
 Strong or Weak Imperium . . . . . 136  
 Good or Evil Imperium . . . . . 136  
 Now Many Nobles? . . . . . 136  
**NOBLES IN THE CAMPAIGN . . . . . 137**  
 Nobles as PCs . . . . . 137  
 Nobles as NPCs . . . . . 138  
**ADVENTURES . . . . . 139**  
 Adventure Seeds . . . . . 139  
*The Nemesis* . . . . . 140  
 Campaign Seeds . . . . . 140  
 High-Level Plotlines . . . . . 141

**INDEX . . . . . 143**

## About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

*Pyramid* ([www.sjgames.com/pyramid/](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/)). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

*New supplements and adventures.* *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9"×12" SASE – please use two stamps! – or just visit [www.warehouse23.com](http://www.warehouse23.com).

*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

*Gamer input.* We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

*Internet.* Visit us on the World Wide Web at [www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com) for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: [rec.games.frp.gurps](mailto:rec.games.frp.gurps).

*GURPSnet.* This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, point your web browser to [www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/](http://www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/).

The *GURPS Traveller: Nobles* web page is at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/nobles/](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/nobles/).

### Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are GT for *GURPS Traveller*, T:AI for *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 1*, T:AII for *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 2*, T:BC for *GURPS Traveller: Behind The Claw*, T:FT for *GURPS Traveller: Far Trader*, T:GF for *GURPS Traveller: Ground Forces*, T:H for *GURPS Traveller: Humaniti*, T:RF for *GURPS Traveller: Rim of Fire*, T:S for *GURPS Traveller: Starships*, T:ST for *GURPS Traveller: Starports*, and T:SW for *GURPS Traveller: Sword Worlds*. The abbreviation for *this* book is T:NO. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html).

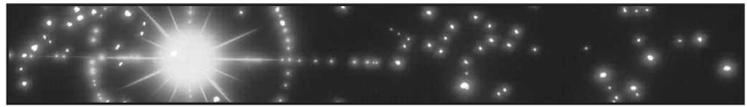
# Introduction

The concept of an interstellar aristocracy has been with *Traveller* from the very beginning. Even *Classic Traveller* had a character trait called “Social Standing,” and suggested that characters with high scores in the trait could claim noble titles. In a sense, nobles were part of the game even before the Third Imperium made its first appearance. For over 25 years, *Traveller* characters have been meeting noble patrons, struggling against noble adversaries, and taking their own places in the aristocracy.

Unfortunately, there has never been a clear picture of what nobles *do*. Noble patrons have been conveniences, there to hand out an adventuring assignment and deliver cash when the job is finished. Noble adversaries were there to be corrupt and antagonistic. Noble adventurers have been essentially like their commoner partners – they may have carried a few more titles, but they have run (or hijacked) the same tramp merchant ships and fought in the same mercenary units.

*GURPS Traveller: Nobles* fills that void. Here, *Traveller* players can learn what the Imperial aristocracy does when it isn't providing patronage or opposition to wandering adventurers. As military commanders, lawmakers, judges, bureaucrats, corporate executives, scientists, and patrons of the arts, nobles work in many ways to provide the Imperium with leadership and unity. Indeed, without the nobility there would *be* no Imperium, only a scattering of antagonistic pocket empires.

Learn what being a noble is really like – the power, the prestige, the wealth, and the *responsibility* . . .



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Loren Wiseman was one of the founding partners of GDW, Inc., original publishers of *Traveller*, and spent more than 20 years there as a game designer, developer, typesetter, and editor. After GDW closed, Loren freelanced for a time, and then came to Steve Jackson Games, where he is the *GURPS Traveller* Line Editor.

Jon F. Zeigler has been a science fiction fan since the cradle (literally). He and his wife and two children live in Maryland, where he works as a computer security consultant. He has written several books for *GURPS* and *GURPS Traveller*.

## Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society

The long-running *Traveller* magazine is now online at [www.sjgames.com/jtas/](http://www.sjgames.com/jtas/). It supports all versions of *Traveller* with news, articles, discussion areas, and reviews. Subscriptions are \$20 per two years, for 52 biweekly updates and full access to archives.

The *Traveller News Service* is updated weekly, chronicling the life and times of the Imperium, and is viewable *free* at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html). The SJ Games *Traveller* links page ([www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/links.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/links.html)) links to the *Traveller* Web Ring, which includes most of the major *Traveller*-oriented websites. For information on subscribing to the *Traveller* mailing list, go to [tml.travellercentral.com](http://tml.travellercentral.com).

# History

*It's been six months by the Terran calendar since I took over here. Sometimes it becomes difficult to remember that – six months, not four Vilani **kidash**, and not a couple dozen of the short units the locals use.*

*Things continue to go smoothly. The Vilani administrators have kept at their posts, and they solve most of the problems that arise. They consult with me on matters of strategy, and I occasionally smack one of them down when he tries to fatten his family's purse at the public's expense. Otherwise I spend most of my time presiding over council meetings and looking authoritative. There's an art to leading Vilani – you wait while all your underlings hash things out, watch for the emerging consensus, and then issue corresponding dictates as if they were entirely your own idea. Everyone goes to work happy.*

*The other day, Sirush convinced me to attend a harvest festival being held in the capital, to be broadcast all over the planet. Apparently it was once traditional for the Vilani **iishakku** to preside over high native ceremonies, a visible reminder of Vilani rule. I agreed, although I drew the line at the outfit they wanted me to wear. I put on the headgear, but I reasoned that the natives had better get used to seeing me in Navy uniform. Besides, I don't look good in chartreuse.*

*In the middle of it, while the priests chanted and howled, the dancers shimmied, and the Vilani higher-ups stood around me like statues, the irony of the whole situation struck me. I've read about things like that on ancient Terra, you see, and it finally came clear to me what position I hold here.*

*Over 400 years ago, an ancestor of mine used his career as a successful general to win the highest elected office in his country. I wonder what he would say if he could see me now. Probably choke on his whiskey, to see his descendant in the role of an uncrowned king.*

– Commander William Grant,  
Terran Confederation Navy,  
circa -2215

The words “noble” and “nobility” both descend from an ancient Latin word (*nobilitas*, meaning “fame” or “celebrity”). Such an origin is appropriate, since most of the titles for Imperial nobility also come from Latin, through ancient English to modern Galanglic. The system of nobility currently used in the Third Imperium and beyond has its origins in the Sylean system, which in turn is descended from a combination of the systems used by the ancient Solomani and Vilani.

## TERRAN PRECURSORS

From the earliest development of Human society on Terra, aristocratic elites developed almost everywhere. Examples of ancient Terran aristocracies include the Greek Spartiates and *eupatridae*, and the Roman patricians and *optimates*. In some cultures the aristocracy developed from a warrior class, in others it came out of religious castes, in still others from a need to regulate scarce resources. In all cases these elites held social, political, and economic power over the populace. Nobles held unusual privileges, but carried unusual responsibilities. It was natural for aristocrats to want to pass their power on to their children, so Terran systems almost invariably became hereditary. Even noble status based purely on wealth tended to be inherited.

## EUROPEAN NOBILITY

The Solomani who took Terran culture to the stars during the Second Imperium were primarily influenced by the European system of aristocracy, so that system formed the Terran basis for the system presently used in the Third Imperium and elsewhere in Charted Space. Although most of the European noble titles date from the time of the Roman Empire, European nobility achieved its highest form in the later era known as the Middle Ages. It was during this period that the system known as *feudalism* was at its height.



## Feudalism

Feudalism is a political system in which interlocking bonds of loyalty and obligation hold a ruling hierarchy together. Members receive oaths of loyalty or *fealty* from those below them (their *vassals*), and simultaneously swear fealty to those above them (their *liege lords*). Vassals owe their liege lords taxes, military service, and other obligations. In return, liege lords offer privileges to their vassals: land, political position, protection, or other favors.

Theoretically, everyone in the medieval feudal system was a vassal of someone above them. This included the king, who occupied the highest step on the feudal pyramid but was considered a vassal of God. Under the political theory of “divine right,” the king received control of his kingdom directly from God, and granted control of pieces of it to his vassals in return for loyalty and services. Each of the king’s vassals kept personal control of some of the land he received – usually enough to support himself and his household – and granted control of the rest to his own vassals in a process known as *subinfeudation*.

The process of vassalage and subinfeudation created a social pyramid. The levels at the top of the pyramid were known as *nobles*, and eventually acquired titles such as *duke*, *count*, or *baron*. Below the nobility was the *chivalric* or “knightly” class, which provided the bulk of the professional military force. Knights were rarely considered noble, although they held well-defined privileges in the feudal hierarchy. At the bottom of the pyramid was the *peasant* class, which made up most of the population. Peasants had no vassals of their own, and simply owed service and loyalty in return for military protection and the use of land.

The feudal system never existed in the pure form described here; there were always individual variations, and many people didn’t fit into the overall scheme (notably merchants and townsmen). The details of the feudal system have filled many books. However, the broad outline given here covers the critical details that eventually influenced the aristocratic system of the Third Imperium.

### Breakdown of the Feudal System

By the end of the Middle Ages, the various noble titles had achieved a specific order of precedence, with barons at the bottom and dukes or grand dukes at the top. Nobles still swore fealty to the king, but feudalism was no longer the dominant political system. The rising economic power of towns and the middle class meant that critical portions of the population were no longer part of the feudal hierarchy. As nation-states gradually came into being, the complex feudal system broke down. Nobles retained some positions in most of the nation-state governments, sometimes vitally important ones, sometimes ones that were purely ornamental.

As time passed, many nations limited the power of their nobility (as in the United Kingdom) or eliminated it entirely (as in the United States of America or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). With rare exceptions, however, all Terran societies kept an aristocracy in fact if not in name. Even the Communist states had an elite based on membership in

## Remnants of Feudalism

Odd remnants of feudalism existed for centuries after the end of the Terran Middle Ages. For example, the monarch of the United Kingdom retained feudal possession of several islands in the English Channel, as the last vestige of the Duchy of Normandy. These holdings were ruled separately from the United Kingdom and were subject to slightly different laws and customs, although they were defended by the military might of the U.K.

Even in the early Interstellar Wars era, Europe had several examples of “leftover” feudal principalities: San Marino, Lichtenstein, and Monaco were the best known. These principalities were generally too small to be economically viable except by the personal fortunes of their princes, or by tourism and related industries – some derived considerable income from issuing postage stamps. These microstates continued to exist at the sufferance of the larger nation-states surrounding them.

the Communist Party. The ostensibly egalitarian United States kept an aristocracy of wealth and education.

Many societies kept some form of titled aristocracy, membership in which still carried social status. The nobles’ financial position did not always remain as stable. Many nobles owned large amounts of property, but had little in the way of liquid assets. Some went deeply in debt, as the cost of maintaining their social life rose out of proportion to their income. By about -2650 (during the so-called “Victorian” era), the newly made millionaires of industrial society often made marriage alliances with impoverished aristocrats. This served as a means of acquiring instant respectability on the one side and an infusion of much-needed cash on the other. This custom has continued, and is often practiced by the elites of the Third Imperium.

## NON-EUROPEAN NOBILITY

Aristocracies developed in all cultures of Terra, not just in Europe’s. For example, in India society was divided into four major classes: the *Brahmin* (priests), *Kshatriya* (warriors), *Vaisya* (merchants) and *Sudra* (workers); the first two represented the ruling classes of Indian society. Ancient China had a similar, although less restrictive, system of aristocrats, merchants, and peasants.

Many societies considered the upper levels of their aristocracies to be divine or at least descended from deities – for example, the rulers of ancient Egypt, Sumeria, Japan, the Aztecs, and some Native American cultures. Sometimes aristocrats held authority only in time of war or other emergency, such as the war chiefs of some northern European and Native American tribes. Others held authority only during certain seasons of the year – such as harvest time or the hunting season, in certain Native American societies.

In some societies, high social status was accorded to academics and philosophers, such as the *shih*, or sages, of ancient China. China developed a system under which its administrators were chosen by rigorous examination, a form

of civil-service test. In theory, promotion depended on education and ability rather than ancestry. This was one of the few cases of an aristocracy based on merit and achievement.

Non-European systems of nobility had little effect on the Imperial nobility. Still, the distribution of Solomani throughout the Imperium – and the desire of various ethnic groups to maintain their cultural heritage – means that local aristocracy often retains some non-European customs. Almost every title ever applied to an aristocrat in any Solomani ethnic group can be found in use *somewhere* in the Third Imperium.



## VILANI PRECURSORS

The Vilani Ziru Sirka is the second great civilization from which the modern Third Imperium takes its inspiration. Although the present-day system of Imperial aristocracy is more clearly based on Terran models, the Vilani also had considerable influence. Meanwhile, there are thousands of Vilani worlds on which the old model is still used by local aristocracies.

### THE BUREAUX

Under the Vilani Imperium, the administration of government was in the hands of three very large organizations: Makhidkarun, Naasirka, and Sharurshid. These were collectively known as the *bureaux*. Each of the bureaux was responsible for governing a specific territory.

The bureaux chose representatives to a central council called the *Igsiirdi*, which elected the *Ishimkarun* (“Shadow Emperor”), who theoretically ruled the empire from Vland. In practice, power remained with the *Igsiirdi*. A strong *Ishimkarun* could rule effectively in spite of the restrictions placed upon him, but such figures were rare in Vilani history – it was in the interests of the bureaux not to pick strong personalities for the office.

Under the Vilani system, the eldest offspring of a noble family became the family’s chief *shugilii* (food preparer/priest), a position of greater importance to the family

than any noble title could possibly be. The second eldest became head of the family in everyday matters, administering the family estates and mercantile interests. The third entered the bureau traditionally associated with that particular family, and thereby acquired a noble title as an indicator of his rank and prestige.

Vilani nobles did not receive personal fiefs, although they often had direct control of land and could use their position to enrich their personal and family fortunes.

In theory, promotion within a bureau came as a result of merit, intelligence, and ability. In practice, a great deal of politics was involved. An ambitious official had to use family influence and resources to play several power blocs against each other. Lower level administrators depended upon the approval of their immediate superiors for advancement. A candidate for promotion would have relatives in higher positions within the bureaux, but his competitors would also have relatives in positions to help *them*. Of course, the higher an individual advanced, the greater his and his family’s power became.

These battles for power occurred at the highest levels of the Vilani government, and are one of the reasons the Vilani were unable to deal effectively with the Terran menace during the Interstellar Wars. The provincial governors involved in the earliest conflicts were unable to bring sufficient influence to bear to deal with the newly encountered “barbarians,” and by the time all of the assorted factions at the Vilani court had realized the danger, the Terrans had become too powerful.

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*The lord is Heaven, the vassal is Earth. Heaven overspreads, and Earth upbears . . . If the Earth attempted to overspread, Heaven would simply fall in ruin. Therefore is it that when the lord speaks, the vassal listens; when the superior acts, the inferior yields compliance. Consequently when you receive the Imperial commands, fail not to carry them out scrupulously. Let there be a want of care in this matter, and ruin is the natural consequence.*

*– Japanese Constitution of Prince Shotoku, 604 A.D.*

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## VILANI NOBLE TITLES

The Vilani not only used different words for the various noble titles in their system, but the titles themselves changed over time. The positions used under the Ziru Sirka do not perfectly match those under the system presently in use in the Third Imperium.

## Kiduunuuzii

The lowest Vilani noble rank was *kiduunuuzii* (literally “holder of special privileges”), which is today roughly equivalent to a knighthood. *Kiduunuuzii* were lower level bureaucrats, judges, and administrators; they did most of the scut work for their bureau. The title was originally awarded only to individuals who had distinguished themselves in an administrative position, but as time passed it was awarded for distinguished military service, especially if the recipient had no other honorific.

## Iishakku

An *iishakku* (“governor”) was originally a regional administrator on Vland, with executive and judicial powers over a large city or the equivalent. When the Vilani went into space, they expanded the duties of the *iishakku* to be roughly comparable to an Imperial baron (p. 15), often administering one or more worlds under a provincial governor. *Iishakku* also served as roving troubleshooters or inspectors; in these cases they wielded power and influence out of proportion to their official position.



## Shakkanakhu

By the end of the First Imperium, the *shakkanakhu* or “provincial governor” was responsible for governing anywhere from one to 12 worlds. It is traditional to equate *shakkanakhu* with Imperial counts (p. 16), although this is not strictly accurate. All that is certain is that several *shakkanakhu* were under the authority of the next highest rank.

## Sarriiu

The term *sarriiu* is often translated “over-governor” or “supreme governor,” and originated on Vland as a governor in control of several *shakkanakhu*. In pre-spaceflight times there were originally only 50 *sarriiu* on Vland, and these collectively formed a lesser council called the *Dagiiia*, which assisted the planet’s rulers. Although the number expanded

tremendously with the growth of the Ziru Sirka, they are to this day collectively referred to as “the Fifty,” and the term has also come to be used as an Imperial would use the term “high society.”

There is no direct Imperial equivalent to the title of *sarriiu*. Currently, various authorities translate it as “marquis” or “count” depending on the size of the fief involved, but both renderings are controversial.

## Saarpuhii

On old Vland, *saarpuhii* (“underking”) was a remnant of the older kingdoms that existed before the world was unified. The *saarpuhii* formed the greater of the two ruling councils on old Vland. When the Vilani created their interstellar empire, many of the *saarpuhii* families expanded as well, ruling multiple star systems under the Ziru Sirka. There is no direct equivalent under the Imperial system, but the few *saarpuhii* remaining by the time Vland was absorbed into the Third Imperium were granted titles of count or duke depending on their circumstances. *Saarpuhii* is currently translated as “duke.”

## Apkallu Kibrat Arban

The highest rank of Vilani nobility was *apkallu kibrat arban* (“minister of the four quarters”), a title of extreme antiquity that appears to derive from an extinct Vilani dialect. On prespaceflight Vland the title was reserved for the most powerful rulers on the planet, the equivalent of powerful kings or emperors on Terra. Under the Ziru Sirka the title denoted a position of immense power, and was reserved originally for the leaders of the bureaux and their highest assistants. Nicknamed *karunii* (“petty emperors”), these nobles each exercised power over several sectors, and are considered equal to present-day archdukes (p. 18). The only noble using this title today is Archduke Ishuggi Tauribi of Vland, but he does so only in documents issued in Vilani – in Galanglic, he uses the title of archduke.

## THE SECOND IMPERIUM

The Second Imperium (also called the Rule of Man) was founded after the Interstellar Wars of -2408 to -2219. The trigger for the foundation of the Rule of Man was a dispute over the final status of the conquered Vilani territories. In -2204 the Secretariat announced its intention to place these territories under the direct administration of the Terran Confederation. At this point the commander-in-chief of the Terran Navy, Admiral Hiroshi Estigarribia, took action.

## ADMIRAL ESTIGARRIBIA AND THE NAVAL NOBLES

Admiral Estigarribia was convinced that the Secretariat could not possibly govern the conquered territories using Terran methods; he believed that the attempt could only plunge the civilized galaxy into chaos, causing untold suffering. The Terran Navy had been governing the territories since -2219; it had left the existing governmental structures largely in

place, in an effort to use Vilani conservatism to keep the peace. This was a temporary expedient, of course, but the Navy had not originally intended to occupy the territories indefinitely.

Now Estigarribia and his allies within the Navy decided that the best way to rule the Vilani was to take over the existing structures of government. Under Estigarribia's plan, the Navy would install Terrans in Vilani offices, giving them Vilani titles using the authority of the last Vilani Emperor, who was a "guest" of the Terran commander-in-chief. Vilani custom required obedience to government officials and locked everyone in their jobs. This meant that once the Terrans were officially installed, they could govern through the old channels with little to no resistance.

To implement this plan and forestall the Secretariat's move, Estigarribia proclaimed himself "Regent of the Vilani Imperium and Protector of Terra." In the final confrontation, the bulk of the fleet sided with him; by this period, the "Terran" Navy was manned largely by Vilani and Terran colonials, who were underrepresented in the Secretariat and felt alienated by that body's Terracentric policies. Without control of the Navy, the Secretariat was forced to agree to Estigarribia's plan.

## THE RULE OF MAN

The Terran fleet headquarters on Dingir became the capital of the Rule of Man. The bureaucratic center initially remained on Vland, because that was the way the existing communications networks and reporting channels were set up.

Upon Estigarribia's death, his chief of staff crowned himself Emperor Hiroshi II. Estigarribia, even though he did not actually assume the crown, is therefore known to history as Emperor Hiroshi I – just as some Terran historians consider Julius Caesar the first Roman Emperor, even though he did not call himself that.

Hiroshi II transferred all functions of government from both Vland and Dingir to a more centrally located world renamed Hub/Ershur (0402 Massilia). This world remained the capital of the Imperium for the next 400 years.

During the Rule of Man, large numbers of Humans from Terra and its oldest colonies emigrated throughout the Imperium. People of Terran ancestry or culture (many of them assimilated Vilani) assumed positions of power on most worlds, and became bureaucrats and administrators.

At first, the noble titles of the Second Imperium were more or less translations of Vilani titles into English – *iishakku* became baron, and so on, as noted on pp. 14-18. The structures of nobility remained Vilani in function. Later, as the Emperors tried to restructure society, they began to incorporate Terran (primarily European) features into the system, incorporating concepts like primogeniture and de-emphasizing the bureaux. During the later years of the Second Imperium, nobles began to receive fiefs, but there was little regularity in their size or distribution.

The Second Imperium postponed the collapse that Estigarribia had feared for over four centuries, but ultimately it too failed, and the empire was plunged into the Long Night.

## SYLEAN PRECURSORS

Established on Sylea in -650, the Sylean Federation grew slowly, gradually increasing trade and interaction between worlds and absorbing its neighbors. At first the hegemony was economic, but gunboats soon went out to protect economic spheres of interest, and political control soon followed. The system worked well enough at first, but as the Sylean Federation grew, so did its problems.

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*The problems of sheer size and scientific stagnation, which had brought about the fall of the First (Vilani) Imperium, continued to plague the Second (Solomani) Imperium. The Vilani had coped with the problems of ruling a large empire by means of a rigid caste system, which fixed nearly all citizens in their places. This system could only last as long as there were no significant external threats, as the Terrans amply demonstrated.*

*The arrangement was clearly flawed, and although the Terrans did away with the system, they were unable to replace it. This was the death of the Second Imperium. Whether the Solomani Emperors of the Rule of Man could have corrected the situation given enough time remains an open question.*

*– From **The Beginning of the Long Night**,  
Professor Enlil Shugisfilii,  
University of Hattar at Dingir*

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## SYLEAN NOBLES

The Sylean system of nobility has roots deep in the Long Night, and its early history is poorly understood. Early in the Long Night, the ruler of Sylea was an Emperor who traced his authority back to the Rule of Man. Over time, this Emperor lost his authority; the Sylean Federation (founded about -650) was ruled by a President and a Grand Senate. These offices were elected, but the franchise was limited to those who met certain minimum property requirements. This effectively restricted voting rights to Sylea's long-established noble families.

As the Federation acquired more worlds, the higher government functions often fell to the wealthiest and most powerful families of the nobility, whose leaders began to call themselves “grand dukes.” Because of the limited franchise, these nobles controlled the office of President and most of the seats in the Grand Senate. Less powerful nobles took the titles of duke, earl, or viscount. Titles like baron and knight were given to governors and administrators to enhance their prestige, but no territory was associated with these titles for most of the time the Federation was in existence.

As the Federation gradually expanded, lesser noble families acquired more wealth and power, and it was necessary for the grand dukes to raise the property requirements for voting in order to retain control of the government. Expansion also caused trouble in the bureaucratic machinery, as the distances involved began to place a strain on the heavily centralized government the Grand Senate insisted upon. After a few centuries the system was strained to the bursting point. Something had to be done, or the Federation would collapse under its own weight.

## CLEON ZHUNASTU AND THE THIRD IMPERIUM

In some ways, the Sylean Federation was repeating the mistakes made by the earlier Terran Federation, and the parallels did not escape some observers. One of the Sylean grand dukes, Cleon Zhunastu, foresaw that the Sylean Federation could not continue to insist on centralized governmental control and at the same time continue to expand. Zhunastu resolved to correct the situation, recruited allies among the noble families of the Sylean Federation, and began the slow and subtle process of reforming the Federation.

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*Cleon is a hero to some, a demon to others, but to most historians he is an enigma. His methods sometimes seem immoral to observers from later times, but his accomplishments cannot be denied. He faced enormous challenges in fulfilling his dream of creating a stable interstellar empire, and met them with a combination of intelligence, ability, and ruthlessness that can still inspire and frighten us over a millennium later.*

– From **Out of the Darkness: The Founding of the Third Imperium**, Professor Gani Jimenez DellaBlanco, University of Sylea

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## Foundation of the Imperium

Over three decades of economic, military, and diplomatic maneuvering, Cleon dramatically increased the size of the Sylean Federation and extended its control beyond the edge of what is now the Core sector. Cleon envisioned a polity larger than a single sector, however, and had long since concluded that the tightly controlled, highly centralized Sylean Federation was not suitable for the large, star-spanning empire he wanted to establish. To restore the past glories of the Rule of Man and claim all of the former territories of the Vilani and Solomani empires, Cleon proposed to revive the Imperium.

Cleon argued that early in the Long Night, one of the last claimants to the throne of the Rule of Man had made Sylea his capital. Cleon traced the legitimacy of the Sylean Federation back through this would-be Emperor to the Rule of Man and, since the Rule of Man claimed to be the lawful successor to the Vilani Imperium, to the First Imperium as well.

In the 651st year of the Sylean Federation, the Grand Senate of the Federation “persuaded” Cleon to accept the Imperial crown. That year he was crowned first Emperor of the Third Imperium, proclaiming that year to be the Year Zero of the new Imperial era.



## The New Aristocracy

The first nobles of the newly established Third Imperium were those business and political leaders who had allied with Cleon Zhunastu. Emperor Cleon I revised the Sylean system of nobility to better fit the needs of his new Imperial regime.

Cleon initiated the system of high, rank, and honor nobility (p. 11). He also founded numerous orders of knighthood, most of which still exist. He revived the old practice of granting fiefs with noble titles, and regularized their size and value.

“Archduke” was originally a purely honorary and non-hereditary title, created because Cleon needed to prune back the plethora of grand dukes and Vilani *apkallu kibrat arban* (p. 8) to manageable numbers. He made the highly prestigious title a nonvoting member of the Grand Senate. In order to qualify, the grand dukes had to break up their holdings and divide them among their heirs, who became ordinary dukes or counts with vastly diluted power and influence.

Finally, some titles once common under the Sylean Confederation were removed from the early Imperial system. For example, the titles of viscount and earl were absorbed into the titles of count or marquis, depending upon the local situation.

Within a generation of the foundation of the Third Imperium, the aristocratic hierarchy had been detached from its Sylean roots and integrated into the basis of a truly universal system. Although there have been some minor reforms and reorganizations over the centuries, the Imperial system of nobility designed by Cleon I remains in effect today.

# The Imperial Nobility

"Next on the agenda?" asked the archduke, as he left the meeting room with his secretary and seneschal in tow.

"An initiation into the Order of Sol, your Grace," answered the secretary.

Archduke Adair nodded. "Excellent. You have the particulars, I trust?"

"Of course, your Grace."

Adair continued to stride down the corridor, listening as the secretary read out the citation's details. The candidate was a naval officer, involved in the Esperance War of the previous year. He had served with distinction for years, and had made a series of very good decisions under extreme pressure during the conflict. Reminded, Adair could now recall for himself. Yes, Captain Denisov was a superb candidate for knighthood, worthy of receiving the accolade from the archduke himself.

The archduke entered the small receiving chamber through a secret door in the back of the vesting room. The herald was already present, finishing with his own robes and taking up his staff. With practiced motions Adair put on the elaborate robe and sash of the Knight Commander of the Order of Sol, while his secretary finished reading the citation. His trained memory absorbed the information so that he could carry out the ceremony without stumbling. It was a small trick, but useful in leadership.

Finally the archduke stood before his minor throne, naked sword in hand, a stern expression on his face, ignoring the dozens of onlookers in the back of the chamber. The herald struck the marble floor with the heel of his staff, making a loud crash that demanded quiet. When all of the witnesses had fallen silent, he boomed out: "Captain John Denisov of the Imperial Navy, come forth and kneel before the throne."

A uniformed officer stepped forward and knelt. Adair assessed the man: tall, pale, graying hair, much like thousands of other naval officers. He had big, capable hands and moved with controlled grace. A Solomani officer, Adair remembered, from a world that had been under Imperial military rule not too many years before. He was doubtless a useful officer, but he would be an even more useful citizen when he returned home.

The herald continued. "Be it known to all citizens that I, Kieran Langos Adair, Archduke of Sol, Knight Commander of the Order of Sol, am minded to raise Captain John Denisov, by virtue of his honor, loyalty, integrity, and accomplishments, to the high estate of knighthood. Captain John Denisov, are you willing to swear and acknowledge fealty to the Emperor Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi, first of his Name, in the presence of his lawful viceroy Archduke Kieran Langos Adair of Sol?"

"I am, your Grace," Denisov replied, his voice thick with emotion.

"Then swear," commanded Adair.

"I, John Denisov, do solemnly swear and pledge my fealty to the Emperor Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi, to defend and obey him and his lawful heirs until death shall take me, and to uphold the honor of knighthood." The captain spoke deliberately and without stumbling. He must have memorized the oath. Not surprising, as he had sworn one very like it upon accepting his commission. A good and loyal man, it seemed.

Adair smiled. "It is right that those who offer unbroken fealty to our Imperium should be protected by our aid. Since Captain John Denisov has seen fit to swear fealty to the Emperor we serve, in our presence and that of the witnesses here assembled, we do decree and command that he shall be counted among the ranks of the Order of Sol. Therefore I, for my part, do swear to defend and honor John Denisov as befits a true knight." Adair stepped forward to tap Captain Denisov on both shoulders with the sword. "I dub thee Sir John Denisov, Companion of the Order of Sol. May you ever stand at my side to serve and defend the Imperium. Arise, sir knight."

The worlds of the Third Imperium exhibit a great deal of cultural diversity. In contrast, the nobles of the Third Imperium inhabit a relatively constant overlying culture that spans the space between the stars. Indeed, the Imperial aristocracy may define the consistent culture that binds the Third Imperium together.



## CLASSES OF NOBILITY

There are three broad classes of Imperial nobility: *high nobility*, *rank nobility*, and *honor nobility*. There is considerable overlap between these three classes in practice, but there are also fundamental differences between them.

Over these three classes is the Imperial family, which is sometimes considered part of the high nobility but is also separate from and above it. A fourth class of nobles also exists, the "planetary" nobility, which is separate from and below the Imperial nobility (p. 83).

## HIGH NOBILITY

The *high nobility* is the core of the Imperial aristocracy. High nobles are charged with the greatest governmental responsibility, and are among the most powerful people in the Third Imperium. Many of them are members of old and powerful families that have formed the backbone of the Imperial system for generations.

New high noble titles are rarely granted, and only in response to extraordinary service to the Imperium. Examples include a military officer who leads Imperial forces to victory in a major war, a captain of industry who delivers billions of credits of economic assistance, a local political leader instrumental in bringing his homeworld into the Imperium, and so on. Simple personal achievement is not enough – the new high noble must have performed a great service to the Imperium as a whole, far beyond the normal call of duty.

A high noble directly administers Imperial territories, acting as a personal representative of the Emperor. Within the demesne assigned to him, he is granted the Imperial Mandate (p. 58), giving him both the right to command Imperial resources and the obligation to uphold Imperial law. A high noble has the right to maintain household troops, or *huscarles* (p. 62); these troops sometimes act as military police, supporting the high noble's legal authority.

High nobles are always at least of baronial rank. Most Imperial viscounts, counts, and dukes are high nobles, and all of the archdukes are high nobles by definition. High noble titles are always hereditary.

A title of high nobility is always associated with at least a single Imperial star system. Titles of viscount and higher are associated with multiple star systems, whole subsectors, or even larger units of territory. A high noble title almost always comes with a fief (p. 13), which is located on one of the worlds falling under the title.

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*Every time someone is promoted to high Imperial office . . . a new noble family is created.*

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## RANK NOBILITY

*Rank nobility* is intended to maintain or confirm social position within Imperial society. Unlike the high and honor nobles, who are granted titles as a *reward* for service to the Imperium, rank nobles hold their titles to *enable* them to serve in a specific position.

A minimum noble rank is required for many senior positions in the Imperial government (see *Position and Rank*, p. 70). If a commoner or a nobleman who doesn't already hold sufficient rank is placed in such a position, he is granted a new title of rank so that he can qualify for it.

Such promotions are not common. If anyone with the required title is available and qualified for the position, he is almost always selected in preference to issuing a new noble title. Also, if a promotion must be made, a small one is preferred to a large one – an office requiring viscount's rank is

likely to be filled by someone who is already a marquis, not by someone with no noble title at all.

Despite these limits, many new titles of rank are issued every year. It's not impossible for an extremely ambitious, talented, and lucky commoner to "rise through the ranks," even into the upper levels of the aristocracy. Of course, such an event is rare and likely to make news across the Imperium. Most commoners are satisfied to regard a knighthood or baronetcy as the crown of a long and productive career in Imperial service.

A rank noble does not hold the Imperial Mandate, and is not considered a personal representative of the Emperor in the same sense as a high noble (p. 58). Rank nobles cannot have *huscarles* (p. 62). Naturally, a title of rank does carry specific government responsibilities – the rank noble is always a very senior Imperial military officer or civilian bureaucrat.

Rank nobles can hold titles as high as duke, although the vast majority of them are no higher than barons. Indeed, fewer than 20 Imperial offices require more than baronial rank, and all of those offices are located on Capital. It is rare to encounter a rank title of marquis, count or higher, or duke anywhere outside the Core sector.

A title of rank is held for life; at the baronial level and above it is usually hereditary. It does not come with a fief, although at the Emperor's whim the person first granted the title may also receive specific privileges such as a pension. Such privileges are almost never hereditary, even when the title itself can be inherited.

## Local Nobility

Every time someone is promoted to high Imperial office and given a new hereditary title of rank, a new noble family is created. The rank noble's descendants inherit the title, but in most cases do not hold a similar high office. Over the centuries, such noble titles have proliferated in all parts of the Imperium, creating a population of low-ranking nobles without fiefs or significant government responsibilities. These *local* nobles actually make up the majority of the Imperial aristocracy.

A local noble has no guaranteed role in the Imperial system, although he may take on the job of Imperial Legate for his home world. This is an official title that carries few specific duties; it designates an official who watches out for Imperial interests on a given world, and sometimes acts as an advocate for that world before the Imperial government. Not every Imperial Legate is a noble, but many of them are.

A local noble is automatically eligible for some government positions that require a title. Many local nobles enter Imperial service in their youth so that they can enter high office late in their careers. As a result, most observers of the Imperial aristocracy consider local nobles part of the rank nobility, whether they currently hold high office or not.

## HONOR NOBILITY

*Honor* nobility is granted for business leadership, remarkable achievement in the arts or sciences, or acts of heroism, usually in military service. Honor titles are generally

granted for unusual personal achievement, not for the extraordinary service to the Imperium – that might earn a title of high nobility (p. 12). Honor nobles have no specific governmental responsibilities; their titles are only social distinctions.

Archdukes can grant honor titles of knight or baronet, while only the Emperor can grant higher titles. Most honor titles are knighthoods, with the occasional baronetcy; honor titles higher than marquis are extremely rare.

Honor titles are held for life, and are usually hereditary at the baronial level and above. The heirs of those who earn honor titles enter the local nobility (p. 12). Honor nobles receive no fief, are not permitted to raise household troops, and have no special privileges aside from the title itself.

## LETTER PATENTS

A title of nobility is conferred through an official document known as a *letter patent*, also known as a *patent of nobility*. The letter patent is issued by the Emperor – or by one of the archdukes, in the case of knights and baronets. The physical document is a single sheet of parchment, with the “formula of conference” (the formal proclamation conferring the title) written in Galanglic on one side and Vilani on the other. The formula of conference is normally written out in longhand by a clerk, and signed by the Emperor or the archduke making the appointment. No official seal is required, but if the signing noble has one, it is applied.

The letter patent specifies the duties and obligations of the noble. All letters patent contain language exhorting the new noble to “uphold and defend the Imperium” using whatever authority and resources he may have. A title of high nobility also defines the territory in which the noble wields the Imperial Mandate. A title of rank nobility defines the specific office the noble will hold. A letter patent also sets out any other provisions attached to the specific title, such as special conditions on inheritance. All of these provisions appear in the highly legalistic court terminology used almost exclusively in such documents.

One item associated with a new noble title does *not* appear in the patent of nobility. If the title comes with a fief, it is legally assigned to the new noble in a separate document, called a *letter of enfeoffment*.

When a letter patent is issued, the noble holds the original document and a record of the appointment is retained in a central archive in the Imperial Palace on Capital. If the letter is for a knight or baronet, a third copy is placed in an archive at the pertinent domain capital.

The physical patent of nobility is primarily ceremonial, and can be replaced if lost or destroyed. The handwritten nature of the document adds to its individuality and perceived importance. Few official documents are written out with pen and ink, and those that are obviously have great importance.

Traditionally, listings of official appointments are published annually in the Holiday List (appearing on the first day of each year) and in the Birthday List (appearing on the Emperor’s birthday, which for Strephon is day 202). Each list reiterates the entire register of active noble titles in the Third

## What Is the Aristocracy For?

Outsiders observing the Imperial system of government are often puzzled by its use of aristocrats.

Nobles run the Imperial bureaucracy. They oversee the Imperial courts. They command the Imperial armed forces. They serve as points of contact between the Imperium and its member worlds. All of these roles are certainly important. Yet it’s true that talented commoners could manage all of these routines just as easily, without any need for inherited privilege or Imperial ceremony. Surely the Imperium could dispense with its aristocracy altogether?

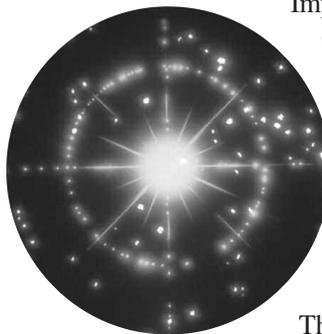
The key to understanding the Imperial system lies in observing the core virtues of the Imperial aristocrat: *loyalty* and *personal initiative*.

A noble may be hopeless as an administrator, soldier, diplomat, or jurist. Yet in theory he has been trained from birth to be staunchly loyal to the Emperor. He has also been taught to be comfortable acting on his own initiative, using whatever power is available to him. A noble who never performs any other function in the Imperial system is still expected to teach his children these virtues, for the day when they may be called to serve.

The noble virtues are critical because the Imperial aristocracy’s true function is not to meet the demands of day-to-day routine. Instead, the aristocracy exists to ensure that there is a pool of people capable of responding to emergencies.

The Imperium is too vast and too thinly spread to be controlled from the center. When a crisis erupts, the Imperium needs to know that one of its trusted servants will be on the scene as soon as possible. That person must have the authority, initiative, and loyalty necessary to resolve the situation in accordance with Imperial interests. If the Imperium can’t rely on this, its very survival will soon be in danger.

There may be many ways for an interstellar society to ensure that loyal, aggressive people with authority will respond to every crisis, but the mechanism chosen by the founders of the Third Imperium was a hereditary aristocracy. In the end, the noble’s role is to prevent the Imperium from flying into thousands of squabbling fragments. Thus far, the Imperium’s nobles have succeeded.



Imperium, listing them in order of precedence, and noting any additions since the last list.

Additional patents of nobility are sometimes issued for political purposes or special occasions, or to fill positions within the Imperial government. These letters patent are issued in special proclamations as needed.

## THE PEERAGE AND THE MOOT

The Imperial nobility includes a subset called the *peerage*, which consists of all nobles except knights and baronets. Many high offices in the Imperial bureaucracy must be held by peers, but not all peers hold office.

Collectively, the peerage constitutes the Moot, the Imperial government's highest deliberative body. The Moot is a direct descendant of the Grand Senate of the Sylean Federation, but has undergone several changes in the centuries since the Third Imperium formed from the Sylean Federation.

The Moot is technically supreme in the Imperium, but in practice its power is extremely limited. Its deliberations are not binding on the Emperor, but he is well advised to heed them, since they represent the will of the nobility. The most significant power of the Moot is its ability to dissolve the Imperium. When this power is brought to bear, it compels compromise between opposing factions. The Moot also has the power to confirm Emperors in their posts, in addition to a number of lesser powers. For a more complete discussion of the Moot, see p. 72.

### Confirmation

When a noble dies, his heir holds the title temporarily, until it can be officially confirmed. Technically speaking, only the Emperor can create or confirm a noble above the rank of baronet – but the vast distances and time delays caused by travel time often make it inconvenient for the Emperor to personally confirm each heir. The archdukes and some of the sector dukes are given limited Imperial Warrants (p. 61) to act in the Emperor's behalf in these instances. Still, it is often several months before an heir is officially confirmed.

Unless some legal impediment to the inheritance comes to light, confirmation is automatic, and all a noble's actions in office are retroactively recognized as official, provided they were otherwise legal. Archdukes are normally confirmed by Imperial proclamation, unless circumstances dictate that the heir travel to Capital.

## NOBLE RANKS

In the Third Imperium, the nobility comes in ranks ranging from the knight to the Emperor himself. The nobility is arranged in a vast hierarchy; each level of the pyramid has fewer members and greater prestige than the one below.

### KNIGHT

The lowest of noble ranks is *knight*. The Emperor or an archduke awards a knighthood as an honorific in recognition of achievement or service, or to confer social position on those who have acquired some small level of wealth or political power. Knighthoods are coveted by non-nobles, and are seen as more readily attainable than membership in the peerage.

### Esquire

The title *esquire* has no official position within the Imperial system of nobility, but it is used in some places. "Esquire" originally designated a young man who was assigned to a knight to undergo the training and education necessary to achieve knighthood in his own right. The word comes from the French *escuier* and is descended through the Late Latin *scutarius*, from the Latin *scutum*, or shield – "squire" is a shortened form of the word.

Later, "esquire" became a courtesy title for English gentry, and was eventually applied to attorneys as a slightly pretentious abbreviation ("Esq."). The title survives in some planetary nobility (p. 83), and still serves as an honorific designator of attorney status on some worlds.

All knights are members of one of the Imperium's numerous orders of knighthood (pp. 21-25). Archdukes may only award knighthoods in the order of their Domain and, in rare cases, another order. For example, Archduke Brzk of Antares may award knighthoods in both the Order of Antares (p. 24) and the Order of Gvadakoung (p. 81), since he commands both. The Emperor may award knighthoods in any order that he commands – including the Order of Sylea (p. 23), in his capacity as Archduke of Sylea.

Fiefs almost never accompany knighthoods; the rare exceptions occur only when the award is for extremely distinguished service. A knight's fief is always on a single world and is generally not more than 10 square kilometers. Knights sometimes receive cash stipends or other financial rewards. They are not members of the peerage, unless they also hold a higher title. Knighthoods are not hereditary, although peers are usually knighted, which means that heirs are usually knighted when confirmed.

### History

The word *knight* is derived from the Old English word *cnicht*, which originally meant "servant" or "retainer." It is one of the few Imperial titles with a non-Latin origin.

On ancient Terra, the horses, training, and equipment required of a mounted warrior were very expensive. Knights were therefore granted land sufficient to maintain them. Knights eventually developed a rigorous code of behavior known as *chivalry*. This code eventually came to be expected of all nobility – although it was honored more in literature than in practice. As mounted combat in full armor passed out of favor, knighthood became more of an honorific rather than a troop classification, but its members retained the status associated with their earlier position.

The institution of knighthood became a fixture of interstellar society during the Rule of Man. It remained important under the Sylean Federation, and was retained by the Third Imperium. Indeed, Cleon I took great pains to consolidate several of the preexisting orders of knighthood in the Imperium's earliest years. In particular, all of the Vilani *kiduumuuzii*

(p. 8) were inducted into the Order of Vland (p. 23) in the first year of the Third Imperium.

Today the institution of chivalry is a critical part of the Imperial system of nobility – this despite the fact (some say *because* of the fact) that the title is purely honorific.

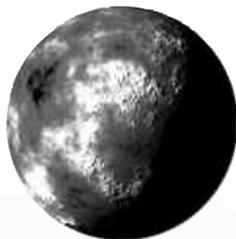
### ***Traveling Incognito***

Imperial nobles often travel “incognito,” using a false identity when they don’t wish to be disturbed by formal protocol – or by celebrity-seekers. So long as the incognito noble reveals his true identity to any legal authority on demand, this weak false identity is allowed under Imperial law.

Tradition has set aside a number of false titles that can be used by any Imperial noble who wishes to claim aristocratic status without revealing his identity. If a noble is asked who he is and he responds with one of these titles, courtesy demands that he not be pressed for more information. This custom only applies to *informal* situations. A false title is not appropriate for a formal social occasion, and becomes illegal during any form of official business. It is also inappropriate to claim a title of higher rank than one’s own – hence there are false titles available for each level in the aristocratic hierarchy.

Many of the common titles for use while incognito are drawn from ancient Terran literature; the ancient Vilani apparently had no similar custom. It is considered a sign of refinement to recognize the literary “joke” inherent in such a title when it is encountered. Examples include:

- Sir John Galt
- Baron Ragoczy
- Baroness of Sheffield
- Marquis of Carabas
- Count of Anbenque
- Count of Mazan
- Duchess of Strackenz



## **BARONET**

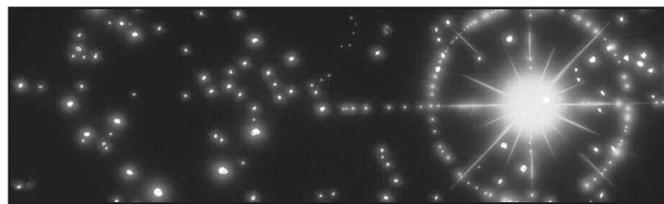
The rank of *baronet* is next above the rank of knight. The title of baronet is awarded by an archduke of one of the Imperial domains (p. 18), and ranks below baron in seniority and precedence. The title of baronet is hereditary, but it is otherwise much like that of a knight. Like knights, baronets do not receive fiefs or specific responsibilities, and are not members of the peerage.

Although the Emperor can create baronets (either as Emperor or as Archduke of Sylea), “Imperial baronets” are quite rare – in practice, only the archdukes create them. The title of baronet is often awarded to members of a planet’s nobility who are not rulers of that world, as a means of enhancing their offworld prestige. It is common, although not required, for a baronetcy to be accompanied by a knighthood; this reinforces the “senior knight” image.

## **History**

Although the title of baronet occasionally appeared earlier, it first came to prominence under the Terran King James I of England about -2900; James instituted the title so that he could raise money by selling it to social-climbing gentlemen. The word itself may have originated in the early Renaissance as a descendant of the phrase *knight banneret*. As such, it at first indicated a knight of slightly higher prestige than normal – the name comes from the fact that such knights were given a special banner as a token of their elevated status.

The title of baronet was not originally part of the Imperial system of nobility. Emperor Artemsus revived it in 80, as part of a set of reforms that created the Imperial domains and revived the title of archduke (p. 18). The new archdukes were granted the power to create baronets, a privilege which has been jealously guarded ever since. Today, the title of baronet remains intermediate between knight and baron, and is still within the purview of archdukes to appoint.



## **BARON**

The third level of nobility is the *baron*. This is the lowest level accorded membership in the peerage (p. 14), and thus the lowest rank which may participate in meetings of the Moot (p. 14). A baron in the high nobility usually has a fief of land on a single world, generally not more than 100 square kilometers and usually on the world associated with his title. Multiple baronies and their associated fiefs are often created on a single world, so long as the world has sufficient land area or population to support each fief.

Planetary nobility (p. 83) who rule a world are sometimes granted a barony on that world, partly as a courtesy and partly to give them a stake in the ruling of the empire. Thus, King Aldo XIV of Haldor can be Baron Aldo of Haldor in the Imperial system if granted a barony – and is likely granted a knighthood as well.

Imperial admirals and generals are often granted the honor title of baron without a fief or duties if they achieve their rank without having acquired any other title.

## **History**

The word “baron” originated in the Terran Middle Ages. At first it meant a person of any rank holding feudal lands (called a “tenanted barony”) directly from the king, as opposed to holding lands through a lesser liege lord. In 13th-century France, a baron often had higher prestige than a count, since many counts held their fiefs through intermediary lords. Later medieval and Renaissance monarchs gradually diluted the title’s prestige, and eventually it became the lowest level of the standard peerage.

## Noble Representation

With rare exceptions, every Imperial world has at least one noble associated with it. On high-population or important worlds, this is usually a member of the high nobility. Low-population or backwater worlds are much less likely to be supervised by a high noble. If this aristocrat is a member of the high nobility, his fief is on that world.

When a world is admitted to the Imperium, at least one local citizen is usually granted Imperial noble status. This first noble (usually a baron) is sometimes the world's ruler, or some other influential political leader believed likely to help in integrating his world into the Imperial system. Additional barons and other nobles are created as needed.

There are many exceptions to this procedure. When the Imperium claims an uninhabited world, a noble title is usually not created for it until a permanent colony is established. Worlds which have been *conquered* by the Imperium may not have associated nobles; if a noble is appointed to such a world before it is given home rule, that noble is almost always an offworlder. Interdicted worlds rarely have associated noble titles, and those that do are always represented by offworlders. Balkanized worlds are usually represented by offworlders as well, to minimize the possibility that the world's Imperial noble will become embroiled in local disputes.

If the leading Imperial noble for a world is an offworlder, he is often an absentee who rarely visits "his" world or fief.

Although the title of baron existed under the Sylean Federation, it was Cleon I who imposed major reforms and gave the title its present significance. Cleon conceived of "the baronage" (the community of Imperial barons) as the strongest link between the Imperium and its member worlds. He intended that local leaders on every Imperial world would be given a stake and a voice in the Imperial system by being granted baronial titles. The proclamation establishing the Imperial title was almost the first decree Cleon issued after ascending to the throne.

Today, barons vastly outnumber the rest of the Imperial peerage, and the baronage remains one of the most critical supports for the Imperium as a whole.

## MARQUIS

The fourth level of noble rank is *marquis*. A marquis is associated with a single system, generally one with a large and important world with a good starport.

A marquis in the high nobility receives a fief of land, generally not more than 1,000 square kilometers, and usually on the world associated with his title. Multiple marquises on the same world are rare, although the situation can arise when a person is granted a marquise as a nonhereditary title.

## History

The word "marquis" originated about -3600 under the Carolingian Franks of Terra. The original form of the word was *marchis*, representing, like the Latin words *dux* or *comes*, a military command. In this case, the command was specifically located on a frontier or *mark* – "march," a usage that survives in the name Spinward Marches, among others. Later, as with the *dux* and *comes*, the *marchis* came to have governmental duties in addition or in place of military ones.

The title of marquis was rare on pre-Imperial Sylea, and indeed it was little used under the early centuries of the Third Imperium. Most of the earliest marquises were actually Vilani *sarriiu* (p. 8) who were given the rank to distinguish them from the baronage. The rank became common in the fourth and fifth centuries Imperial, when the high-population worlds of the Old Expanses and Solomani Rim sectors were first being admitted in large numbers. Today the rank remains an oddity within the Imperial system of nobility – there are large regions of the Imperium where there are fewer marquises than there are counts.

## VISCOUNT

The fifth level of noble rank is the *viscount*. A viscount's demesne is two or three star systems within a subsector, and rarely more. This cluster of star systems rarely contains any important, high-population worlds; a noble whose demesne includes such a world is usually given the rank of count.

Many viscounts have greater responsibilities in the subsector and sector government than marquises and below. Most are also members of the high nobility, wielding the Imperial Mandate on all of the worlds of their demesne (p. 60). Indeed, viscounts are often assigned to clusters of worlds which do not have their own high-noble marquises or barons. A viscount in this situation may be the only high noble responsible for the worlds in his demesne.

The title of viscount is not used everywhere in the Third Imperium. It is most common in the Imperial core, and is rare in more recently-settled regions such as the Spinward Marches. In regions where viscounts are rare, their role in Imperial government is carried by local counts.

## History

The word "viscount" is derived from the Latin term *comes*, from which we also get the title of "count." The exact Latin term was *vice comes*, indicating a count's deputy, or a nobleman who was just subordinate to a count in rank and precedence. The title of viscount was revived under the Sylean Confederation and passed into the Imperial system from there.

## COUNT

The sixth level of noble rank is the *count*. Like a viscount, a count has a demesne of two or three systems within a subsector and rarely more. A count in the high nobility receives a fief of land on a single world, generally not more than 10,000 square kilometers and not always in the same system as that referred to in his title.

Many counts have greater responsibilities in the subsector and sector government than marquises and below. Most are also members of the high nobility, wielding the Imperial Mandate on all of the worlds of their county (p. 58). Indeed, counts are often assigned to clusters of worlds which do not have their own marquises or barons. A count in this situation may be the only high noble responsible for the worlds in his county. A count's demesne usually includes at least one important, high-population world; his title is normally associated with that world.

## History

The word "count" is Terran and another Roman military title. It is from the Latin *comes*, from which we also get the word *companion*. A *comes* was originally part of a barbarian chief's bodyguard, the chief's trusted friend. The later Roman Empire incorporated many barbarians into the army, and began to use some of their terms, *comes* among them.

Under the Franks, a *comes* was a military governor with administrative and judicial responsibilities, and the word entered the muddle of nomenclature that plagued all early medieval titles of nobility. It eventually acquired a position just under duke in the Third Imperium.

The Scandinavian term *jarl* and the English equivalent *earl* were once equivalent to count and in common use under the Rule of Man and the Sylean Confederation. The ancient title of *viscount* was also in use on Sylea. Those titles are no longer part of the Imperial system, although planetary nobility still use them (p. 83).

The title of count was one of the first ones instituted by Cleon I at the foundation of the Third Imperium. The new title incorporated the Sylean earls and viscounts, the Vilani *shakkanakhu* (p. 8), and a few new nobles from among Cleon's industrialist supporters. All of these groups spent a great deal of time quarreling over their relative status, even to the point of violent feuds. Emperor Martin I finally suppressed these quarrels and revoked the titles of the most troublesome counts.

Oddly, at the beginning of the Imperial period the titles of viscount and count were actually *inferior* to that of marquis. A marquis was usually associated with a large and important world, while a viscount or count often had only a scattering of backwater worlds. However, as the Imperium expanded the viscounts and counts became increasingly important, especially with regard to the administration of new territory. In particular, the old Vilani *shakkanakhu* families were critical to the continued functioning of the Imperium during the Civil War.

Emperor Zhakirov finally recognized the realities of the situation, and issued a decree reforming the Imperial nobility in 669. This decree "promoted" Imperial viscounts and counts to be senior to marquises in precedence. This move was generally accepted at the time, since it did fit the situation as it had evolved. Even so, it caused resentment among the numerous Solomani marquises of the Rim, and contributed to the growing conflict between the Emperor and the Solomani Movement.

## DUKE

The seventh level of noble rank is the *duke*. Most dukes are members of the high nobility, associated with entire subsectors. One duke within each sector rises to the position of *sector duke*, in charge of the administration of Imperial government in that particular sector.

A duke in the high nobility receives a fief of land on a single world, generally not more than 100,000 square kilometers, usually located on a world within his subsector.

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*So many of the titles we use for the nobility come from ancient military ranks, it might seem to give some credence to the Ine Givar's contention that the Imperial government is a military dictatorship.*

*– Dr. Harlan Zhunu Novotna,  
**Foundations of Political  
Science***

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## History

The word "duke" and derivatives, such as "grand duke" and "archduke," come from the Terran Latin *dux*, a title given to military commanders assigned specific territories to defend. The overall military commander of the province of Britain, for example, was the *Dux Britannica*.

Originally a purely military position, over the years the holders of this title acquired governmental responsibilities and more freedom. Some of them gained power and independence equaling or exceeding that of the king to whom they owed nominal fealty – for example, the ancient Dukes of Burgundy, were for several generations effectively independent of the Kings of France. Eventually brought under royal control, the position of duke became the highest noble rank under the monarchy in most countries.

The title of duke, with variants such as "grand duke," was common on Sylea. Cleon I redefined the title to apply to the senior Imperial nobleman in a subsector, the sense in which the title is still used today.

The Imperial title of duke is one of the few that did not completely absorb an earlier Vilani title. The ancient Vilani title of *saarpuhii* was roughly equivalent, but by the Third Imperium's foundation almost all of the old *saarpuhii* families were extinct or no longer had much influence. As a result, almost all of the *saarpuhii* were given lesser titles, and new families were granted ducal status in the Vilani-dominated regions of the Imperium.

## ARCHDUKE

Each of the seven Imperial domains has an *archduke*, exercising overall control over his domain and acting as an intermediary between the Emperor and the other levels of nobility. An archduke is a member of the high nobility by definition, wielding the Imperial Mandate throughout his four-sector domain (p. 58). An archduchy includes a fief of an entire world, sometimes (but not always) retained as a private reserve.

### History

The title of archduke has changed the most in the course of Imperial history. Cleon I established the title at the time of the foundation of the Imperium, but at the time it was purely honorific in nature.

The early Imperium was swarming with dozens of Sylean “grand dukes” and Vilani *apkallu kibrat arban* (p. 8). Some of these dignitaries were content to give up their titles in order to accept duchies and other titles in the new Imperial system. Others were uninterested in participating in the new Imperial power structure – too many to make the simple abolition of their titles a safe move. Cleon I created the title of archduke to placate these nobles.

In the first decades of the Imperium, the title of archduke granted only nonvoting membership in the Moot. It was not hereditary – as its holders died out, their heirs either accepted a “lesser” title (usually that of duke) or fell from the aristocracy entirely. Cleon I originally planned for the title to fall into disuse at the death of its last bearer.

Cleon’s successor, the Emperor Artemsus, changed this plan in the early 70s. He felt the need to create a new class of

## Duchies of the Spinward Marches

The Spinward Marches are unique in many ways, but its Imperial duchies serve as an example of the way the aristocratic system works on the frontiers.

The Spinward Marches sector has fewer than the standard number of subsector dukes. Several of the subsectors are outside Imperial control, and some of those inside the borders are controlled from other subsectors. The administration of the Aramis subsector, for example, is divided among several dukes based in neighboring subsectors.

The continually evolving political situation in the Spinward Marches pits the Duchess Delphine of Mora and her faction against the rising power of the newly invested Archduke Norris of Deneb. Several of the subsector dukes of the Marches owe allegiance to one side of the other, and the remainder is charting a middle course. This rivalry came to a head during the Fifth Frontier War (1107-1110), and continues despite the region’s external tensions.

**Duchess Delphine Adorania Muudashir of Mora:** Along with her position as Duchess of Mora, Delphine is sector duchess, a position achieved by decades of political maneuvering and consensus building. Delphine’s allies include her kinsman Duke Luis Adorania Jesten of Lunion, as well as Duchess Miraii Abani Arahaili of Trin. The rise of Norris to Archduke of Deneb was achieved partly at the expense of Delphine’s faction. (Norris’ military rival Admiral Santanocheev was one of her protégés.) Delphine was reportedly livid when news of Norris’ elevation reached her, and while she has cooperated since then, she does so grudgingly. She accepted her appointment as a Knight of the Order of Deneb with all the grace expected, but has yet to use the title in any public document.

**Duke Luis Adorania Jesten of Lunion:** Luis, Duke of Lunion, is a second cousin once removed of Duchess Delphine, and one of her staunchest allies in the Marches. Retired admiral Santanocheev, Luis’ brother-in-law, holds the County of Fornice, also in the Lunion subsector.

**Duchess Miraii Abani Arahaili of Trin:** Miraii is the duchess associated with the Trin’s Veil subsector. She has allied herself with Duchess Delphine at times in the past, but

lately has pursued policies less supportive of the duchess, although she has not moved fully into Norris’ camp.

**Duke Leonard Stephanos Kirgashii of Rhylanor:** Leonard, as subsector duke of Rhylanor, also administers the section of the Aramis subsector known as the Aramis Trace, including Aramis itself. He has remained neutral in the rivalry.

**Duchess Avaraja Astaarte Muktheswara of Glisten:** Avaraja is subsector duchess of Glisten, and feels that the Imperium should take a greater interest in the neighboring subsector, District 268. Avaraja has been unable to convince Norris to allow her greater freedom of action in District 268, but nevertheless remains neutral in the power struggle between Norris and Delphine.

**Duke Norris Aella Aledon of Regina:** Norris, in his position as subsector duke of Regina, administers parts of the Jewell, Vilis, Lanth, and Aramis subsectors as well. Past Dukes of Regina annexed these territories to their administration, and made Regina one of the most powerful duchies in the Spinward Marches.

Upon his appointment as archduke, Norris established the domain capital on Mora, which was already the capital of the Spinward Marches sector. This bewildered many observers (p. 93).

Norris has effectively delegated the administration of the Regina subsector to Countess Josephine Hortalez Aella of Efate, a distant relative and one of his supporters during the Fifth Frontier War. There is considerable speculation over whether Norris will use his influence with Strephon to promote Josephine – a move which will undoubtedly be opposed by Delphine’s faction, although probably not openly.

**Duchess Ramasawamy Opania Shumma of Pretoria:** Duchess Ramasawamy is the subsector duchess of Pretoria in the Deneb sector, but also administers the Towers Cluster, part of the Aramis subsector. Although she is not strictly one of the subsector dukes of the Spinward Marches, Ramasawamy is involved in sector politics as one of Norris’ supporters.

Imperial viceroys, who could act on his behalf in regions distant from Capital. He also planned to launch a series of economic, diplomatic, and military campaigns to “pacify” territory beyond the current Imperial borders, bringing new regions into the Imperium. To this end, he divided the map into *domains* of four sectors each, and placed each domain in the hands of a viceroy who would coordinate expansion into his assigned territory.

Artemus decided that his viceroys needed prestige and authority beyond that of a duke and second only to his own. In 76, therefore, he revived the title of archduke and assigned it to five of the most influential and loyal dukes in the Imperium. At the same time, he created the Domain of Sylea to cover the Imperial core territories, and assumed the title of Archduke of Sylea himself. The “new archdukes” could pass their title along to their heirs normally – and the title would be anything but honorific.

Ironically, one of the “old archdukes” was still alive in 76: Willem DeClark, Archduke of Whitehall. Archduke DeClark had been the 21-year-old Grand Duke of Whitehall at the foundation of the Third Imperium, had accepted the title of archduke, and had taken almost no role in Imperial government since. He survived for well over a century through a combination of good health, luck, and sheer stubbornness. Upon his death in 95 he was given a magnificent state funeral with the Emperor himself presiding, a remarkable tribute considering the mediocrity of his public career. Today, he is remembered as little more than a footnote in Imperial history.

By the end of the Pacification Campaigns in 120, the title of archduke operated more or less as it does today, although Emperor Strephon recently again added to the archdukes’ powers (p. 89). A seventh Domain (Deneb) was established in 589, although no archduke was named to it until the elevation of Duke Norris in 1117.

## THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

The members of the Imperial family, while part of the peerage through any lesser titles they may hold, are not ordinary nobles. Aside from the Emperor they have no formal governmental duties, although they may act as informal “extensions” of the Imperial presence for ceremonial purposes. Members of the Imperial family are subject to the same restrictions as the Emperor with regard to attending meetings of the Moot, unless they hold other titles and are willing to temporarily forego the honors due a member of the Imperial family in order to attend (see *Multiple Titles*, p. 28).

### PRINCE

The lowest rank within the Imperial family is *prince* (*princess* is the feminine form). The title is normally given only to blood relatives of the Emperor, although most Emperors have granted the title to their relatives’ spouses as a courtesy (p. 29). The degree of consanguinity has never been formally established, but most Emperors limit it to direct descendants, younger siblings and their children, first cousins, and the spouses of these persons.

An Imperial proclamation is required for the title to be official, but this is normally incorporated into the formal announcement of a child’s birth, or the formal announcement of the marriage in the case of a spouse. Revocation of the title also requires an Imperial proclamation.

The surviving spouse of the previous monarch is granted the official title of prince or princess when a new Emperor takes the throne. An Emperor’s surviving mother is usually known as the “Empress-Mother” in all but the most formal of situations. In the rare cases in which the Emperor’s *father* was the surviving spouse (i.e. when the previous reigning monarch was a woman), the simple title “prince” has been used.

The parents and siblings of the Emperor’s spouse (i.e., the Emperor’s in-laws) are not normally granted any special title.

There are currently two princes of the Third Imperium, the twins Varian and Lucan Alkhalikoi, the Emperor’s nephews – the sons of Strephon’s younger sister Lydia. There are other living relatives of the Imperial family, but none are of the degree of consanguinity required to receive the title. Strephon’s mother Elbet died in 1053; his sister Lydia and her husband Dresden both died in 1108. Duchess Margaret Alkhalikoi of Delphi is Strephon’s first cousin *once removed*, and thus has not been granted the title of princess.



**Duchess Delphine of Mora**

## History

The word *prince* comes from the Latin *princeps* (“first,” also the source of the word “principle”). It was originally applied in titles like that accorded the senior member of the Roman Senate (the *princeps senatus*), who was allowed to speak first on any subject. The emperor Augustus also used *princeps senatus* as one of his titles, and the word eventually came to have its modern meaning.

The title of prince was established by Cleon I at the foundation of the Third Imperium, and was immediately applied to several of the new Emperor’s kinsmen. Many of the princes of the Imperium have had colorful careers in their own right. Notable among these was the second Emperor, Cleon II, who abdicated the Iridium Throne after less than a year in power. He spent the rest of a long and apparently happy life as “Prince Cleon,” working as an adventurer and troubleshooter on the Imperial frontiers (p. GT66).

### **The Great Seal of the Imperium**

Although it is rarely used, the Third Imperium has a great seal, dating back to the days of Cleon I. The obverse depicts the Imperial starburst surrounded by the inscription “For and by order of the Imperium” in Galanglic. The reverse is the same, but the inscription is in Vilani. The main use of the seal these days is on letters patent, and for the museum copies of important Imperial proclamations.

The seal is impressed into a wax disc 1/2” (12mm) in thickness and 4” (10cm) in diameter, normally attached to a document by means of a ribbon or cord threaded through a slit in the parchment.



## GRAND PRINCE

Only one person can hold the title of *grand prince* (*grand princess* in the feminine) at any given time. The title is reserved for the formally designated heir to the Iridium Throne. This is usually (but not always) the eldest issue of

the Emperor. The title is not conferred automatically – it can be granted only by Imperial proclamation. It becomes void if the heir dies before the Emperor. It may also be revoked by an Imperial proclamation, but this has never happened in the history of the Third Imperium.

The current grand princess is Strephon’s only child, Ciencia Iphegenia Guuilbataashullibaa Alkhalikoi (p. 90).

## History

Cleon I established the title of grand prince at the foundation of the Third Imperium. It was first granted to Cleon’s only son Cleon II in 33.

Since the time of Cleon I, Imperial law has required the title of grand prince to be granted by the time the heir reached 12 years of age. In the early centuries of the Imperium, most Emperors waited until this point to grant the title. In more recent times, the Emperors have seldom waited more than a year or two after birth before making the formal appointment. The first Emperor to grant the title while his heir was still a child was Zhakirov, who declared his daughter Margaret to be the grand princess when she was only two years of age.

## CONSORT

*Consort* is an official title of the spouse of the reigning Emperor. A woman in this position is officially titled as “Empress-Consort,” normally shortened to “Empress” in all but the most formal of proclamations. In the case of a male consort, the title is “Prince-Consort,” shortened to “Prince.”

## EMPEROR

The *Emperor* is the ruling monarch of the Third Imperium (*Empress* is the feminine form). The current Emperor is Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi. He stands at the head of the Imperial system of nobility, the focal point of countless oaths of fealty and service.

Although the Emperor wields the Imperial Mandate over *all* Imperial territories (p. 58), he is not considered to be a member of the high nobility – rather, he is the *source* of the high nobility, the ultimate authority for whom all high nobles are merely representatives and viceroys.

## History

The word *emperor* is taken from the Latin *imperator* (which is usually translated “generalissimo,” although there is no good single-word translation), which was originally an honorific title granted to successful Roman military commanders by their soldiers. Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor, took *imperator* as one of his titles when he redesigned the Roman government and converted the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. Subsequent European rulers in Europe tended to imitate the Romans, so the title *imperator* or a local variation became common (in Germany, for example, the word for Emperor was *kaiser*, derived from the name Caesar).

The title of Emperor was revived under the Rule of Man (p. 9) and again at the foundation of the Third Imperium.

# ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

Below the peerage stand the knights of the Imperium. Knights are organized into *orders*, each of which is a unified ceremonial institution organized along military lines. Each order has its own supreme commander and its own ceremonial traditions.

There are dozens of orders of knighthood in the Imperium, but most of these are small or have only local significance. Only 12 of the orders have truly Imperium-wide membership and influence. This section discusses 10 of these; the other two are the Order of Gvadakoung (p. 81) and the Order of Hlyuea (p. 78).

The precedence of the various knightly orders in the Imperium is partially determined by their age, but it is also influenced by a variety of other factors. For example, the Order of Sylea predates the Imperium, but it takes a lower precedence than several younger orders. The Order of Sol is descended from the much older Order of Terra, but lost much of its earlier precedence in the period of the Solomani Rim War. The newest of the orders, the Order of Deneb, is currently lowest in precedence of the major orders (and is listed first in official proclamations, in keeping with Imperial practice, see p. 30). The following sections describe the orders in *descending* order of prestige, with the most prestigious order first.



## SENIOR ORDERS

These three orders of knighthood all date to the earliest years of the Third Imperium, and carry tremendous prestige.

### *Order of the Starship and Crown*

Cleon I established the Order of the Starship and Crown in 17. When it was formed, the new order incorporated almost the entire membership of the older Order of the Imperial Sunburst, which was disbanded by the same proclamation. The size of the order varies depending on the whims of the reigning Emperor; as of 1120 there are about 200 members, making it one of the most exclusive of the Imperium's orders of chivalry.

Unlike all the other orders, there are no subsidiary ranks in the Order of the Starship and Crown. Knights of the order are ranked solely according to the date of their knighthoods, which are not hereditary except in the case of the Emperor. Even the Emperor is “only” a knight of the order (K.S.C.), although he is by definition the most senior (his seniority date is that of Cleon I).

The main advantage of being a member of the order is that knights of the Order of the Starship and Crown take precedence over all others when applying for an audience with the Emperor (although they appear before the Emperor last, according to the normal rule of precedence). This privilege technically supersedes even that of the archdukes, although all of the archdukes are also members of the order. Other advantages include a seat at the Emperor's table during the annual Holiday and Emperor's Birthday banquets, and the right to use the order's palatial headquarters when visiting Capital.

The badge of the order is a stylized starship laid over a circlet representing the imperial crown, both of these in gold on a field of black.

The headquarters of the order are on Capital, adjacent to the Moot Spire. The building contains the grand ceremonial hall of the order, a museum, archives, library, and the small but sumptuous apartments, which are maintained for visiting members.



***Order of the Starship and Crown***



***Honorable Order of the Emperor's Guard***



***Order of the Arrow***



***Ancient and Preeminent Order of Sylea***

### ***Honorable Order of the Emperor's Guard***

Established in 52 by Cleon I, the Order of the Emperor's Guard was originally limited to the personal retainers of the reigning Emperor. Under the Empress Nicholle, the rule was broadened to permit any Imperial citizen to be elevated to the order. The order is now widespread, with a diverse membership. Most knighthoods bestowed by the Emperor are in the Honorable Order of the Emperor's Guard; there are about 2,500 in existence at any one time.

The duties of the order are purely ceremonial, and have nothing to do with actually guarding the Emperor – or much of anything, except attending meetings and banquets.

Ordinary members of the Order of the Emperor's Guard are known as Companions (C.E.G.). Higher-ranking members of the order are known as Knight Commanders (K.C.E.G.). The order has about 100 Knight Commanders; the Imperial archdukes normally hold this rank, and it is otherwise granted to a few rare individuals the Emperor chooses to honor more highly than with an ordinary knighthood. The head of the order is the Grand Commander (G.C.E.G.), a position automatically assumed by the Emperor upon assuming the throne. He may resign and appoint a successor, but this has never been done.

Knight Commanders of the Order of the Emperor's Guard are unusual in that they receive fiefs – almost the only Imperial knights to receive this distinction. These fiefs are rather small, consisting of between a quarter and half a hectare of land, but they are located on Capital and the associated prestige is enormous.

The badge of the order is a single golden apple against a field of red – the emblem of the now-extinct Dukes of Grundsens, from which Empress Nicholle was descended. For this reason, knights of this order are sometimes given the nickname "Apple-Bearers."

The headquarters of the order are located adjacent to the Imperial Palace, and contain a small museum and the grand hall of the order. There is no provision for housing visiting members, however; they must find their own lodging while on Capital.

### ***Order of the Arrow***

The Order of the Arrow was established in 62 by Emperor Artemsus, to recognize interstellar explorers. The order was originally open only to members of the IISS, but was opened to others in 692 under Margaret I. Margaret's proclamation specifically permitted notable scientists in fields related to exploration (astronomy, sophontology, sociology, and so on) to be inducted.

An ordinary member is a *Frater* ("brother") or *Sorer* ("sister") of the Order of the Arrow (F.A., S.A.), treated as a knight in all respects. The second level of membership in the order is Knight Commander of the Order of the Arrow (K.C.A.). Grand Princess Ciencia Iphegenia is a Knight Commander, and is one of only three members of the Imperial family ever to have been inducted into the order. The current Grand Commander of the Order of the Arrow (G.C.A.) is a former Commander of the IISS, Duke Harlen Maadfa Omar of Tephany.

The badge of the order is a sheaf of arrows in red over a black background, as laid down in Artemsus' original establishing proclamation.

The headquarters of the order are located on Capital, adjacent to the headquarters of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. They contain the grand meeting hall of the order, a museum of the IISS (including the complete IISS archives), and a few small but well-appointed apartments for traveling members, available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

## ORDERS OF THE DOMAINS

Each of the Imperium's seven domains has its own order of knighthood, which is commanded by the domain's archduke. These orders are prestigious, although not at the same level as those controlled by the Emperor. On the other hand, in the frontier regions of the Imperium they are much sought after by ambitious commoners hoping to win high social standing.



### *Ancient and Preeminent Order of Sylea*

The original Order of Sylea predates the foundation of the Third Imperium, and its members consider it superior to all other orders, but also consider it beneath their dignity to mention the point (aside from an occasional emphasis of the first and third words in the order's name). As an additional distinction, members of the order are entitled to be addressed as *Sieur* instead of Sir.

Ordinary members of the order are Companions of the Ancient and Preeminent Order of Sylea (C.A.S.). Above these are the Knights of the Ancient and Preeminent Order of Sylea (K.A.S.). The current Knight Commander of the Ancient and Preeminent Order of Sylea (K.C.A.S.) is Emperor Strephon, in his position as Archduke of Sylea.

The badge of the order is three green quintefoils on a field of white – the symbol of the Zhunastu family.

The headquarters of the order are located on Capital, in the building formerly occupied by the Sylean Grand Senate (p. 9). It contains the official library of the order, a large meeting hall (the former Grand Senate Chamber), and

quarters for visiting members. It also houses the Museum of the Sylean Federation, including the surviving Federation Archives.

### *Ancient Order of Vland*

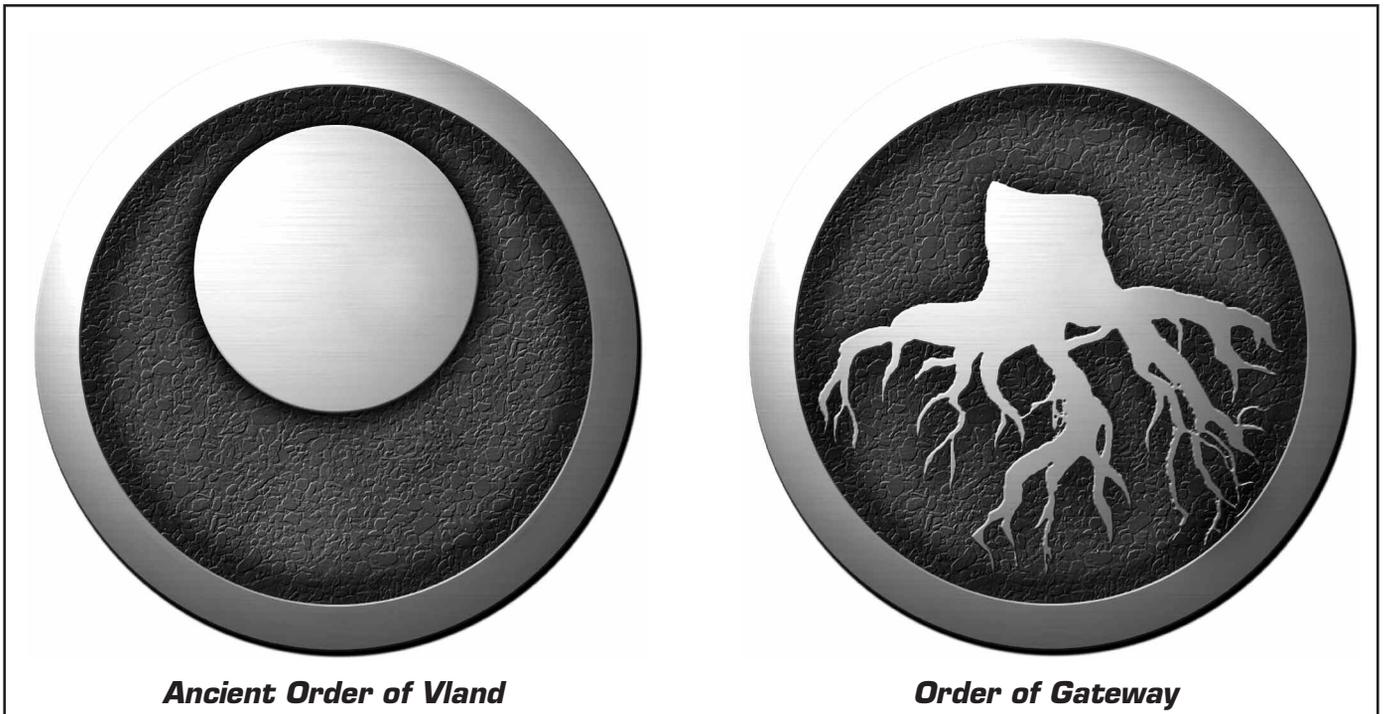
The Order of Vland also predates the foundation of the Third Imperium. The members of the Order also consider themselves to be lower in prestige than the distinction of the order deserves, and insist that its title be translated into Galanglic as the "Ancient Order of Vland." Ordinary members of the order are *Kiduunuuzii Balandin* (K.B.) or Knights of the Order of Vland. The only other rank is the *Apkallu Kiduunuuzii Balandin* (A.K.B.) or Grand Knight of the Order of Vland. The current *Apkallu Kiduunuuzii Balandin* is Archduke Ishuggi Tauribi of Vland.

The badge of the order is the chaplet of the Vilani, in red against a field of black – the only formal usage of this emblem allowed in the Third Imperium.

The headquarters of the order are located on Vland, in what was once one of the smaller palaces of the *Ishimkarun* (the Vilani Shadow Emperor). The order maintains a small headquarters on Capital, with administrative offices and quarters for transient members.

### *Order of Gateway*

The Order of Gateway is among the smallest of the major orders, because Gateway is the smallest of the domains, but circumstances have made it third in seniority among the domain orders. An ordinary member is known as a Companion of the Order of Gateway (C.G.). Senior members receive the title Knight of the Order of Gateway (K.G.); there are fewer than a dozen of these. The current Knight Commander of the Order of Gateway (K.C.G.) is Archduke Tranian of Gateway.



***Ancient Order of Vland***

***Order of Gateway***



The badge of the order is a white tree stump on a background of red. This is not the coat of arms of the current archduke, but a badge traditionally associated with the order since its earliest days, for reasons unknown.

The headquarters of the order are located on Annapabar (1936 Ley), the capital of the domain of Gateway, and contains the grand hall of the order. A secondary headquarters is located on Capital, in a high-rise arcology owned and occupied by Archduke Tranian.

## *Order of Ilelish*

Ordinary members of this order receive the title Companion of the Order of Ilelish (C.I.). More distinguished members receive the title Knight of the Order of Ilelish (K.I.). The present Knight Commander of the Order of Ilelish (K.C.I.) is Archduchess Isis Arepo Ilethian, who inherited the title in 1116 upon the death of her father.

The badge of the Order of Ilelish is a black trefoil on a field of white, representing the time when Ilelish was third in precedence among the domains. The order was demoted in 436, after the defeat of the Ilelish revolt.

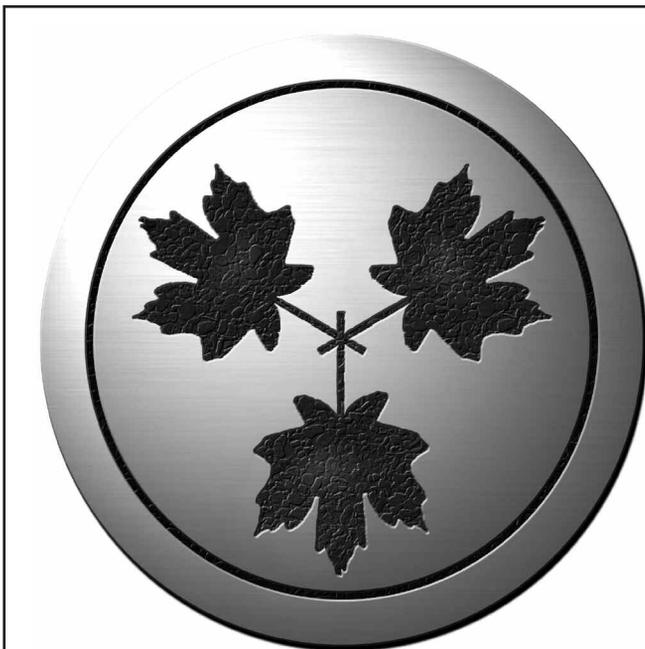
The headquarters of the order are on Dlan (capital of the domain), and contain the grand hall of the order, as well as quarters for transient members. Offices are maintained on Capital.

## *Royal Order of Antares*

The primary chivalric organization of the Domain of Antares is the Royal Order of Antares, which claims descent from a powerful monarchic “pocket empire” of the Long Night. The lowest rank in the order is Companion of the Royal Order of Antares (C.R.A.). Senior members receive the title Knight of the Royal Order of Antares (K.R.A.). The current Grand Commander of the Royal Order of Antares (G.C.R.A.) is Archduke Brzk of Antares, a Vargr, who also heads the Order of Gvadakoung (p. 81).

The badge of the order is the three peaks of Gaakish in black against a field of green, an emblem traditionally associated with the Domain of Antares.

The headquarters of the order are on Antares itself, capital of the domain. They contain the grand hall of the order, the Museum of the Domain of Antares, and a library. No provision is made for visiting members.



***Order of Ilelish***



***Royal Order of Antares***

## *Order of Sol*

The Order of Sol was formerly the Order of Terra, one of the most prestigious orders in the early years of the Imperium. By the time of the Solomani Rim War, no knighthoods had been issued in the Order of Terra in over a century, and the order was effectively extinct. The Emperor Gavin changed the order's name in 1002, and the order's seniority was downgraded at the same time. Today the order is still recovering its former numbers and prominence.

Rank and file members of the order receive the title Companion of the Order of Sol (C.S.). More distinguished members receive the title Knight of the Order of Sol (K.S.). The present Knight Commander of the Order of Sol (K.C.S.) is Archduke Adair of Sol.

The badge of the order is the golden disc of Sol against a field of blue. The symbol originally consisted of an emblem that was very similar to the sunburst of the Third Imperium, and was changed to a simple yellow disc without rays in 1002.

The old headquarters of the order are on Exeter (2729 Diaspora), and contain the grand hall of the order. A smaller building on Muan Gwi, the new capital of the domain, serves as the current administrative headquarters of the order. Formal ceremonies are still held on Exeter, although the distance between there and the domain's current capital is an inconvenience.

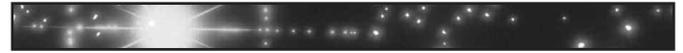
## *Order of Deneb*

Established shortly after the appointment of Norris as Archduke of Deneb, this order is the most junior of the major orders of knighthood. Norris issued the first list of members on 001-1118, inducting 36 members (including all six archdukes and the major nobles of his domain). An ordinary member receives the title Companion of the Order of Deneb (C.D.), with the title Knight of the Order of Deneb (K.D.) granted to

more senior members. Archduke Norris of Deneb is the current Grand Commander of the Order of Deneb (G.C.D.).

The badge of the order is a bridled steed in white (a badge taken from the personal arms of the archduke) rampant against a field of blue.

The order is too new to have a headquarters building of its own. It currently has its headquarters in the administrative building used by Archduke Norris in Wavecrest City on Mora, the capital of the domain of Deneb. Norris has yet to announce where the permanent headquarters of the order will be built.

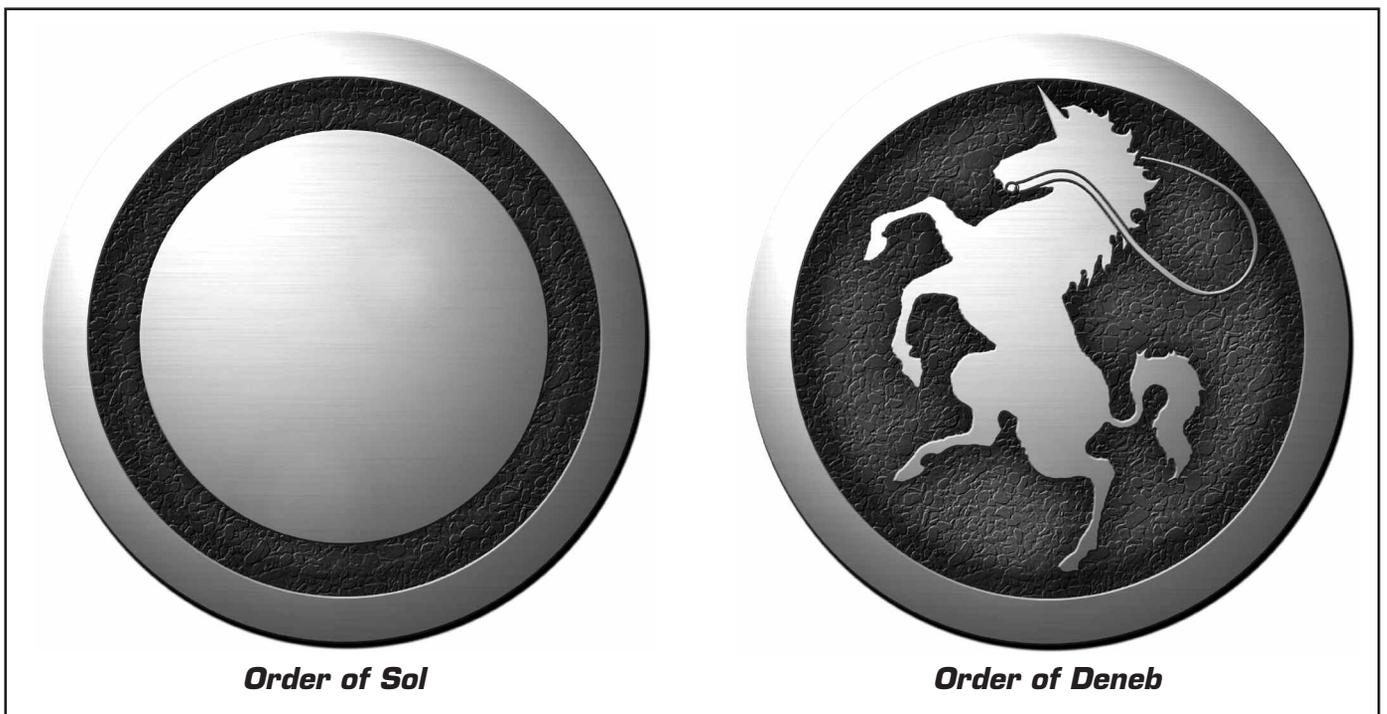


## **UNIFORMS AND EMBLEMS**

Each order has its own official colors and badge. Officers of each order have specific uniforms for wear during official ceremonies; these are highly ornate, and vary from order to order. Ordinary members are only required to wear sashes with the order's colors over formal civilian clothing or a military uniform. These are worn from the left shoulder across the torso down to the right hip, with the badge of the order embroidered where the sash passes over the heart. The bottom of the sash terminates in a highly ornate knot, the design of which is unique to each order.

When not attending ceremonies, members often wear small, tasteful jewelry patterned after the badge of the order. The uniform regulations of the Imperial military permit knights to wear the emblems of their order with their dress uniforms, but restrict their size and location.

Nobles with multiple knighthoods usually wear all of the associated badges on formal occasions, except when attending an official function of the order (when it is considered bad taste to wear the badges of other orders).



# IMPERIAL PROTOCOL

Almost without exception, the Imperial aristocracy follows a well-known set of rules governing the use of personal names, family names, titles, introductions, and other matters of protocol. With only rare exceptions, every Imperial noble understands and conforms to these rules.

## NAMES

*I hate the nickname I acquired in school. My father said that it was a sign that the other students had noticed me, which he said was better than being totally ignored, but I hated it all the same.*

*Thirty years down the line, I still have to grit my teeth when some old classmate introduces me to his spouse, seneschal, or business partner as “Gigi.” It dredges up years of frustration, and hundreds of angry protestations. “My name is Giigui, you ignorant buffoon!” I long to shout, but I continue the conversation as if I don’t notice. It is ten times worse if they know how much it bothers you.*

– Giigui Bascomb Levenson,  
Countess of Shagipka

The name a noble receives can vary slightly depending on local customs or family practices, but most Imperial nobles follow the same naming conventions.

Nobles receive a personal name, or “first” name, followed by two family names, one from each parent. Norris Aella Aledon indicates a child of a member of the Aella family and a member of the Aledon family, who has been given the personal name “Norris.”

The family name, which comes last, is considered the primary family name; this is the family name handed on to the noble’s children. If the mother’s family name carries more prestige or is associated with a higher noble title, it is usually placed last in order to preserve the name. Otherwise, the father’s family name is usually placed last. Where a prefix is used to indicate noble status (such as “hault-” or “von”) it is always applied to the last family name (for example, “Eneri Morrison hault-Gemana”).

When two nobles marry, both partners usually keep their own family names. Sometimes one partner chooses to take the other’s family name in place of his or her own; this is usually the wife, unless she has the more prestigious family name.

When noble children are named, a hyphenated construction is sometimes used to preserve one of the family names. For example, if Isaac Fremen Hodden were to marry Lydia Massengale Riisha, and the Massengale name was considered worth retaining, then Isaac and Lydia might choose to name their first child Alexei Massengale-Riisha Hodden rather than Alexei Riisha Hodden. There is a common prejudice against this sort of thing, as it can get cumbersome within a few generations.

The system is not always this simple. Sometimes a person will receive several personal names, such as Grand Princess Ciencia Iphegenia Guuilbataashullibaa Alkhalikoi (commonly known as “Ciencia Iphegenia”). Families may choose to emphasize the female line of descent rather than

the male. On some worlds, the family names come *first* instead of last. On others a *patronymic* or *matronymic* (a name taken from the father’s or mother’s given name) is assigned instead of a family name (for example, Vaseli Pavelovich Zhukov is the son of Pavel Alexeivich Zhukov, whose father was Alexei, and so on).

Often, nobles choose not to use their full names, preferring to use shortened versions for everyday social intercourse. This is especially true of Vilani nobles, whose names tend to be lengthy, and Aslan, whose full, legal names are a complete listing of their ancestry.



## FORMS OF ADDRESS

Each title within the Imperial system has its own associated forms of address. These govern how a title-holder should be addressed in situations of various degrees of formality. To address a noble inappropriately is a serious social error.

### *Knights*

A knight is permitted to use the title *Sir* in front of his given name; some female knights prefer *Dame*, but this is an archaic usage. A few of the orders use different titles and honorifics; these exceptions are noted in those orders’ descriptions. Each knight may use the initials of his rank within his particular order as a suffix. For example, a *Frater* (“brother”) of the Order of the Arrow adds “F.A.” to his name, while a Companion of the Honorable Order of the Emperor’s Guard adds “C.E.G.” The specific abbreviations vary according to the individual order of knighthood (pp. 21-25).

In the case of multiple knighthoods, the prefix “Sir” is used once, and the abbreviations of the various orders are

appended after the name. Peers who are also knights add “Sir” after their title in the peerage, but before their given names (for example, “Baron Sir Arthur hault-Devro of Monomon, C.E.G.”). Similarly, knights who have professional titles add “Sir” after the title and before the given name (for example, “Professor Sir Andrew Forrestal, C.S.”). Note that the abbreviations are *never* used in formal introductions; when introducing a knight in a formal situation, the formula used is “The Honorable Sir Harlin Matins Eldridge, *Frater* of the Order of the Arrow.”

In less formal situations, knights are addressed using the title “Sir” and their given name (Sir Arthur, Sir Ganni, and so on). Relatives and close friends may omit the “Sir” in all but the most formal situations. Unlike members of the peerage, the children and spouses of knights have no courtesy titles (p. 14).

### Baronets

Baronets are addressed by using the title as a prefix to their name. Like a female knight, a female baronet may use the title *Dame*, but most simply use *Baronet*. Baronets are associated with their homeworld, their place of residence, or some other place that is of personal significance (“Baronet Gloria Fiorella of Hanu”). Baronets who are also knights add “Sir” immediately before their given name (“Baronet Sir Edred Aldin of Gani”). Baronets, like knights, are introduced as “The Honorable Baronet Gloria Fiorella of Hanu,” adding the appropriate titles if the baronet is also a knight (p. 28).

### Barons

Barons are referred to using several different styles. The title *Baron* or *Baroness* is always used, and a baronial family may also use prefixes to its surname (such as von, van, hault-, hault-, or others, depending upon local custom). For example, two Imperial barons might be called “Baroness Cecelia Gami hault-Devereaux” and “Baron Omar van Dyke.”

In informal situations, a baron is often addressed with his title and only one name, normally the given name (“Baroness Cecelia” or “Baron Omar”). In some formal situations, the title can be used with the family name (“Baroness hault-Devereaux” or “Baron van Dyke”), but this is not usual practice.

When a barony comes with a fief, the title is usually associated with the fief’s name (for example, the “Baron of Solvenos”). Alternatively, if only one barony with an associated fief exists on a given world, it may be referred to by the name of that world (“Norris, Baron of Yori”).

When a barony is granted without a fief, the title can be associated with the baron’s homeworld, his place of residence, or some other place of personal significance. For example, Baron Wilson Petrov of Credo is an honor noble without a fief; when he received his letter patent, his title was associated with his home city on Regina. Baronial titles without fiefs are sometimes simply associated with the family name of the noble; for example, Wilson Petrov might have been ennobled as “Baron Petrov.” In this case, there is no “of” in the official title, since there is no place to be associated with.

With barons and higher nobles, the personal name is sometimes omitted, and the name of the place associated with the title is used instead. Hence Norris might be referred to simply as “Baron Yori,” while Wilson Petrov might be called “Baron Credo.”

Barons are introduced as “His Lordship” and referred to subsequently as “your lordship” or “Lord.” For example, the Baron of Yori would be introduced as “His Lordship, Baron Sir Norris Aella Aledon, Knight Commander of the Order of Deneb, of Yori,” and subsequently addressed as “Your Lordship,” “Lord Norris,” or “Lord Yori.”

### Marquises

A marquis is referred to by his title, followed by his given name or by the name of the name of the world with which the marquissate is associated (as in the “Marquis of Aramis”). The feminine forms of the title are *Marquesa* or *Marchioness*. The rare marquis with no associated fief has a title associated with the name of his homeworld, his place of residence, or a place of personal significance. A marquis (or a viscount, count, or duke) is otherwise addressed and introduced in a manner similar to that of a baron, with the obvious substitutions. He is also addressed as “Lord” or “Your Lordship.”

### Viscounts

A viscount is referred to by his title, followed by his given name or by the name of one of the worlds within his demesne – (normally the most important world, which is usually, but not always, the highest in population). The feminine form of the title is *Viscountess*.

### Counts

A count is referred to by his title, followed by his given name or by the name of one of the worlds within the county – again, normally the most important world. (normally the most important world, which is usually, but not always the highest in population). The feminine form of the title is *Countess*.

### Dukes

A duke is referred to by his title, followed by his given name or by the name of the subsector with which his duchy is associated. The feminine form of the title is *Duchess*. Sector dukes are addressed by referring to their *subsector*, not to the sector they govern. For example, Duchess Delphine is still addressed as simply the “Duchess of Mora” even though she is also the sector duchess of the Spinward Marches.

### Archdukes

An archduke is referred to by his title, followed by his given name or by the name of the domain which he rules. An archduke is otherwise addressed and introduced in a similar way to a baron, with the obvious substitutions. He is also addressed as “Lord,” but the phrase “His Grace” is used in introductions and “Your Grace” in subsequent formal address. This raises the archdukes above the rest of the peerage, and emphasizes their superior position and powers.

## Prince

A prince is addressed by using the title “prince” and the full name (“Prince Varian Alkhalikoi”) or the title and the given name (“Prince Lucan”). Princes are introduced as “Highness” (“His Highness Prince Lucan Alkhalikoi,” “Good afternoon, your Highness,” and so on). In the case of members of the Imperial family, lesser titles such as knight are normally considered unimportant in all but the most formal of situations.

## Grand Prince

A grand prince is formally addressed using the title and the name, in a similar fashion to ordinary princes. However, the grand prince is “His Majesty” in introductions, and is addressed as “Your Majesty” (“Her Majesty Grand Princess Ciencia Iphegenia Guuilbataashullibaa Alkhalikoi,” “Would your Majesty care to follow me?”).

## Imperial Consort

Strephon’s wife, Iolanthe, is called “Empress Iolanthe” and introduced as “Her Majesty.” This is done to indicate her position as Imperial spouse and mother to the heir. Iolanthe has no formal power. A male consort would be introduced as “His Majesty, Prince . . .”

## Emperor

Emperors normally use the given name only (Emperor Strephon, Empress Arbellatra) in all but the most formal situations. The Emperor is introduced as “Imperial Majesty” and subsequently addressed as “Your Imperial Majesty.”

## MULTIPLE TITLES

Many nobles, even members of the Imperial family, hold more than one title – even a lowly baron is often also a knight of his domain’s order. High nobles usually have at

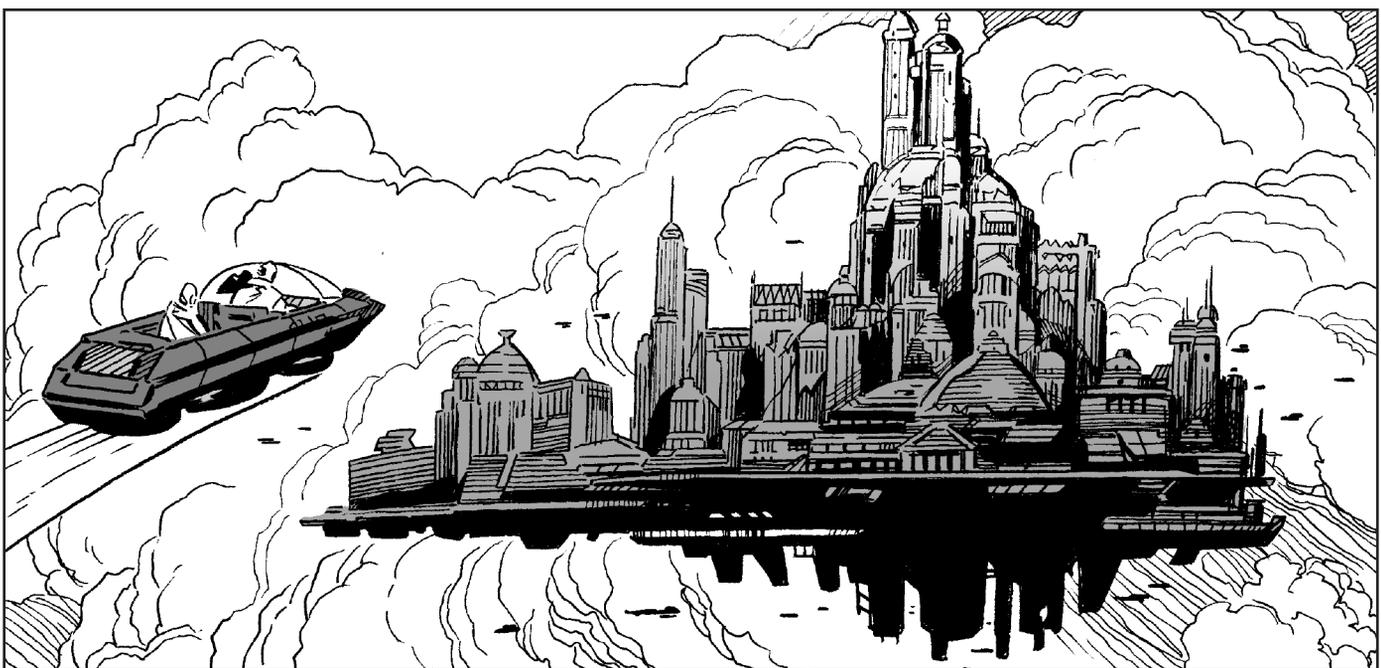
least one lesser title. Older families often acquire multiple titles due to intermarriage. Ambitious individuals sometimes accumulate titles.

If an Imperial noble holds multiple hereditary titles, he can pass them along to his primary heir as a set or divide them among his heirs. He can also abdicate some titles while he still lives, to give his heir the chance to gather experience. So long as the law of inheritance for each specific title is not violated, the Imperium usually permits nobles to apportion titles in any desired fashion. The major exception is that the Imperium prefers that no one person hold more than one high noble title. If such a situation occurs in one generation of a family, the Emperor may insist that the high noble titles be divided among multiple heirs in the next generation.

For an example of multiple noble titles, consider the case of the Prince of Wales on old Terra. The eldest son of the Sovereign of the United Kingdom automatically inherited a number of titles at birth: the Duke of Cornwall in the English peerage, and the Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, and Baron of Renfrew in the Scottish peerage. The titles of Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester were awarded at his parent’s behest. Other offspring acquired other titles (Princess Royal, etc.).

It is possible for a noble to hold titles that carry contradictory duties or privileges. These are worked out by a judicious application of custom, compromise, and common sense. For example, *Emperor Strephon* is prohibited from entering the Moot Spire, even if the Moot is not in session, without first requesting permission from the President of the Moot. On the other hand, as Archduke of Sylea or Marquis of Usdiki, *Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi* can attend meetings of the Moot uninvited, and cannot be excluded.

Strephon himself has never attended a meeting of the Moot in this fashion, but his father Paulo had. On such occasions, he was announced as “His Grace Sir Paulo Jaellemo Alkhalikoi, Archduke of Sylea, Knight Commander of the



Ancient and Preeminent Order of Sylea” upon entering the Moot Spire. While there, he received only the honors due an Archduke, and did not speak as Emperor.

### *Forms of Address for Multiple Titles*

Nobles holding several ranks are normally referred to using the highest rank, unless some reason dictates use of another rank. Norris Aella Aledon is simultaneously Archduke of Deneb, Duke of Regina, Count Aledon, Marquis of Regina, and Baron of Yori, in addition to holding knight-hoods from several orders. In formal pronouncements, all titles are used, in descending order (“His Grace Archduke Sir Norris Aella Aledon of Deneb, Count Aledon, Duke and Marquis of Regina, Baron of Yori, Knight of the Order of the Starship and Crown, Knight Commander of the Order of the Emperor’s Guard, Grand Commander of the Order of Deneb”). In less formal introductions, the title of archduke takes precedence and it is used alone.

## **COURTESY TITLES**

An Imperial citizen who holds only a knighthood confers no unusual social status on his family members. Those who hold higher titles *do* confer such status, which is reflected in the use of courtesy titles.

In general, the spouses, and children, and designated heirs of nobles at the ranks of baronet and above are allowed to use courtesy titles if they have no title of their own. A courtesy title does not have any legal or formal standing – the holders are not allowed to govern, command, or vote in the Moot. A courtesy title is purely a social convention, giving social and political prestige to a noble’s family members who have no other position. People who are permitted to use courtesy titles rarely use them if they have their own noble rank, especially if such rank actually grants greater precedence than the courtesy title.

### *Spouses*

The spouse of a noble has precedence equal to that of the noble in all social contexts. They are permitted to use the formal title of “Gentleman” or “Lady” with their own name. They may also be addressed as “Lord” or “Lady,” followed by the name associated with the title of the ennobled spouse (except for the spouse of the Emperor or Empress, see p. 90). Spouses derive no governmental or administrative power from their courtesy titles, and lose them if they divorce the ennobled spouse, although they retain them if their spouse dies and they are the other parent of the heir.

For example, suppose that Baroness Arielle Sinclair of Igashir marries an ordinary citizen named William Haldane. Her husband has the courtesy title of Gentleman, and would be introduced as “The Honorable Gentleman William Haldane.” He could also be addressed as “Lord Igashir” in informal conversation. He would retain this courtesy title after Baroness Arielle’s death, if he was the father of the baroness’ heir.

As another example, the wife of Craig Anton Horvath, Duke of Warinir, is allowed to call herself Lady Warinir, and

is formally introduced as “The Honorable Lady Warinir.” She will continue to use this title after her daughter Fielle inherits the duchy.

### *Children and Heirs*

The designated heirchild or designated heir of a noble is allowed to use the title just below his parent’s in social situations. This title is always associated with the child or heir’s given name, not with the fief or world associated with the noble’s title. For example, the designated heir of the Archduke of Deneb (Seldrian Aledon) often uses the courtesy title of Duchess with her given name: (“Duchess Seldrian”). She would never be addressed as the “Duchess of Deneb,” especially since there may well be someone who holds the title of Duke of Deneb in his own right.

Children and heirs are addressed as if they actually held the courtesy title, but have no other powers or privileges connected with the title. The child or heir of a baron uses baronet rather than knight as a courtesy title. The child or heir of a baronet has the courtesy title of gentleman (or lady). The heirs of barons and baronets are the exception to this general rule, and are only permitted to use “Lord” or “Lady” in front of their family name. The children of knights do not use courtesy titles, as knighthoods are not hereditary.

For example, Archduke Norris also holds the title of Baron of Yori. When using a courtesy title derived from the barony, his heir Seldrian Aledon would simply call herself “Dame Seldrian” or “Baronet Lady Aledon Seldrian.”

As another example, the youngest daughter of Craig Anton Horvath, Duke of Warinir, is permitted to call herself “Countess Judith.” She may not be addressed as “Lady Warinir” since that title is reserved for her mother, the duke’s wife.

### *Other Children*

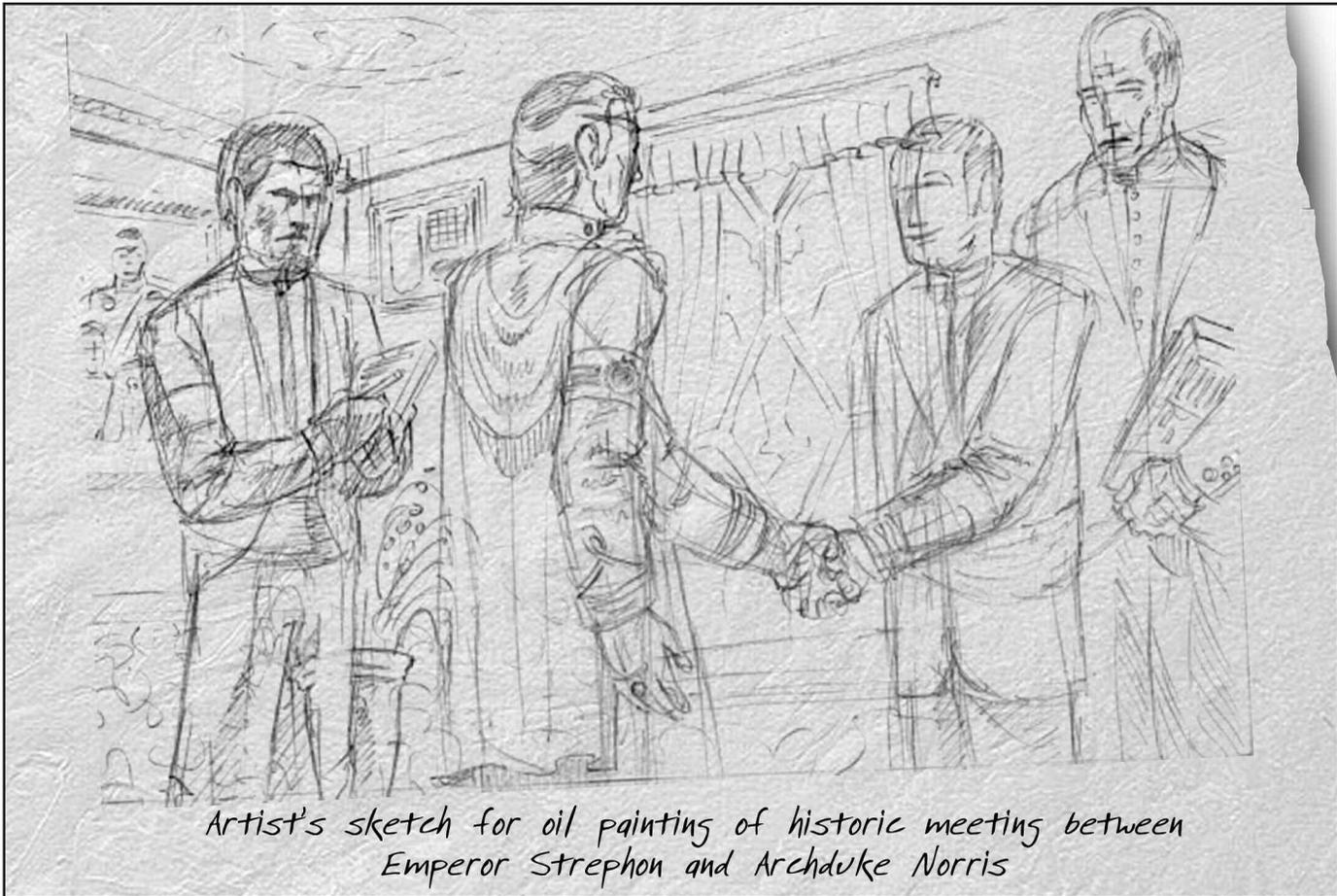
Other children of a noble are allowed to use “Lord” or “Lady” in front of their family name. Again, the nonheirs of barons and baronets are the exceptions, and use “The Honorable” in front of their family name.

For example, the youngest daughter of Craig Anton Horvath, Duke of Warinir, can call herself Lady Judith Lannes Horvath but cannot use “Lady Warinir,” as that is the title used by her mother.

### *Diplomatic Courtesy*

Another application of courtesy titles is in the area of interstellar diplomacy. Imperial custom is to provide courtesy titles for foreign diplomats while they are in the Third Imperium. This is primarily for purposes of protocol at formal ceremonies – seating, introductions, and so on. Ambassadors are given duke’s honors, and are sometimes introduced as the duke of their polity’s capital world. Lesser diplomats are given honors of count, marquis, or baron as appropriate.

Of course, if the diplomat actually possesses a title in his homeland, that title will be used in preference; it is usually translated into the closest Galanglic equivalent.



Artist's sketch for oil painting of historic meeting between Emperor Strephon and Archduke Norris

## PRECEDENCE

The Imperium practices a “last shall be first” method of according precedence in lists of nobles, and during ceremonies and other formal and informal events.

In all but the most informal nobles’ list, the lowest ranking comes first in the list, and the highest ranking comes last. Barons are superior to knights, for example, but all barons are listed after all knights. A knight of a more “senior” order (see *Orders of Knighthood*, pp. 21-25) is superior and listed later. Two nobles who are otherwise of the same rank are ordered according to the length of time they have held their highest titles; the older title is higher in rank, and is thus listed later than the younger. This order of precedence applies to *persons*, not to titles held by the same person. When multiple titles held by a single individual are listed, the highest titles are always given first (p. 29).

At a formal banquet or other occasion, the lowest ranking nobles are expected to enter first; higher ranks enter later, are seated later, and are served food later. Nobles with higher rank are expected to *leave* the occasion first. The Emperor is the last to enter any ballroom, he is always the last to receive food at a formal dinner, and the festivities are not over until some time after he leaves. When the Emperor receives visitors in formal audience, they are presented to him in ascending order of importance, but lower-ranking visitors are generally not excused until their superiors have departed (p. 52).

This custom dates back to at least the Sylean Federation, which practiced an almost identical system for

nongovernmental ceremonies. This system is designed to ensure that lower-rank nobles must wait for those of higher rank, and not the other way around. In this respect, the custom resembles the order of precedence established under some military systems, in which senior officers are “last in, first out” at any meeting or social occasion. This provides some insight into the custom’s origins.

## ALTERNATIVE TITLES

Many worlds use different languages for the various titles of the Imperial peerage. For example, a world of primarily Germanic ancestry may choose to use the title *markgraf* instead of marquis. GMs who wish to add individual flavor to their campaigns may choose to make use of these alternatives for individual nobles. (For more exotic local titles, which are not simple translations, see p. 84.)

**Duke/Duchess:** *Male* – Duc, Herzog, Duca, Gertsog, Duque, Dux. *Female* – Duchesse, Herzogin, Duchessa, Gertsogynya, Duquesa, Ducissa.

**Count:** *Male* – Comte, Graf, Conte, Conde, Comes. *Female* – Comtesse, Gräfin, Contessa, Grafinya, Condesa, Comitissa.

**Marquis/Marquissa:** *Male* – Marquess, Markgraf, Marchese, Marquès. *Female* – Marchioness, Markgräfin, Marchesa, Marquesa.

**Baron/Baroness:** *Male* – Barone, Barón, Baro. *Female* – Barone, Baronessa, Baronesa, Baronissa.

**Knight:** *Male* – Chevalier, Ritter, Reiter. *Female* – Chevaleuse.

# The Noble Life

*I had certain expectations about school, largely derived from my sister's collection of holovid romances, which I had surreptitiously borrowed . . . at no small risk, as our parents considered them harmful to our developing psyches. I expected to be sent off to some remote estate, where I would be hazed by the upperclassmen and one especially malevolent instructor. Eventually I would demonstrate my natural spunk and resilience, and would find a small circle of chums to share the drudgery of the scholastic life. Ultimately, of course, after several years of fascinating adventures I would meet my soul mate, who would turn out to be heir to a dukedom attending school incognito, and we would spend the rest of our lives together in connubial bliss.*

*Reality was less romantic. The campus of the boarding school to which I went was in an arcology in the center of a large urban area, rather than a remote rural locale. The upperclassmen were too involved in mistreating each other to notice my natural spunk and resistance, and the instructors were too busy trying to teach me to think. I did meet a small circle of companions, but we found a positive dearth of mysteries to solve; evidently, few interstellar criminal networks or espionage organizations operate out of private schools, and there had not been a felony on campus in living memory.*

*I did meet my soul mate at school, although neither of us realized it at the time. We would not meet again for nearly two decades, and the dukedom turned out to be a minor county.*

*So much for holovid romances.*

– Giigui Bascomb Levenson,  
Countess of Shagipka



The popular image of the noble lifestyle is one of indolence and luxury. In fact, very few noble families exist in real poverty, but many are less well off than the general public imagines.

If there is any consistency within the noble lifestyle, it rests on the fact that the aristocracy participates in the overall starfaring culture of the Imperium. Indeed, it may be said that the aristocracy *defines* that culture through its traditions. The aristocracy is one of the institutions that binds the Imperium together – it maintains a consistent set of cultural values at the highest level, and places control in the hands of citizens deemed likely to be reliable and loyal. It is believed that without the nobility, the Imperium would rapidly disintegrate into smaller polities, constantly at war with one another.

## CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

The consistent nature of Imperial aristocratic culture is maintained by a deliberate effort of education. From the earliest age, noble children are inculcated with cultural values that stress integrity, general loyalty to the Imperium, personal loyalty to the Emperor, and a deep sense of duty toward subordinates. All noble children receive this training, whether or not they are the direct heirs – one never knows whether the heir apparent to a title will die prematurely or prove unsuitable.

Aside from this indoctrination, children of the nobility have little in common. Child-rearing practices vary with culture, species, and the individual family. In most cultures some form of education is mandatory, although the form that education takes may not qualify an individual to enter a prestigious college.

## SCHOOLS

Most noble families are able to afford private schools or tutors for their children. In particular, high noble families usually make use of private tutors in the early years of the educational process. High nobles often spend much of their time traveling, and tutors enable the family to bring school along wherever they may go. Once the high noble's children are older, they are often sent to a private school that specializes in instruction for children of the aristocracy. Dozens of such schools exist – at least one can usually be found at each sector and domain capital in the Imperium.

Schooling normally begins when the child is between 3 and 6 years of age. The first few years concentrate on basic literacy and mathematics. Languages are particularly important; noble children always learn Galanglic along with their native language, and in some regions of the Imperium they learn Vilani or some other widespread *lingua franca*. Socialization and behavior are also important, but the teaching of these subjects is not limited to school – they permeate the young noble's life. Every child of the aristocracy receives extensive training in public speaking and deportment, acquiring the noble “airs and graces” that serve to set them apart from the common folk of the Imperium.

From ages 8 to 12, the curriculum widens to include the social and physical sciences, sports, and whatever fine arts the student expresses an interest in or shows talent for. At this time, the primary emphasis is teaching the student how to reason, how to learn, and how to behave in social situations.

At this stage, students with particular talents for certain subjects are singled out for special attention. Those with learning difficulties or other special needs are identified as early as possible, and also given special attention.

The final years of preparatory education (ages 12 to 16) focus on specific subjects, and are largely shaped by the student's interests and talents as a means for preparing the student for later life. Those who plan to attend a university

### ***The Karbiili School***

The Karbiili School is a private institution on Capital specializing in training the children of high nobility. Countess Gani Karbiili, former tutor to the Empress Antiamo, founded the school in 682. Because she had the patronage of the Imperial family and hired educators from both Vilani and Solomani backgrounds, the Karbiili School attracted a prestigious clientele. It soon became the preferred school for any noble family that was close enough to Capital and could afford the institution's fees.

The fundamental rules laid down by the Countess remain in force today. Students must meet certain minimum intellectual standards to enter, but there is no minimum age. Classes are small, with one teacher for every eight students. Independent study is common for older students, but all students must pass annual examinations. In addition to intellectual pursuits, the school shapes the student for service to the Imperium, teaching integrity, honor, and a sense of obligation to the Imperium and its citizens. Students must adhere to a strict code of behavior, and major violations result in expulsion.

Students live in dormitories with private sleeping quarters. These are divided into "houses" of 40 or 50 students, who share a common lounge under the supervision of a junior faculty member called a *gilan* (Vilani: "older sibling of the same gender"). Each house occupies a floor of the dormitory tower, which has a dining hall, gymnasium, and assembly hall where students and faculty begin each day. Classes are held in various buildings across the campus, which contain lecture halls, small rooms for seminars, carrels for independent study, and laboratories for chemistry, botany, zoology, physics, and other subjects. Private facilities can be arranged, but all studies are monitored. Studies which present physical dangers are supervised – young chemistry students in particular are prone to potentially deadly experimentation.

The campus is located near the Imperial Palace, adjacent to the Imperial Botanical Park and the Library of the University of Sylea. The view from the observation deck of the Antiamo Library tower is especially majestic, and has inspired students to write hundreds of poems, three symphonies, and one opera. Because of its location and prestige, many students find positions as pages in their last few years at the School (p. 52).

Tuition and fees at the Karbiili School are extremely high compared to other schools, but the board can waive them in cases of extreme need.

begin preparatory work, often adjusting the curriculum to fit the entrance exams for a particular school.

After finishing preparatory school, the student sometimes takes a break of two to four years before entering an institution of higher education. This permits the student to mature and prepare for life away from the parental household, and also allows for travel time to the (often distant) university campus. This is the typical time for a young noble to undertake a Grand Tour (p. 34).

## **UNIVERSITIES**

Almost every world with a substantial population has a university, and the more populous worlds have hundreds. A common practice on many worlds is to amalgamate the various campuses into a single, worldwide "University of Wherever." Some schools resist this trend, choosing to retain their independence at least in name.

Most noble children attend a university – some attend several. Most take an academic degree, although it may not be in anything useful; a large enough donation to the building fund will persuade some schools to grant a degree in basket weaving. Children of the nobility attend the same universities as the rest of the populace, although most noble families can afford to send their offspring to expensive and prestigious schools, where they can rub elbows with other youth from wealthy and powerful families.

### ***Local Universities***

Entrance requirements for universities vary, but the vast majority will admit new students only at certain times of the year, and almost all have some form of entrance examination. Many schools limit admissions to students from a given locality, but most will take any sophont that can afford the fees and otherwise qualifies.

Universities that draw from across a sector or domain are especially preferred because of the cosmopolitan nature of their student bodies. Such universities often have several campuses throughout their home sector or domain. Interstellar travel times mean that students in these schools do not usually return home between sessions, which last all year. Students at large universities customarily receive a short break between sessions, normally around Holiday.

A number of accreditation bodies exist throughout the Imperium. These organizations are privately funded; they exist to evaluate how well the major universities turn out students with a minimum level of competence in their fields of study. Each university sets its own admission standards, although these are fairly standard throughout the Imperium for the larger, more prestigious schools.

Young nobles study a wide variety of disciplines. Heirs to titles that carry governmental responsibility often study administration, law, or political science in addition to history, comparative sophontology, or sociology. Those with military ambitions usually attend one of the service academies. Some specialize in business or economics, and enter the corporate world. A few nobles even take an interest in the physical sciences.

A significant number of nobles receive training in the creative arts, such as painting, sculpting, literature, musical composition and performance, and so on. Like many societies, the high Imperial culture emphasizes artistic pursuits for those of high social standing; it is considered odd for a noble to not have at least a nodding acquaintance with one or more fine arts.

A few noble families send their children to technical schools. Many cultures require that their nobles be able to earn a living with their hands, even though they will never actually practice it as anything more than a hobby – much as the sultans of the Ottoman Empire on old Terra were required to learn a trade such as jewelry-making or cabinetry.

Depending on the course of study and the degree sought, students attend a university for anywhere from two years (for simple baccalaureate degrees) to eight years or more (for doctorates and advanced subjects). Specific courses of study and classes vary greatly, and are tailored to the individual student's needs and abilities. Some individuals do better in a classroom or lecture hall setting; others do better in smaller seminars or in independent study.

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*The taste for the Way of literature, arms, archery, and horsemanship is to be the chief object of cultivation.*

– *Laws Governing Military Households (Buke Shohatto), 1635 A.D.*

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### *Imperial Universities*

A university with a charter granted by the Emperor is an Imperial Charter University, generally just referred to as an “Imperial university.” Imperial universities are required to meet or exceed certain educational standards, which are laid down by a special accreditation committee. Only a school with an Imperial charter is permitted to incorporate the word “Imperial” into its name, although not all do so. For example, the University of Sylea on Capital is an Imperial Charter University, even though it does not specifically call itself such. Likewise, merely because a school has an Imperial charter does not necessarily make it superior to others. Phoenix Imperial University on Terra (a charter university, as the name shows) is less prestigious than the University of Terra, even though the latter does not hold an Imperial charter.

Traditionally, the Emperor maintains his own accreditation committee for Imperial universities. This committee sets educational standards for Imperial universities, and requires that each be administered by a governing board made up of prominent citizens – usually one or more Imperial nobles and a number of local nobles from the world where the university is located, in addition to other local notables. Otherwise universities are allowed to organize and administer themselves as they wish.

## THE SERVICE ACADEMIES

Young nobles seeking careers as military officers often attend the various military academies. On some worlds there is a slight stigma attached to military service, but in general at least a few years of service is an accepted part of a noble's life. It is rare for anyone who has ambitions for a high office in the Imperium not to have at least some military service, although it is rare for career military officers to move very high in government.

The curricula at the various academies are standardized throughout the Imperium, and concentrate on making the cadets proper officers. Cadets are given a solid grounding in the social and physical sciences, along with courses in military science, leadership, and more specialized training depending on the particular service. Upon graduation, cadets are required to serve at least four years in the Imperial military. Many, especially those not likely to inherit a title, choose to make the military a career. Circumstances can alter this decision (for example, see *Archduke Norris of Deneb*, p. 92).

Noncommissioned heirs who inherit a title while in the service have the option of completing their term of service or applying for a discharge. The latter is almost always granted and is always considered honorable. Commissioned heirs are normally permitted to resign their commission in order to take up their duties, although some remain in the military and allow their seneschals to carry on for them until their current term is completed. If the title does not involve governmental duties, most choose to complete their required tour of duty.



### *Location*

The Imperium maintains several service academies in various locations. For example, there is no central Imperial Naval Academy, but each sector usually has a *branch* of the Academy at the Imperial Navy depot for that sector. In addition, a number of “floating schools” are maintained on the command ships of major fleets, for officer cadets of special ability or with connections.

## Academy Life

All of the Imperial military academies are organized in a similar fashion.

At the beginning of their first term, newly arrived students are received into the Corps of Cadets in a formal ceremony. Assembled before the ranks of the upperclassmen, resplendent in their dress uniforms, the incoming students are addressed by the commandant of the academy, and then take the cadet oath. From that moment on they are cadets, subject to the rules and regulations of the corps of cadets, and are permitted to pin the proper pips to their uniforms. First-year cadets are all of the same rank: cadet fourth class.

The corps of cadets is divided into battalions, and each battalion is further subdivided into companies, officered by upperclassmen. The rules and regulations of the Corps of Cadets are military in character. The curriculum of each academy stresses the development of leadership, character, and integrity, instilling a sense of duty to the Imperium and its citizens in each cadet. Academic subjects are not neglected, but the main focus of the first year is to integrate the cadets into the Imperial military as career officers, and to cultivate each cadet's development in military, physical, and moral-ethical dimensions.

### Chess

Certain pastimes carry an unusual cachet of sophistication and prestige. One of the most popular among the Imperial nobility is *chess* – or, more properly, several variants of Terran games collectively known as chess. Many other games are enjoyed by the citizens of the Third Imperium, but few enjoy the prestige of chess (although the card game called *poker* is equally widespread).

Chess was once seen as a game for the educated and wealthy members of Terran society, and there are numerous references to chess in pre-spaceflight literature and poetry. The game was carried to the stars by the Solomani, and spread throughout the Imperium and beyond by the Rule of Man. There are formal and informal chess clubs, and thousands of players compete in championships held at regular intervals throughout the Third Imperium.

All but the most sparsely populated worlds have a chess club, and most subsectors have annual championship tournaments. The Imperial Chess Federation sets standards for these tournaments, and many wags have noted that the regulations for ICF-sanctioned tournaments (which specify the design of the pieces and the board, furnishings in the room where the contest is to be held, and a myriad other details) have a word-count several orders of magnitude greater than the ICF rules for the game itself.

The most common version of chess is the so-called *standard* or *tournament* version, which even an ancient Terran would have little trouble recognizing. Less common variations include Vilani chess, *chaturanga* (considered by many to be an ancestor of traditional chess), and thousands of other minor variants.

During the second year, the cadets (promoted to *cadet third class*) have received most of their basic military training. They are now directed into an appropriate sequence of courses designed to make maximum use of their intellectual assets, and to detect and nurture leadership qualities. Upon promotion to cadet third class, certain selected individuals are given positions of responsibility within the cadet corps. They may be assigned to supervise four or five incoming first-year cadets as mentors and advisors. Those showing leadership qualities are made platoon leaders or assistant platoon leaders.

During their third year, cadets (promoted to *cadet second class*) are moved into advanced officer-training courses, as well as pursuing a course of study directed toward the acquisition of an academic degree. Selected third-year cadets are given platoon- or company-level commands within the corps, and a rare few are appointed to the cadet staff. Many third-year cadets spend part of their year assigned to an active-duty unit for hands-on experience. Naval and Marine cadets on field tours are given the rank of *midshipman*, while Army cadets are simply called *officer cadets* while in the field.

Fourth-year cadets (promoted to *cadet first class*) complete their degrees. All fourth-year cadets spend at least part of the final year in their field. Upon successfully completing their last year, cadets are commissioned as officers at their graduation ceremony.

A select few Imperial Navy and Marine cadets spend their entire academy time with a “traveling academy” assigned to a fleet headquarters ship. This approach is more strenuous, but it has the advantage of providing an unusual amount of practical experience. It also provides a very high degree of physical security; very high noble families often push to have their military-minded offspring take this route for the additional degree of protection it offers.

## THE GRAND TOUR

A major feature of noble life is a custom known as the Grand Tour. After completing their basic education, the children of the Imperial nobility are encouraged to experience as many of the diverse cultures within the Third Imperium as possible. In practical terms, of course, a person could travel for decades across the Imperium without fully experiencing even the major cultures. A small number of people succumb to “Rapture of the Jump” and spend their entire lives traveling, abandoning career, responsibilities, and heritage.

The purpose of the Grand Tour is to expose the young noble to a variety of societies and cultures, and instill in him the cosmopolitan attitude necessary for his role in Imperial society. It is widely believed that the Grand Tour brings out a person's true character. Wise parents often send a trusted subordinate to observe and report their offspring's behavior. A certain level of exuberance is natural in youth newly released from the “bonds” of the educational system, but the heir to a high title who makes his Grand Tour nothing more than a five-year party is liable to find his situation altered upon his return home.

Most young nobles limit themselves to a great-circle route that brings them home after three to five years. For

those who have been accepted at a university, it is common for a Grand Tour to end there instead of at the student's home, saving travel time.

The specifics of the journey vary, and there are numerous theories on what provides the optimum experience. Almost everyone agrees that the itinerary should include major cultural and educational centers, but there is much disagreement over where *else* the tour should go.

Many people feel a Grand Tour should be made alone or with a single companion, while others feel a large group is best. Wealthy "grand tourists" often have a family yacht and a few loyal retainers to accompany them on their journey. Less well-heeled scions of the nobility band together to pool resources, investing in a common yacht and communal servants.

Some young nobles feel that the Grand Tour should be carefully planned in advance, while others prefer to let fate guide their path. Some (a rather small group) maintain that the trip should be made incognito, and with minimal use of privileges of rank or social position. Some families hire bodyguards to follow along discreetly and protect their offspring should things get out of hand, while others leave them to their own devices.

Heirs who enter military service directly after their elementary education are not pressured to undertake a Grand Tour upon completion of their tour of duty; it is felt that military service provides sufficient cosmopolitan life experience on its own. Some make the trip anyway, if they are not likely to inherit an important title soon.

Solomani claim the Grand Tour custom dates from about -2800 on old Terra, when touring Europe became a fashion with the British nobility. Still, other societies besides the Solomani have stressed the need for cosmopolitanism. Third Imperium society considers it to be especially important for nobles to experience as many of the myriad cultures and mores of the Imperium as possible. Even planetary nobles are encouraged to travel, and their individual means dictate how far their Grand Tours take them.

## MARRIAGE

Marriage customs vary throughout the Imperium. Specific marriage customs are not important to the Imperial legal system, except as they regularize the inheritance of titles and property. High nobles and the Imperial court follow a set of marriage customs based on a mixture of Solomani and Vilani practices.

Divorce laws are equally varied. Again, the main concern of the Imperium is in regularizing the inheritance of titles and property.

## MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Wide ranges of marriage customs are all recognized under Imperial law. Some of the arrangements can be quite complicated.

## Monogamy

*Monogamy* is the simplest and most common form of marriage in Imperial society, involving one male and one female partner. This is the usual practice for the Imperial family and the high nobility.

Nobles in monogamous marriage usually designate their eldest child as the heir. The Imperium recognizes the validity of same-sex marriages; many local cultures within the Imperium do not.



## Polygamy and Polyandry

These forms of marriage see a single member of one sex married to multiple members of the other (one male in the case of *polygamy*, one female in the case of *polyandry*). This type of marriage usually occurs when one sex is seen as inferior or of a lower social level than the other. Nobles in such arrangements usually define their eldest child by any spouse to be the heir. In some cases (especially under polygamous systems), one spouse is designated as primary; any heir must be the child of that spouse even if he or she is not the noble's eldest child.

## Polyamory

*Polyamory* is group marriage, of which there are two forms.

The first is *hierarchical polyamory*, where a family grouping consists of many adults who classify their relationships by level of commitment. Nobles in this type of relationship usually designate the oldest child by their primary partner as the heir.

In *nonhierarchical polyamory*, all relationships between adult members of the group are treated as equal. In this sort of situation, the heir is the oldest child that is acknowledged to be the noble's.

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*The most unusual system for inheritance I ever came across was on Serpila, which depends entirely on the honesty and integrity of the regent. Fortunately, the world is inhabited by a tightly knit and highly regulated religious group, and any misbehavior on the regent's part would imperil his soul.*

– Dr. Sir Benson Honig, *IISS*

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## Clan Family

A *clan family* is an association of multiple couples. The community raises children, with little attention paid to their actual parentage. When a noble is involved in this sort of family, the heir is usually the oldest child regardless of the actual lineage.

## DYNASTIC CONSIDERATIONS

Nobles often put a great deal of thought into their choice of marriage partner or partners. Any marriage can have far-reaching effects on the fortunes of a noble's family.

### *Political and Social Considerations*

Marriage is often used as a means of uniting powerful families and cementing political alliances. Some parents plan such alliances carefully, and arrange marriages between specific offspring to further the interests of both families. Other parents simply send their children to the “proper schools” and hope that their heir will be attracted to some suitable offshoot of another family. Romantic love may or may not enter into the equation at all. Certain cultures on old Terra considered romantic love to be a form of insanity, and many modern Imperials agree.

The marriage of Count Blaine Tukera and Duchess Margaret Alkhalikoi (p. 105) is an example of marriage as a means of cementing an alliance between a wealthy family and a noble one. That particular marriage *did* involve romantic

affection, but the effect on the two families would have been the same if the two principals had no liking for one another.

## Financial Considerations

Marriage is often used to unite the social power of an impoverished noble family with the monetary power of a wealthier family – possibly even a wealthy family of common origins (p. 40). As with marriage for political reasons, marriage for economics may be arranged by the parents or left to chance.

## INHERITANCE

Aside from knighthoods, almost all Imperial noble titles are hereditary, with the consent of the Emperor. Imperial law governs who may inherit a title, and how the inheritance may occur – although Imperial law does recognize a wide variety of local customs in this matter. In general, the exact form of inheritance is defined in the letter patent when a title is first granted (p. 13).

### *Normal Inheritance*

The most common type of inheritance is *primogeniture*, in which the title-holder's eldest acknowledged offspring inherits the title upon his death. All but one of the archduchies in the Third Imperium are inherited in this way, the Archduchy of Vland being the exception. Most other titles follow the archducal lead.

Some titles require the natural heir to be the result of a legitimate union; others merely require legal proof of paternity. In extreme cases, a DNA match may be necessary; public recognition by the parent is normally sufficient. Adoption is acceptable under Imperial law, and is the normal means by which a childless noble may remedy his situation (p. 37).

Normally, a noble must die or abdicate in favor of his heir in order to pass on his title. Imperial law permits an heir to assume a title if the present title-holder is unable to carry out the duties and requirements of his position. The law contains numerous safeguards to prevent an heir from pressing the matter prematurely. Titles at the ducal level and above require a formal proclamation of incompetence from the Emperor. Lesser titles may only require sanction of incompetence by a special committee or other body designated in the letter patent (p. 13). When a noble is deposed for incompetence in this fashion, he is still treated with all courtesies and honors due his former title, but his heir immediately inherits all formal titles, rank, and privileges. What happens to the former title-holder depends on the reason for the incompetence. Disease or infirmity dictates admission to a sanitarium, a hospital, or private care at the family estate. Criminal activity usually results in a jail term.

### *Regency*

When a noble heir comes into a title while still underage, Imperial law requires the appointment of one or more *regents*. For titles of rank or honor nobility, a single regent is usually sufficient; for high nobility, Imperial law requires a regency council of at least three members.

The outgoing noble usually chooses the regent or regents, recording the choice in his will or in any similar document that designates the heir. A regent is often a family member who is not himself in line to inherit the title; the noble's other parent is also a very common choice. The family's seneschal or some other trusted servant can also serve in the position. A regent need not be a noble, although it is very rare for a regent to be of significantly lower rank than the minor noble he represents. If a noble fails to arrange for regency before passing on his title to a minor heir, then his immediate superior in the aristocratic hierarchy is required to make any necessary appointments.

A regent is effectively the minor noble's guardian. He makes decisions on the minor noble's behalf, and in many situations can act with the noble's authority. He is responsible for making sure that the minor noble's possessions and authority are in good condition when he reaches adulthood and can take control of them in his own right. The regent is also responsible for seeing to the minor noble's education – he must make certain that the noble reaches adulthood actually capable of carrying out his responsibilities.

When a regency council is appointed, the council's presiding officer is the primary regent for the minor noble, but its other members also have a say in the regency's actions. Imperial law lays out a standard set of procedures for the operation of regency councils, governing what authority members have and how they can be replaced if necessary.

Regency situations can be quite disruptive, especially when they involve important titles in the high nobility. Unscrupulous regents can play havoc with a noble's possessions or political standing. Ambitious individuals often try to push their way into important regencies, hoping to have more influence over a young noble than a normal situation would permit. Conflicts among members of a regency council can paralyze Imperial government at a high level, or lead to widespread instability.

For example, the last major Imperial regency was under the Empress Margaret I, between the death of her father Zhakirov in 688 and her arrival at the age of majority in 702. This was a time of considerable political upheaval throughout the Imperium. Conflict among the members of Margaret's Regency Council almost led to a new Civil War, and did contribute to the foundation of the Solomani Autonomous Region in 704.

### *Unusual Inheritance Systems*

Inheritance customs vary among cultures. In some cultures, inheritance may be sex-linked, meaning that only members of one sex may inherit a title. In extreme cases, a title must be held by a member of one sex, but can only be gained by union with the opposite sex. For example, the Countess of Beatus/Solomani Rim must be female, but her eldest daughter does not inherit when she dies – instead, the wife of her eldest son becomes the new Countess.

Some titles pass to an heir *designated* by the current title-holder. In this case the heir need not be the eldest child of the title-holder – indeed, the heir need not even be related, although he is usually formally adopted by the proclamation

designating him heir. In a few cases, heirs to a title may be chosen at random from family members, or from a larger group. Some titles limit who can be designated as an heir, placing restrictions based on sex, age, adoption, or other conditions.

In extreme cases, an heir may be chosen by a committee or designated in some other way. For example, when the Marquis of Serpila/Old Expanses dies, his soul is believed to be reincarnated into a child born on Serpila shortly after his death. The Lord High Sachem of Serpila is responsible for locating this child as quickly as possible, and acting as regent until the new marquis comes of age.

### ***Private Worlds***

Imperial archdukes are granted a fief consisting of an entire world, or even an entire star system. Other nobles may own worlds or systems as personal property, and not as part of a fief. The Tukera family, for example, has acquired control or near-control of several worlds over the years, including Lewis in the Spinward Marches (p. 18). Such a planet is usually called a *private world*.

A noble is free to establish whatever government strikes his fancy on a private world, provided that he owns all the property on the world and that Imperial laws are not violated.

Most private worlds are sparsely populated, and many of them are used solely for family purposes: estates, hunting preserves, vacation getaways, religious communes, and so on. Some families use their private worlds as a source of income – for example, the Hansen family has turned its private world Kamsii into a popular resort; see *Planetary Survey 1: Kamsii*. This may include exploiting the natural resources of a world or system, or taxing its inhabitants, but slavery and certain other practices are not allowed.

### *Clones*

Cloning to create an heir is an accepted practice throughout most of the Third Imperium, and heirs conceived in this fashion are not normally differentiated legally from more conventional offspring. If DNA from two married partners is used, the offspring is treated as a conventionally sired child for legal purposes. If DNA from one person is used, the clone is treated as a younger twin in the eyes of the law, and inherits if there are no other offspring – such a child is commonly called a “true-son” or “true-daughter.” It is unusual, but not unknown, for a single noble to create an heir by cloning; the most famous example today is Archduke Norris and his true-daughter Seldrian Aledon.

Some titles forbid inheritance by clones, while others give conventionally conceived persons priority. The Marquisate of Ephemir/Solomani Rim is unique in giving cloning priority over conventional conception.

# WEALTH

Wealth is one form of power. Social status usually goes hand-in-hand with wealth, although in the Third Imperium inherited “old money” is socially preferred to wealth acquired by personal effort. Old-money families in the Third Imperium often accumulate titles, a reflection of the power the wealth brings (see *The Tukera Family*, p. 103). The reverse is not necessarily true; having a title doesn’t guarantee wealth or power.

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*High nobles are expected to maintain their fiefs in good condition. Those who do not can find themselves stripped of the fief – and sometimes the title.*

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## ASSETS

In Imperial society, wealth takes a number of forms. Some assets are liquid, easily convertible from one form to another. Others are more fixed in nature, yielding reliable income but difficult to transfer if an emergency arises.

### *Fiefs and Other Property*

When any world is admitted to the Imperium, the world government is required to transfer sovereignty over a small quantity of land to the Imperium. The quantity and type of property varies widely from world to world, and is worked out by agreement between the Imperium and the local government when the world is first admitted. (Worlds which are forcibly annexed do not get a choice as to which land to turn over.) From this land, fiefs are handed out to Imperial high nobles (p. 49).

The purpose of a fief is to give a high noble a minimum level of income in order to maintain his lifestyle, not just to give him a place to build a manor house. For this reason, a fief is not always *just* land – a fief may consist of an industrial park, a mineral-rich wilderness area, a few blocks of prime business property in a startown, or a combination of all of these. In some cases, a fief may consist partly of a block of stock in a local business, the right to collect taxes from a certain industry on a world, or other more complicated arrangements.

Even if a fief consists entirely of land, it may be divided among several different geographic locations on a world (fiefs associated with a single title are almost never divided between two or more star systems). In systems without habitable worlds, a fief may consist of one or more planetoids, or a deep space installation. The concept of subinfeudation, where one noble grants fiefs to his vassals out of his own fief, is not used in the Imperial system.

High nobles are expected to maintain their fiefs in good condition, both for their own benefit and for their heirs. Those who do not can find themselves stripped of the fief – and sometimes the title.

Many noble families have accumulated property other than the fiefs received with their titles. This property is not considered part of any fief, and the Emperor cannot strip a family of any nonfief properties when a title is withdrawn.

### *Businesses*

The main way by which a family acquires additional property is by applying funds generated by some form of commercial enterprise. For example, the Tukera family operates one of the largest transportation networks in the Third Imperium, and has amassed a gigantic fortune over the centuries (p. 103).

### ***Bodyguards and Personal Military Units***

Many nobles are concerned for their personal safety, and retain bodyguards. The number, equipment, and training of these vary with the wealth (and paranoia) of the individual. Some nobles are content with no bodyguards at all, others with one or two lightly armed escorts, while others may have huge contingents rivaling military units in all but uniforms.

In addition to bodyguards, nobles are allowed to raise and equip private paramilitary units as their individual resources allow. Private armies are less common in more-settled areas of the Imperium, and low-ranking nobles tend to retain smaller contingents. High nobles have the right to raise special private units called *huscarles* (p. 62).

In emergencies, high nobles in threatened areas are expected to incorporate their “private armies” into Imperial service. When this happens, it is considered good form for the noble to continue paying them, although this is not legally required, and the Imperium will usually cover costs if necessary.

Noble families are often able to make use of social and political connections to gain an edge over their business competitors. In the frontier regions of the Imperium, large business competitors occasionally make use of trade wars (p. T:FT112), although these are frowned upon in the older regions of the Imperium.



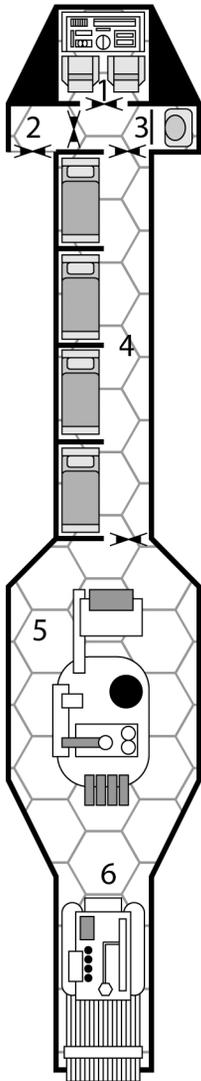
### *Starships and Other Vehicles*

Many noble families maintain at least one yacht – some have several. Wealthy aristocrats have a small fleet of other vehicles as well, including spacecraft (such as shuttles, gigs, launches, and cutters) and atmospheric craft such as air/rafts and G-carriers. Some collect antique vehicles such as ground cars, surface maritime vessels, and the like. See also pp. 132-135.

# CONDOR-CLASS RACING YACHT

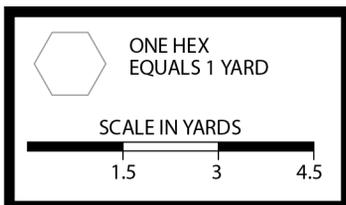
The Condor class racing yacht presents a grand profile with its twin radiator fins extending above and below the primary hull. The total wingspan is twice the length of the body, in order to provide the radiator square footage needed by the high-powered fusion plant and jump drives. In addition, the wings hold supplemental fuel tanks to hold the massive amounts of liquid hydrogen necessary for this long-legged craft.

In order to dock or land, both radiator fins pivot ninety degrees and fold to lay flat against the hull. Radiator performance is greatly diminished in this configuration, causing most pilots to store the fins at the last possible moment. Some pilots hold "contests" to see who can keep the radiators deployed until the last second – accidents are not unknown among the young and brash racers.



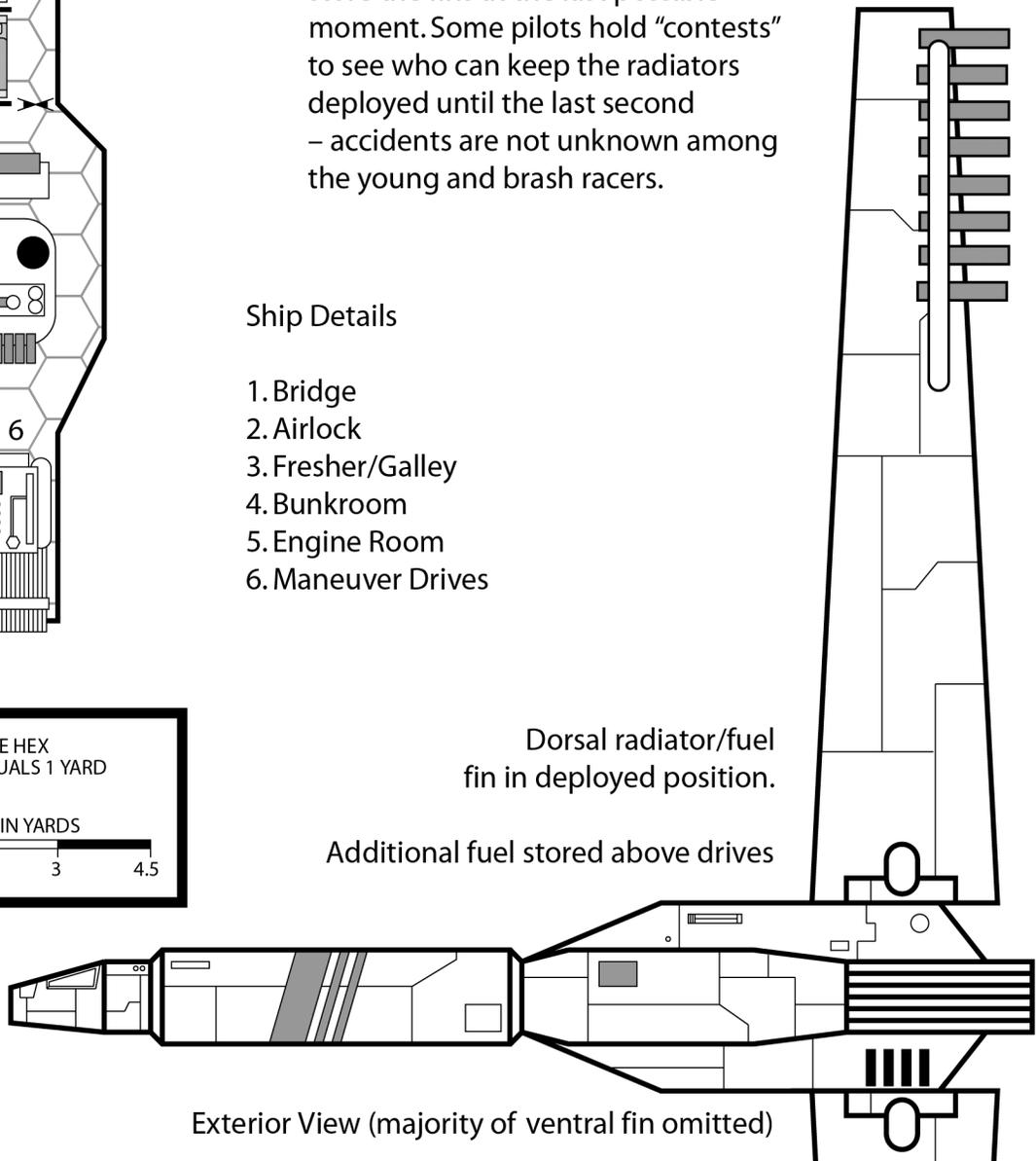
## Ship Details

1. Bridge
2. Airlock
3. Fresher/Galley
4. Bunkroom
5. Engine Room
6. Maneuver Drives



Dorsal radiator/fuel fin in deployed position.

Additional fuel stored above drives



Exterior View (majority of ventral fin omitted)

## LIFESTYLES

*There are families that accumulate possessions like old paint, layer upon layer, added to by each successive generation of pack rats. Great-Grandfather came back from his service in the Solomani Rim with a passion for teak furniture, so he brought back tons of it, intricately carved in dozens of different styles, most of it too valuable to actually use. Grandma acquired a passion for Denebian oil-jade, and filled room after room with display cases of the bilious yellow-green stuff. Uncle Ensi and Father became connoisseurs of Gamibian driimwein – they spent a fortune transplanting a vineyard to the Umbran estate and the wine cellar is packed with decades of bottlings.*

*I can't open a door of the old manor without tripping over one of Aunt Hanja's spider-silk brocade rugs, or another glass case filled with some unidentified ancestor's botanical specimens. I grew up in a 98-room attic filled with the flotsam of a score of ancestors, and I feel guilty if I even entertain thoughts of moving any of it, let alone calling an auctioneer. Every family has baggage from previous generations – mine is both mental and physical.*

– Ansii Maastricht Hanumaan,  
Count of Hamilcar

Fictional portrayals of the noble life tend to be either morality plays (to reassure non-nobles that even wealth, power, and social position cannot guarantee happiness) or wish-fulfillment fantasies (for those obsessed with the nobility). Everyone is familiar with the popular stereotypes: the sybaritic fop, the deranged eccentric, the self-obsessed dilettante, the helpless old fool, and the power-hungry schemer. Non-fictional portrayals of noble life are normally either scandalous exposés or worshipful puff pieces.

The reality is different. To be sure, there are real counterparts for all of the archetypes mentioned above, but the vast majority of nobles lead lives that differ little from those of equal-income non-nobles.

## HOME LIFE

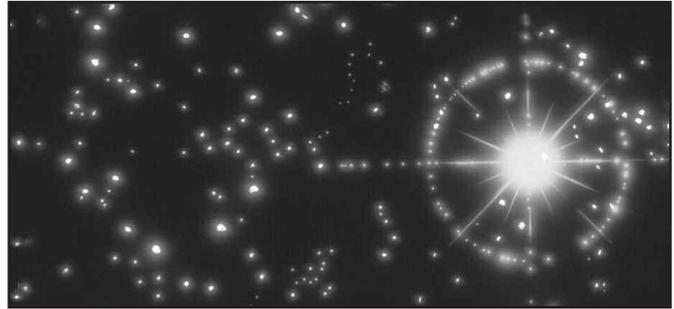
Nobles, like most of Humaniti, feel certain nostalgia for one special place they call “home.” Nobles often have numerous properties, but one is always given preeminence as the seat of the title. The seat of the title need not be on the fief for that title, especially if the fief is not suitable for habitation, but it is usually located on the same world.

A noble family's manorial residence can range from a palatial estate on an otherwise-empty continent of a private world (p. 37), to a luxuriously appointed apartment in a high-rise on a heavily populated world. Long-established noble families accumulate manors, hunting lodges, palaces, vacation getaways, and private moonlets in large numbers. New aristocratic families may be lucky to have a single place to call home.

Some nobles spend much of their time traveling; some even feel more at home on the family yacht than in the drafty halls of a mansion they visit once every few years. These are the nobles who run back and forth every few years between their holdings and Capital – a habit that requires considerable

sacrifices. Their families are often dragged along with them, spending a few years on Capital, a year or two traveling, and a few years on the homeworld. This serves as a kind of additional Grand Tour, and it can make everyone concerned more cosmopolitan – but it can also instill family members with a sense of alienation, a feeling that they don't really belong anywhere and have no real home.

A few nobles spend their entire careers away from their demesne (p. 60), either at the sector capital or at Capital itself. For these, “home” is likely to be simply a block of rooms on long-term lease in a skyscraping arcology.



## IMPOVERISHED NOBILITY

*I was nine when it happened, and I didn't understand very much at the time – something about business and the war, and papers that were once very valuable but weren't valuable any more. Later I came to understand all too well what had happened, and I was infuriated at the bumbling that cost us so much. At the time, however, all I knew was that we could no longer go to the house in the mountains in the summer, that we had to close down most of the rooms in the manor, that the hundreds of pretty things that filled the rooms of my home began to vanish mysteriously, and that most of the valley I loved wasn't ours any more. We were in no danger of starving, and to someone who has known real deprivation, I suppose my youth must seem laughable, but it is a special kind of poverty to be without means in the midst of the wealthy. We learned to live with it – and most importantly, we learned to keep up appearances.*

– from *The Empty Castle*, by Admiral Heimat  
Diigeruu Singh, Count of Alaban

The notion of impoverished nobility may strike some as an oxymoron. “Impoverished” is a relative term, of course – a noble may have an extensive fief, but if the money it generates is completely absorbed in maintaining the fief, the noble is effectively impoverished. The higher the rank, the less likely this is to happen, but misfortune can strike even the best of families. History is full of examples of land-rich but cash-poor aristocrats, and the “young noble from an impoverished house seeking a marriage with a wealthy commoner” is a genuine occurrence as well as a staple of romantic literature.

Most such families are obsessed with maintaining appearances. Nobles aren't supposed to concern themselves with vulgar things like money, but it takes wealth to maintain the outward trappings of nobility. Impoverished noble houses tend to send their younger children into the military or the

bureaucracy, and seek marriage alliances with newly rich status-seeking families. They may mortgage or sell off private holdings, or discreetly sell off family treasures to finance business ventures in the hope that speculation can bring in the wealth needed to maintain their station.

On the other extreme, some families are cash-poor, but are swimming in possessions that they *cannot* sell for various reasons. For instance, a fief cannot be sold, even if it has become a losing financial proposition. In cases like these, maintaining appearances is not difficult, but avoiding bankruptcy can be.

## SERVANTS AND SENESCHALS

Wealthy families retain hundreds of employees, while those that are less well off get by with one or two. In some places, the prestige of a noble is dependent on the size and splendor of his accompanying entourage. Servants are divided into two broad groups: staff and household servants. The seneschal supervises both groups (p. 128).

Servants receive salaries, and are free to leave a noble's employ at any time – slavery is forbidden by Imperial law. The aged but fanatically loyal retainer is a staple of literature, and there are enough of them in reality to justify the stereotype, but servants come in all ages and degrees of devotion. Pay and working conditions vary tremendously from family to family and the specific job description. Some nobles retain servants from the same families, generation after generation – a custom especially common in Vilani cultural regions. High noble families may even employ servants with noble titles of their own.

Many noble families prefer that their servants wear uniforms (or *livery*) when on duty, but most insist on it only on formal public occasions. The design, style, and colors vary according to family taste and the occasion. At a minimum, servants usually wear a small and tasteful item of jewelry (a pin or brooch) with the family sigil, or a garment such as a scarf, headband, or sash in family colors.

### *Seneschal*

Almost every Imperial noble has a *seneschal*. The office of seneschal originally appeared as a response to the growing complexity of society under the Sylean Federation. Nobles with governing responsibilities found that the sheer volume of information was only manageable with computer assistance. The seneschal was an assistant with responsibilities in information management. He had no authority of his own; instead, he was responsible for organizing the flow of data so that his principal would be informed, but not overwhelmed.

Over time, the position of seneschal has evolved considerably. In the modern Third Imperium, the seneschal is still a data-management expert, but he is likely to have taken on many other roles as well. He is a public-relations officer, managing contact with the general public. He is a chief of staff, supervising the rest of the noble's servants. Finally, he is a leading aide, assisting the noble with all of his political and social responsibilities. The position of seneschal can be very prestigious in its own right – indeed, it is not uncommon for a high noble to retain a lesser noble as a seneschal.

In many cases, a seneschal may act for a noble when the noble is out of contact or incapacitated. Absentee nobles may even designate their seneschal to rule in their stead. For example, Prince Varian is also the Duke of Sanches, but the administration of the duchy is in the hands of Varian's seneschal, Baron Jean Dupree Adorania of Edraste.

### *Ordinary Staff*

Below the seneschal is the rest of the noble's staff: secretaries, personal assistants, advisors, and any administrative staff required to run the family fiefs and properties. Nobles with an especially large staff divide it into departments, each supervised by a deputy who reports to the seneschal.

Nobles with government duties have additional staff to assist them, but these are paid from Imperial revenues, and are not part of the noble's personal retinue although they remain under his direct control. High nobles are expected to keep their personal and governmental staffs separate, although their seneschal usually supervises both.

### *Household Servants*

The seneschal controls household servants through several intermediaries (usually one per installation). Household servants include butlers, maids, valets, dressers, masseuses, footmen, cooks, scullions, housekeepers, personal trainers, nurses and personal physicians, nannies, tutors, bodyguards, and other personnel necessary for the health and well being of the noble family. They also include groundskeepers, gamekeepers, gardeners, mechanics, technicians, and operating engineers for the buildings, grounds, and equipment of the family properties. In addition, chauffeurs, pilots, and spaceship crew are retained according to the family's requirements. Some household staff members remain assigned to a specific place, while others accompany each family member wherever he happens to be.

### *Robots*

Some cultures permit the use of robots in servile positions, while others consider them anathema. The high nobles of the Imperium use robots only for boring, repetitive, physically challenging, or distasteful tasks such as cleaning and maintenance. They reserve living sophonts for other duties, such as serving dinner and pouring drinks at parties (p. 127).

## FESTIVITIES

Imperial aristocrats and other members of high society spend a great deal of time entertaining each other. Parties and formal balls, visits to elaborate musical performances, lavish dinners at famous restaurants, and expeditions to nobles' private hunting resorts – all of these have a role to play in Imperial society.

On one level, grand entertainments are purely for fun. Nobles and other high-status people like to enjoy themselves in social situations, just as commoners do. Nobles use parties to meet new people, enjoy the company of friends, pursue romantic affairs, and participate in favorite activities.

On the other hand, festivities can also be very serious business. The host for any gathering is putting his wealth, status, and personal taste on display. If he can impress his guests – or outdo his rivals – then the success can be turned to political advantage. Meanwhile, the guests are also likely to be competing for each other’s attention and favor.

Meanwhile, these parties are a traditional place for nobles to carry on business outside the formal context of the office or workplace. Any aristocrat invited to a grand entertainment can expect that people will approach him with proposals or requests during the festivities. Many parties are designed to make such contacts easy; for example, after a formal dinner in a nobleman’s home the most important guests may be invited to retire to a private room for fine wine and political discussion.

### *Being a Guest*

At a minimum, the GM can require a roll against *Savoir-Faire* for any guest at an entertainment, to determine whether the guest behaves appropriately. On a success, the guest gets a +1 to every reaction roll the GM makes in the course of the party; on a critical failure, he may suffer a penalty of -4 or more to reaction rolls.

If the GM wishes to play out the entertainment in more detail, he may require multiple rolls against various Artistic or Social skills. *Savoir-Faire* is always appropriate; other useful skills include Bard (for telling stories and anecdotes), Carousing (for holding your liquor), Dancing, Gambling, Games, Literature (to have just the right quotation on hand), Musical Instrument, Poetry (for extemporaneous composition), Sex Appeal, or Singing. In most cases, only a critical success has a significant positive effect; success simply means that the guest acquits himself well. Failure may deprive the guest of social opportunities or give him a penalty to reaction rolls.

If a guest wishes to compete against a rival, the GM may require a Quick Contest of Skill. The winner has managed to more thoroughly impress the other guests with his skill and taste, with long-term consequences up to the GM.

While the host at any entertainment is spending the most money, guests also face some necessary expenses. Small gifts for the host are often appropriate at Imperial social gatherings, and these are more appreciated if they are selected with some thought for the recipient’s tastes. Meanwhile, a guest simply must wear fashionable attire, and it’s a social sin to wear the same outfit that you took to any other recent occasion. The major exception is a military dress uniform complete with decorations, which is never out of fashion.

If the guest has Status at least as high as that of anyone else in attendance, including the host, then it can be assumed that his usual cost-of-living budget covers clothes, personal grooming, gifts, or other items necessary to make a good showing. Otherwise, the guest needs to spend at least Cr100, doubled for each level of Status held by the highest-ranking guest. Serving or former military personnel can get away with paying only one-quarter of this amount, if they attend in dress uniform.

A roll against *Savoir-Faire* may be required in order to make sure that clothes are fashionable and any other accessories are appropriate. If a guest fails to invest in the proper clothing or incidentals, any *Savoir-Faire* or other skill roll he makes during the entertainment is at a penalty of -4 or more.

### *Being a Host*

Putting on a party or any other form of entertainment requires the host to spend money on food, hired musicians or other artists, special furnishings, and so on. The cost of such items can vary widely, but the following should serve as a guideline.

The base cost for a worthwhile entertainment is Cr10 per person attending, *doubled* for each level of Status held by the highest-ranking guest. For example, a house party for eight ordinary Imperial citizens (Status 0) costs  $Cr10 \times 8 = Cr80$ . A night at the theater for 20 guests, the highest-ranking of whom is an Imperial knight (Status 2), costs  $Cr10 \times 20 \times 4 = Cr800$ . A grand Imperial ball with 500 guests, at which the Emperor (Status 8) is expected to make an appearance, costs  $Cr10 \times 500 \times 256 = MCr1.28$ .

If the host has Status at least equal to that of any of his guests, then it can be assumed that his usual cost-of-living budget covers some of the expenses of entertaining. In this case, the base cost for the entertainment is halved.

If the host pays the base cost, then the entertainment is lavish enough to satisfy his guests. For each doubling of the base cost, the host gets a +1 to all reaction rolls made toward him by guests in the course of the entertainment. The GM may wish to impose a limit of +4 on this bonus – it’s possible to overspend the bounds of good taste! Conversely, if the host spends less than the base cost, he suffers a -4 penalty to reaction rolls.

The GM may insist that the host make at least a *Savoir-Faire* roll to carry off the entertainment properly. If the occasion is played out in more detail, than a variety of other skill rolls may be appropriate. Various Artistic skills may be particularly useful in this context, to choose artists or performers who demonstrate the host’s good taste.

## LUXURIES

The number of luxury items consumed by the upper crust is astronomical. Not all of the nobility are connoisseurs of fine food, drink, furniture, and rare artwork, but enough are that the stereotype has some validity.

### FOOD

One way of enjoying the good life is through food. The sheer variety of fine foodstuffs available within the Third Imperium is astronomical, so only a few of the most famous ones are dealt with here.

### *Cheeses*

By definition, cheeses are made from milk, which is technically restricted to mammals and thus to animals of Ter-ran ancestry. However, a wide variety of animals throughout the Imperium and beyond produce similar substances. Thus,

there are thousands of varieties of cheese-like food in the Imperium, most of them simply called “cheese.” Some of the more famous varieties include feta, cheddar, Stilton, and Jannian Schmeerkasse.

## Caviar

The name *caviar* is technically applied only to the eggs of certain species of Terran fish (sturgeons of two genera: *Huso* and *Acipenser*), but a broader usage applies among the gourmets of the Third Imperium.

## Truffles

A truffle is an edible, subterranean fungus, prized as a food delicacy for thousands of years on Terra. Truffles are roughly spherical, and vary in size with species, ranging from about 0.2” to 0.4” in diameter. For millennia there was no way to cultivate truffles, but they are now raised on farms throughout the Third Imperium. However, connoisseurs of the delicacy prefer free-range or “wild” truffles, as having a superior flavor and consistency to the farm-raised variety.

## Pomme d’Enrin

This is a small fruit grown for its aromatic oil on a large number of worlds. The oil is used as a flavoring in certain cuisines, and as a component in perfumes and colognes as well.

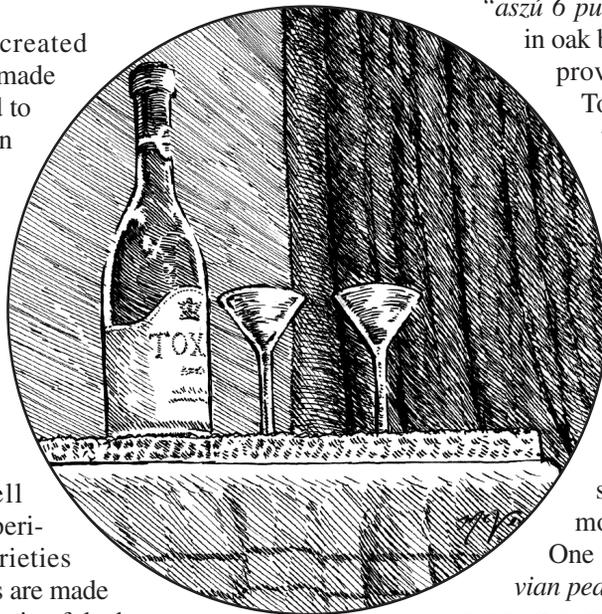
## DRINK

With food, there must be drink. The Imperial aristocracy enjoys a tremendous variety of potables, many of them alcoholic to some degree.

## Beer

Beers are beverages created from some form of grain, made into a mash, and encouraged to undergo slow fermentation through the addition of a yeast culture. Other natural substances may be added to the final product to give it a distinctive flavor. The result is mildly alcoholic, and can be somewhat carbonated for a fizzy texture and distinctive “head.”

Terran beers are well known throughout the Imperium, and include many varieties and types. Most Terran beers are made from the malted or roasted grain of the barley plant, flavored with the additions of hops. There are also wheat, rye, and rice beers. Some varieties are labeled with growing region and vintages, like wine. The Sword Worlders are famous for their strong Terran-style beer (p. T:SW77).



The Vilani brew a variety of beers from various cereal grains encountered on worlds throughout the Imperium, using methods similar to those developed by ancient peoples on Terra (the Egyptians and Sumerians). Vilani beers tend to be thicker than Terran brews, and some are decidedly soupy. Vilani beer is traditionally consumed with a straw, which helps to avoid imbibing the grainy “dregs.”

## Wine

Wines are made from the juice of various sugary fruits, fermented by the addition of a yeast culture. Many great wines are grown on various worlds of the Third Imperium, some of them made from transplanted Terran grapes, others from local plants. Fine wines are labeled according to the type of grape or other fruit, the year (vintage), and the area within which the grapes were grown.

*Tokaj eszencia* is one of the rarest and most prestigious wines available in the Third Imperium. Tokaj is a wine-growing region in the Hungarian district on Terra, rather than a specific type of grape; in viniculture, the name Tokaj refers to a group of white wines prepared in a unique fashion. Some grapes are left on the vines a little later into the harvest season, and become infected with a specific type of mold (*Botrytis cinerea*, also known as the “noble rot”) which causes a number of chemical changes to take place in the grapes – they shrivel and accumulate sugars until they are almost candied. In making Tokaj wines, these grapes, called *aszú* in Hungarian, are picked grape by grape, and converted into a thick paste that is added to a vat of wine from conventionally harvested grapes. The number of baskets, called *puttunynos*, added to a vat forms a rating of the sugar level of the wine, which ranges from three to six *puttunynos*. A wine labeled “*aszú 3 puttunynos*” is drier (less sweet) than a bottle labeled “*aszú 6 puttunynos*.” The wine is fermented and aged in oak barrels, sometimes in underground caves to provide constant temperature and humidity.

*Tokaj eszencia* (“essence”) refers to wine that is prepared *solely* from the *aszú* grapes, and is of the best quality. Tokaj *eszencia* was one of the preferred wines of the ancient Austro-Hungarian emperors; today it is exported at great expense to Capital to serve as one of Emperor Strephon’s favorite table wines.

*Champagne* is a generic term for a class of sparkling wines; purists reserve the name for sparkling wines made in a specific geographic region on Terra, but most connoisseurs ignore this distinction.

One of the most valued champagnes is *Moldavian pear champagne*, a sparkling wine made from pears grown on the planet Moldavia. While the fruit itself can be grown and wine made from it almost anywhere, connoisseurs prefer the flavor of vintages grown in certain valleys on Moldavia. The complex process involves two separate fermentation processes, and is similar to the *Méthode Champenoise* used in the making of champagne on Terra.

## Liquors

High alcoholic content beverages are produced in a myriad of varieties and types. Grain-based and fruit-based whiskeys patterned on those produced on Terra – Scotch and Irish whiskey, vodka, brandy, bourbon, tequila, and gin – are especially popular with Solomani and Solomani imitators.

*Calvados* is an apple brandy produced in a small region on Terra. Genuine Terran Calvados is highly prized among connoisseurs of fine liquor. Applejack is a similar beverage produced from apples in some regions of North America.

### **The Imperial College of Arms**

The function of a college of heralds (p. 45) in the Third Imperium is carried out by a subdivision of the Imperial Bureau of Trademarks. When Cleon I transformed the Sylean Federation into the Third Imperium, the Sylean College of Arms was combined with the Vilani *Amkadash Akir* (“Keepers of the Sigils”), and the combined body was renamed the Imperial College of Arms. In official documents it is also called the Imperial Division of Heraldry.

The duties of the Imperial College of Arms are to record each noble family’s “heraldic achievement,” which consists of the coat-of-arms and all of its associated symbols (helmet, mantling, wreath, motto, and so on). The College also assures that there are no duplications. Each heraldic achievement is both illustrated and described in a highly specific technical language. The master roll of arms is kept in the Palace of Arms on Capital. By tradition, each coat-of-arms is chased (engraved) onto a sheet of brass and painted by hand before being displayed in the Hall of Arms. There are pictorial and textual records in the databanks of the College, of course, but the hall is considered the primary repository.

Older families tend to have simpler designs, but since patterns can be reused after a line becomes extinct, some popular emblems are constantly recycled into new arms. Branches of a family often change the primary arms slightly (changing colors or adding a small variation to the design) in order to differentiate themselves. Occasionally, the head of a branch chooses a totally new pattern or arms.

The Imperial College of Arms exists solely to serve the Imperial aristocracy; non-nobles are not permitted to register a coat-of-arms with it. Many local heraldic colleges exist throughout the Imperium, and these organizations are usually less exclusive.

In addition to a main coat of arms, large and powerful families also create a smaller, simpler emblem called a *sigil*. The sigil is worn by household staff, emblazoned on vehicles, and used for other purposes where a full crest is not proper or convenient. For example, members of the household staff of Archduke Norris of Deneb wear a stylized version of the “bridled steed” emblem (p. 25), tastefully embroidered on their clothing. Norris’ private regiment of huscarles (p. 62) uses the bridled steed as part of its unit crest and as a vehicle marking.

## TEXTILES

One of the best ways to display your wealth is to wear it. Nobles love fashionable, expensive clothing, made from the rarest textiles produced around the Imperium.

*Mashakhir* is a cloth once common on ancient Vland but now extremely rare and prestigious in the Third Imperium. It is a linen-like cloth, produced by the natural fibers of a flowering plant that has never been successfully cultivated anywhere but on Vland itself. It is tough and strong, but its true value is aesthetic – it can be used to produce fine fabrics with a shimmering quality that catches the ambient light and bewilders the Human eye. *Mashakhir* is never dyed, as the coloring process destroys the fabric’s natural beauty. Brilliant, sheer white drapes of *mashakhir* cloth were the height of fashion on Vland millennia ago, and are still coveted by Imperial noblewomen today.

*Nomenhan spidersilk* is a little more common than *mashakhir*, but almost as prestigious. The name is a case of “deceptive advertising.” *Nomenhan spidersilk* is not produced by a spider – it is another plant fiber, similar to linen but vastly finer and stronger – nor did it originate on a world or continent named Nomenhan. However, it accepts a wide variety of dyes, is easy to work with, and is popular for both diaphanous fabrics and heavier weaves, especially brocades.

## FURNITURE AND FURNISHINGS

Fine furnishings and appointments are one of the ways in which the nobility individualize their homes. Often, the supporting structures of a yacht are made from advanced materials, but the interior paneling and decorative trim are of expensive and luxurious substances. Chairs, tables, desks, shelving and other furnishings and appointments are made of exceptionally beautiful woods like mahogany, teak, laskari sandalwood, cherry, curly maple, and yohoba. Armrests, backrests, legs, and trim are often carved, inlaid, fretted, and polished to the greatest extent the taste and finances of the owner allow.

## DECORATIONS, JEWELRY, AND ORNAMENTS

There are thousands of gems, jewels, precious, and semi-precious materials available within the Third Imperium.

### *Denebian Oil Jade*

This is a rare type of stone found only on *Imparlu/Gushemege* – why it is called “Denebian Oil Jade” is a mystery. It is used in certain religious carvings by the *Imparlani* sect there, although local artisans have begun producing “secular” versions of the carvings. The world forbids export of the raw stone. Non-*Imparlu* immigrants are strictly controlled, and outsiders who wish to work in the material must convince the *Efont* (the local planetary ruler) that they understand the significance of the substance and will do it the proper honor.

## Kudebeck Ivory

The horn and skeleton of the Kudebeck's gazelle (also called the "ivory gazelle") is an ivory-like substance highly prized by artists throughout the Imperium. The animal's original homeworld is not known with certainty, but they are found on numerous worlds in the spinward sectors of the Imperium.

Kudebeck ivory is especially beautiful when properly polished, and is considered more versatile than elephant or Terran walrus ivory because the final color can be influenced by the diet of the gazelle. Normally, Kudebeck ivory is snow white, but trace elements fed to the gazelle can impart a variety of colors. On several worlds, the gazelle is raised domestically, and fed a diet with carefully programmed sequence of specific compounds as they grow. This results in ivory with a pattern of different colored layers as the animal grows, and carvings in such ivory are especially valuable. Cameos made with this multi-colored ivory are very popular in many areas.

The horn is more valuable than the bones of the gazelle, because it is thicker and solid throughout, whereas the skeleton of the gazelle contains marrow and other substances, and the usable ivory is thinner. Also, the horns are shed and regrown periodically, and can be harvested without requiring the death of the gazelle.



## Amber

Amber is a semi-precious "stone" formed when certain plant resins are petrified. Some plant species, when damaged, exude a thick resin as a means of repair, which can sometimes undergo chemical changes that convert it into a hard,

translucent substance. Amber sometimes traps and preserves small animals or other things, and pieces containing such "inclusions" are sometimes highly sought after, both by scientists and collectors. Even amber without inclusions can be worked into objects of great beauty in the hands of a skilled artisan. Depending on the type of plant and local conditions, amber can come in a variety of colors.

## Denuli Gems

These "gems" are actually the eggs of a sophont species, and are illegal for outsiders to buy, sell, or possess. Nevertheless, collectors exist, creating a black market for these items (see *GURPS Traveller: Planetary Sourcebook 2 – Denuli*).

## HERALDRY

The use of symbols, patterns, and colors to distinguish one side from the other in battle dates from earliest antiquity on Terra and many other worlds. A pattern on a shield or banner can be distinguished at a far greater distance than a face, and soldiers keep formation better when they have an easily spotted item, such as a flag, to follow. Even though soldiers no longer march in rows except in parades, the practice lives on in military and civilian life. Trademarks and service marks are simply extensions of the same principle.

The specific art of heraldry began in the Terran Middle Ages, driven by the need to distinguish one knight from another after the development of fully enclosed helmets. Symbols and patterns were painted on shields and banners, and served as a means of identification in a largely illiterate society. The term *heraldry* recalls the heralds who were in charge of identifying approaching knights and their contingents by their emblems. They eventually acquired other duties in both war and peace. A complex system of describing the pattern (known as *blazoning*) developed as the patterns became more involved. Eventually, groups of heralds were formed – the British College of Heraldry is a prime example – and national and international registries were established.

Today heraldry is simply the formalized system whereby a specific symbol and color pattern is registered to a single individual and inherited by his heirs. In the Imperium, every noble family has a *coat of arms*, a heraldic crest that is unique to it. It is incorporated into clothing and jewelry, painted on the sides of vehicles, printed on stationery and visiting cards, embroidered onto dinner napkins, carved into gateposts and stone walls, and used in a myriad other ways to represent the social status of the bearers.

On old Terra a coat of arms was a badge of status, so for centuries the right to use one was jealously guarded. Although a looser approach was taken in later Terran history, the present-day Imperium regards the use of an official coat-of-arms as a privilege of the aristocracy.

Organizations and groups are also allowed to register and use a coat of arms. The various orders of knighthood all have their badges (pp. 21-25), as do Imperial military units, universities, businesses, social clubs, charitable organizations, and many others. Possession of a coat of arms adds a cachet of sophistication and elegance to an organization.

# PASTIMES AND PASSIONS

Many nobles pursue expensive hobbies, some involving great personal risk, some more sedate (but no less expensive).

## SPORTS

Most nobles are sports fans of one sort or another, but many have resources not available to most citizens, and can sponsor teams or even entire leagues devoted to their favorite sports. Some participate in the more dangerous sports for the thrill of risking life and limb; others settle for the vicarious thrill of owning a team.

One result of the widespread availability of individual orbital reentry gear (see p. GT112) is the sport of *orbital skydiving*. The Imperial Orbital Reentry League is an Imperium-wide association devoted to orbital skydiving – it sets standards for equipment and maintains records for team and individual jumps. Affiliate clubs are found throughout the Imperium and beyond. Orbital skydiving is especially popular with younger nobles, but all ages participate. It involves considerable degree of risk (a second's inattention and the diver can end up a meteor shower), but rigorous attention to detail and careful training can reduce this to acceptable limits.

*Yacht racing* requires large amounts of money and free time, and many nobles are amply supplied with both. Interstellar races require vessels with jump drive, while interplanetary races involve a wide variety of propulsion types, of which the most popular is the solar-sail yacht. This uses a very large but gossamer-thin sail to harness the light pressure of a star's natural radiation – the vessels are permitted no other form of propulsion.

There are numerous racing organizations that set standards and specifications for solar-sail yachts, and there are dozens of classes to regulate the size, instrumentation, total weight, and materials of racing yachts. Of these, the regulations laid down by the Sylean Stellar Yachting Club are accepted as the standard by 95% of all racing clubs throughout the Imperium. For more details on solar sails, see *GURPS Traveller: Starships* (p. T:S38).

### **Imperial Nobles and Psionics**

Imperial nobles, like all citizens of the Imperium, share (officially, anyway) the popular prejudice against the development and use of psionic talents. Because of their position, nobles in possession of psi talents usually have the resources to develop them, and are generally able to conceal them from public detection and official pressure.

## PASSIONS

Almost everyone has a passion, but nobles are usually able to pursue theirs with minimal fiscal or social restraints.

Scholarship is a common passion. Some nobles endow university chairs, some become university professors, but

many pursue independent study in the best (and worst) tradition of ancient Terran “gentleman scientists.” Some choose to stay at home and immerse themselves in the study of everything written on a topic; others revel in hands-on fieldwork. Subjects range from the mundane and serious to the controversial and crackpot, with every shade in between.

For example, Lord William Kirgashii, the younger brother of the Duke of Rhylanor, holds a doctorate in literature from the University of Rhylanor. He persists in identifying himself as a professor from that institution, although he holds no such status. His life's work involves cataloging the occurrence of pyramids in the Spinward Marches, in pursuit of his hypothesis that they are a consistent remnant of an interstellar society predating known history. He has no formal archeological training, however, and his cataloging consists mostly of highly detailed measurements, maps, and three-dimensional scans, which he subjects to rigorous and idiosyncratic analysis. He compares the ratio of width to height in dozens of structures, for example, and attempts to discover some kind of numerological code present in them. The doctor has made no useful contribution to archeology or literature, although the monographs he publishes hold some interest for students of architecture.

Nobles also indulge in the human tendency of amassing *collections* of interesting objects. The desire to accumulate things is not limited to nobles, but they often have the wealth and resources to pursue their interests to the fullest. A few nobles pursue the collection of illegal items, such as Denuli gems (p. 45) or Ancient artifacts, but the vast majority of nobles stay strictly within the bounds of legality.

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*Loyalty and filialty must be prized, and the rules of ceremonial decorum correctly carried out, and the attention constantly directed to literary cultivation and military accomplishments. Rectitude of conduct is to be made the first concern, so that there may be no degeneration of morals among the lower orders under you.*

*– Laws Governing the Gentry  
(Shoshi Hatto), 1636 A.D.*

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## FINE AND LITERARY ARTS

Artists of all types and levels of talent find patronage from among the nobility. Painting and sculpture are the most common art forms. Nobles also collect artwork in a variety of other forms, including Darrian flame sculpture (pp. T:H42-43), photography, holography, and so on. Even nobles who have no interest in art themselves sometimes commission original works. These make good gifts . . . or bribes, if the recipient would be offended by an offer of cash.

Some Imperial nobles are themselves artists. The Imperial aristocratic culture places value on artistic accomplishment, as a sign of the refinement that sets nobles apart from the common populace. In fact, many nobles with military or administrative duties have no time to cultivate their own artistic talents. But becoming a respected artist is one avenue to social success among local nobles who have no such duties.

Literature is also a common pursuit among the Imperial aristocracy. Many nobles study historical literature; favored periods include the reign of Arbellastra, the foundation era of the Third Imperium, ancient Terra, and ancient Vland. Aside from myth and fiction, there is a persistent fashion for studying old *political* literature – it's not uncommon to find an Imperial noble who can quote Confucius, Plato, or Thomas Hobbes.

As with the fine arts, there are some Imperial aristocrats who have literary pretensions of their own. Many nobles are inveterate diarists, recording their thoughts and experiences for posterity. Others write for publication – there is a healthy tradition of nobles writing under various pseudonyms.



## BEHAVIOR AND ETHICS

All nobles are expected to adhere to certain general standards of behavior. Nobles should obey the law (both local and Imperial), respect those in authority above them, show

concern for those below them, and in general act in the best interests of the Imperium. This, of course, is what is expected of all citizens of the Imperium – but nobles are held to a higher standard, by their own peers and by the general public. Indeed, the higher the noble's rank, the higher the standard to which he is held.

### *Etiquette*

The rules regulating formal behavior are not legally binding, but are strictly enforced nevertheless. Regular violations can result in social ostracism, which can be worse than a prison sentence for some people.

*Etiquette* covers all social interactions between sophonts; it is beyond the scope of this book to deal with it in detail. In general, it consists of always behaving in such a manner as to not offend others by word or deed. Vilani etiquette was extremely strict, and had specific forms for almost every conceivable social situation. Solomani etiquette was based on a combination of Terran cultures mixed heavily with military protocols, and was looser and less restrictive. The etiquette books of the Third Imperium are a fusion of the two, tending more toward the Solomani forms.

In game terms, etiquette is represented by *Savoir-Faire* skill, possibly with a specialization covering a specific society. Specific details (which fork to use, and so on) are left up to the individual GM, should they become important to a game.

The purpose of the early training and education of nobles is to create a body of loyal administrators and functionaries, who can be trusted to act only in the best interests of the Third Imperium and its citizens. As with almost all lofty goals, this one is not completely successful. Over the years, careful selection has produced a group of high nobility (the archdukes and sector dukes) that can usually be relied upon to act in the best interest of the Third Imperium. The system places a great deal of faith in the behavior of this select group, and rewards it for supporting the *status quo*.

This system is strong enough that as long as the upper strata of the nobility remain loyal, a certain degree of "misbehavior" can be tolerated among lesser nobles. Outright criminality cannot be tolerated, of course, but a lowly baron can get away with acts that a sector duke would never dream of. Nobles with governmental duties are usually held to stricter standards, and a lot depends on not getting caught in the act.

Perhaps the most commonly violated tenet of good behavior is the use of position and connections provided by a title for personal gain. Minor government officials sometimes take unfair advantage of their jobs to benefit their families. Occasional white-collar crimes can be committed with relative impunity, provided that the perpetrator takes care not to get careless. Repeated offenses increase the chance of discovery, of course, and the higher up the chain the greater the risks of capture.

## NOBLES AND THE LAW

A common belief among non-nobles (and a major tenet of anti-Imperial propaganda) is that the Imperial peerage is not subject to the same laws as the rest of the citizenry. Nobles *are* often able to hire more talented attorneys, and can sometimes make use of their connections to avoid harsh penalties. Still, Imperial laws apply equally to all Imperial citizens, noble or not.

The same is true of local laws. A peer is subject to the laws of his homeworld. And like any Imperial citizen, a noble visiting another world is bound by local laws when not in an area of Imperial jurisdiction, such as on an Imperial military base or within the extrality line of a starport. In actual practice, local law enforcement often “looks the other way” in startowns, but the further you are from a starport, the less likely it is that police officers will be inclined to ignore infractions of local laws. Likewise, local trials and local sentences apply with full force to all. Visitors must be careful not to offend local sensibilities without offworld connections to extricate them.

There is one major exception to this general rule: peers may only be sentenced to death in an Imperial court (p. 71). The worst penalty any local justice system can impose on a peer is permanent banishment and forfeiture of any local

### *The End*

There are two ways in which a title may cease to exist. First, it may be revoked by the Emperor (or an archduke in the cases of baronetcies and some knighthoods) for cause, and not invested with another family. This is a rare event, and only happens in cases where the crime causing the revocation was especially heinous, tainting the criminal’s title and name forever. Even simple treason (p. 70) is usually not enough – in the case of the Duchy of Ushra, the title, fiefs, and privileges were revoked and removed from the Hansen family, but almost immediately transferred to the Simalr family (p. 111).

The second means by which a title may become extinct is if there is no legitimate heir and the Emperor chooses not to appoint another. Today this is a rare event, although it occurred quite frequently in the period from about 700 to 1000, when the titles of nobles who joined the Solomani Movement were routinely permitted to lapse rather than being handed on to their heirs.

Finally, a title may become extinct if the conditions of the patent specifically forbid its assignment to another family. This is the most common circumstance. It is rare that a family line becomes so attenuated that no relative at all can be found – almost all noble families are related if you go far enough back. Sometimes, the Emperor may decide that a lapsing title has acquired a negative connotation among the populace at large, and should be ended. In this case, it is common for the fief to be awarded to another title, sometimes one newly created for the purpose.

non-Imperial titles. In practice, the Ministry of Justice turns a blind eye to peers convicted of murder, rape, arson, or other major felonies and sentenced to life imprisonment – assuming it approves of the judicial process. Some local worlds have legal systems that are rather . . . unusual by Imperial standards. In especially egregious cases, subsector or even sector authorities may contrive some scheme to try the perpetrator for an Imperial crime.

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*Earls and barons shall not be fined except by their peers, and only in proportion to the gravity of their offence.*

*– Magna Carta, 1215 A.D.*

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## IMPERIAL LAW

Imperial law applies wherever the Imperium exercises sovereignty. The traditional statement is that the Imperium rules the space between the worlds, not the worlds themselves, but this is an oversimplification. Imperial law applies to all locations where the Imperium has decided it applies, which is not really the circular statement it seems at first. This includes all spacecraft (military and civil) traveling within the Imperium, anything within the extrality line of a starport, any place outside the gravity well of a world or star, and all other Imperial installations, regardless of their location. In addition, Imperial law covers all contracts in interstellar commerce. Finally, there are a few Imperial laws, most of them centuries old, which apply to all Imperial citizens and territories.

## PLANETARY LAWS

Planetary laws can hold in orbital and deep space installations, asteroid stations, and other nonplanetary bodies, depending on local circumstances. They do not hold on any Imperial property (p. 38). In the case of a direct conflict between Imperial and local laws, Imperial law is supreme, but this principle is seldom enforced in minor cases.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

Local traditions often impose restrictions on nobles. Sometimes these are part of the title, sometimes not; in the latter case, the question of how closely to adhere to a given custom depends on the individual noble.

For example, the dominant religion of Dlan, in the Domain of Ielish, is the Virasin faith. By local tradition, non-Virasins are required to wear black as a distinguishing feature – a symbol of their unredeemed spiritual state. The late Archduke Dulinor, who was born on Dlan but was not a Virasin, followed this tradition, even when not on Dlan. His daughter Isis (who was also born on Dlan and who also does not follow the Virasin faith), wears black on Dlan out of respect for local tradition, but not offworld.

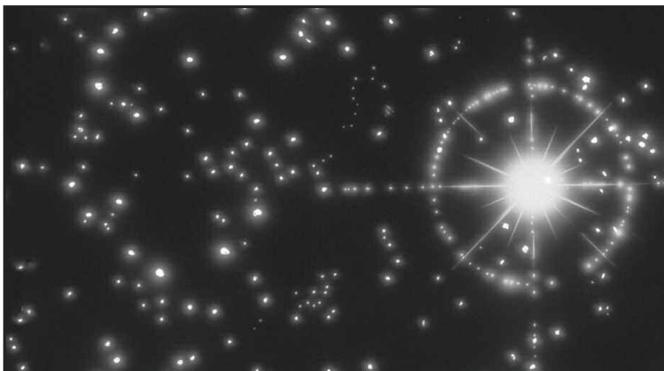
## REINFORCEMENT

Aside from the noble's formal obligation to obey the law and fulfill his assigned duties, there are many less formal obligations incumbent on every noble. The Imperial system has evolved a number of mechanisms for rewarding faithful service – and punishing behavioral violations.

### Rewards

The rewards given for outstanding service depend on the individual situation. Duke Norris' reward for his contribution toward winning the Fifth Frontier War (p. 93) was promotion to the position of Archduke of Deneb. Other rewards may consist of a knighthood, another title, a promotion, or a more important (or at least more prestigious) job. Rewards for lesser deeds may include a mention by name in an Imperial proclamation or speech, a public letter of commendation, and so on. Nobles in the military can be awarded medals and military distinctions, or receive letters of commendation in their personnel files.

Titles and fiefs carry tangible rewards in the form of income and political power. The other awards are often equally valuable, but confer added prestige and respect on their recipients.



### Punishments

An Imperial noble can be stripped of his title for certain high crimes, including, but not limited to, murder or perjury before the Moot. The Emperor can revoke any Imperial title of nobility, while an archduke can revoke those baronetcies (p. 18) and knighthoods (p. 21) under his own control. For example, the Archduke of Gateway can revoke knighthoods in the Order of Gateway, but not in the Order of Sol.

Tradition requires that before a title can be revoked, the accused must be tried under the normal judicial system (pp. 67-71). (Cases of treason are handled differently, see p. 71.) When a noble is convicted of a crime, it is up to the Emperor – or an archduke, as the case may be – to decide if the offense merits the revocation of his title. Titles are revoked by a proclamation voiding the relevant patent of nobility, which usually demands the return or certified destruction of the letter patent (p. 13). A revoked title may go dormant for a time, or may be awarded to someone else. This is normally the designated heir, unless the family is being stripped of the title entirely, no heir is available, or the available heirs are considered unsuitable.

## The Imperial Regalia

Most noble offices in the Third Imperium come with *regalia*, a set of objects used during high ceremonial occasions. Each object in a set of regalia has symbolic importance and probably a long history. Even a lowly baron can have one or two items of regalia – but the Emperor's are priceless objects.

The *Staff of Office* is most important, the symbol of the Emperor's legitimacy as heir to the Ziru Sirka. It is a Vilani artifact, and has been used by Emperors of the First, Second, and Third Imperia for almost 5,000 years. It is said to be a part from one of the "god-robots" abandoned on Vland by the Ancients (p. GT75). It is used only during the coronation ceremony (p. 51).

The *Crown of Cleon* is used only for ceremonial occasions; most of the time the Emperor wears no crown. It is a simple band made of platinum, and was used to crown Cleon I in the first year of the Third Imperium.

The *Imperial Scepter* is a short staff of solid iridium, capped on each end by identical 1,000-carat diamonds. Its origins are unknown, but may have been brought to Capital by one of the Emperors of the Flag between 610 and 615. It has been in constant use since the reign of the Empress Arbellatra, and is often held by the Emperor during ordinary ceremonial occasions.

The *Anointing Bowl* is a blue crystal bowl, presented to Artemsus in 63 by the first Zhodani ambassador to the Third Imperium. The bowl was unused until Arbellatra added the anointing ceremony to the coronation in 629. Arbellatra chose this bowl as a slight to the Zhodani, who had demanded its return when their ambassador left Capital after the outbreak of the First Frontier War.

The *Anointing Spoon* is silver gilt and set with four freshwater pearls. It was brought to Capital after the incorporation of Terra in 588. The Terran merchant who brought it claimed it had belonged to the rulers of pre-industrial Britain.

One item of the Imperial regalia has been lost. Legends say that the *Orb of Power*, a circular metal device discovered during the Long Night, allowed the Emperors to see into the future. It vanished following the murder of Empress Nicholle in 475. Current scholars disagree as to its nature – some believe it was an Ancient artifact with psionic properties.

A lesser punishment is to strip the noble of any fief, sometimes replacing it with a smaller one, while allowing the title to remain. This also requires an Imperial proclamation, as well as the destruction (and replacement, if necessary) of the original patent of nobility.

A noble sentenced to prison for violation of Imperial laws, but not stripped of his title, must immediately forfeit the title to his designated heir. Nobles convicted of local law violations may forfeit any relevant local titles, but usually do not lose their Imperial titles or fiefs.

## DUELING

Duels are a means of settling disputes by force of arms. The custom of dueling grew out of the practice of trial by combat (the judicial duel) on old Terra, and similar traditions on other worlds. The practice is not limited to the nobility, but they are the most common practitioners.

Dueling is forbidden by Imperial military regulations, but this applies only to serving members of the Imperial military. Dueling is not against Imperial law in and of itself, although it can be treated as a criminal offense in a number of ways if the relevant officials wish to – duelists can be charged with assault, attempted murder, and so on. In practice, duels are ignored by Imperial law enforcement, provided no one is killed or seriously injured. Local laws vary considerably on the subject, but many governments frown upon dueling.

High nobles are discouraged from engaging in duels, although many have come from cultures that retain the custom. For many years the Imperial family has done everything it can to discourage dueling – Emperor Paulo III and his son Emperor Strehon have both been opposed to the custom. Still, it is difficult to change so many traditions on so many worlds.

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*For a while, I was employed as a family champion for the Marquis of Westendes, but I quit when I found out that I would not be allowed to use my acerbic wit as a weapon . . . they are rather backward on Westendes.*

– Anton Wilson Peale

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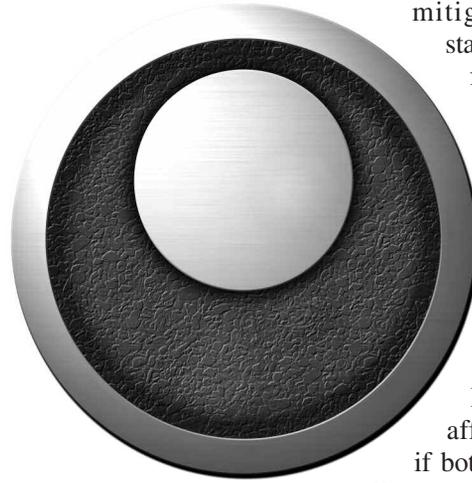
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### A Typical Code Duello

In most places where dueling is permitted or tolerated, the practice has restrictions and procedures. These restrictions are compiled into a *code duello*, or code of dueling, often promulgated by a formal regulatory body. The purpose of a *code duello* is to minimize death and physical injury. Many codes encourage all parties to settle the matter without recourse to violence, and most discourage duels to the death. Most codes encourage duels to be fought with melee weapons, such as swords. Few codes allow duels with missile weapons, and most of those that do limit them to fairly low-powered slug throwers used at ranges where the odds of death are remote.

The following *code duello* is practiced by the inhabitants of Libert/Diaspora, and is descended from a combination of Solomani and Vilani customs. Similar codes hold on hundreds of other Imperial worlds. Under the Libert code, there are three sorts of offenses that may provoke a duel.

A *simple offense* is a disagreement or argument that does not involve personal (*ad hominem*) insults or attacks, but does involve angry words or emotions. Sophonts of breeding strive not to take offense in such cases, especially where



mitigating circumstances such as a different language or inebriation are involved. If matters proceed to a duel, the injured party is the first to claim that he has taken offense.

Honor in such affairs is preserved if both parties agree to disagree, and offer their

apologies to others present for the disruption of the public peace. The parties may continue to discuss the topic calmly and rationally. Merely holding a contrary opinion or belief is not an offense, provided it is expressed with courtesy and respect.

A *personal insult* involves direct attacks on the honor, intelligence, ancestry, or behavior of another. The party receiving the insult is the injured party. Honor is preserved if the offender apologizes and withdraws the insult – calling a sophont a liar, for example, would require an apology for the insult as well as a direct statement of the aggrieved party's veracity. If the offender refuses, the injured party is within his rights to demand satisfaction – that is, a duel.

*Physical violence* consists of a blow or an attempted blow. The party struck is the injured one. A verbal apology may make up for an attempted blow, or for laying hands upon or seizing another, provided the apology is offered immediately. Otherwise, or in the case of a blow that lands, only blood may wipe out the insult.

In all cases, the injured party has choice of weapons, which are chosen from among those customary for the location. Each party chooses a trusted friend to act as second, and the seconds meet and choose a neutral umpire. The umpire and the seconds choose the time and place where the duel takes place, and set any additional ground rules according to local custom (body armor over vital organs, and so on). In all matters, the seconds and the umpire must be guided by the highest standards of fair play and honesty.

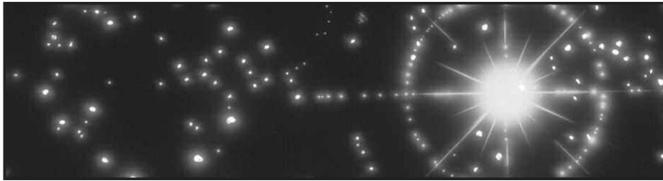
The duelists must commence and cease fighting when directed by the umpire, and abide by the regulations laid down before the duel without fail. It is customary for a medical technician to also be present to provide immediate treatment, especially if no protective armor is provided.

Once the duel has begun, it cannot end unless the offending party apologizes – unless the offense was a blow that landed – or one of the parties draws blood.

Once a duel ends, honor is satisfied and both parties must immediately cease dueling. The seconds and the umpire must intervene to end any contest that continues after honor has been satisfied, especially after blood has been drawn. To continue after first blood is an offense against propriety.

## Aslan Duels

Honor duels are common among Aslan, but those taking place within the Imperium are subject to different regulations. In duels in which both parties are Aslan, no artificial weapons are allowed – the fight must be with the natural Aslan dewclaw. When one party is a member of another race, he may make use of an artificial dewclaw (designed to be similar in size and shape). Imperial regulations prohibit non-Aslan from participating in honor duels against their will, and provide alternative means of settling disputes which preserve the honor of both parties. The rules of Aslan duels vary from world to world, and are covered in detail on p. T:AI19.



## Champions

Cultures that permit trial by combat often allow the use of a *champion*, a substitute who fights in place of one of the combatants. In criminal cases, a salaried champion usually represents the prosecutor, and defendants either hire a freelance fighter, or make use of their family champion (family champions are not uncommon on such worlds). Most societies which tolerate dueling permit a party to select his own champion; in some cases, if a duelist fails to appear at the agreed time his second must fight on his behalf.

## LIFE AT CAPITAL

Most nobles who live on Capital do so for social or political reasons. Capital is the heart of the government of the Imperium, and also the center of its social life. Living on Capital is *very* expensive, as the highly charged environment causes prices for almost everything to rise.

The main reason many people stay on Capital is to see and be seen – to meet people and use them to gain introductions to other people. Life for social-climbing nobles is a continual cycle of parties and entertaining, trying to impress superiors and overwhelm inferiors (p. 42).

As above, so below – the social life, ceremonies, and political intrigue which take place on Capital are replicated in miniature in many places around the Imperium. Every archduke and subsector duke has his own seat of government and his own provincial court. Thus, events typical for the Imperial court are similar to the kind of events that can be expected at a lesser noble's court.

## CEREMONIES

Life at the Imperial court is dominated by ceremony. Ceremonies can range from formal government occasions to informal gatherings . . . if anything the Imperial court does can be considered informal. Appearance and tradition play a large role in ceremonies, as they emphasize the continuity of

Imperial institutions. From a social and political standpoint, the most important ceremonies on Capital are Imperial coronations and audiences with the Emperor.

Ceremonies are also important away from Capital, and most follow the same general pattern, although with adaptations to local custom.

## Coronations

The coronation of a new Emperor is vitally important. It confers authority on the new emperor, and provides a sense of continuity with the past and a link to the future. The current ceremony dates to the ascension of the Empress Arbella-tra, and incorporates elements of coronation rituals stretching back to Cleon I and beyond. The details of the ceremony differ with each new Emperor's wishes, but like other ceremonies, there are traditional aspects that seldom change.

The first element of the coronation ritual is the Moot Ceremony. Escorted by the Imperial family and the colonels of the Imperial Guard regiments, the new Emperor walks the three miles from the Palace to the Moot Spire carrying the Emperor's Staff of Office, stopping occasionally to receive the congratulations of the crowd. As he arrives at the Moot, the doors are slammed in his face as a symbol of the independence of the nobility. The Emperor ritually bangs three times on the door with the Staff of Office, commanding those within: "Open these doors and accept your Emperor." He receives a traditional reply: "No Emperor may enter here." To complete the ritual, the new Emperor drops the Staff on the steps of the Moot (carefully padded with velvet, to avoid damage to the staff), and returns to the Palace by grav car.

Once the Emperor departs from the Moot, the doors are reopened and the nobles emerge, now dressed in their maroon ceremonial robes. The senior archduke present (usually the Archduke of Vland) picks up the Staff of Office, then the assembled nobles proceed to the Imperial Palace.

Upon reaching the Palace, the nobles are escorted into the Long Hall leading to the Throne Room, where they form in rows beneath the banners of the sector dukes, joining ambassadors, religious leaders, and Imperial family members. Once the nobles have assembled, the new Emperor is escorted by the colonels of all the Imperial Guard regiments down the Long Hall into the Throne Room. His ceremonial robes are removed, leaving him dressed only in a white robe, and he kneels in front of the Throne for the anointing ceremony.

The Lord Grand High Chamberlain (p. 54) conducts the actual coronation ceremony. The ceremony begins with the ritual question: "How will you rule?" The Emperor replies, "I make my oath before all present that I will devote my life to protecting all sophont citizens of the Third Imperium. I promise to rule fairly and honestly with the advice of my nobles, to the best of my abilities."

The Lord Grand High Chamberlain then anoints the Emperor's head with water from Terra, announcing: "With this water from the lands where Humaniti began, you are now cleansed of your former life as a citizen and begin life anew as our Emperor. Long may you reign." The Emperor stands, is dressed once again in his robes of state, and then sits on the Iridium Throne for the first time.

## Paging Through the Palace

*I served as a page in the Imperial Palace for three years before entering the university, and it was the best decision I ever made. The main advantage it gives you is connections you can use later in life; a great many very important people pass through the doors of the Imperial Palace, and as a page, your face is likely to be the first they see. The main part of the job was to accompany everyone who entered the Palace to wherever they needed to go, get them in and out with minimum fuss, and to stay as unobtrusive as possible.*

*I didn't much care for the design of the uniforms – the basic cut wasn't too bad, they were all custom-fitted and the sash was kind of dashing, but there was too much braid, bric-a-brac, and hanging cords with knots at the end. The basic colors were changed every shift, and tended toward pastels – sky blue, almond, pale yellows, browns, purples, greens, and crimsons. I looked good in some of them and horrible in others. We were not allowed to use any service colors, so there was no danger of any of us being mistaken for the myriad Marine, Navy, or Scout officers swarming everywhere. And those of us who got Throne Room duty got the top of the line: pure white with silver trim, an absolute nightmare to keep clean and crisp looking, even in the near operating-room cleanliness of the Throne Room. The stuff almost showed **finger-prints**.*

*The other thing the uniforms had was a sophisticated tracking system (with all that braid, we probably showed up on radar), and a comm link that enabled us to talk to Security, the Chamberlain's office, or the library computer. This last was especially valuable when we had to give a "tour guide" lecture: "This wing was added under the reign of Artemsus, and all the corridors are faced with Carrera marble from Terra. To the left is the portrait of Admiral Fonebone, who led the Imperial Navy to victory during the Third War of Jenkins' Ear."*

*The locators always knew where we were and what speech to feed you, so all you had to do was repeat what the little voice was whispering in your ear and be alert for what the guest was doing.*

*You could turn the sound monitoring circuitry off when you were in the lounge between gigs, and when you were answering calls of nature – the locators were always on, however, as was the medical telemetry. Don't want someone knocking you over the head and slipping the leash, after all . . .*

*– Doctor Sir Ganidiirsi Evanston Jolielt,  
Imperial Interstellar Scout Service, retired*

Once the Emperor is seated, he is invested with the Imperial regalia (p. 49). The senior baron and marquis in attendance present the Emperor with the Imperial Scepter, symbolizing his position as a military leader. The senior viscount, count, and duke then present him with the Staff of Office, representing his link to the First Imperium. Finally, the senior archduke places the Crown of Cleon on the

Emperor's head, saying, "With this, the Crown of Cleon, founder and first Emperor of the Third Imperium, we, the Moot, your subjects, crown you as Emperor of the 11,000 Worlds of the Third Imperium. Long may you reign."

At this point, the Emperor has officially been placed in office and can receive the oaths of fealty of the assembled nobles. This ceremony often lasts for many hours, as there are usually over 1,000 nobles on Capital at any one time. The senior archduke is the first to proceed; he kneels, kisses the Staff of Office, and swears the traditional formula of allegiance. He then leaves the Throne Room entirely. Likewise, every noble present then comes forward, highest-ranking nobles first, (now in the usual order of precedence, see p. 30) to swear his oath and leave the Throne Room. Religious leaders and ambassadors also come forward to offer their congratulations. Finally, the Throne Room is empty of everyone except the Emperor's immediate family.

At this point, the coronation ceremony is over. By tradition, the Emperor comes out onto the balcony of the Imperial Palace to greet his subjects. The tension of the long ceremonial is over, and Capital often responds with a night of riotous celebration.

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*When introduced to the Emperor at age three, I was slightly nervous. When Strephon greeted me, I'm told I buried my face in mother's gown, but Strephon's gentle manner soon persuaded me to come out.*

*– Lady Mala Upamwe Hortalez*

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## Imperial Audiences

By ancient tradition, Emperors receive formal visitors in reverse order of their rank – an example of the principle "the last shall be first" (p. 30), and a demonstration of the esteem in which the Imperial family holds the ordinary Imperial citizen. In practice, few non-nobles ever receive audiences with the Emperor, as most problems are handled at a lower level. Non-nobles usually appear before the Emperor only to receive some honor or award.

All audiences are held in the Throne Room in the Imperial Palace. Audiences may be conducted daily or not, depending on the time of year and the press of business. Morning audiences last four to six hours, and end at midday when the Emperor dines. The length of the midday meal has varied widely over the years; Strephon traditionally has a light lunch and is back in the throne room within half an hour, but more indolent Emperors have often taken hours or even cancelled afternoon audiences altogether. After the meal the afternoon audiences begin, lasting between six and eight hours depending on how many visitors are waiting. Lengthy audiences are often interrupted by short breaks of 10 to 20 minutes, during which time the Emperor retreats to a chamber behind the throne.

As visitors are received in reverse order of their rank (p. 30), morning audiences are usually filled with non-nobles and low-level nobles, presenting petitions or receiving appointments or awards. In the afternoon, higher-ranking officials submit reports or receive commissions, titles, and appointments. Late afternoons are reserved for receiving foreign delegations or embassies. Again, these are received in reverse order; diplomats receive honorary ranks and seniority, according to the significance of the polity they represent and the length of time they have served at Capital (p. 13).

By very old tradition, all translations during an audience with the Emperor are carried out by living translators rather than by machine, even in the case of Hivers. The reason for this is appearance – translators enhance the spectacle, and there is something mundane and ordinary about machine translation.

### *Presentation of Dignitaries*

When foreign diplomats arrive at Capital, they are required to present their credentials to the Emperor as soon as is reasonable. This is usually done at an Imperial audience on the next business day after their arrival on Capital. The diplomat is brought before the Emperor by the Minister of State, who presents the diplomat to the Emperor. The diplomat then reads from his *letter of credence*, a formal request from the diplomat's head of government asking in highly formal diplomatic language that the Emperor receive him as an accredited representative. After the reading, the Minister of State takes the letter and hands it to the Emperor, who examines it and formally recognizes the diplomat's credentials by endorsing them and affixing an official seal. The Emperor makes a short speech welcoming the diplomat to the Imperium and the letter of credence is taken away to be filed away with all the others received over the years. The Emperor then affixes the seal to an Imperial Proclamation of welcome, and the presentation is concluded.

### *Investitures*

Because of the distances involved, ceremonies for investiture of noble titles are seldom performed on Capital. Most new and inheriting nobles receive their letter patents (p. 13) by Imperial courier. Only on special occasions, such as the simultaneous investiture of Isis and Norris on 001-1117 (p. 97), is there a formal ceremony at the Imperial Palace.

When the Emperor himself performs an investiture, the ceremony can be quite elaborate and majestic. Since there are so few Imperial investiture ceremonies, each Emperor develops his own details, but the broad outlines are generally the same. The candidate is summoned from a larger audience – usually every peer who can reasonably attend. He approaches the Emperor unannounced by the Lord Grand High Chamberlain, and unescorted by stewards or footmen. He then kneels before the Emperor, who delivers a short speech and accepts the candidate's oath of fealty. The Emperor presents the candidate with an item of regalia symbolizing his new status – a circlet for an archduke, some other item for a lesser noble. He then bids the new noble rise, calling him by his

new title and presenting the newly invested noble to the assembled peers and the citizens of the Imperium.

Most new nobles undergo a ceremony closer to home, often at the nearest subsector capital. A high noble, always of higher rank than the new noble, presides over the ceremony as the Emperor's stand-in. The details of the ceremony again vary, but the swearing of an oath of fealty to the Emperor is always included. For a knighthood, the ancient ritual of "dubbing" with a sword is used, and the noble presiding over the ceremony must himself be a knight of the same order into which the new noble is being initiated.



### *Weddings*

As far as the Imperium is concerned, the main purpose of marriage is to regulate inheritance. Marriage ceremonies are mostly a matter for local law and custom. The Imperium requires only that a formal document attesting that the marriage was performed at a stated time and place, according to the customs of the locale, and signed by at least two witnesses. Imperial state weddings are held on Capital, usually following an ancient Sylean marriage ceremony, and can be extremely elaborate.

## Funerals

State funerals, like many other Imperial ceremonies, have both a religious and a secular component. The precise details vary depending on the religion of the deceased, his wishes (as expressed in a will or in life), and the wishes of his family.

The secular component consists of a public display of the deceased or his coffin (if the religion prohibits viewing the body) for a period of time that varies with the prestige and rank of the deceased. Normally, the coffin is displayed in a public place, sheltered from the elements. During this display, mourners are permitted to pay their respects in person or by means of closed circuit holo-vision. In some cases, where the religion or custom of the deceased dictates it, other arrangements for mourners are made.

After a period of display, a funeral ceremony will be held. This does not normally involve the coffin, but it is customary for one or more images of the deceased to be displayed by hologram or other means. Someone close to the deceased delivers a eulogy, a speech honoring the deceased and recalling his achievements.

## THE IMPERIAL PALACE

The Imperial Palace on Capital is, in a sense, the manorial residence of a noble, the Emperor. Its protocols and administrative structure are similar to those of many other nobles' courts, although on a much grander scale.

The Imperial Household is responsible for the comfort and well being of the Imperial family, and also helps them carry out their official duties. It is divided into several departments.



## Office of the Emperor

Each member of the Imperial family has a personal staff, under the general administration of the Office of the Emperor, which is headed by an official named the *Imperial Major-domestic*. This department includes the personal servants of each member of the Imperial family (including valets and maids), correspondence secretaries, and personal assistants. Strephon insists that the “body servants” (valets, maids, and so on) be kept to a minimum, and there are less than a dozen for the whole family at any given time.

Each member of the Imperial family other than the Emperor has an aide attached to the Office of the Emperor from the Unified Armies, Navy, Marines, or Scout Service. These aides serve a year or two before moving on to other positions, and are in charge of protocol arrangements. Appointments as aides are highly sought after by younger children of the high nobility, since it enables them to make very valuable personal contacts that will be helpful to them in later years.

## Office of the Palace

The Office of the Palace is a very large department, headed by an officer called the Chancellor of the Palace. This office is charged with carrying out all official and unofficial court ceremonies – the shows of Imperial grandeur and majesty that include formal audiences with the Emperor, courts, speeches, addresses, parties, balls, dances, receptions, cotillions, feasts, and other celebrations.

This Office of the Palace includes all the ceremonial officeholders of the court, from the Lord Grand High Chamberlain down to the pages (p. 52) who escort guests through the labyrinth that is the Imperial Palace. The Chancellor also oversees huge staffs of housekeeping, maintenance, and technical personnel, who operate out of the public eye and keep the Palace operating smoothly.

All court ceremonies are broadcast in several media and made available throughout the Imperium, so as to get maximum public relations benefit out of them. People enjoy gala presentations – and the more colorful, the better.

*Lord Grand High Chamberlain:* The chief ceremonial office in the Imperial Palace is that of Lord Grand High Chamberlain. This office is a hereditary position, which since 1003 has been held by the Archdukes of Sol. Since the archduke is rarely in residence on Capital, he delegates the position to another peer from the Imperium's rimward provinces. The Lord Grand High Chamberlain is responsible for formally escorting all visitors to the Imperial throne during formal courts, and introduces all guests at formal receptions, balls, and other court social events.

The Lord Grand High Chamberlain is assisted by a number of Vice-Chamberlains. Their duties are primarily administrative, although a few of them are required to serve at lesser functions which may compete with more important ones. (The Lord Grand High Chamberlain cannot be in two places at once, after all.)

*Monitors:* Monitors keep track of who is where, and who is approaching at any given time, and feed their information to the Lord Grand High Chamberlain and his subordinates by means of short-range radio. Some chamberlains have a permanent receiver surgically installed in their mastoid, while others simply wear a small microdot receiver behind their ear lobe; the choice is a matter of personal preference. The monitors identify people by extensive facial recognition programs in their computers, and by their own knowledge of the court and incoming visitors. Monitors work with the Office of Security (p. 56) and the units of the Imperial Guard regiments to identify and take into custody any suspicious persons trying to enter the Palace.

*Pages:* Each visitor, upon being passed by the security checkpoint at the entrance to the palace, is met by a page who guides him through the halls and passageways of the Palace to their destination, and out again. The page's job is to make sure no visitor gets lost or goes someplace he shouldn't. Pages are equipped with ornate uniforms, which incorporate tracking and communications gear, and are chosen for their intelligence, social skills, tact, and, last but not least, the ability to think fast. Pages are trained in protocol and first aid, and are expected to report any suspicious behavior they observe in any guest.

A page is assigned to each visitor to the Imperial Palace, except for high nobles, flag officers, and those bound for a personal audience with the Emperor – these guests are assigned an officer from one of the Imperial Guard regiments. There are several hundred pages on duty at any given time, and a pool stands by ready to go on duty at any time. Service as a page is an excellent way for an aspiring person to make a very good impression on the powers that be . . . and an excellent way to earn a very bad reputation if he messes things up.

*Footmen:* Footmen are the “gophers” of the Imperial Palace. They carry messages, bring drinks and snacks, serve meals during formal dinners, carry luggage, and do the general scut work. Their uniforms have communicators and locators, like the pages, but are generally less ornate, as their job is to blend into the background rather than attract attention. Security personnel are often assigned to duties as footmen to disguise their presence; it is rumored that half the footmen in the Throne Room at any given moment are from the Security Office.

Like pages, footmen have their own group of remote monitors. Footmen are trained in first aid and the protocols necessary for their duties. Security men assigned as footmen have the same skills, but also have both armed and unarmed combat skills. Few “brute” footmen (as the others call them) are armed – there are more than enough armed soldiers in the Palace – but all of them are trained to act swiftly at need, and few of them find weapons necessary.

## ***The Imperial Guard***

The Imperial Guard is the personal huscarle unit (p. 62) of the Emperor. It is a corps-sized combat team, managed on a day-to-day basis by a lieutenant general with administrative support from the Imperial High Command. The Emperor is the Guard's overall commander, and indeed the Guard is the only unit of the Unified Armies under his direct leadership. He also holds the honorary rank of Colonel in each regiment, allowing him to dine with his officers and men without the pomp of an Imperial visit.

The Guard has nine Rapid Interface Regiments, each composed of three Rapid Interface Battalions (p. T:GF24) with their support units. Seven of the regiments are drawn from the various domains of the Imperium. There is also a separate Guard regiment made up solely of Imperial Aslan. Backing the drop troops are the Household Cavalry Regiment and the Imperial Artillery (a full Lift Artillery Regiment). Along with the Army troopers, there is also a Marine Guard Regiment, which serves under Army command.

Standards for a guardsman are strict. All troops are volunteers, and must meet standards not only for military excellence, but for physical size as well. Skills in music, drill, ceremony, and even dance are valued. Guardsmen serve a seven-year rotation, with a year allowed for travel time to and from the home sector. Once on Capital, newly assigned Guardsmen find themselves standing post at little-used entrances to the palace grounds, and spending endless time drilling. Members of the Household Cavalry learn to ride a variety of traditional cavalry mounts.

When not drilling or guarding the palace, Guardsmen perform numerous duties in and around the palace grounds. Junior officers, in particular, are used as gophers and messengers. A full company sits in battle dress on ready alert at all times, and there is the constant grind of inspections to deal with.

Most citizens of the Imperium see the Guard in their ceremonial role. The duty regiment stands at each entrance to the palace grounds, patrols those grounds, and escorts the Emperor to his throne at the beginning of each day. The monthly changeover of the Guard Regiment is an extravaganza that attracts thousands of spectators. But the Guards really *are* highly trained soldiers who have won many battle honors. The Aslan Guard, for example, returned home from the Solomani Rim War with high praise and many decorations.

The regiments of the Guard are the Sylea Guard (established 0), the Vland Guard (established 0), the Gateway Guard (established 123), the Ilelish Guard (established 123), the Antares Guard (established 123), the Imperial Artillery (established 248), the Household Cavalry (established 248), the Aslan Guard (established 380), the Deneb Guard (established 589), the Marine Guard (established 629), and the Sol Guard (established 123, disbanded 990, and reinstated 1050).

## *Office of Personal Transportation*

This section is primarily concerned with the operation and maintenance of the various spacecraft at the disposal of the Imperial family, some of them temporarily detached from the Imperial Navy. It also operates numerous atmospheric and ground vehicles, as well as the private subway tunnels connecting the Palace with the Moot Spire and other buildings in and around Capital.

## *Office of Security*

The head of the Office of Security is technically the Commander of the Imperial Guard, but in practice he normally leaves this to the Executive Director, who is usually a baron. While the Imperial Guard is responsible for the physical protection of the Emperor and the Imperial Palace, the Office of Security oversees the myriad tasks that are not military in nature, but are still important. Security specialists, technicians, and special operatives are detached to this office from the Navy, the Marines, the Scouts, the Army, and other bodies. They sweep the Palace for bugs, make sure the food, water, and other supplies are clean and harmless, periodically review psychological profiles on everyone who enters the Palace, and carry out hundreds of other mundane but vital tasks to safeguard the Imperial family.

## *The Ancients Foundation*

This organization is funded through the Imperial purse, but staffed and operated by personnel from the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service, or occasionally drawing upon the Imperial Marines and the Navy. It is in charge of the protection, excavation, investigation, and security of all Ancient sites within the Imperium and in almost all Imperial client states. It also prepares reports on all known Ancient artifacts, purchases or otherwise secures existing ones, assigns them to various institutions for study, and is constantly looking for new ones. Field operatives of the Ancients Office are usually detached from the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service or one of the Imperial military services.

The Director of the Ancients Foundation is a marquis, and maintains an office within the Imperial Palace, with an assistant director and seven staff. His task is to keep the Emperor informed on research into the Ancients, by coordinating reports from the field and assembling them into a coherent picture.

## *Imperial Reservations Office*

Over the years, the Imperial family has acquired the exclusive use of various locations throughout the Imperium. These Imperial Reservations consist of hunting preserves, scenic wilderness areas, secure palaces, and other facilities – even a few private worlds (p. 37).

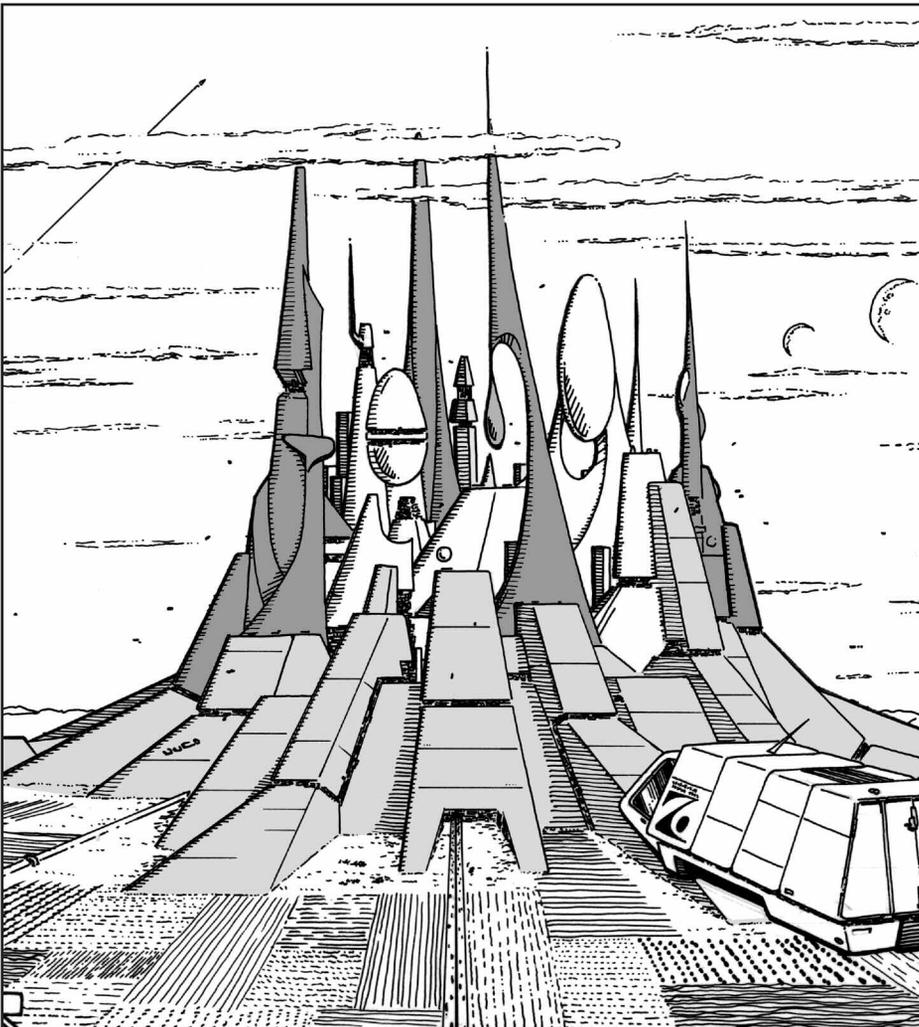
They are intended to provide secure locations for the Imperial family during their travels through the Imperium, and are constantly staffed, even though some of them have not been visited in generations.

The Director of the Imperial Reservations Office administers the reservations on behalf of the Imperial family. He is usually a marquis, and maintains a small administrative office (an assistant director and five communications techs and clerks) within the Imperial Palace.

## *The Imperial Palace Staff*

The Imperial Palace Staff is responsible for all official activities and is headed by the Emperor's Seneschal (also known as the Imperial Chief of Staff). It consists mostly of aides, secretaries, clerks, researchers, assorted specialists and advisors, and so on.

There are many subdivisions, but the only significant one is the Office of News and Public Relations. This is the propaganda arm of the Imperial government, and is descended from the old Ministry of Information used by Cleon I.



# Duties and Responsibilities

*“Please identify yourself for the record,” the prosecutor requested.*

*The man standing in the witness box stood tall, his voice crackling with pride and authority as he responded. “I am Baron Sir Mazun Vasiliyev haut-Numar of Kunumi, Knight of the Order of the Starship and Crown, Knight of the Ancient Order of Vland. I hold the rank of Commander in the Imperial Navy.”*

*Baron haut-Numar controlled his expression, remaining apparently unmoved as his eyes rested for a moment on the man seated at the defendant’s table. Today, at last, he would have his revenge. Patient investigation for seven long years and finally it was all ready: dates, places, names, size and destination of “cargoes,” amounts paid. The evidence was plentiful, and it amounted to an ironclad case against the Count of Vhodan. The man who had destroyed the Baron’s father now stood accused of profiting from commerce in slaves. He would be lucky to escape this court with his life, much less his rank and titles.*

*Many people had contributed to the investigation, and indeed the case was under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice rather than the Navy. The Baron could have left most of the Navy’s testimony to his subordinates. Personal pride forbade it. He would deliver the testimony himself, watching his enemy’s face as the wall of facts closed in. When the sentence was passed, the Baron would be there to hear it.*

*Yet why did the Count look so confident?*

*“Thank you, my lord,” said the prosecutor. “My lord, perhaps you would begin by informing the court, in your own words, as to the events of 118-1113?”*

*“Certainly,” said haut-Numar. “On that date I was master of the Imperial patrol cruiser **Poseidon**, stationed in the Odinaga system. An armed Vargr merchantman violated lane controls and fled when ordered to stand down. We intercepted the merchantman, disabled her drives, and boarded her. What we found . . .”*

Nobles are expected to “earn their keep” in the Third Imperium. Almost all nobles have duties and responsibilities inherent in their position, although these vary tremendously from individual to individual and from place to place. Many nobles have some role in the Imperial government or in local administration. Those that do not may still have social responsibilities that require their attention.

## THE HIGH NOBILITY

Imperial government is controlled by the high nobility (p. 12), those aristocrats who act as direct representatives of

the Emperor. The Imperium, as it is often said, rules the space between the worlds – it is the high nobles that administer that rule.

## GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

High noble administration consists of several specific duties.

First, high nobles supervise the operation of the various executive ministries of the Imperium. They ensure that the ministries operate effectively, and that they remain within the parameters of Imperial policy as set by the Emperor.

High nobles also operate the Imperial courts (p. 67). This duty may require acting as a judge for some important cases, but it usually consists of monitoring the actions of lesser judges and reviewing their decisions.

High nobles also do most of the work of managing the Imperium’s finances. They collect tariffs, tolls, taxes, and levees from member worlds. They see to it that revenues are spent in a way that benefits the Imperium as a whole and their piece of it in particular. The most visible items controlled by the high nobility are the starports and the military, but there are also bureaucratic expenses, interest on loans and bonds, and salaries to staff. A portion of the tax revenue is always passed on to higher levels; a large portion of the Emperor’s official revenues derives from taxes collected by high nobles all over the Imperium.

Finally, the high nobles monitor the operations of the Imperial military at the highest levels. They sometimes assume direct command of military forces in times of emergency.

## Archdukes

The archdukes of the Imperium are responsible for Imperial government in each of the seven domains, thus relieving the Emperor of some of the pressure of government. The system of domains is an old institution, recently given new life by Emperor Strephon – for centuries before his reign the position of Archduke was largely ceremonial (p. 89).

Under Strephon the archdukes have been encouraged to accept greater responsibility for handling local affairs (including military commands) using their own judgment. This enables the Imperial government to react more swiftly to local crises, and makes the government more flexible and attentive to the needs of the citizens. Archdukes are also responsible for the administration of Imperial justice within their respective domains, but they delegate most of this to the sector dukes.

## Ducal Succession

In each sector of the Imperium, one subsector duke rises to become the first among his peers, holding the position of sector duke. How is this accomplished? Meanwhile, the position of sector duke is not strictly hereditary, so what happens when a sector duke dies? This is one of the few aspects of noble succession that is not under the sole control of the Emperor.

Under the normal procedure, a sector duke holds his position and passes it to his heir unless he loses the confidence of his peers. At any time except during a state of war or some other emergency, any subsector duke in the same sector can call for a vote of no confidence in the sector duke's administration. Making such a call is an extremely dangerous move from a political standpoint – if the vote fails, the duke who called for it risks punishment from the Iridium Throne itself.

The exact definition of the electorate varies from sector to sector, but it is usually defined as all the local peers holding the rank of count and above. When a vote of no confidence is called for, the electors meet as soon as possible at a place specified by custom – this is usually the sector capital, but it is often simply the system that all electors can get to most easily. The vote is counted by the three senior peers in the sector, seniority in this case being determined by the length of time they have held their titles. A vote of at least two-thirds of the electorate is required to confirm a finding of no confidence.

If a vote of no confidence is passed, the electors choose a new sector duke. A majority vote for a single candidate is required; the electors may vote multiple times before a clear winner emerges. Only subsector dukes are eligible to receive votes for the position of sector duke.

Subsector dukes are sometimes chosen by a similar procedure. Since most subsectors only have one duke, this means that the position of subsector duke is *usually* hereditary – in practice, the process of selecting a new one only occurs when a subsector duke dies without a clear heir. There are fewer electors in a subsector, and the distances involved are shorter, so things go faster. Every peer in a subsector gets to vote for subsector duke, but only dukes are eligible candidates unless none are available in the subsector.

As usual, the Emperor can override the selection of a sector or subsector's peers, and resolve ducal succession by an Imperial decree (p. 93).

## Sector and Subsector Dukes

In theory, every Imperial sector has a duke (known as the *sector duke*) in overall control, and up to 16 lesser dukes (known as *subsector dukes*) operating at the subsector level. The sector duke always holds one of the subsector-duke positions as well.

Each sector has different requirements and customs, of course – a few sectors have no sector duke, and many sectors

do not have the full complement of 16 subsector dukes (for an example, see p. 18). Sector dukes have a well-defined role in the chain of Imperial military command, acting to supervise the sector fleets. Subsector dukes oversee the local commands of the Unified Armies of the Imperium, and sometimes have a role in naval leadership as well.

Sector and subsector dukes are by definition the most powerful and influential dukes in their respective areas. A ducal title is almost always hereditary, but the specific positions of sector and subsector duke are not necessarily hereditary; shifting power bases and alliances can cause them to change hands from one ducal family to another. Likewise, positions lower in the aristocratic hierarchy are occasionally subject to change. The specific peer to whom an individual noble is directly responsible can change over time, reflecting the changing political situation in a given region.

These changes are the most significant factor encouraging competition among Imperial nobles. Many high nobles are constantly maneuvering to enhance their positions, and the barons and marquises under them are often involved in this effort. Even in areas where there is a clear external threat, such as the Spinward Marches or the Solomani Rim, there is a level of internal tension despite the obvious need for unanimity. Some consider this the greatest flaw of the system of nobility practiced within the Imperium.

## Viscounts and Counts

Clusters of three or more Imperial worlds are sometimes placed under the direct supervision (although usually not the direct control) of a viscount or count. Over the centuries, the importance of some worlds has changed. For political reasons, most Emperors are hesitant to remove a count noble from one of these positions, and they are usually given some ceremonial task to make up for their dwindling real power. Some viscounts, and even a few counts, now find themselves in charge of worlds (or clusters of worlds) whose importance is minimal.

## Lesser Nobles

Marquises and barons in the high nobility are assigned to single Imperial worlds. Aside from their duties as high nobles (p. 57), marquises and barons often occupy positions in the Imperial bureaucracy or serve as judges.

Every world in the Imperium has at least a baron associated with it, but not every world has its own high noble. Many marquises and barons are not involved with local government, except in the rather nebulous position of *Imperial liaison* (p. 76). Some of them have never seen their backwater worlds, preferring to spend their whole lives closer to the centers of Imperial society.

## THE IMPERIAL MANDATE

The Imperial system of government operates on two parallel “chains of command.” Both chains pass from the Emperor, down through multiple layers of authority, ending with the billions of rank-and-file sophonts who do the everyday work of government. One chain is made up of the bulk

of the Imperial civilian ministries and military organizations; the other consists only of the Imperium's high nobles.

These paired chains of command are intended to make the Imperial system both robust and flexible. The bureaucracy works according to procedure and precedent, keeping the Imperial government working smoothly during normal times. When an emergency arises, and bureaucratic procedure can't respond appropriately, the high nobility has the authority to cut through the red tape and mobilize Imperial resources to meet the crisis.

In short, the Imperial bureaucracy and military manage Imperial government, but it is ultimately *controlled* by the high nobility in the name of the Emperor. The legal authority under which the high nobles exert this control is called the *Imperial Mandate*.

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*The Imperium insists that loyalties be undivided, so no noble ever "does homage" to anyone but the Emperor.*

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### *Origins*

The Imperial Mandate is one of the legal concepts that underlie the Third Imperium as a whole. Like many of these fundamental concepts, Cleon I first developed it at the foundation of the Imperium. The Imperial Mandate is an expression of the authority held by the Imperium's high nobility. It is also an expression of the *legitimacy* of that authority, the legal and ethical basis for Imperial rule. With the consent of the Imperial Moot (p. 72), the Emperor holds the Imperial Mandate, and permits the high nobles of the Imperium to wield it on his behalf within their assigned territories.

Cleon's concept of the Imperial Mandate was originally derived from ancient Vilani legal theory, especially the concept of *karunargur* ("emperor's merit"). The *karunargur* was a quality held by the *karun* or ruler, incorporating both his worthiness to govern for the benefit of all the people, and his right to claim the authority to do so. The ruler was "vested" with *karunargur* by tradition, and he could lose the quality if he ruled in such a way as to break tradition.

Cleon was also influenced by several ancient Terran political ideas. For example, certain elected magistrates of the Roman republic held a type of authority called *imperium*. The Senate and the People of Rome invested *imperium* in the magistrate, conferring on him the legitimate right to wield authority in pursuit of his duties. Even after the fall of the republic, the Roman Emperors maintained the fiction that *imperium* was a quality conferred by the Senate.

Another Terran concept that may have influenced Cleon's thinking was the Chinese idea of *t'ien ming*, or "the Mandate of Heaven." This idea was originally used by the Chou dynasty to legitimize its rule over China. It held that the divine beings of "heaven" were interested in Human welfare, and so appointed rulers to govern on Terra. So long as the ruling dynasty acted wisely and with justice, "heaven"

## ***Fealty and Homage***

In the ancient European feudal system, each noble was the *vassal* of a superior noble – even the king, who was the vassal of God. A vassal owed *fealty* and *homage* to his overlord. These two concepts were nearly synonymous and were often used interchangeably.

Under the Imperial system, fealty and homage are distinct; the two Galanglic words have changed in meaning and are no longer interchangeable. *Fealty* applies to the tangible duties owed to the Imperium, while *homage* applies to the noble's personal loyalty to the Emperor.

The Imperium insists that loyalties be undivided, so no noble ever "does homage" to anyone but the Emperor. On the other hand, when a noble swears fealty to the Emperor, he is promising to serve the Imperium in tangible ways under the Emperor's supervision – and the Emperor can delegate the task of providing that supervision. In practice, this means that most nobles report to the Emperor through a chain of superiors.

Every Imperial baron or marquis has a title associated with a specific world within the Imperium, even if the title is not the primary one for that world, or if the title has no associated fief. That world often falls within some cluster of worlds associated with an Imperial viscount or count – in which case the baron or marquis reports to that count noble rather than directly to the Emperor. Similarly, the viscount or count reports to his local subsector duke, who reports to the sector duke, who reports to the archduke, who finally reports to the Emperor.

There are many exceptions to this system, especially if one of the links in the chain is missing. For example, if there is only one Imperial world in a subsector, any baron or marquis assigned to that world probably doesn't have a viscount, count, or duke directly over him. He instead reports to a count noble in a neighboring subsector, or usually directly to the nearest duke. In any case, the subordination of one noble to the other is often purely formal in nature – most Imperial barons rarely speak to their immediate superior, and are unlikely to consult with him before taking any but the most unusual and important action.

Informal discussions of the Imperial system often refer to a subordinate noble as the "vassal" of the noble to whom he reports. This is technically incorrect – under Imperial law, all nobles are vassals of the Emperor *only*, to whom they owe homage as well as fealty. Still, the usage is a convenient way to indicate to whom each noble is immediately responsible for his actions.

would maintain it in power. If the dynasty began to act unjustly, or with selfish interests at heart, then "heaven" would remove the Mandate and confer it on another family. The family now holding the Mandate would then have the right and the obligation to rebel, depose the rulers, and establish a new dynasty.

Today, the Roman concept of *imperium* is still referred to occasionally. Cleon I explicitly mentioned it a number of times in private letters and public speeches. Letters patent from the earliest days of the Third Imperium sometimes used the term explicitly to describe the authority being vested in the new noble. Meanwhile, the Vilani concept of *karunargur* and the Chinese concept of the Mandate of Heaven have their own echoes in present-day political theory. Several of the Emperors (notably Cleon III and Jacqueline) have been said to have “lost the Imperial Mandate” before being deposed by assassination or rebellion.

## Organization of the Mandate

Today, every Imperial high noble is said to wield the Imperial Mandate over a defined territory, or over a specific set of Imperial activities. The territory or set of activities over which a high noble can wield the Mandate is called his *demesne*.

The demesnes conferred on various high nobles are carefully arranged. The demesnes of two nobles at the same level in the feudal hierarchy (two barons, two counts, and so on) almost never overlap. Naturally there are exceptions, sometimes leading to disputes that must be resolved by nobles at a higher level of authority.

Meanwhile, every high noble’s demesne falls entirely within that of another high noble at a higher level of authority. This means that every high noble is subject to the authority of a feudal superior, in a chain of command leading up to the Emperor himself.

An Imperial baron is the lowest-ranking noble who can wield the Mandate. His demesne is no larger than a single Imperial star system, the one associated with his title and in which his fief is located. In some star systems, more than one baron is assigned to wield the Mandate; in such cases, the barons’ demesnes are carefully defined to prevent any overlap. The star system may be subdivided into territorial units, or certain Imperial activities may be placed under the supervision of one baron no matter where they occur in the system.

A high noble marquis usually has a demesne covering an entire star system. Any high noble barons in the same star system are under the marquis’ supervision.

A viscount or count in the high nobility has a demesne composed of a small cluster of star systems, and wields the Mandate everywhere in that cluster. He supervises the activities of any marquises and barons in his demesne. He is also the first noble to wield the Mandate over any territories in his county demesne that have no high-noble baron or marquis of their own.

A high noble duke has a demesne of at least an entire subsector. Like a count, he supervises the activities of all subordinate nobles in his subsector, and he may wield the Mandate directly over star systems that have no baron, marquis, or count of their own. Meanwhile, one duke per sector rises to the position of sector duke, holding the Mandate over all Imperial activities organized at the sector level.

An archduke is a high noble by definition, and supervises all of the subordinate dukes, counts, marquises, and barons

in his four-sector domain. Finally, the Emperor can wield the Imperial Mandate anywhere in the Imperium, overriding any orders or policies issued by his subordinates.

A number of functions of Imperial government are organized at the subsector level or higher rather than at the level of individual star systems. For example, every subsector capital includes offices of the various Imperial ministries. These offices fall into the demesne of the subsector duke, not that of any of the lesser nobles whose territories include the world on which the subsector capital is located. Similarly, the Unified Armies of the Imperium are commanded at the subsector level. As a result, Imperial Army command structures fall into the demesne of a duke, not that of any lesser noble. Similar arrangements occur at the sector, domain, and Imperial level.



## Authority

A noble with the Imperial Mandate over a given territory has far-reaching authority to command *all Imperial activities and personnel* within his demesne.

Every Imperial world has some number of Imperial servants assigned to local administration. At a minimum, Starport Authority personnel man the Imperial Starport, and there are a few Ministry of Commerce officials assigned to the task of collecting Imperial taxes. If the world is important enough, there is one or more Imperial courts of justice assigned to it, each with its own staff. There are also likely to be some Imperial diplomats assigned to liaison duty with local government. On some worlds, there is a scout base, or at least a team of IISS personnel supporting local scientific or diplomatic efforts, and there may be an Imperial research station. Depending on the history behind the world’s admission, the Imperium may own or control other facilities on the world – a terraforming project, a network of hydroelectric power plants, or something similar.

All of these local facilities and personnel come under the Imperial Mandate of the high noble assigned to the world. The high noble supervises their activities, and can give them legally binding orders. Every individual in Imperial service is responsible to a superior in his own organization or ministry, but he is also directly responsible to the high noble under whose Mandate he is assigned.

Meanwhile, every high noble has the job of enforcing Imperial law within his demesne. He has the authority to investigate possible violations of Imperial law, arrest violators, and turn those violators over to the Imperial courts. He can call on other Imperial agencies to help him in such investigations and arrests. He can also make use of his own household troops for similar purposes (see *Huscarles*, p. 62).

Most Imperial laws have to do with interstellar trade and commerce; high nobles have the help of the Starport Authority and other Ministry of Commerce personnel in enforcing these laws. A few laws affect *every* Imperial citizen, even those outside the extrality line of an Imperial Starport: these include the prohibition against slavery, laws against the development and use of psionic powers, and the Imperial Rules of War. High nobles have the authority and obligation to enforce all of these laws.

High nobles have two other privileges not available to other Imperial citizens. When a high noble is acting legally in pursuit of his duties, he *cannot* be interfered with by anyone of lesser rank; to do so is a serious crime under Imperial law. Furthermore, his person is sacrosanct – if he is physically assaulted while “on duty,” those responsible for the attack can be charged with treason against the Imperium.

A high noble’s authority is not unlimited. The Imperial Mandate can only be wielded in accordance with Imperial law. A high noble’s actions can also be negated by any of the high nobles directly above him in the aristocratic hierarchy. In theory, a high noble’s authority to override his subordinates is seldom used – the point of conferring the Mandate even on barons is to place as many decisions as possible at the lowest level of authority. Still, the option is always available – in fact, the proper course of action for any Imperial citizen who disagrees with a high noble’s actions is to appeal to the noble’s superior.

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*By my order, and for the good of the State, the bearer has done what has been done.*

**– The Three Musketeers**

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### *Imperial Warrants*

On a routine basis, the Emperor delegates his Imperial Mandate to the high nobility through the channels inherent in the aristocratic hierarchy. However, at times the Emperor feels the need to short-circuit the hierarchy and grant an agent extraordinary powers. This is done by means of an Imperial Warrant (p. GT42).

It is very rare for the Emperor to issue an *unlimited* warrant, effectively granting the bearer unlimited authority to wield the Imperial Mandate on his behalf. The warrant issued to Duke Norris of Regina during the Fifth Frontier War was one such, demonstrating an astonishing degree of Imperial trust in the duke’s competence and integrity. In practice, Emperors almost always prefer that such power be hedged with limitations of one kind or another. Such *limited Imperial warrants* are always restricted in one or more ways as to who, when, where, how, and for what it can be used.

A limited Imperial Warrant always specifies just who can use it. Because the death of a warrant-holder may cause unacceptable delays, a warrant may instead specify the holder of a particular title or office, allowing it to pass to the successor of the original holder. Of course, the Emperor may prefer delay to having such power pass to someone whose competence he has no way to verify. Sometimes a warrant specifies a list of successors. For instance, a warrant issued to Duchess Delphine of Mora can list Duke Leonard of Rhylanor as her successor.



Most limited Imperial Warrants are also limited in duration, expiring after a set period of time. They may also specify a mission or task, defining the conditions under which the mission has been accomplished and expiring at that point.

Most limited warrants specify an area of operation. A warrant might allow an agent of the Emperor to review the efficiency of the Imperial Navy in one sector, or to negotiate a treaty with the nonaligned worlds along one border, or to investigate the complaints of a single member world.

A warrant usually specifies a task or a set of tasks for which it can be used. A Special Investigator from the Ministry of Justice carries a warrant that allows him to pursue evildoers from one end of the Imperium to the other, and even to request backup from a passing Imperial Navy ship, but it doesn’t permit him to order the local Fleet Admiral to invade a world.

Some warrants specify what means a warrant holder may or may not use. A diplomat might be instructed to obtain a peace treaty “by any means short of ceding Imperial territory.”

Note that a warrant is a delegation of the Emperor’s legal powers, and can’t exceed the limits of those powers. If, for example, the treaty between the Imperium and a member world allows the world an unusual degree of autonomy, a Ministry of Justice agent has to respect that regardless of what his warrant says.

Finally, powerful Imperial nobles can sometimes get away with obstructing warrant holders. It’s always a delicate matter to go against the wishes of the Emperor – but a noble can always argue that because of his greater local knowledge, he knew that the Emperor would have issued different orders had he known all the facts. The higher the status of the warrant holder, the less likely it is that such interference will occur.

## ***The Fine Art of Bribery***

Bribery is the art of improving someone's reaction to you or a favor you would like by offering him money or some other thing of value.

Bribery is tolerated and even encouraged in many cultures. A business meeting may begin with an exchange of small gifts. A public official may expect a small tip or "baksheesh" in exchange for cooperating with a citizen's needs. A corporate executive may expect to be entertained by a potential business partner while negotiating a contract.

Bribery is not always overt. Even in situations where bribery is common and expected there is often some social embarrassment involved in asking for or receiving a bribe. A face-saving formula is often used, such as calling the bribe a "fee," or making the transaction entirely through nonverbal signals. Where bribery is common, there are likely unwritten customs defining the size of an appropriate bribe. There are also customs regarding how a bribe is to be offered, and how you can determine whether a bribe is sufficient without asking outright.

Bribery does not always involve a gift of money. Someone with Honesty or the Code of Honor (Imperial) disadvantage (p. 120) will probably refuse an overt offer of cash – but there are other ways to offer a bribe without appearing to do so. For example, an honorable nobleman might still react favorably to the news that a large donation has been made to his favorite charity. At its most abstract, bribery is little more than an exchange of favors.

There are no Imperial laws against offering or accepting bribes; the subtle exchange of favors is one of the mechanisms that helps the Imperial elite keep things running smoothly. Officials in the Imperial military and the civilian ministries are forbidden to accept bribes, but this is a matter of administrative policy rather than criminal law. An Imperial official who is exposed as having accepted a bribe will probably lose his job, but he will not be convicted of a crime. In particular, an Imperial noble who accepts bribes is very unlikely to lose his title for it – although he may lose the official position that made him worth bribing in the first place!

Naturally, many Imperial member worlds do have laws against bribery. Imperial nobles and other officials may be held accountable if they break such local laws.

## **HUSCARLES**

One of the most important privileges accorded to a high noble is the authority to raise a unit of household troops, also called *huscarles*.

In fact, there is no Imperial law against the maintenance of private military forces. Mercenary units are common, and the line between large bodyguard forces and small military units is often hard to define. Many Imperial aristocrats, not just in the high nobility, maintain private armed forces.

Huscarles are different because they have Imperial sanction. They are considered part of the Unified Armies of

the Imperium, even though they are maintained and commanded by individual nobles. They have the right under Imperial law to bear military-grade arms, even in violation of local weapons ordinances, so long as they are in uniform and on duty. Most importantly, when they are accompanying their commander in the pursuit of his duties, they share in his legal protection against assault (p. 50). Shooting at a private army may be a legitimate exercise of self-defense. Shooting at huscarles can sometimes be treason.

Huscarles serve a number of different functions. During wartime a noble's huscarles are likely to be assigned combat duty, as part of the Unified Armies. Huscarles sometimes also fight under their noble's command during Imperial interventions in local warfare. During peacetime, huscarles serve their noble commander as bodyguards, ceremonial guards, and military staff. They also serve as paramilitary police – if the noble needs armed force to back up his law-enforcement responsibilities, he can call on his huscarles.

The maximum allowable size and armament is different for each unit of huscarles. Each high noble receives his own legal document authorizing him to raise household troops, and the details can vary according to the Emperor's whim. Traditional practice gives nobles at higher levels the ability to raise more troops; a baron might be permitted to maintain only a single company, while a duke could keep an entire brigade on hand. High nobles on the Imperial frontier are likely to maintain larger huscarle units. Nobles in the Imperial core may choose not to take advantage of their privilege at all, preferring instead to call upon the Imperial civilian ministries when they need police assistance.

The most prominent huscarle units in the Imperium are the ones belonging to the archdukes and the Emperor. Each archduke has the authority to maintain a complete Lift Infantry Division (p. T:GF30). Only Archduke Norris of Deneb has so far failed to take advantage of this privilege, preferring instead to retain the brigade-strength 4,518th Lift Infantry Regiment (his huscarles as the Duke of Regina). Meanwhile, the Imperial Guard (p. 55) is a corps-sized combat team that is legally considered the Emperor's personal unit of huscarles.

## **THE IMPERIAL MILITARY**

Emperor Strephon issued far-reaching reforms of the Imperial military command structure in 1116. These reforms gave the archdukes a much greater role in military command, while reducing the role of sector dukes. The reforms also streamlined chains of command at the highest levels.

### *Nobles and Military Command*

High-ranking military officers are often nobles. Of course, merely being a noble does not guarantee an individual an officer's commission – there are numerous cases of nobles serving as enlisted personnel. On the other hand, reaching very high military rank often brings an officer a title (see *Rank and Position*, p. 70).

High military officers must consider the twists and turns of the noble hierarchy when carrying out their duties, especially in times of peace when political considerations trump military ones. For example, consider the relief of Admiral Santanocheev during the Fifth Frontier War by Norris, who at the time was merely the Duke of Regina. Duke Norris would not ordinarily have had the authority to relieve so senior an admiral – Santanocheev and the sector-level Navy command were under the Mandate of the sector duchess, and Norris could not countermand her orders. However, an Imperial Warrant (p. 61) granted Norris the authority of the Emperor, so Norris was able to relieve Santanocheev, assume command of Imperial forces in the region, and subsequently win the war.

From about the fourth century Imperial until recently, the archdukes were often bypassed in the military chain of command; civilian control of the Imperial military was usually left in the hands of the sector and subsector dukes. Under the Emperor's reformed system, archdukes are now expected to take supreme command of all forces within their domain, or to designate a suitable commander if they lack sufficient military expertise for command. Sector and subsector dukes still play an important role in military command and administration during peacetime, but their former role as wartime leaders has been much reduced.

## THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE

The office of the Imperial Minister of Defense is not in the chain of command. The Minister is in charge of advising the Emperor on military affairs, evaluating the general state of the Imperial military, and supervising long-term military planning, research, and development. He has a wing of the Imperial Palace for his headquarters.

## THE IMPERIAL HIGH COMMAND

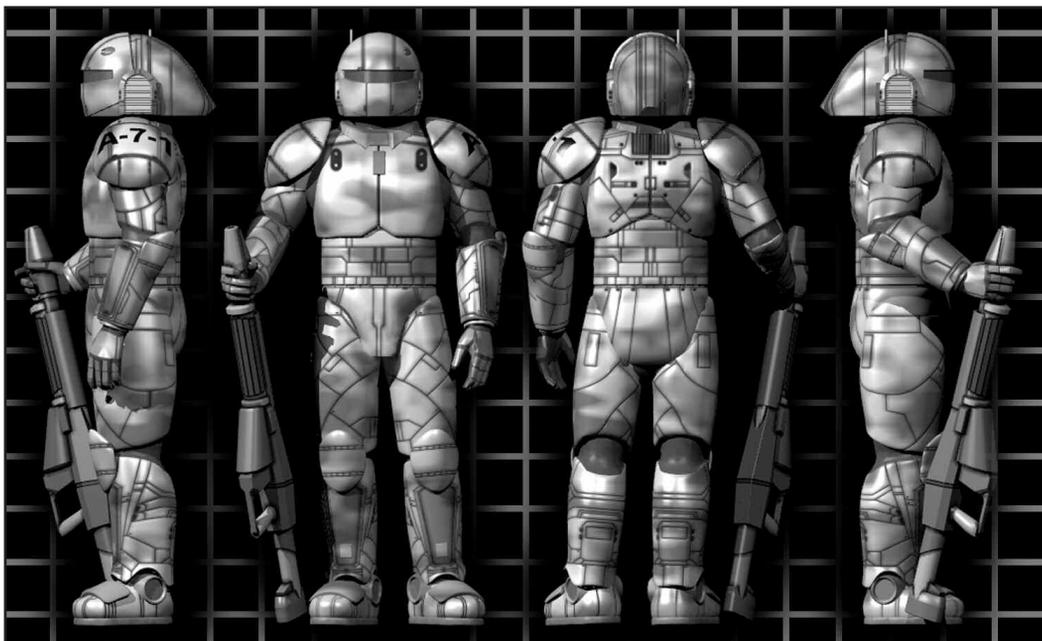
The First Lord of the Admiralty and the Lord Marshal of the Unified Armies make up the Imperial High Command. Each of these officers reports directly to the Emperor, and they meet with each other as necessary to coordinate their work and avoid useless duplication of effort. The High Command actually takes little part in directly commanding military forces around the Imperium, almost all of which are organized at the domain level or below. Its role is normally confined to policy-making and strategic planning at the highest levels.

The current (much simplified) structure of the High Command is recent, dating to Emperor Strepthon's military reforms of 1116. The earlier command structure was a much more complex network of official chains of command and unofficial but equally crucial chains of noble supervision and oversight. The reforms effectively ejected a large number of nobles from supervisory roles over the military; many of these nobles remain resentful.

## *The Imperial Navy*

The Imperial Navy's senior command is officially known as the Naval Office of the Ministry of Defense, but in all but the most formal documents it is referred to as "the Admiralty." All units of the Imperial Navy receive their orders through the Admiralty, including sector and subsector fleets, named fleets, reserve fleets, and local fleets if activated into Imperial service.

The Admiralty is headed by the First Lord of the Admiralty. He leads the Board of the Admiralty, whose other members supervise various aspects of naval operation (shipyards, intelligence, research and development, and so on). All positions on the Board require that the peer holding them be present at Capital most of the time, so any noble appointed to the position must either have no other duties, or must be willing and able to delegate them to subordinates (p. 72).



## *The Imperial Army and Marines*

The Lord Marshal of the Unified Armies supervises the Unified Armies of the Imperium. A board of senior officers, called the General Staff of the Unified Armies, assists him in shaping Army policy.

The Imperial Marines are a separate service from the other armed forces, but organized under the Admiralty and dependent on the Imperial Navy for transport and logistics. The Commandant of the Marines is an advisor to the Imperial High Command.

# IMPERIAL CIVILIAN MINISTRIES

Although descended from the five primary bureaucratic agencies established by Cleon Zhunastu at the beginning of the Third Imperium, the present-day Imperial ministries have grown, intermingled, and recombined over the years. All Imperial ministries have headquarters on Capital. They also have offices, some of them larger than their counterparts on Capital, at sector and subsector capitals throughout the Imperium. Some ministries are even active outside the Imperium, in the Imperial client states.

In general, the various headquarters on Capital serve as coordinating and oversight agencies. Sector and subsector level administrators are chosen from local nobles, and are appointed, promoted, and dismissed by the Minister, usually upon the advice of the sector duke. The sector and subsector dukes, with the advice and consent of the local ministerial department head, appoint lower-level positions within each agency.

## MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

The Imperial Ministry of Justice exercises authority over violations of Imperial law, especially when those violations occur on Imperial territory, including within the extrality boundary of starports. Judges, justices, and the other personnel of the Imperial justice system are part of the Ministry of Justice. The Minister of Justice has a liaison office within the Imperial Palace, but the main administrative and record-keeping center is elsewhere on Capital.

Special agents of the Ministry of Justice travel throughout the Imperium to investigate specific cases, and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice. Most of these agents act with the direct authority of the Minister, and a few have limited Imperial Warrants, making them personal representatives of the Emperor (p. 61).

In addition to the Imperial court systems (p. 67), the Ministry of Justice administers the Imperial prison system, sometimes through sector and subsector nobles and sometimes directly.



## MINISTRY OF STATE

The Ministry of State is in charge of diplomatic relations with the Imperium's neighbor states, with Imperial client states, and (in some cases) with various autonomous regions within the Imperium. The Minister of State reports to the Emperor daily, but does not have a liaison office within the Imperial Palace.

The Ministry of State assists the Emperor in formulating Imperial foreign policy, advises on the creation of treaties and other agreements with foreign powers, and advises on relations with the autonomous regions within the Imperium. It contains a number of subsidiary divisions.

### *Policy Board*

This board consists of the Minister of State and any other nobles chosen by the Emperor to advise him on matters of long-term foreign policy. Aside from the Minister of State, the Policy Board is not composed of members of the ministry, and is purely an advisory body. The board has a small group of offices in the Ministry of State's building complex on Capital, but has no permanent presence in the Imperial Palace.

### *Imperial Diplomatic Corps (Foreign)*

This division oversees the embassies and consulates sent to foreign powers and Imperial client states, including Ambassadors Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary.

### *Imperial Diplomatic Corps (Home)*

This division oversees and monitors representatives sent to autonomous regions within the Imperium, and coordinates Imperial governors of worlds and systems when these are appointed by the Emperor.

### *Intelligence*

Ostensibly, this division coordinates information collected by various sources, including its own agents, who are usually assigned other official titles to act as cover for their real missions.

The Intelligence Division is subdivided into bureaus. Some of the bureaus cover one of the significant powers the ministry has to deal with (the Zhodani Bureau, the Solomani Bureau, and so on). Four of them cover the four major quadrants (the Spinward Bureau, the Coreward Bureau, the Trailing Bureau, and the Rimward Bureau), dealing with states or political entities in those quadrants which are not covered by one of the other bureaus.

## **MINISTRY OF COLONIZATION**

The original function of the Ministry of Colonization was to select worlds suitable for colonization or other exploitation by the member worlds of the Imperium, and supply the expertise needed to oversee their settlement. It is now much reduced in size and influence, and its duties are now merely to advise sector and subsector officials who wish to undertake colonization efforts. Naturally, with the Imperial borders nearly static such projects are rare.

The Ministry of Colonization has some functional overlap with the Ministry of Conservation (p. 66). Rivalry between the two organizations is sometimes fierce.

## **MINISTRY OF COMMERCE**

The Ministry of Commerce is responsible for encouraging trade and commerce between the member worlds of the Imperium, and collecting tariffs, taxes, duties, and fines. Its largest component is the Starport Authority, which is essentially an independent institution.

### *Trading Standards Bureau*

This bureau advises the Emperor on matters of interstellar trade and commerce, especially with respect to Imperial regulations and laws. The bureau is purely advisory, and has no governmental authority.

### *Imperial Shipping Commission*

This agency monitors the customs duties and restrictions set by Imperial member worlds. It makes decisions about interference in interstellar trade, hazardous and contraband

## **The Office of Calendar Compliance**

The Office of Calendar Compliance is all that remains of the original Office of Standards established by Cleon I, the remainder of its duties having been absorbed by the Ministry of Technology. The purpose of the Office of Calendar Compliance is to insure that uniform and consistent time and date standards are adhered to all through the Imperium. By default, it handles other units of measure as well.

The Imperial government has defined standards for Imperial date, time, and other units of measure. Agents of “CalComp” insure that all worlds adhere to these standards in all official transactions and records. Individual worlds are free to use local dates and times in addition, but the Imperial standards are the only legal ones for any interstellar interactions and legal records.

Some agents of the Office travel from world to world, while others have a permanent presence on a given world. Complex instruments and methods are used to test and calibrate local equipment, which in turn is used to calibrate local instruments. The Chief of CalComp oversees the actions of many thousands of field agents, a fleet of starships, and billions of credits in equipment.

The ancient Roman emperors (p. 5) had a group of military officials known as *frumentarii* or “grain inspectors,” whose job was to make sure the army always got the grain it needed, and that the grain purchased was of good quality. The emperors often placed secret agents among the *frumentarii*, using their public role as cover.

The emperors of the Third Imperium may well use the Office of Calendar Compliance in a similar way. In an organization with the size and scope of the Office, there is considerable room for “extra” personnel. CalComp field agents have legitimate reasons to travel anywhere within the Third Imperium, and report to a distant office on Capital. GMs may wish to use CalComp as cover for the Emperor’s secret police, especially when running an “evil Imperium” campaign (p. 136).

cargo, and so on, and then recommends action to the Ministry of Commerce. It also collects shipping information, records registries and licenses, and acts as an advocate for starship crews in disputes over pay or working conditions.

### *Imperial Treasury*

The Imperial Treasury consists of the Office of the Mint and the Imperial Monetary Board. The Mint issues Imperial currency from several sector and subsector minting installations, and generates a small amount of revenue from the sale of special commemorative currency to collectors. The Monetary Board is a group of experts on fiscal and economic policy, which advises the Emperor on long-term economic and monetary issues.

## **The Imperial Bar**

The Imperial Bar Association is an Imperium-wide body administered by the Ministry of Justice, whose primary duty is to set consistent standards of conduct for practicing attorneys. Examinations are given annually at several locations in each sector, and consist of a series of written tests and an oral examination by a board of attorneys. Tests are given for various specialties, but primarily these break down into criminal, civil, and admiralty law. In the Imperium, a specialist in civil law or admiralty law is known as an *advocate*, while a specialist in criminal law is known as a *lawyer*.

Bar associations also exist on the domain, sector, and subsector levels; these can only license an attorney to practice within their jurisdiction. Individual worlds often have their own bar associations and certification procedures, but these cannot certify anyone to practice law before *any* Imperial court.

## **Starport Authority**

This organization operates all Imperial public starports, and thus has control over the port facilities for the vast majority of interstellar trade. It also enforces most of the Imperial laws and regulations governing trade and commerce. These functions make the Starport Authority very powerful (not to mention very large), dwarfing the rest of the Ministry of Commerce.

The Starport Authority is governed by a board of Directors-General, headed by a chairman appointed by the Emperor. The Chairman often holds greater noble rank than the Minister of Commerce himself. The details of the Starport Authority's organization are in *GURPS Traveller: Starports* (pp. T:ST17-39).

## **MINISTRY OF CONSERVATION**

The Ministry of Conservation oversees the preservation of nonrenewable resources, controls exploitation of renewable ones, and (in cooperation with the IISS) is responsible for the protection of primitive societies within the Imperium. The Ministry also oversees terraforming projects and programs that involve genetic engineering to adapt populations to local conditions.

The ministry's headquarters on Capital is a small administrative and records office, and field offices on frontier sectors are sometimes larger.

## **MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

The Ministry of Information and Communication ("MinIC") is responsible for the data-transmission and archival needs of the Imperial government. It is unrelated to the original Ministry of Information founded by Cleon I, which was essentially a propaganda bureau. Its most important components are the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service and the Imperial Archives.

## **Imperial Interstellar Scout Service**

The office of Director of the IISS is actually a more prestigious position than the office of Minister of Information and Communication. The Scouts are effectively independent of the Ministry, and even the IISS Communications Branch (one of two reasons the Scouts are attached to MinIC) pays the Minister little heed.

## **Imperial Archives**

The Imperial Archivist has a small liaison office inside the Imperial Palace, but the Imperial Archives have large facilities on several worlds in strategic locations throughout the Imperium. A small fleet of couriers (detached from the Scouts) carries information and artifacts between them.

## **MINISTRY OF TECHNOLOGY**

The Imperial Ministry of Technology is concerned with improvements in the technology of the Imperium. It oversees the operations of Imperial research stations, and of the research and development departments of major universities within the Imperium. It provides technical staff and experts to the Ancients Foundation (p. 56), the Imperial military, and the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service.

## **Extradition**

*Extradition* is when a criminal is transferred from one jurisdiction to another, normally for purposes of trial. The Ministry of Justice has developed policies on extradition, and tries to persuade all member worlds of the Third Imperium to develop consistent policies for handling the process. They have not been completely successful.

Extradition in the Third Imperium can be a complex business, and is usually more trouble than it is worth. World governments are not prone to expend money and manpower to reclaim a criminal unless the crime was especially egregious or horrific, or was the subject of a great deal of publicity. The world the criminal is on must agree to extradite, and often has stipulations. Most worlds will not extradite anyone wanted for acts that are not a crime under local law, or which are likely to be punished much more severely in the jurisdiction demanding extradition.

In general, it is difficult to get any criminal but a major felon extradited more than a sector or two. Of course, if the crime is *too* big the criminal is probably sought on Imperial charges; the Ministry of Justice can and will chase a criminal anywhere in the Imperium!

The Ministry is rumored to conduct industrial espionage operations against the megacorporations, to prevent any one from developing an innovation to which the Imperium does not have access. It is also rumored to be conducting experiments in psionics, despite official announcements to the contrary.

# IMPERIAL COURTS AND IMPERIAL JUSTICE

One of the major duties of any noble is participation in the Imperial justice system. Most worlds administer their own laws within their own jurisdictions, which by custom extend to 100 planetary diameters. Imperial law applies outside this zone, and within any Imperial territory inside it – such as within the extrality line of any Imperial starport. A few Imperial laws actually override local law, and violations of such laws are also brought before Imperial rather than local courts.

There are three main systems of Imperial justice: the *criminal courts*, the *civil courts* (p. 68), and the *admiralty courts* (p. 70). Imperial courts are generally similar everywhere in the Imperium, with only minor variations depending on their location. The Imperium also maintains a High Court, unique because it tries only one type of case – treason committed by a peer (p. 70) – and is always presided over by the Emperor. While the Emperor is considered the sole chief justice of the Imperium, the Minister of Justice usually stands in for him in the most important criminal, civil, and admiralty cases.

Imperial court justices are *always* members of the Imperial nobility. Justices at the lowest levels of the Imperial legal system need not be peers – but even they are almost always baronets or knights in the local domain's order (p. 48).

## IMPERIAL LAWS

The laws of the Imperium are promulgated by the Emperor, in the form of proclamations known officially as *Imperial Edicts*. Most of these laws are actually composed by the Imperial bureaucracy; a few laws are written by the Moot, and a very few laws are written by the Emperor personally. In almost all cases, the laws are written by the nobility, and then presented to the Emperor for his review and signature.

Laws become binding once the Emperor has signed them. They are enforced by the high nobility, and by the

various ministries, bureaus, and departments of the Imperial government. The ministries create regulations and protocols, according to their establishing edicts, to enforce their rule over the areas within their jurisdiction. Imperial laws thus represent a complex, interlocking maze of jurisdictions and power bases.

## CRIMINAL COURTS

The Imperial criminal court system is what most people think of when the word “court” is mentioned. Criminal courts try almost all violations of Imperial law, the only exception being cases of treason by peers (p. 70); the criminal courts *do* try cases of treason by nonpeers. Details of the operation of the criminal courts vary slightly from domain to domain, but they are similar in overall operation.

### Administration

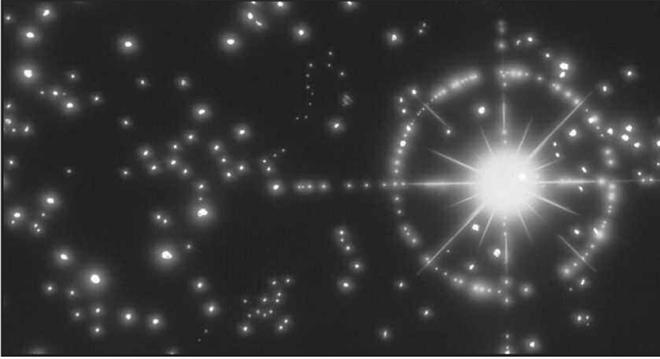
Technically, each domain's archduke is head of the criminal court system within that domain, but in practice the archduke's participation is limited to the review of appeals – he is seldom called upon to adjudicate any but the most important cases. The duties of sector and subsector dukes bring them into more direct involvement in the process, but even they are usually limited to assigning investigators and judges to particular cases. High nobles below the level of duke are also involved in the court system, as they investigate violations of Imperial law and arrest the perpetrators.

Justices are appointed by sector and subsector dukes, with the approval of the sector representative of the Ministry of Justice. Their terms are open-ended, although they can be ended for cause at any time by superior authorities. Justices are appointed for their integrity and good judgment, and need not be trained in the law; each justice may retain a legal advisor known as a *court legate*, whose job it is to advise the justice on the facts of law in any given case. Important cases (such as for capital crimes) require a tribunal of three justices, with a senior justice presiding; some sectors require justices in capital cases to be licensed attorneys.



## Procedures

The proceedings of criminal courts in the Imperium are inquisitorial, and are convened by the judicial authority for a given region on the basis of facts brought forward by an investigation of the Ministry of Justice or some other Imperial agency. Once a court has been convened in a particular case, the appointed justice or senior justice orders the accused to appear and present a defense. Depending on the crime and the particulars of a case, the presiding justice sets a date and place for the trial.



The accused must be informed of all charges against him at the time of his arrest, and he must be presented with the evidence against him before the trial begins so that he can assemble a defense. He may retain legal counsel, or he may allow one to be appointed to him by the convening authority. The accused is allowed to challenge the testimony of any witnesses against him, but in some regions he is not always allowed to directly confront them – this is reserved for the justices.

At the trial, the chief investigator presents evidence to the court, including any testimony of witnesses. Witnesses must testify in person, unless the convening authority allows depositions (written or recorded statements). The defendant or his legal counsel may present evidence of his innocence, or attempt to refute the evidence against him. Examination of witnesses is done by the senior justice, as is any clarification of the evidence. Investigators with special qualifications may be appointed if the evidence requires special knowledge to interpret or analyze.

After all evidence has been presented, the justice or tribunal retires to consider the facts of the case, and renders a verdict based on the evidence presented and the relevant laws. The level of proof required for a criminal conviction is “beyond reasonable doubt,” a more stringent standard than the “clear and convincing proof” required by the admiralty and civil courts.

The judgment of a court is usually final and there are no Imperial appeals courts. However, the losing side in a case can make an appeal to the high noble in charge of the court, or to his superiors in the noble hierarchy. The Imperium applies a “double jeopardy” rule in criminal cases; the accused cannot be tried repeatedly for the same offense.

Subsector dukes have the authority to issue Imperial pardons for all but the most serious criminal offenses under

Imperial law. Lesser high nobles may also have the authority to issue pardons, under limited circumstances and within their own demesnes.

## Courts Martial

Military courts martial are separate from civilian courts. A court martial proceeding is a purely military affair, and is conducted according to the Imperial Code of Military Justice. Only serving members of the Imperial military may be tried in a court martial. This includes active members of the IISS, but not detached service Scouts.

The procedures and protocols of a court martial are generally similar to a civilian criminal court. The convening authority is a flag officer (general, admiral, or equivalent), the investigators are members of the relevant service’s Judge Advocate General’s office (p. 70), and court-appointed defense lawyers are serving military officers trained in law. The accused may retain a civilian lawyer, but a court-appointed legate, who must be a military officer familiar with court-martial procedures, must assist the civilian. A court martial may be convened to try any serious breach of military regulations. The only exception is violations of the Imperial Rules of War (see *War Crimes Trials*, p. 69).

## Punishments

Depending on the particular crime and the specifications of the relevant Imperial laws, criminal courts may impose fines, imprisonment, banishment (rarely imposed, but still on the books), or the death penalty. One of the few advantages of being a peer is that capital sentences can only be imposed on a peer by a noble of higher rank (p. 14).

In important cases, or cases where capital punishment is an option, a separate tribunal is convened to determine the sentence after considering the nature of the crime and any mitigating factors, such as mental disease or defect. Imperial law and the precedent of legal systems on many worlds over the millennia recognize that certain individuals are not always responsible for their actions, and custom forbids the application of the death penalty in such cases. The courts usually prescribe commitment to a mental institution instead.

Violations of the Imperial Laws of War are special cases, tried by specially convened tribunals of Imperial military officers (see *War Crimes Trials*, p. 69). Violations of Imperial military regulations are handled by court martial, administered by the officers of the relevant service.

## CIVIL COURT

The Imperial civil court system exists in parallel to the criminal court system. The conduct and operation of the civil court system within each domain is, again, the responsibility of the respective archduke. Similarly, the civil court system is under control of the sector and subsector dukes. The Imperial

civil court system is also part of the Ministry of Justice, but not under the same department as the criminal courts.

## Administration

Imperial civil courts deal primarily with contract disputes and noncriminal infringement of Imperial law. Local worlds have their own civil court systems, but all worlds in the Imperium are bound by the decisions of Imperial civil courts where jurisdictions overlap. Imperial civil law is almost exclusively contract law.

The Imperium does not usually concern itself with that area of civil law commonly called *family law* – the details of marriage, child custody, wills, inheritances, and so on. These are not important to the Third Imperium, and are regarded as local matters. Imperial civil courts become involved in such things only when cases are interstellar in scope, or when the inheritance of a noble title is involved (p. 36).

Small claims courts and similar institutions are usually handled on the planetary level, although cases that take place on Imperial territory are handled by the Imperial civil court system. Such cases almost always occur in starports, and the largest starports maintain magistrates with minor titles (knights or baronets) to handle them.

Major civil cases require a tribunal of three or more nobles, while a single judge can hear ordinary cases. Justices hearing a civil case must have no vested interest in either side. This can be difficult in cases involving megacorporations, as most major noble families are heavily invested in almost every megacorporation. Civil court justices, like their criminal court counterparts, are advised by a civil legate (p. 67) if they are not themselves licensed to practice civil law.

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*Empress Elbet died suddenly in 1053 . . . Suspicion fell upon the Emperor's brother James, widely believed to be mentally unbalanced. Prince James withdrew from public life after that, and committed suicide later in the same year.*

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## Procedures

The Imperial civil court system is adversarial – two sides appear before an impartial judge or tribunal of judges. The individual or entity that brings the suit is known as the *plaintiff*, and the individual or entity sued is known as the *defendant*. Both sides retain specialists in civil law, known as

*advocates* rather than lawyers (p. 69). Each side may present evidence in support of its case and call witnesses. These witnesses may testify by deposition rather than in person, if the convening body allows it. The court itself may also call witnesses, if it feels the need. Investigators with special qualifications may be appointed if the evidence requires special knowledge to interpret or analyze.

The Imperial civil court system uses the “clear and convincing proof” standard for deciding cases, a less stringent arrangement than the “beyond reasonable doubt” standard used by the criminal courts system.

## War Crimes Trials

War crimes – violations of the Imperial Rules of War – are tried by the branch of the Imperial military that first discovers the crime. This is most often the Imperial Navy or IISS (which is considered “military” for this purpose), but the Imperial Marines and Army are sometimes involved. War crimes trials are normally handled at sector level or below; it is rare for any noble above the rank of sector duke to become involved.

The first stage is the formation of an investigatory tribunal operating under the authority of a flag officer (general, admiral, or equivalent). In extreme cases, several branches cooperate to investigate and render judgment. The investigators gather evidence and present it as speedily as possible to the convening authority, who then decides who (if anyone) will be brought to trial, and convenes a military tribunal for all relevant incidents.

A tribunal of officers, including at least one of flag rank, is appointed to hear the case and render judgment. Officers are appointed to prosecute and defend the accused. In cases where several branches of the Imperial military are involved, the tribunal must include at least one officer from each branch. In any case, the tribunal must include at least three officers, and may not include an even number, to avoid ties.

The procedures and rules of evidence follow military regulations, and are specified in the orders that convened the tribunal. The accused may retain civilian legal counsel, but an officer is always appointed to advise him on matters of military trial procedure. Both prosecution and defense may present evidence and call witnesses, either in person or by written deposition. All evidence is examined and weighed by the tribunal before rendering a verdict. In extremely important cases, there may be a separate tribunal convened to pass sentence, but in most cases the original tribunal imposes a punishment according to the Imperial laws dealing with violations of the Rules of War.

The tribunal’s decision may be appealed to the archduke of the domain where the crime occurred. Peers convicted of violations of the Rules of War may appeal to the Emperor if the archduke upholds their conviction. Punishments range from fine or imprisonment up to execution by firing squad.

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*The recognized nobles of the Imperium shall provide their advice and counsel to the Emperor prior to any legislation or action by the Emperor. The recognized nobles, acting in this capacity, shall be designated as the **Imperial Moot**. The Imperial Moot shall have two powers over the Emperor: They shall have the power to declare the dissolution of the Imperium, and they shall have the power to disqualify an Imperial heir apparent from ascending to the Imperial power. However, the latter power shall only be exercised for just and proper cause. If the Emperor dies or abdicates having provided no heirs either by blood or by adoption, or if no heir of the Emperor is found fit to maintain the powers of the Imperium, the Moot shall have the power to designate the next recipient of the Imperial powers. Should the Moot find it necessary to exercise this power, the designee shall be a citizen of the Imperium.*

*A recognized noble of the Imperium shall be a citizen granted a noble title (by the Emperor or by one empowered by the Emperor to grant noble titles). Noble titles granted by member worlds may be recognized by the Imperium on a case-by-case basis . . .*

*– The Warrant of Restoration,  
Article III*

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### *Penalties*

Like criminal verdicts, civil verdicts are final but are subject to appeal under certain circumstances. Damages imposed by a civil court are purely monetary and are limited to restitution; Imperial law does not recognize the concept of punitive damages. Civil courts cannot impose prison terms or capital punishment, unless a party to a dispute earns a criminal citation of contempt of court.

## **ADMIRALTY COURT**

The admiralty court is the province of the Imperial Navy, but operates according to a set of rules distinct from the Imperial Code of Military Justice (ICMJ). Judges of the admiralty court are appointed by the supreme admiral of each sector, and are normally both naval officers and qualified lawyers. They normally come from the Judge Advocate General's Office of the Imperial Navy, but are sometimes seconded from the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service or from the Ministry of Justice. Justices and other officers of the admiralty court system are not normally members of the Ministry of Justice, unless seconded from the Ministry for some special purpose.

Admiralty courts adjudicate cases involving interstellar trade and shipping – including piracy, barratry (wrongful conduct of crew that results in monetary losses), and hijacking – using an inquisitorial process similar to that used by the criminal courts. The procedures are also similar: court-appointed investigators and the advocates of the accused present the facts of the case to a panel of one or more judges, who render a verdict after considering the evidence.

Like the criminal courts, admiralty courts can impose fines, imprisonment, or capital punishment. The Ministry of Justice, not by the Imperial Navy, carries out capital punishments.

### **Rank and Position**

The table *Summary of Imperial Positions* contains the interaction between noble rank and certain governmental positions in the Third Imperium.

Each noble rank is followed by a list of the positions that require that rank. Positions that carry the Imperial Mandate require titles in the high nobility by definition (p. 58). Nobles with rank or honor titles may hold positions in the bureaucracy or military (p. 14).

An asterisk indicates that although the position does not *require* the noble rank in question, it is more or less customary for officials who serve in the position to be granted the associated noble rank at some point. In such cases, the title is usually granted after the position is earned. It may not be granted until the official *retires*, as an honor title reflecting a long and distinguished career in Imperial service.

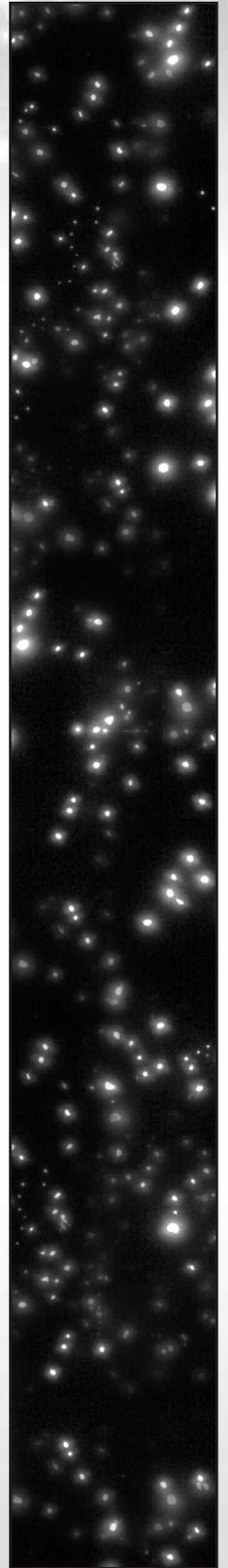
## **HIGH COURT**

High Courts are convened only in cases of treason against the Imperium by a peer (p. 67); nonpeers accused of treason are tried in criminal court. The Emperor acts as the justice in the case, advised on matters of law by his personal court legate (p. 67).

A high court is always convened on the authority of an Imperial proclamation, which formally accuses the defendant and orders his arrest if this has not already been done. It defines what rules of evidence and law the trial will follow, and sets a time and place for the trial. High Court trials are usually held on Capital, in the Imperial Palace.

## **Summary of Imperial Positions**

<b>Noble Rank</b>	<b>Government Position</b>
Emperor	Noble with the Imperial Mandate (p. 58) over the entire Imperium
Archduke	Noble with the Imperial Mandate over a domain
Duke	Noble with the Imperial Mandate over a sector or subsector Minister of Commerce Minister of Defense Minister of Justice Minister of State Minister of Technology First Lord of the Admiralty Chief of the Office of Calendar Compliance
Count	Noble with the Imperial Mandate over a cluster of worlds Minister of Colonization Minister of Conservation Minister of Information and Communication Chairman of the Board of Directors-General, Starport Authority Director of the Imperial Treasury Lord Marshal, Unified Armies of the Imperium Commandant of the Imperial Marines Director of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service
Viscount	Noble with the Imperial Mandate over a cluster of worlds Lord Marshal, Unified Armies of the Imperium Commandant of the Imperial Marines Director of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service
Marquis	Noble with the Imperial Mandate over a single major world Minister Plenipotentiary Imperial Archivist
Baron	Noble with the Imperial Mandate over a single minor world Member of the Board of Directors-General, Starport Authority President of the Imperial Shipping Commission Chairman of the Imperial Monetary Board Member of the Board of the Admiralty Member of the General Staff, Unified Armies of the Imperium Member of the Policy Board, Ministry of State Ambassador Extraordinary Member of the Imperial Moot * Sector Director, Starport Authority * Sector Admiral or Grand Admiral, Imperial Navy * Subsector Marshal or Sector Grand Marshal, Unified Armies of the Imperium * Senior sector-level official in most Imperial civilian ministries
Knight/Baronet	Imperial Court Justice Ambassador * Port Director or Subsector Director, Starport Authority * Commodore, Admiral, or Fleet Admiral, Imperial Navy * General officer, Unified Armies of the Imperium or Imperial Marines * Scout Leader or Sector Scout Leader, Imperial Interstellar Scout Service * Senior planetary or subsector-level official in most Imperial civilian ministries



High Courts traditionally follow the same general set of procedures as Imperial criminal courts, with the exception that there is no appeal from the Emperor's verdict. As in criminal court, the Emperor must find proof of guilt beyond reasonable doubt in order to convict, but what this consists of is left up to the Emperor to decide.

Sentences for treason can include imprisonment, capital punishment, or banishment (rarely invoked these days). If a noble is convicted of treason, all titles are revoked and usually awarded to another individual, but the family is not otherwise penalized.

# THE IMPERIAL MOOT

One of the most prestigious governmental duties of any peer is serving in the Imperial Moot. All peers – high nobles, rank nobles, and honor nobles alike – are members of the Moot by definition, but not all can or will participate.

## Attendance

The Moot meets on Capital, in the massive structure known as the Moot Spire. It is inconvenient, if not impossible, for more than a small portion of the peerage to attend meetings of the Moot. Most peers consider themselves lucky if they manage to attend more than one meeting in their entire lifetime. Still, despite the logistical difficulties of active participation in the Moot, about 1,000 peers usually attend regular meetings.

Since being on Capital necessarily means being away from their worlds, their subsectors, and their sectors, only the most highly motivated peers attend regularly, year in and year out. In some, this motivation is a sense of civic duty, in others it derives from political ambition. For the vast majority of peers, service in the Moot is the pinnacle of a long career of public service.

A few peers exercise the option of abdicating their title in order to serve in the Moot. A proclamation of Emperor Artemsus allows any peer to retire from all duties except Moot membership, abdicating in favor of their heir and moving to Capital. Such a “retiree” retains the style and honors of his position, and is still called by his title as a courtesy. However, all other duties, obligations, and benefits of the title are transferred to his heir. Of course, not everyone can exercise this option. Capital is an expensive place to live, and members of the Moot are not paid for attendance. Holders of multiple titles can abdicate all but one – preferably one which has no governmental duties, but still allows Moot membership –

and use the income from the remaining title to support them while they live on Capital.

## Proxies

The most common means of dealing with the problem of Moot attendance is by the use of a *proxy*, a formal document by which one noble entrusts his vote to another. The formal proxy is a written document, but it can be accompanied by holographic or other recorded versions. Because of the immense potential for abuse, proxies are subject to a number of severe limitations.

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*The formal powers of the moot appear quite decisive. The Moot can vote to dissolve the Imperium, effectively withdrawing the Imperial mandate from the Emperor and from all of the high nobles. The Moot also has effective veto power over the Imperial succession, and can either disqualify the Emperor's heir apparent or designate a new heir if no clear line of succession is available.*

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Proxies may only be granted to peers, and must be presented in person, before the Moot, in a formal transfer ceremony. This means that a peer who wishes to hand over his vote to a proxy must make the trip to Capital to do so.

A noble can hold proxies from more than one peer, but no proxy can be granted on more than one level (there can be no proxy to vote for a group of proxies, for example), and they are non-transferable.

A proxy must have a time limit after which it is no longer valid, specified in the written document of transfer, and this limit cannot exceed 10 years. All proxies become invalid one year after the accession of a new Emperor, upon the death of the holder, or when the news of the death of the grantor arrives at the Moot.

A grantor may revoke his proxy at any time and may do so by any number of verified communications methods, without being personally present. Proxies are thus difficult to grant and easy to revoke.

Proxies may be *open*, in which case the holder may vote them in any way he sees fit, or they may be *limited*, in which case the proxy itself specifies when and how it can be exercised. A proxy may, for example, forbid the holder from approving a specific candidate to the Imperial succession. In general, anything not specifically granted in a limited proxy is forbidden. Questions on the legality of proxies are referred to the Emperor for adjudication. Any violation of the regulations governing proxies can result in fines or imprisonment, and all violators are subject to permanent expulsion from the Moot, although they usually retain their titles.

## Debate

The formal powers of the Moot appear quite decisive. The Moot can vote to dissolve the Imperium, effectively withdrawing the Imperial Mandate from the Emperor and from all of the high nobles. The Moot also has effective veto power over the Imperial succession, and can either disqualify the Emperor's heir apparent or designate a new heir if no clear line of succession is available.

In historical fact, these powers are effectively hollow. No motion to dissolve the Imperium has ever been brought before the Moot for debate. The power to regulate the Imperial succession has been exercised, but this has not been a frequent occurrence since the period of "nondynastic" Emperors that led up to the Civil War. The last time the Moot did more than rubber-stamp the Imperial succession was in 629, when it invited Regent Arbellaatra to accept the Imperial throne in her own right.

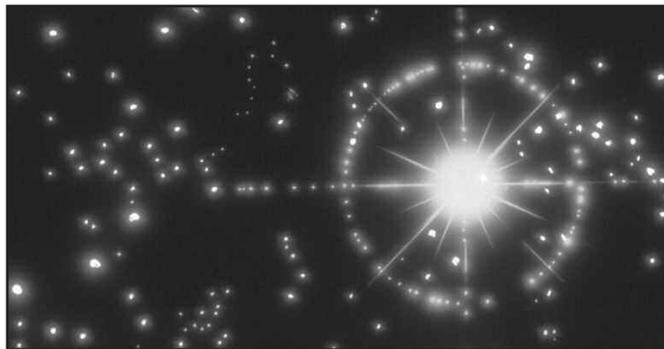
Today, the Moot spends most of its time deliberating on the minutiae of Imperial policy. Budgets, military deployments, Imperial laws, the actions of Imperial bureaucratic agencies, the proper response to local crises, all are discussed and debated within the Moot. Such deliberations lead to *resolutions of the Moot*, which are not binding on the Emperor, but which are considered the embodiment of the Moot's advice to the throne. Resolutions of the Moot sometimes contain both majority and minority positions, to ensure that the Emperor learns the whole range of opinion among his nobles. It is a significant political accomplishment to be the author of even a minority opinion that is incorporated into a resolution.

Resolutions of the Moot sometimes suggest new Imperial laws for the Emperor's consideration. He is under no obligation to approve these suggestions, and they cannot become law without his signature.

The Moot follows a well-defined parliamentary procedure during its deliberations, descended from a mixture of Solomani and Vilani models. Every peer has an equal vote, no matter his rank or seniority, although proxies can give some peers more voting power than others. Despite the fact that the Moot's resolutions have no force of law, debates on the floor of the Moot Spire can become quite contentious.

The Moot has two presiding officers. The President of the Moot is by definition the *oldest* peer in attendance, no

matter what his rank or length of time in office. The position is purely ceremonial, and mostly involves opening and adjourning each session of the Moot. The Speaker of the Moot is an elected position, which changes hands on an annual basis. This officer manages sessions of the Moot and supervises the Moot's relatively small internal staff, but he gives up his own vote in the Moot except to break ties.



## LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

Some sectors and subsectors have local assemblies, similar to the Imperial Moot but on a smaller scale. For example, the Spinward Marches sector has a *Senate* that meets at the sector capital at Mora. Custom dictates that these local assemblies may not be called *moots*, in order to avoid confusion with the Imperial Moot. Just as the duties of these lesser assemblies are more restricted than those of the Moot (they cover a smaller area), they also carry less prestige.

Like the Moot, the local assemblies consist of all the peers in a given area, but not all members attend all meetings. In most cases, the relationship between these local assemblies and the subsector or sector dukes is very similar to that between the Moot and the Emperor. Like the Moot, these local assemblies are usually advisory bodies with few concrete powers; unlike the Moot, local assemblies cannot dissolve a subsector or sector.

Because the distances involved are shorter, local bodies can have a higher proportion of active members than does the Moot. For example, subsector assemblies can remain in session more than two-thirds of the year, although few actually do.

## NOBLES AND VOTING SYSTEMS

Even outside the Moot or some local assembly, nobles are often faced with the problem of winning a vote. Democratic societies choose officials and make decisions with formal elections. Corporate or bureaucratic staffs often settle policy decisions with informal votes. Nobles at the Imperial, sector, or subsector level often form advisory councils with influence over policy. Even when a single person is responsible for the ultimate decision, he probably consults with a staff or team of advisors if there is time. Gather enough support from the people who have a say, and the final decision can be pulled in the desired direction.

An election situation can be resolved quickly with a simple roll on the Politics skill (p. 121); the GM can assign modifiers depending on how difficult it will be to make the case for the desired policy. If an adversary is actively opposing the attempt to gather support, a Contest of Skill in Politics is appropriate.

If the Game Master wishes to play out an election in more detail, he can use the following guidelines to spin an entire adventure out of the situation.

First, decide the issue at hand. Is the PC politician trying to convince the political decision-makers to give him a specific office? Is he trying to deprive someone else of his own position? Is he trying to persuade influential people to implement a specific policy or pass a law? State the issue at hand, and determine the outcome desired by the politician who is trying to sway events.

Determine how many votes the adventurer needs to pull to his side. The total number of votes isn't important, and neither is the number of votes the politician can already count on – what matters is the number of individual people he still must convince. In most situations, the GM can roll 1d to determine this number. Note that even in very large elections, there are often a small number of key opinion-shapers among the electorate – bring these people over to your side, and they can deliver the rest of the votes you need. The roll of 1d is appropriate even for elections in which thousands (or millions!) of people have a vote.

Note that the politician himself should not necessarily know who holds the crucial votes, or how many votes he needs! Many a politician has gone astray by going to a vote before he was certain he had enough support committed to his position. The GM may require rolls against Administration, Politics, or other social skills, just to determine who the crucial vote holders are (and how many of them there are). Other adventurers can also lend a hand by doing research or careful espionage during the prevote period. If the politician and his allies don't succeed in this work, the GM may mislead him about who needs to be influenced, causing him to waste precious time.

Once the GM knows how many votes are needed, he must determine the specifics for each of the crucial voters. Full character descriptions are helpful here, but at a minimum he must determine each voter's Will score, and the approach most likely to succeed in convincing the voter. The Will score can be fixed by the GM or determined randomly with a roll of 1d+10. The preferred approach depends on the voter's personality – is the voter driven most by Greed, by Intolerance, by a Sense of Duty, or by some other psychological trait?

Finally, set a time limit, determining how soon the vote will take place. Also decide the maximum number of opportunities the adventurers have to influence critical voters, even within the time limit. A roll of 1d+3 (minimum of 1 more than the number of crucial voters) is appropriate; the scheming politicians should never know the exact number of opportunities until they've run out of time!

Once all the crucial voters have been detailed, the party may approach and try to convince each of them in turn. Each attempt should be roleplayed, after which a PC must roll



against an appropriate skill (Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Politics, Savoir-Faire, or Sex Appeal are all likely). The GM can give the politician bonuses or penalties to skill, depending on how well he thinks the *players* made their case. The politician should also get a bonus of up to +2 to skill if he manages (through research or a lucky guess) to use the correct approach for the voter.

Influence attempts can involve bribery (p. 62). It is also appropriate for influence attempts to be made at formal social gatherings (see *Festivities*, p. 41).

Each attempt is an Influence Roll (p. B93), a Contest of Skill between the politician's skill and the voter's Will. If the politician wins, the voter agrees to vote as he wishes. If the voter wins, he is unconvinced – the politician will have to use another opportunity to try again, possibly using a different approach.

Once all the influence attempts have been made, the GM determines whether the PCs have swayed enough of the crucial voters to succeed.

## NOBLE CAREER PATHS

The ancient Roman Republic promoted the concept of the *cursus honorum* or "path of honors." This was a career path for young Roman aristocrats; it began with entry into the Senate at the age of 30, and then proceeded through a well-defined series of elected offices. A successful run through the *cursus honorum* ended with election to the consulship, ideally

at the age of 42. Naturally, there were always many more Roman politicians than available offices, so competition was fierce and most aspirants failed to complete the *cursus honorum*.

The Third Imperium has consciously revived the concept of the *cursus honorum* for ambitious citizens who wish to try to earn higher status. Certain time-tested career paths are known to be useful for a commoner who wishes to enter the aristocracy, or for a born noble who wants greater rank.

Note that these career paths are considered the most likely ways for someone to gain a title in the *rank* nobility (p. 12) through long and diligent service. They assume that even a commoner candidate begins his career with a good social position – a Wealthy or better background and a good university education. It's possible for any Imperial citizen to earn a title in the *honor* nobility, but planning for that to happen is like planning to be struck by lightning; it's very unlikely and may involve a great deal of danger . . .

## MILITARY SERVICE

For wealthy commoners or noninheriting offspring of the aristocracy, the most reliable way to earn a letter patent (p. 13) is through service in the Imperial military. The most critical step is to enter the military *as an officer*, avoiding a potentially long and fruitless period of service in the enlisted ranks. The best way to this is to get an appointment to an Imperial military academy, or to enter an Officer Training Corps while attending college.

If the ambitious citizen is a commissioned officer by the age of 22, he should work to be promoted as regularly as possible. He also needs to strive to be noticed (favorably!) by as many aristocrats as he can manage. Command assignments are always preferable to staff assignments – they help both with promotion and with the necessary visibility. A very useful assignment is as a military attaché or aide to a senior Imperial official; such assignments are quite rare, but they often bring immediate promotion in both military and social rank.

The *minimum* goal is captain's rank in the Imperial Navy, or full colonel's rank in the Army or Marines. Admiral's or general's rank is much more likely to lead to elevation into the aristocracy.

If everything goes right, the officer has a good chance of earning a knighthood by his late 40s. He can try to stay in the service and aim for the very highest military ranks, which often bring a barony, but competition for such positions is *extremely* fierce. If his ambitions are still not sated, he is more likely to earn further advancement in Imperial civilian administration.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

Someone who already holds knight's or baronet's rank is most likely to find advancement in the Imperial civilian bureaucracy. The most productive career paths usually alternate between service in the candidate's home subsector and at the domain capital or Capital itself.

The first step (after attending the right school and earning a university degree) is to win a low-level management

appointment to one of the Imperial ministries. A candidate with military experience might take a position on the Ministry of Defense staff. Someone with training in business may choose a Ministry of Commerce division, usually the Starport Authority. Legal training offers a path as a court legate (p. 67) or the diplomatic service. Alternatively, the candidate may take a position on the staff of a high noble, preferably at least a marquis.

About 12 to 16 years of service in such a local position, with regular promotions, may bring the candidate to a leading position at the planetary level – Imperial Legate, Ambassador, Port Director in the Starport Authority, seneschal to a high noble baron or marquis, or some equivalent job. This time can be cut short (down to four to eight years) if the candidate has already had a full military career, as he already has plenty of experience in administration and leadership. Such a position often brings a knighthood, if the candidate does not already have one.

At this point the candidate should try to move closer to the Imperial core. An assignment on Capital is ideal, but time spent at an archduke's court is almost as effective. The ideal assignment is as seneschal to a noble who is working in the upper levels of the bureaucracy, or who is active and influential in the Moot. About four to eight years in such a position permits the candidate to earn a patron's favorable attention, and to make useful contacts. With good fortune, a candidate can use his time at court to earn an appointment to a leading position at the subsector level – Subsector Director in an Imperial ministry, seneschal to a subsector duke, or the equivalent.

This is the critical point in the candidate's career. He is now in a highly visible position, responsible for activities covering a whole subsector, and working under the direct supervision of an Imperial duke. Any disasters or failed policies will reflect badly on him, even if he is not at fault. He is also in a position to make plenty of enemies among the subsector's senior bureaucrats and high nobles. If he can serve competently for four to eight years, and avoid offending anyone important, he may find the door open to promotion to the sector level. Such a promotion often brings baron's rank with it (see *Rank and Position*, p. 70).

If *everything* goes right, a commoner who climbs both the military and civilian ladders can possibly earn baron's rank by his mid-60s. A baronet who skips the military career path, going directly into the civilian administration, can speed up the process and earn his barony while still in his mid-40s. These are *minimum* times – the vast majority of candidates never earn a barony at all.

Once a candidate has earned a barony, he may well be satisfied with his progress; he has earned a hereditary title, and his heirs can build upon his success. If he is still young enough or ambitious enough to want more, his best move is to serve for a few years in the position that brought him his title, then head for Capital to enter the Imperial Moot. Capital is where all of the positions that can bring even higher rank are available, and the best way to move into one of those is to gain a reputation for competence in the Moot. Meanwhile, the best way to earn a *high noble* title is to attract the Emperor's attention . . .

## ALREADY NOBLE?

Someone *born* in the peerage may want further advancement. If such an aristocrat is not in the high nobility, he is probably a “local noble” baron, descended from a past honor or rank noble (p. 12); possibly his ancestor climbed the ladders described above. In any case, if he wishes further advancement he needs to follow the same kind of career path, going into some combination of the military or Imperial civilian service.

All of the time periods described on pp. 74-75 can probably be reduced by several years each, as noble status tends to open doors and make it easier to gather contacts. Again, the best final move in the process is to take up a seat in the Imperial Moot, from which the candidate can try to earn enough Imperial favor to take up a Minister’s post or earn a high-noble title.

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*The Schunamanns have largely ceased day-to-day involvement in the operations of SuSAG. Those who care to can fill their lives with corporate duties, but most of us choose other ways to keep busy.*

– Gretel Iyavesu Schunamann

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## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL OBLIGATIONS

Many nobles have obligations that come with their position, but are unrelated to Imperial or local government. These may be religious or social requirements, without which the title may not be acquired.

Many nobles lead lives of ease and pleasure seeking, some of them bordering on hedonism. In lower-ranking nobles, this sort of lifestyle is tolerated, but few higher-ranking nobles could get away with it in the face of peer pressure to act responsibly. Even the younger offspring of high noble families are expected to stay within certain bounds.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS AND REQUIREMENTS

In most cases, an Imperial title of nobility is associated with specific worlds, and the holder of a title is considered to be a citizen of the associated world (p. 12). This often means that Imperial nobles are subject to local customs, particularly the ones binding on social elites. This is especially true in cases where the Imperial noble title is granted to someone who also holds a title in the local aristocracy.

One extreme example is the case of the nobles of Cogri/Spinward Marches, who are surgically blinded upon ascending to their titles. This custom is in recollection of a time when actions of the hereditary nobility caused millions of Cogri’s citizens to be blinded by the intense rays of the local sun. Transplants and other treatments are forbidden, although technological replacements are allowed provided

they do not completely restore vision. Nobles of Cogri accept their lot because it is traditional, and because Cogri is a wealthy and influential world in its subsector.

Few other worlds are as extreme in their requirements as Cogri. The most common special requirement is that inheritance must be sex-linked – that is, that only males or only females can inherit. Some worlds require their associated Imperial nobles to be members of a specific religion, to wear or not wear certain colors or fabrics, or to consume or avoid certain foods or beverages.

Very unusual requirements and obligations are more likely to hold for lower titles, especially that of baron, and such customs are more likely to be binding.

## SOCIAL DUTIES

Besides the behavior expected of an Imperial noble, there are certain social duties that come with high rank.

*Imperial liaison* is not an official governmental position, and no noble includes it among his formal titles. Indeed, it is the one duty of every Imperial noble that is most often ignored, especially by nobles who rarely if ever visit their homeworlds. Still, it remains an unofficial duty of all Imperial nobles to act as an intermediary between local society and that of the Imperium. Being an Imperial liaison means that a noble must be *visible*, participating in local society and making the Imperial presence known. It also means that nobles are expected to familiarize themselves with the history and culture of their worlds, and to represent of local interests before the Imperium.

Another duty of all nobles is to serve as an example and an inspiration to the common people of the Imperium. Nobles are expected to visibly display the behavior and ethics expected of all citizens. Not all of them live up to this duty, but those higher up the ladder certainly do – at least for public consumption. This duty, too, requires visibility and active participation in local society.

Meanwhile, many Imperial nobles play some role in local as well as Imperial government. The degree to which this happens varies widely from world to world – on many worlds the Imperial noble has no role, while on some worlds an Imperial noble is also the world’s ruler. The most common case is somewhere in between, a level of involvement under which a noble is required to preside over local festivals, to judge some local court cases, and to otherwise help administer local laws and regulations.

## PATRONAGE

Many nobles are wealthy enough to serve as patrons of the arts, and sponsor everything from individual artists to entire museums and symphony orchestras. Of course, sponsorship by a noble means more than financial support – a patron also provides social contacts, helps with legal problems, and generally smoothes the path for the sponsored person or organization. In return, the person or group advertises the noble’s patronage by various means (“By special appointment to the Duchess of Mora”). See also *Fine and Literary Arts*, p. 46.

# Variations on the Theme

*Sarmaty/Solomani Rim: Taehtaukhakhtko, chief-para-mount of the Aslan clans of Aorhtoi, announced today that Duke Iwoahlarko has died of natural causes. "My friend is gone, my honor-brother is gone," stated the ko, who was reportedly present at the duke's deathbed. "His last words were of his clan and his demesne. Let all who respected him hold silence. Let all who would dishonor his memory beware."*

*Baron Renaud of Argenteuil read the duke's personal legacy aloud. In it, Duke Iwoahlarko left the choice of a new duke to his superiors in the Imperial aristocracy, trusting in the wisdom of the archduke and Emperor. The duke's position as ko of the Iwoahlar clan is currently in abeyance, and will be awarded to a clan elder after a brief period of mourning in accordance with clan custom.*

– Traveller News Service item, 355-1119

Even among the Human populations of the Third Imperium, there is considerable variation in the aristocratic practice. However, not all Imperial nobles are Human, and many "aliens" participate in Imperial society as full members of the aristocracy. Meanwhile, many of the other major powers of Charted Space also use their own systems of aristocratic privilege. Even minor states and individual Imperial worlds maintain their own noble hierarchies, distinct from the Imperial system. This chapter briefly discusses all of these variations on the basic theme of Imperial nobility.

## NON-HUMANS AND FOREIGNERS

Each of the major powers of Charted Space manages its society in its own way. Sometimes these alternative customs "leak" into the Third Imperium, affecting the way the Imperial aristocracy itself operates.

### ASLAN

Devoted to honor and valor, the lion-like Aslan most resemble Humaniti in their concept of nobility.

#### *Nobles in the Aslan Hierate*

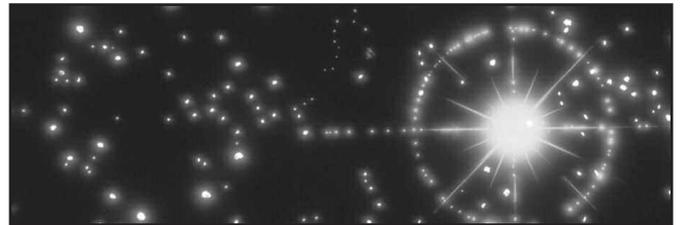
The Aslan Hierate is feudal in overall structure, but unlike the Imperium, it has no single ultimate ruler. Instead, the Aslan are governed by hundreds of small clan groups which are theoretically equal in status (although many smaller clans are vassals of larger clans). The overlord-vassal

relationship among the Aslan has strong parallels to similar relationships in Human space.

In many ways, the Aslan arrangement is closer to the classic Human definition of feudalism than to the modern Imperial system (p. 5). For example, the Aslan practice *subinfeudation* (p. 6). A clan patriarch technically owns all of a clan's land, but cannot manage it personally, so he grants landholds to his vassals. These in turn grant smaller landholds to their vassals, and so on down the line. Aslan differ from most Human societies in that females cannot be vassals, except in the sense that they are the wives or daughters of vassals (pp. T:APII10-13 for a full discussion of gender roles in Aslan society).

Aslan have no formal ranks for their nobility. Each Aslan's complete name includes a full statement of precisely where he fits into his family, extended family, and his clan. Even a clan leader has no special title, other than the name of his clan – which is his in a literal sense, as he owns it! In order to determine the relative status of an individual Aslan, you must know the relative status of his family and clan. This is easy for Aslan and often very difficult for outsiders.

The Aslan have a system of heraldry similar to that of the Third Imperium (p. 10), but tend to use more stylized or abstract symbols.



#### *Imperial Aslan*

There are not enormous numbers of Imperial Aslan, and in most cases their society has been altered by exposure to the Imperium. In general, Aslan have adjusted well to the Third Imperium and its system of government, because their own culture and government are organized in a very similar way.

In many Imperial Aslan, the instinctive drive to accumulate land has been altered. Imperial *ihatei* (second sons) seek service in the Imperial military, primarily the Marines and Army, and glory in service to their new overlords (their superior officers). If an Imperial Aslan wins high honors in Imperial service, the associated wealth and responsibilities usually satisfy his land-hunger.

Female Aslan have even less trouble adapting to Imperial ways, as their approach to commerce is entirely compatible with the Imperial system. Many Imperial Aslan females have founded or become part of profitable mercantile concerns. Female Aslan are eligible to hold Imperial titles of nobility in their own right.

There are a number of Aslan nobles in the Third Imperium, holding ranks as high as duke. Like their Human counterparts, Imperial Aslan who hold military or governmental positions are given a courtesy title commensurate with their rank if they do not already have one (p. 29).

For more information about the Aslan, see *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 2*.

### **Order of Hlyuea**

Established by the Empress Arbella in 642, the Order of Hlyuea honors Aslan citizens for exceptional service to the Imperium. The separation of the genders in Aslan society continues in Imperial Aslan; this cultural quirk has necessitated the creation of separate branches of the Order of Hlyuea for male and female inductees. The male branch recognizes service in leadership or military roles, while the female branch recognizes bureaucratic or commercial success.

The headquarters of the order is on Capital. It is the smallest of the headquarters buildings of the various major orders of Imperial knighthood in the Imperium, despite the fact that it contains two separate facilities – one for males and one for females.

The emblem of the order is five four-pointed stars in gold against a background of red. This emblem is traditionally associated with Hlyuea, an Aslan folk hero commemorated in the clan name Hlyueawi. Historians argue over the accuracy of this contention; as with much of Aslan history, it is difficult to separate myth from reality.



## **DARRIANS**

The Darrian Confederation covers less than a subsector, and is descended from Terran Human genetic stock transplanted to the world known as Daryen about 300,000 years ago by the Ancients. Eventually, the Darrians achieved jump technology, and Darrian culture spread slowly to nearby worlds in the region.

Darrian culture is radically different from that of the Third Imperium, so, unsurprisingly, the Darrians take a different approach to their nobility. Unlike the Imperial system, *all* Darrian noble titles carry with them specific and definite governmental responsibilities. The major worlds of the Darrian Confederation (Daryen, Stern-Stern, Ektron, Rorre, and Trifuge) all use a similar system, and Daryen itself serves as a general model for all worlds in the Confederation.

The Darrian Council is the supreme governmental assembly on Daryen. This Council is constitutionally required to appoint a fraction of the planetary population (currently one in 20,000) to the noble rank of *Bodek* (“Knight”). In turn, the Knights of Daryen are the electors of the 100-man Darrian Council, choosing a replacement whenever a Council member retires or dies. Election to the Council is for life, and automatically raises the individual to the noble rank of *Monigh* (“Baron”).

Every four years, the Darrian Council elects one of its own members to serve as Prime Minister, the head of the planetary government. The Council also appoints members from its own ranks to senior executive positions in the government bureaucracy. Any councilor who is elevated to a ministerial position is automatically raised to the noble rank of *Lezom* (“Marquis”). Second and subsequent terms as a Minister usually involve promotions in noble rank, to *Mehdar* (“Count”) and then *Yisar* (“Duke”). The Prime Minister is always promoted to a noble rank at least equal to that of any minister serving on his cabinet.

All noble rank on Daryen is granted for life, and can only be taken away by decree of the Darrian Council (usually for crimes against the state). Noble rank is not inherited, although higher-ranking nobles are often successful in having their children granted knighthoods. Indeed, the nobles tend to form cliques, supporting one another in the Council and helping each other’s children advance. As a result, Daryen currently has a number of “noble houses,” families which have managed to keep representation on the Council for centuries.

Darrian nobles do not receive a fief, but each noble is assigned a specific geographic territory, averaging about 200 square miles in size. He is expected to serve as a representative for the inhabitants of this territory, serving their interests in the Council. Knights oversee the vast majority of these territories, although even Dukes of Darrian retain similar responsibilities. The people of a territory can petition the Darrian Council to remove their noble representative for cause – this is considered a great disgrace to the accused noble, and usually ends his career in politics.

For more information about the Darrians, see *GURPS Traveller: Humaniti*.

## DROYNE

With rare exceptions, the Droyne remain profoundly uninterested in anything outside their own society. Each Droyne world has an associated baron, and the majority of these are Droyne, but few Droyne hold any higher rank. Droyne interests in the Moot are handled by proxy, through the one or two Droyne Leaders who choose to attend meetings.

There is no order of knighthood for Droyne. The few Droyne who have accepted such positions have been inducted into other, more generalized orders.

For more information about the Droyne, see *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 3*.

## HIVERS

The Hivers have no system of hereditary nobility. Hiver “family” groups consist of nests of unrelated individuals, which hold property in common; the notion of individual inheritance is alien to them. Individuals can accumulate power and prestige over their lifetimes, but since Hivers do not keep track of their children, they cannot pass this accumulated power along to their descendants – only to their nests.

There is no significant Hiver presence within the Third Imperium. Hence, there is no perceived need for an order of knighthood especially for Hivers, and no Hiver nobility beyond that granted to diplomatic parties as a courtesy (p. 29).

For more information about the Hivers, see *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 3*.

## K’KREE

K’kree aristocracy (like their society) differs radically from that of the Imperium, especially since they act as groups rather than as individuals. An individual’s status within the family group is acquired at birth, and cannot be changed, although the power of the group can advance or recede over the span of generations. The top male of a given family group is given a title, but there is no concept of individual property among the K’kree – the group holds any lands or possessions.

There is no significant K’kree presence within the Third Imperium. Embassies are maintained at Capital, and consulates exist on a few other worlds for the benefit of the few mercantile parties operating within Imperial borders.

The K’kree have a system of heraldic markings, consisting of ornate scripts identifying the genealogy and ancestry of the group in question.

For more information about the K’kree, see *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 2*.

## SOLOMANI

*There is something in nature that seems to require classes, ranks, and stratifications of society. I use the word nature in my first sentence rather than **Human nature** because ranks and hierarchies and pecking orders are an integral part of many species in addition to **Homo sapiens**. Wolf packs,*

*groat herds, even anthills have higher and lower classes. Even so-called “egalitarian” societies such as the Communists of ancient Terra eventually had to implement a system of classes, although they didn’t use that labeling.*

*It is something of a mystery why the Solomani persist in denying their own history and culture. Hereditary aristocracies have been the rule rather than the exception for most of Terra throughout most of its history.*

– Dr. Hyman LeStrade-Esteban, *Class and Culture*, Sylean University Press, 1112

Within the Solomani Confederation, some individual worlds have hereditary aristocracies, but the Confederation as a whole does not. Indeed, the Confederation is governed along (theoretically) republican lines, with many of its highest officials elected or appointed.

The relative unimportance of hereditary aristocracy is a point of pride for many Solomani. Nobles do not rule the Confederation, the Solomani say, because their culture is superior to the decadent Imperial culture. Imperial political scientists counter this argument by pointing out that the Solomani Confederation is smaller than the Third Imperium, and that the Confederation can therefore exercise greater central control over its member worlds, obviating the need for a system of aristocratic privilege on the Imperial model.

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*The relative unimportance of hereditary aristocracy is a point of pride for many Solomani.*

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## The Solomani Party

The dominant social institution in the Solomani Confederation is the Solomani Party, a political association devoted to the ideology of Solomani racial superiority.

The Solomani Party most strongly resembles a political phenomenon common on ancient Terra. At various times, nation-states such as Germany, Mexico, and the Soviet Union were all governed by single political organizations which originally had no official role in government, but which seized monopoly control over the political process. By law, the Solomani Party is the only legal political organization within the Solomani Confederation. Diverging political views are usually expressed through the Party’s hundreds of local factions, rather than moving entirely outside the Party.

In theory, any Human of Solomani descent is automatically a member of the Solomani Party. In practice, many Solomani choose not to participate in Party activities that are not mandatory. A typical rate of active participation is about 10% of the adult population. Solomani Party members must pay annual dues to the Party, and must attend at least four meetings of their local Party cell each year. These two requirements suffice to maintain one’s membership in good standing indefinitely.

A Solomani citizen who is devoted to the Party (or who simply wants to gain the benefits that advanced Party membership carries) may participate to a much greater extent. He may join private social organizations associated with the Party, such as the Albadawi Society or the Sons of Terra. He may take courses offered by the Party in Solomani history and ideology, beyond the basic curriculum required for all citizens. If he is concerned with his genetic “purity,” he may trace his ancestry and undergo genetic testing to establish his own pure-Solomani origins. He regularly attends Party meetings within his local community or workplace. He may make monetary contributions above and beyond his basic dues. He may run for local political office, if any such office is open to him. All of these activities tend to increase the citizen’s Party standing, a vaguely defined but significant indicator of status within Solomani society.

The actual benefits of Solomani Party membership vary from world to world. Aside from a few items mandated by Confederation law, the nature of those benefits is influenced by the needs of local or planetary society.

The most obvious and universal benefit is an array of political rights. Within the Solomani Confederation, most political offices, including *all* offices at the planetary level or above, are reserved for the Party. Only Party members may take part in any formal selection process for such offices, and only Party members are eligible to hold them. This includes most jobs within government bureaucracies, even those which are filled through some form of merit system.

In Solomani military institutions, Party membership can be critical to a career. Enlisted men have no opportunity to attend Officer Training unless they are Party members in good standing. Meanwhile, officers find that opportunities for command assignments (and the associated opportunities for promotion) are tied directly to their standing within the Party. Since the Solomani military uses an “up or out” system, discharging officers who don’t manage to be promoted at a steady rate, an officer without serious commitment to the Solomani Party can expect a short career.

On many worlds, local law treats Solomani Party members differently from nonmembers. Members are likely to be treated with greater respect when accused of a crime or served with a lawsuit. They may also get favored treatment under government business regulations, or when they pursue government contracts.

Directly or indirectly, the Solomani Party owns a great many businesses and nonprofit organizations. Solomani Party membership gives an advantage to those seeking jobs or promotions within such institutions. Party-owned businesses tend to favor other Party members in commercial negotiations.

### *Imperial Solomani*

Of course, there are many Solomani citizens of the Third Imperium, and much of the Imperial aristocracy is at least partially of Solomani descent. Although the Solomani Party exists on worlds close to the border with the Solomani Confederation, it does not hold a position of social dominance or political control within Imperial territory.

## **SWORD WORLDS**

The Sword Worlds are a one-subsector cluster of worlds in the Spinward Marches, inhabited by an offshoot of Solomani civilization. The Sword Worlders use a variant on the ancient European aristocratic model that also inspires the system of nobility used in the Third Imperium. Many of their titles of nobility descend from the Scandinavian languages of ancient Terra.

### *Sword Worlder Nobility*

The highest noble title in the Sword Worlds is *hertug* (plural: *hertugnir*), which originally meant “duke.” The title of *hertug* was originally granted to the hereditary governor of an entire world. The *hertugnir* served only as heads of state, and were required to share power with nonhereditary heads of government. However, at some point in Sword Worlds history many of the *hertugnir* became effective monarchs in their own right. In present-day Sword Worlds society, the title is often equivalent to “king.”

The Sword Worlders have developed two titles for *hertugnir* of unusual power or prestige: *Storhertug* or “Grand Duke,” and *Erkehertug* which is usually translated as “Archduke.”

Below the *hertugnir* stands the title of *jarl* (plural: *jarlnir*) or “earl.” This title originated as a Scandinavian word for powerful independent nobles who were not quite of royal rank. The title was adopted during a period of political upheaval in the Sword Worlds, when a number of petty nobles wished to indicate their independent status. It is still in use in present-day Sword Worlder society, and ambitious lordlings still sometimes lay claim to the rank.

The title of *greve* (plural: *grevenir*) translates roughly as “count” and indicates a hereditary nobleman associated with a local district on one of the Sword Worlds. There are a large number of *grevenir*, with widely varying levels of power and influence.

The title of *baron* (meaning, of course, “baron”) is the lowest hereditary title in the Sword Worlds system of aristocracy. It does not appear on all of the Sword Worlds; in some places the *greve* class occupies the bottom rung of status. A *baron* is a hereditary noble associated with a very small but populated district or one with no landholding at all.

Many Sword Worlders hold the title of *freiherr* (“free man”) as an honorific, earned through military valor or exceptional public service. It is roughly equivalent to the Imperial title of knight.

### *Sword Worlders in the Imperium*

Over the centuries, many Sword Worlders have settled in the Imperium; in particular, a number of planets originally settled by Sword Worlders have been annexed by the Imperium. On these worlds, the Imperial system of aristocracy takes precedence. The Sword Worlder titles survive on a few worlds as part of planetary systems of aristocracy (p. 43).

For more information on the Sword Worlds, see **GURPS Traveller: Sword Worlds**.

## VARGR

The pack-dwelling Vargr are extremely common in the coreward regions of the Imperium, and have their own cluster of interstellar states beyond the Imperial border.

### **Order of Gvadakoung**

Established in 642 by Empress Arbellastra for distinguished Vargr citizens of the Third Imperium, the Order of Gvadakoung was formed in order to honor loyal Vargr citizens such as Admiral Soegz (p. 96).

The order meets at its headquarters, a deep space station located in the Antares system, in geostationary orbit around the main world. The station contains a meeting hall, offices, recreational facilities, the archives (including both the official and private papers of Soegz and his descendants) and museum of the order, quarters for the entire membership of the order should the need arise, and docking facilities for starships.

The emblem of the order is an inverted silver trefoil on a background of black. Its origin is unknown.



### **Nobles in the Vargr Extents**

In their own societies, the Vargr do not normally set up systems of hereditary aristocracy. Status in Vargr society comes from an intangible quality, called *charisma* in Galanglic – those with it become leaders, those without it lose any influence they might hold. Thus, a charismatic leader might claim a title – and some Vargr leaders claim *very* grandiose titles indeed! – but he has no way to pass it on to his offspring if they do not have their own personal charisma.

That having been said, Vargr societies are extremely diverse – just about any social form ever imagined by Humans has its counterpart somewhere in the Vargr Extents.

## Imperial Vargr

Vargr have dwelt within the Imperium for centuries. In the beginning, there was some concern as to how well Vargr would adapt to being governed by the Imperium, but the concern turned out to be largely groundless. Over the centuries, Vargr local governments have proven highly changeable, but their loyalty to the Third Imperium is unshakable, as was amply demonstrated by the actions of Vargr soldiers and politicians during the various Frontier Wars. One in particular, Admiral Soegz, proved so competent and loyal that Empress Arbellastra rewarded him with the position of Archduke of Antares, which his descendants have held to the present day (p. 96). Vargr nobility are most common in the regions bordering on the Vargr Extents.

Local Vargr aristocrats tend to be slightly less predictable than their Human counterparts. Even so, their efforts are usually directed at domination of their own worlds and have little significant effect on interstellar conditions.

For more information about the Vargr, see *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 1*.

## VEGANS

Vegan society differs radically from Human society. It is organized not into tribes or nation-states, but into *tuhuir* (the term translates roughly as “philosophy” or “way of life”).

The Vegan Autonomous District in the Solomani Rim sector is governed by a single *tuhuir*, whose name translates as the “Guardians of the Inviolable Covenant.” The Guardian *tuhuir* has traditionally provided government services for all Vegans for thousands of years, and currently dominates both the District government and those of individual Vegan worlds. All Vegan members of the Imperial peerage are from the Guardian *tuhuir*. Its leader holds ducal rank, and is referred to as the Duke of Muan Gwi. A few other members of the *tuhuir* hold the titles of count or marquis. Finally, each world within the District has an associated Vegan baron, usually the world’s chief administrator or head of state. The Vegans themselves generally view Imperial noble titles as worthwhile only to the extent that they regularize interactions with the Imperial government.

Vegans seldom hold governmental duties for any great length of time. Individuals continually cycle through offices, and the name of the individual holding any specific office changes so often that few non-Vegans can keep track. This presents a special problem to the Imperial system of aristocracy. By the time the Emperor could be informed of each change and issue a new patent of nobility, the title’s associated office would probably be occupied by another Vegan and the cycle would have to start again. As a result, the Duke of Muan Gwi uses a special limited Imperial Warrant (p. 58) to appoint all Vegan titles.

Vegan titles are not hereditary and have no associated fiefs. Vegan nobles seldom actually attend meetings of the Moot, making use of proxies to participate if they choose to do so at all.

## Order of Muan Gwi

The Order of Muan Gwi is one of the youngest chivalric orders, founded by Archduke Arielle Adair of Sol in 1005. It is intended to lend honor and prestige to Vegan citizens of the Imperium, especially members of the Guardian *tuhuir* within the Vegan Autonomous District.

The Duke of Muan Gwi is head of the Order, but other than this there are no ranks or other internal distinctions among members. The Order has no separate headquarters building, but gets by using a few offices in the central headquarters of the Guardian *tuhuir* on Muan Gwi, the Vegan homeworld.

The order has no emblem. On the rare occasions when a sigil is needed, the Order uses its title (translated from the Vegan) in red on a black background.



## ZHODANI

*Zhodani society claims to be a meritocracy, based on psionic talents rather than intelligence, leadership ability, or other mental characteristics. It is difficult to carry out completely unbiased studies of Zhodani society, and the nature of their social "pecking order" is more problematic, but several potential flaws in this system are evident to the outside observer.*

– Dr. Hyman LeStrade-Esteban, *Class and Culture*, Sylean University Press, 1112

Located to coreward of Imperial space, the Human polity known as the Zhodani Consulate is very large, and this size creates some of the same problems of scale suffered by the Third Imperium. However, Zhodani society and institutions have responded to these problems in a radically different manner than the Imperium. In particular, the Zhodani have embraced psionic powers instead of shunning them, and this factor influences every facet of their society and government.

The Zhodani have no noble titles *per se*, but those of noble rank adopt suffixes to their family names indicative of their social position, and change them as they ascend or descend the social ladder. All members of a Zhodani noble family may adopt the suffix, and thus use the "title," even if they are not otherwise entitled to use it – this is similar to the custom of courtesy titles used by the families of Imperial nobles (p. 29). Where brothers or other relatives hold different positions, a complicated system of custom and tradition dictates which suffix is used for a specific occasion.

Social advancement among the Zhodani is acquired purely through individual merit, especially in the development of psionic powers. Wealth and family connections do not enter into the equation (at least according to the Zhodani – Imperial observers often hold different opinions). In this sense, all Zhodani nobility are honor nobility.

Zhodani government is by elected representatives or *consuls* – hence the overall name of their state, the Zhodani Consulate – organized in a series of *councils*. Each council elects two representatives to the next higher-level council, and the process is repeated up the chain of community, local, planetary, subsector, and sector councils to the Supreme Council on Zhdant, the Zhodani homeworld.

Nobles exclusively occupy consular positions among the Zhodani; only nobles can vote, and only nobles are eligible candidates. Below the nobility is a social class of *intendants*, members of which occupy the administrative and bureaucratic positions of the government. They are not elected, but appointed by the consuls. Consular elections are held every three Zhodani years (a period known as an Olympiad), and all elected officials serve until their replacement arrives.

Zhodani nobles are indoctrinated from early age with a sense of duty and responsibility, to the Zhodani people as a whole and their superiors in particular. In this, they are similar to the nobility of the Third Imperium. Zhodani society, however, is much more conformist than Imperial society. The Consulate has fewer local variations to disrupt their society and a psionic elite that helps correct antisocial tendencies at the earliest stages. These factors act to reduce the divisive pressures of distance and cultural variety.

For more information about the Zhodani, see *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 1*.

## INTERCULTURAL PROBLEMS

Some species experience difficulties interacting with other sophonts not of their own kind. These difficulties can be caused by social and cultural differences, perceived or genuine conflicts, and totally irrational prejudices. Many of these problems can affect how the various forms of aristocracy in Charted Space interact.

Prejudice is a subtle but constant problem. Despite generations of public education to the contrary, some sophonts in the Imperium are prejudiced against certain groups of intelligent beings. These prejudices range from the relatively innocuous – unease about physical appearance, for example – to irrational hatred. Overt racism is rare, but many people practice covert discrimination, often without realizing it.

Even otherwise innocuous humor can sometimes show an underlying prejudice. The widespread joke involving the smell of a wet Vargr is a common example. A more subtle prejudice is to attribute an increased level of bigotry to those of Solomani ancestry; in fact, with rare exceptions overt prejudice is discouraged even within the Solomani Confederation.

The Imperial government has a tradition (admittedly not always observed) of evenhandedness across the lines of culture or species. For this reason, while noble children are taught to consider their own aristocratic culture ideal, they are also taught to work smoothly with cultures other than their own. The Imperium generally does not permit open bigotry in those who hold positions of administrative, governmental, or military authority.

In addition to pure prejudice, the sheer diversity of cultures in the Imperium means that “culture clash” is almost inevitable, and this is especially true of encounters between sophonts of different species.

The K’kree, for example, are fundamentally incapable of long-term interaction with carnivorous species and find even omnivores extremely distasteful. When circumstances dictate that the K’kree must deal with such species, they use intermediaries acceptable to both sides. In many cases, extensive use of holographic communication technology will be used; for example, the K’kree ambassador can “talk” to the Emperor using a holographic projector without actually leaving the comfort of his embassy compound. Thus, he needs not experience the upsetting and distracting sounds and smells of the Human court.

Most of the other sophonts inside the Third Imperium have less radical problems to overcome.

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*I don't know if any of you have ever been to some of the backwater worlds of the Imperium, but they have some pretty odd titles for the guys who run them. I've played command performances for the Emir of Daugavpilis, the Voivoide of Lesser Hanistan, the König von und zu Grossbek, and, last but not least, for the Akond of Swat – which I have to point out was not on a world called Swat. It was not on a continent, island, peninsula, or isthmus called Swat. It was not in a city, province, subdivision, parish, or parcel called Swat.*

*I have no idea what an **Akond** is, either.*

*– Anton Wilson Peale*

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## PLANETARY NOBILITY

Individual worlds within the Third Imperium often have their own systems of aristocracy, distinct from the Imperial system. The main difference between the two is that planetary nobles lack the social standing and power held by Imperial nobles. A few planetary nobles have wealth and political power on a par with the Imperial aristocracy, but most do not.

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*On most worlds where formal titles are used, there is some form of investiture ceremony, ranging from the inspiring to the comic.*

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### INVESTITURE

The means by which a planetary noble is appointed differ from world to world. Hereditary aristocracies are common, but not universal. Some systems have differing methods, including inheritance by the youngest child, designation by the titleholder, and various forms of election and random selection.

On most worlds where formal titles are used, there is some form of investiture ceremony, ranging from the inspiring to the comic. In almost all cases, there is a document formalizing the investiture, usually issued by the highest-ranking noble on the world in question. In the case of the investiture of the highest noble himself, usually either a panel of other peers or a local religious leader issues the document. Like a patent of nobility (p. 13), the investiture document details the rights and responsibilities of the title, along with the terms under which it may be passed on and other details. The original document is usually kept in some form of secure archive in the capital of the system.

### RANK AND TITLES

The variety of local planetary titles is enormous, and while there is some repetition, there are thousands of variations on a few basic themes. A wide variety of hierarchies also exist, with great disparity at the individual world level. Most local systems take the names for their titles from less well-known Solomani or Vilani models, sometimes modifying them to suit local needs.

Planetary nobles are prohibited from using the same titles as the Imperial nobility, to avoid confusion. This restriction applies to the Galanglic and Vilani titles only – a world may translate the Imperial titles into any other language, if desired. A common solution is to add “Parochial” as a prefix to the official title – for example, “Parochial Archduke” for someone who holds the title of archduke in a local system of aristocracy. This prefix is usually dropped in everyday usage, and is only used explicitly on state occasions or when there are Imperial nobles present.

Planetary nobles may also hold Imperial titles in addition to their local titles.

## LOCAL TITLES

A world which uses its own titles of nobility may use titles from any language or culture, provided there is no possibility of confusion with the Imperial titles. The ruler of a world may call himself *Tsar* or *Kaiser* without repercussions (although it may seem a little pretentious). This is not the same as the practice, prevalent in some regions, of using different languages for Imperial titles (p. 30).

The following are taken from various Terran cultures, and in each case are arranged from highest to lowest. GMs should note that the Third Imperium is thousands of years in the future, and words may not be used in the same way that they are in the 21st century.

### Albanian

**Mbret, Mbreteshe:** King, queen.

**Bir Mbreti, Bije Mreti:** Lesser king, queen.

**Princ, Princeshe:** Prince, princess.

**Duk, Dukeshe:** Duke, duchess.

**Kont, Konteshe:** Count, countess.

**Kreshnik:** Knight (also used as a first name).

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*Sergei hault-Oberlindes has settled down nicely after that Ruie business, and hasn't caused his family any embarrassment since. He and his wife Zinovia are taking over more and more of the regular management of the company, and in my opinion this is for the good.*

*– Yan Ming, business reporter for TNS, Spinward Marches*

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### Amharic (Ethiopian)

**Negusa Negest:** Emperor (“king of kings”).

**Negus:** King.

**Ras:** The highest noble rank under emperor/king.

**Bitwoded:** Literally “beloved,” a rank just under *ras* in hierarchy.

**Dejzmach:** Literally “gatekeeper.”

**Fitawrari:** Originally a military title, “leader of the vanguard.”

**Gerazmach:** Originally a military title, “commander of the left,” equal in rank to *Kenyazmach*.

**Kenyazmach:** Originally a military title, “commander of the right,” equal to *Gerazmach*.

**Balambaras:** Originally a military title, “castellan” or “commander of a fortress.”

**Ato:** An honorific for male knights equivalent to *sir*.

**Woizero:** An honorific for male knights equivalent to *lady*.

**Lij:** Child, used as an honorific for an heir (both male and female).

### Arabic

**Caliph:** Also *Khalifa*, “successor,” roughly equivalent to emperor.

**Sultan:** Leader of a number of states, roughly equivalent to king.

**Malik:** Leader of a large state, king (also *Muluk*).

**Amir:** A ruler of a small state, roughly equivalent to king/queen (also *emir*).

**Vizier:** A high-ranking officer of state, second to a supreme ruler (also *wazir*).

**Sheik:** A title given to a lower level noble, often a tribal leader or headman (also *shayk*).

### English

**Sheriff:** Possibly descended from “shire reeve” but certainly influenced by the Arabic *sharif*. The word originally meant a feudal official appointed by the king to enforce the royal prerogatives in his absence.

**Ealdorman:** A councilor or advisor.

**Reeve:** A term of early medieval origin, referring to an officer in charge of a manor in the absence of the owner.

**Mayor:** One of several local officials in charge of a castle or town.

**Castellan:** Originally, an official in charge of a castle.

### French

**Empereur, Imperatrice:** Emperor, empress.

**Roi, Reine:** King, queen.

**Duc, Duchesse:** Duke, duchess.

**Comte, Comtesse:** Count, countess.

**Viscomte, Viscomtesse:** Viscount, viscountess.

**Barone, Baronne:** Baron, baroness

**Chevalier:** Knight.

### Gaelic

**Rig:** King.

**Leath-Ri:** “Half-King,” a joint ruler.

**Ruire:** A petty king, a ruler of a smaller principality.

**Flaith, Mal, Prionsa:** Various forms of “prince.”

**Biocun:** Viscount.

**Tiarna, Tighearna:** “Lord,” a title of respect given to peers.

**Marcas:** Marquis.

**Taoiseach:** Elder or chieftain.

**Tanaiste:** Heir to a chieftain.

**Curadh, Ridire:** Knight.

**Scuibheir:** “Shield bearer,” or squire.

### German

**Kaiser:** Emperor.

**Koenig:** King.

**Fürst:** Prince.

**Erzherzog:** Equivalent to “archduke.”

**Grossherzog:** Equivalent to grand duke, an especially powerful duke.

**Herzog:** Duke.

**Graf, Grafın:** Count, countess.

**Landgraf:** A count whose demesne was primarily rural.

**Burggraf:** A count with a demesne consisting primarily of a city, roughly equivalent to viscount.

**Pfalzgraf:** In Germany, a count with certain additional rights and duties.

**Wildgraf:** A count with governing duties over wilderness.

**Kurfürst:** In the old Terran Holy Roman Empire, one of the nobles with the right to elect emperors, now an alternative to count.

**Altgraf:** Originally applied to German counts garrisoning mountainous regions, and allowed to levy tolls for access to mountain passes and gaps, now an alternative to count.

**Markgraf:** Count of a “march” – a military command in a newly conquered territory.

**Vicomte:** A “vice-Count,” a lower level of count or marquis.

**Freiherr:** Equivalent to “baron.”

**Hauptmann:** Headman or hetman, a clan or tribal leader (often with military responsibilities, usually translated as “captain”).

**Ritter:** Knight (the equivalent of “sir” is *Herr*).

**Gutsherr:** Originally, a servant of a knight – a squire or esquire.

## Greek

**Basileus:** King.

**Pringkepas:** Prince.

**Komes:** Count.

**Baronos:** Baron.



## Hungarian

**Csaszar:** Emperor.

**Kiraly:** King.

**Fejedelem:** Prince.

**Herceg:** Similar to the German *herzog*, or duke.

**Grof:** Graf, or count.

**Vicomte:** Viscount.

**Baro:** Baron.

**Lovag:** Knight.

## Polish

**Imperator, Imperatorowa:** Emperor, empress.

**Cesarz, Cesarzowa:** Emperor, empress.

**Krol, Krolowa:** King, queen.

**Ksiaze:** Prince.

**Margrabia, Margrabina:** Margrave, margravess.

**Markiz, Markiza:** Marquis, marquessa.

**Baronn, Baronowa:** Baron, baroness.

**Rycerz:** Knight.

## Portuguese

**Imperador:** Emperor.

**Rei:** King.

**Principe:** Prince.

**Duque:** Duke.

**Marques:** Marquis.

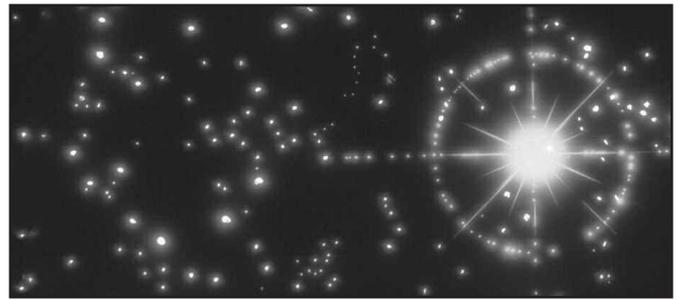
**Conde:** Count.



**Visconde:** Viscount.

**Barao:** Baron.

**Cavaleiro:** Knight.



## Romanian

**Rege, Regina:** King, queen.

**Principe, Principesa:** Prince, princess.

**Duce, Ducesa:** Duke, duchess.

**Conte, Contesa:** Count, countess.

**Vicomte, Vicontesa:** Viscount, viscountess.

**Baron, Baroneasa:** Baron, baroness.

**Cavaler:** Knight.

## Russian

**Tsar, Tsarina:** Emperor, empress.

**Velikii Kniaz, Velikaia Kniaginia:** Grand prince, princess.

**Kniaz:** Technically “prince” but sometimes translated as duke.

**Graf:** Count.

**Voyevoda:** A provincial governor, originally a military commander.

**Baron:** This word exists in Russian, but is not used because of possible confusion with the Galanglic (Imperial) “baron.”

## Slavonic

**Kralj:** King.

**Knez:** Prince, grand duke.

**Ban:** A hereditary provincial governor, duke.

**Vojvod (Voivode):** Originally a military commander, later a hereditary governor possibly equivalent to a duke.

**Boyar:** A hereditary landholder, possibly equal to count.

**Zupan:** Chieftain, leader of a family group.

## Turkish

**Sultan Es Selatin:** Literally “Sultan of Sultans,” a title of the Ottoman Emperor.

**Sultan:** King.

**Beylerbey:** A senior provincial governor or exalted military commander.

**Pasha:** A provincial Governor.

**Atabeg:** A provincial Governor.

**Bey:** A governor of a smaller province or a major city.

**Efendi:** A term of respect applied to a noble or important person, used in some places as a substitute title for a knight.



## *Governmental Obligations*

Government at the highest local levels includes executive and judicial duties. Lower-level nobles may take an active role in the judiciary and a more “hands-on” role in the administration. Local knight-hoods (p. 86) are awarded to local businessmen or aristocrats to enhance their status.

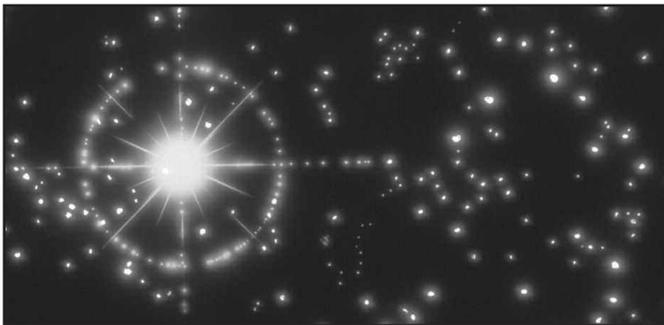
## **PLANETARY ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD**

Minor Imperial orders of knighthood have been established for inhabitants of many of the major worlds of the Imperium. Like the major orders discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 21-25), these are granted by the archdukes and, less often, by the Emperor.

A grand commander or similar person, appointed by the relevant archduke, usually heads planetary chivalric orders. The most likely candidates for this position are the planet’s head of state, or its Imperial baron.

Membership in planetary orders is restricted to a small proportion of the inhabitants of the world in question, and carries a certain amount of social prestige in the world’s immediate vicinity. Ranks within the order vary from world to world, but tend to be similar to those of the major orders discussed in Chapter 2 – companion, knight, knight commander, and so on.

Planetary knight-hoods exist primarily to give local magnates some political and social standing, however small, when they travel off of their worlds, and to enhance their prestige when they must deal with offworlders.



## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Like Imperial nobles, planetary nobles may or may not bear specific governmental responsibilities. Unlike Imperial nobles, they usually have plenty of ceremonial duties – sometimes religious, sometimes social, often both. The proportion of real responsibility to ceremonial duty is different for each world.

## *Social and Cultural Obligations*

Conditions on the individual world dictate the social and cultural obligations each local noble operates under. Ceremonial duties may include opening and closing ceremonies for whatever local assembly exists, initiation of lower-level nobles, and presiding at local secular and religious holidays. Nobles are usually expected to lend their support to charities and fund-raising efforts.

## **MINOR STATES**

Aside from the major powers of Charted Space, there are hundreds of tiny “pocket empires.” Many of these are client states of the Third Imperium, imitating Imperial social and political forms to some extent. Others are fully independent, or are attached to one of the other major powers.

## **IMPERIAL CLIENT STATES**

There are too many client states outside the Imperium to do more than generalize, but the high level of interaction between these states and the Third Imperium mean that many of them follow Imperial hierarchies and nomenclature for their nobility. In some cases, a noble of a client state may be granted an Imperial title, especially where this would strengthen ties between the Imperium and that state.

Client states of the Imperium tend to follow Imperial norms for issues like inheritance and standards of behavior, but there are differences in other areas. There are fewer high nobles. Archduke is an Imperial title, and no client state has anything similar because no client state covers four sectors. Likewise, no client state has anything equal to a sector duke in power. A few client states approach subsector size, so there are a few extra-Imperial dukes, most of which call themselves by other titles. The equivalents of count and marquis are common, but baron is the most frequent title. Baronets and knights are actually *more* common than in the Imperium, as practically every state appoints them in great numbers, although very few of these lesser nobles have governmental duties.

Extra-Imperial nobles do not act as Imperial liaison to their worlds, unless they hold actual Imperial titles as well. Those who are part of a multiple-system polity often have similar duties for those political units. Also, extra-Imperial nobles are more likely to have governmental duties than their

## Tarsus

Tarsus is one of several systems in the District 268 sub-sector of the Spinward Marches, and is a typical Imperial client state – a world within the Imperial sphere of influence, but not actually part of the Third Imperium.

Tarsus is one of three worlds in a mercantile union known as the *Ag-Worlds Cooperative*, a loose association of agricultural worlds – including Tarsus, Motmos, and Tarkine – formed in order to present a coherent and organized front during dealings with the high-population worlds in the subsector, Collace and Forine. The worlds of the Cooperative share a similar social and cultural background, but are otherwise independent.

Tarsus has no formal system of nobility in the Imperial sense, but a system of aristocratic families has arisen over the centuries, and the unusual local election laws have helped certain families retain their position from generation to generation.

On Tarsus, the franchise is limited to a specific number of votes, originally assigned one to each adult settler. These “votes” were hereditary, and could originally be divided among several heirs (resulting in fractional votes) and bought or sold. Over the years, the number of votes has been increased several times, and limitations have been placed on the ownership of votes by noninhabitants. Members of the local aristocratic families hold positions on the governing High Commission, in one of the four regional bureaucracies, and in judiciary offices.



Imperial counterparts, often ruling one or more worlds directly.

Fiefs are provided about as often in the Imperium, and in comparable sizes (p. 13), but these are more likely to be the sole source of income for a noble family. Often the population of the fief represents a real constituency that the noble represents to the government as a whole.

The main difference is in ethics and behavior. Without the peer pressure brought to bear by large numbers of other nobles, there are fewer limits on a given noble's behavior. Sometimes this can lead to excesses that would not be tolerated within the Imperium. Wealthy worlds may tolerate a level of hedonism and dilettantism among their nobility that would be unusual in the Third Imperium. Actively oppressive nobles are rare in the client states, however, as Imperial pressure discourages extremes.

Many Imperial client states have no formal system of nobility. Although they usually have aristocracies of some kind, these lack the formal hierarchy of titles and ranks of the Third Imperium. Others have systems clearly descended from the Imperial system, but using unique local names.

## POCKET EMPIRES

The various political entities outside the major interstellar empires have a wide variety of cultures and societies, but often resemble the nearest large polity. Two examples are given here.

### *The Julian Protectorate*

The worlds of the Julian Protectorate are peopled by a combination of Vargr and Humaniti of Vilani extraction. The system of nobility most often used on Protectorate worlds draws heavily on Vilani roots modified by Vargr cultural mores. Individual worlds within the Protectorate adopt differing proportions of the cultural mix.

Asimikigir (Amdukan 0223) is one of the most extreme examples of cultural mixing, where Humaniti and Vargr have achieved one of the oldest examples of a combined society in Charted Space. The Vilani system of noble titles predominates (p. 7), although the names for the individual titles are usually given in Galanglic. The Vargr component of the combined society means that each titled noble must continually demonstrate fitness for the privileges of his rank, or face a challenge to his position. In the distant past, this meant an actual duel for the position, but in more modern times, the contested title is judged before a tribunal of the planetary council.

### *The Federation of Arden*

The Federation of Arden consists of Arden and six other star systems in the Spinward Marches. Although ostensibly a democracy, the Federation is controlled by the Arden Society, a group which consists solely of members chosen from among the hereditary oligarchy. Government officials are freely elected, but candidates are all chosen from the Society.

The Federation's expansionistic tendencies are kept in check by Imperial economic and political pressure, both overt and covert.

# Biographies

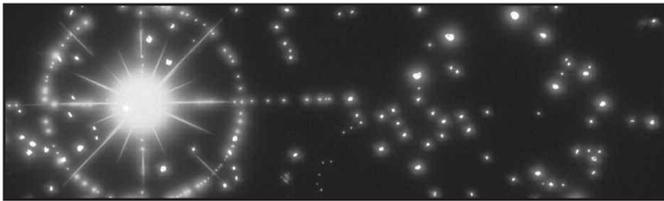
*ALKHALIKOI, Arbella Khatami. 32nd Empress of the Third Imperium, Regent of the Third Imperium, third Duchess of Rhylanor, fifth Baroness Alkhalikoi, K.S.C., G.C.E.G., K.C.A., K.C.A.S., K.B., K.T., K.G., K.I., K.R.A. Born 037-587 on Rhylanor/Spinward Marches, eldest issue of Duke Anton Royden Alkhalikoi of Rhylanor and Lady Maryam Plankwell Khatami of Zivije. Inherited Duchy of Rhylanor 602, commanded system defenses during Battle of Rhylanor 603, commissioned as Captain in the Imperial Navy by Grand Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell 603, appointed Grand Admiral of the Marches by Emperor Cleon V in 616, victor in the Second Frontier War 620, victor over the forces of the Barracks Emperor Gustus in the Second Battle of Zhimaway 622, proclaimed Regent by Imperial Moot 622, proclaimed Empress by Imperial Moot 629, died 355-666 on Capital/Core.*

*Married (on 194-623) Duke Sergey Torgyan ASHRAN of Cemplas (died on 147-645). By this marriage she had issue:*

- 1) Zhakirov Ashran ALKHALIKOI (born 197-624)
- 2) Anton Ashran ALKHALIKOI (born 023-627)
- 3) Maryam Ashran ALKHALIKOI (born 303-629)

*– from Urquhart’s Peerage,  
236th Edition (published 1118)*

This chapter gives sketch biographies (and, in some cases, **GURPS** writeups) for a number of Imperial nobles at all levels of the aristocratic hierarchy. These individuals can be used as NPCs in any **GURPS Traveller** adventure as examples of “typical” nobles or as adventure seeds.



## THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

The ruling Imperial dynasty is the Alkhalikoi family, founded after the Civil War by the last and only successful Emperor of the Flag (p. GT31). Today the Emperor and his family stand at the head of the Imperial aristocracy, and serve as the focus of the loyalties of trillions of Imperial citizens.

### EMPEROR STREPHON

The current Emperor, Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi, has ruled over the Third Imperium for almost 50 years. When observing the dour, rather humorless monarch, it is hard to

recall that he is the product of one of the Imperium’s most famous and tragic love stories.

### Strephon’s Parents

Emperor Paulo III was a very stubborn man in one respect: he always insisted that he would marry only if his partner was a woman he could wholeheartedly love and respect. Since his standards were very high, he remained unmarried until late in life. The “bachelor Emperor” resisted all pressure to produce an heir. He insisted that one of his younger brothers could take the Iridium Throne if all else failed. He may have been less than serious – his brothers were both suspected of being incompetent to govern a garden party.

Finally, just as he reached his 60th year, the Emperor found his bride – the young Elbet Osmanlia Aella, daughter of a count in the Gushemege sector. Lady Aella was barely 20 years of age when she first met the Emperor, but she was already an accomplished mathematician and economist. Her academic accomplishments caught the Emperor’s attention while he visited her homeworld. They enjoyed many hours discussing and quarreling over affairs of state before they recognized the stirring of personal affection.

Lady Aella arrived on Capital for the first time in 1043, seven days before her marriage to the Emperor. She soon swayed the entire Imperium with her learning, sharp wit, personal charm, and beauty. The few years of their marriage were a brilliant time at Court, giving rise to important changes in policy as well as a whirl of merry social occasions centering on the aging Emperor and his young wife.

Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi was born on 202-1049, and his younger sister Lydia was born on 266-1052. The Imperial couple intended to have more children, but fate intervened.

Empress Elbet died suddenly in 1053, under very mysterious circumstances at the Imperial Palace. Official investigations led to a finding of “death by natural causes,” although rumors abounded that she had met with foul play. Suspicion fell upon the Emperor’s brother James, widely believed to be mentally unbalanced. Prince James withdrew from public life after that, and committed suicide later in the same year.

Emperor Paulo III never remarried, and remained in public mourning for the rest of his life. Wrapped in his grief, he paid little attention to his children. Grand Prince Strephon and Princess Lydia were effectively orphans in the Imperial Palace. Their only “parents” were tutors and Palace footmen, and their only friends were the children of high-ranking Palace servants. Both of them grew up quiet and sullen, more prone to calculate advantage than seek affection.

Strephon knew that he would one day be Emperor. Even more than most Imperial heirs, he was the subject of media attention. His parents' story, and the likelihood that he would inherit while still young, caused reporters to swarm about his every public appearance. Perhaps in reaction to this attention, Strephon developed a colorless public personality, hiding his emotions behind a stiff facade.

## Strephon's Naval Career

The Alkhalikoi dynasty began with a lucky admiral in the time of the Civil War. Ever since, most of its members have spent time in the Imperial Navy before taking the throne or some other role in the Imperial aristocracy. Grand Prince Strephon was no exception. He entered the Imperial Naval Academy (Core branch) a few days after his 18th birthday, intending to earn a commission as a line Naval officer. His time at the Academy was typical. He earned high marks in most courses, performing especially well in history and military law, and passing grades during his shipboard cruises.

Unfortunately, the Grand Prince never earned a normal commission. In late 1070, while serving aboard the battleship *Tomutov I*, Midshipman Strephon Alkhalikoi received word that his father was ill and not expected to live. The battleship immediately set course for Capital, arriving three days after the Emperor's death. Strephon learned that as part of his succession to the Iridium Throne, he had been promoted directly from midshipman to Grand Admiral of the Imperial Fleet – the most drastic promotion in the Imperial Navy's history.

## Strephon's Reign

Strephon came to power as the youngest reigning Emperor in over 300 years. This was of concern to many. For centuries, there had been a general consensus that the Iridium Throne was intended for experienced, seasoned rulers – the Imperium was far too large and complex for a young person to handle wisely.

Mindful of this belief, Strephon ruled with a very light hand for a long time. This accorded well with his political instincts, but it also gave him time to learn the finer points of statecraft from his advisors. His primary goal was to project the image of a steady hand at the helm of state. To this end, he made few significant changes to policy. He relied on the Imperial archdukes a great deal, granting them increasing authority to act as his viceroys in their domains.

During this period, he made a marriage alliance with an ancient Vilani noble family, hoping to use its prestige to further suggest calm and stability to the Imperium as a whole. Unlike his father, the Emperor used unromantic criteria in his choice – his marriage to Lady Iolanthe Guuilbataashullibaa (p. 90) was a true marriage of state. The warmth and affection that soon grew between Strephon and his Empress was an unexpected bonus.

Strephon truly began to take control of the Imperium in the aftermath of the Fourth Frontier War (1084-1088). The Emperor took little part in actual management of the war – hostilities were over long before his orders could reach the front lines. Even so, Strephon was able to apply adroit public relations to portray himself as an effective war leader for the

Imperium. The birth of his heir Grand Princess Ciencia (p. 90) helped as well. By 1090 Strephon enjoyed greater prestige than his father ever had, and he could begin to implement independent and innovative policies.

## Current Goals

*E Pluribus Unum. Out of many, one. Easier said than done.*

– Emperor Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi,  
personal journals

Emperor Strephon has long suspected that the Third Imperium is facing a slow and subtle crisis. The Imperium appears to be dividing into a dozen sector-sized cultural units, each with its own concerns and goals. Thus far nothing has led these subcultures to question their loyalty to the Iridium Throne. However, if a serious catastrophe were to occur, it seems possible that the Imperium would shatter in response.

Strephon's primary concern is with rebuilding a unified Imperium, and many of his policies are directed toward that goal. For example, for years the Emperor has been working to make his own family as visible as possible. One instance of this strategy is the series of "Grand Tours" being undertaken by members of the Imperial family during the jubilee year of 1121. Strephon, his Empress, and his heirs are all being presented to the people of the Imperium as symbols of unity, strength, and devotion.

The Emperor has also been promoting surrogates, such as the six other Imperial archdukes and a few carefully selected sector dukes. At first glance, it appears that increasing local noble authority would further fragment the Imperium – but Strephon believes that *loyal* viceroys will have the opposite effect. The archdukes and sector dukes can act as a symbol of Imperial authority, less distant and unapproachable than the Emperor himself. They and their subordinate nobles can also moderate the demands of Imperial membership to fit the needs of local communities.

The Emperor has also been actively *encouraging* the expression of local cultural differences. By supporting phenomena such as the Authentic Movement (p. T:RF60), he hopes to demonstrate that the Imperium is flexible enough to support a wide variety of cultures. If a crisis of loyalties does erupt, he wants member communities to decide that staying in the Imperium is safer than trying to go it alone.

Meanwhile, Strephon is actively working to *predict* what catastrophes might be lurking on the horizon. He often consults with economists, sociologists, and political theorists, and has invested heavily in the murky science of psychohistory (p. GT55). He has significantly increased the size and funding of the Imperial Diplomatic Corps, and of various Imperial intelligence agencies. He also supports the Longbow II project (p. GT81), rumored to be attempting to discover just why the Zhodani are so interested in the galactic core. On a personal level, Strephon is an enthusiastic and largely self-taught historian; he is an expert on history and political philosophy, studying ancient Terran, Vilani, and other Human societies.

## EMPEROR STREPHON 590 POINTS

Human (Mixed/Imperial). Age 70; 5' 10", 160 lbs.; white skin, black hair going silver, gray eyes, clean-shaven, usually in elaborate Imperial garments or the dress uniform of a Grand Admiral of the Imperial Navy.

**ST** 9 [-10]; **DX** 11 [10]; **IQ** 14 [45]; **HT** 12 [20].

Speed 5.75; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 8 [40]; Alertness +1 [5]; Ally Group (Imperial retainers; large group, 100-point characters, 12 or less) [80]; Charisma +1 [5]; Claim to Hospitality [10]; Empathy [15]; Filthy Rich [50]; Legal Enforcement Powers 2 [10]; Military Rank 8 (Grand Admiral) [40]; Multimillionaire 6 [150]; Status 8 (Emperor) [10]\*; Strong Will +2 [8].

\* Includes three levels of free Status from high Wealth, and three from Military Rank.

**Disadvantages:** Honesty [-10]; Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Workaholic [-5].

**Quirks:** Becomes verbally aggressive when angry; Cultivates a bland public persona; Dislikes ceremony and spectacle; Enjoys working with philosophers and scientists; Obsessive diarist. [-5]

**Skills:** Acting-15 [4]; Administration-18 [10]; Anthropology-12 [1]; Astrogation-14 [2]; Bard-15 [4]; Carousing-12 [2]; Computer Operation-14 [1]; Detect Lies-17 [2]\*; Diplomacy-15 [6]; Disguise-13 [1]; Economics-14 [4]; First Aid-14 [1]; Free Fall-11 [2]; Guns (Pistols)-15 [4]\*\*; Heraldry-15 [4]; History-16 [8]; Intelligence Analysis-16 [8]; Interrogation-14 [2]; Intimidation-14 [2]; Law-16 [8]; Leadership-16 [6]; Lip Reading-14 [2]; Literature-14 [4]; Philosophy (Imperial)-14 [4]; Piloting (Grav Vehicles)-11 [2]; Piloting (Spacecraft)-11 [2]; Poetry-13 [1]; Politics-18 [10]; Powerboat-11 [2]; Psychology-14 [4]; Research-15 [4]; Savoir-Faire-18 [4]†; Strategy (Space)-14 [4]; Swimming-12 [2]; Tactics (Space)-13 [2]; Vacc Suit-14 [2]; Writing-15 [4].

\* Includes +4 for Empathy.

\*\* Includes +2 for IQ.

† Based on default of IQ+2 due to Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-14 [0]; Vilani-14 [2].

## EMPRESS IOLANTHE

Iolanthe Abartii Guuilbataashullibaa was born on 064-1052. Her father was Duke Ashur Sirush Guuilbataashullibaa of Tansa, sector duke of the Gushemege sector. Her mother was Dame Celia Abartii, K.B., a former member of the Imperial Diplomatic Corps who had been knighted by the Archduke of Vland.

Iolanthe was the fifth child of the marriage, and was never expected to inherit her father's duchy. Instead, at the age of 14 she traveled to Capital, joining the retinue of Princess Lydia Alkhalikoi as a lady-in-waiting. Lady Iolanthe

attended the Karbiili School (p. 32) with Princess Lydia, and the two girls became close friends.

Lady Iolanthe first met her future husband at Strephon's coronation, but it was years before the two of them established a close relationship. Instead, Iolanthe attended the University of Sylea and earned a doctorate in anthropology, then did field work for three years on a backwater world in the Fornast sector.

When she returned to Capital in 1079, she renewed her acquaintance with Princess Lydia and was reintroduced to the Emperor. At the time, Strephon was very concerned with the need to find a wife, but none of the available candidates were quite suitable. Strephon barely knew this quiet, rather studious Vilani noblewoman – but she came from an ancient family, her father was one of his most important supporters, and she seemed pleasant enough in person. After consulting with his sister, Strephon asked for Iolanthe's hand in marriage. After thinking it over for several days, Iolanthe accepted.

To her surprise, the Empress has developed considerable affection for her husband over the years. She has also become a quiet but crucial support for his reign. She is quite intelligent – more so than her husband, as he has observed. Her analytical ability and her expertise in anthropology have given Strephon useful insight as he struggles with the Imperium's problems. Meanwhile, her ties to many Vilani noble families have helped to strengthen the old Alkhalikoi power base in the Gushemege sector.

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*Grand Princess Iphegenia has been educated from birth to eventually assume the mantle of authority for the Imperium. However, instead of following the usual Alkhalikoi tradition into the Imperial Navy, she has followed her mother's route into the sciences.*

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## GRAND PRINCESS CIENCIA IPHEGENIA

*The Grand Princess Ciencia, of course, is approaching the age where she has to begin considering where the next heir is coming from. She attended Karbiili when I taught there, and I remember her as intelligent and levelheaded, if a bit of a discipline problem initially. She had a little trouble making the adjustment from the Imperial Palace to the Academy campus, but after a few months she adapted nicely. She and Isis both were moony over that Glip fellow – that singer popular a couple of decades ago, I can't even remember his full name. Of course, so was every adolescent girl in the Imperium.*

*For now, Ciencia is rumored to be inordinately interested in the career of Doctor Ganidiirsi Simalr, son of the Duke of Ushra, and she is said to have pulled the strings that resulted in his induction into the Order of the Arrow. They have been seen at a number of formal and informal gatherings, and the*

usual “friend of a friend knows a guy in the Imperial Guards who said . . .” stories are all over polite society. I’ve met the man, and she could do a lot worse. He has a tendency to get lost in his thoughts, and is almost the stereotypical “absent-minded professor.” When he wants to be, however, he’s quite the public speaker.

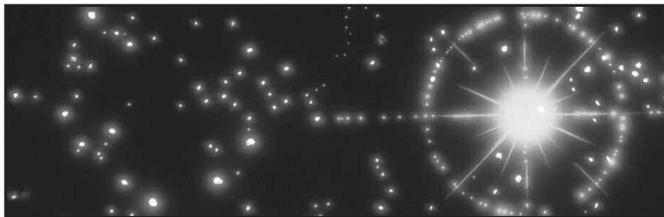
*The painter Mobi Branjan Ibn-Daud is in some stories. He’s been picked to do an official jubilee portrait and some think that Ciencia had a hand in that. He’s a lesser child of some rimward duke I’ve never heard of, and although that accident of birth gives him the ancestry for a consort, I don’t think he has the temperament for it – he’s too outspoken and hasn’t much use for the nobility. Odd how the children of wealth and power like to disavow it, but they cash the credit drafts from home all the same. He’s good looking, about the right age for her, and if I were 40 years younger, I’d be chasing him myself.*

– Countess Vienna Amalfi Zirunkaar of Quildhac, private communication, 291-1118

Ciencia Iphegenia Guuilbataashullibaa Alkhalikoi was born on 076-1088, and is the only child of Emperor Strephon and Empress Iolanthe. As such, she is heir apparent to the Iridium Throne.

Grand Princess Iphegenia has been educated from birth to eventually assume the mantle of authority for the Imperium. However, instead of following the usual Alkhalikoi tradition into the Imperial Navy, she has followed her mother’s route into the sciences. She attended the prestigious Karbiili School (p. 32) and the University of Sylea, earning a doctorate in sociology. Her dissertation, “Modeling Developmental Cycles in Metropolitan Groups: Six Case Studies in the Corridor Sector” was published in *Ad Astra*, the prestigious journal of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service.

Iphegenia’s early fascination with the sciences has prompted an extensive interest in the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. Since earning her doctorate in 1112, she has become the unofficial leader of a circle of high-level Imperial nobles who support the IISS. Her studies of developing cultures, and her work with the IISS, have earned her the rank of Knight Commander of the Order of the Arrow (conferred in 1118). This is a rare honor for a member of the Imperial family – the last member of the dynasty to hold it was Empress Arbellatra.



## PRINCE VARIAN

Prince Varian Alkhalikoi Alkhalikoi is Emperor Strephon’s nephew, and second in line for the Iridium Throne. He was born on 127-1088, the son of Duke Dresden Paulo Alkhalikoi of Sanches and Princess Lydia Aella Alkhalikoi. Dresden and Lydia were fourth cousins, born to two

distantly related branches of the Alkhalikoi family. Dresden was descended from Prince Sergey Alkhalikoi, third son of the Empress Margaret II; Lydia was, of course, descended from the direct Imperial line.

Varian was educated at the Karbiili School (p. 32), and attended the University of Sylea for two terms before leaving with an associate’s degree in literature. He has spent no time in Imperial service, and has a reputation as an indolent playboy.

Perhaps to counter this reputation as a dilettante, Prince Varian recently chose to celebrate his 30th birthday by embarking on a Grand Tour (p. 34). Since that time he has kept out of the public eye, appearing from time to time in scattered spots on a general course leading toward the Spinward Marches.

Varian is five minutes older than his twin brother Lucan, and thus Varian became Duke of Sanches upon the death of his father in 1108.

## GRAND PRINCESS CIENCIA IPHEGENIA 355 POINTS

Human (Mixed/Imperial). Age 31; 5’ 6”, 125 lbs.; white skin, black hair, gray eyes, usually seen in Imperial regalia or in plain academic’s garb.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 12 [10]; **IQ** 14 [45]; **HT** 12 [20].

Speed 6.00; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

**Advantages:** Ally Group (Imperial retainers; medium-sized group, 100-point characters, 12 or less) [60]; Claim to Hospitality [10]; Filthy Rich [50]; Heir [5]; Multimillionaire 3 [75]; Reputation +4 (Patron of the IISS; Scouts and explorers, all the time) [10]; Status 7 (Grand Princess) [20]\*; Voice [10].

\* Includes three levels of free Status from high Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** Curious [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10].

**Quirks:** Hates violence; Passionately interested in the social sciences; Pedantic. [-3]

**Skills:** Administration-15 [4]; Anthropology-15 [6]; Bard-16 [2]\*; Computer Operation-14 [1]; Detect Lies-13 [2]; Diplomacy-16 [4]\*; Economics-13 [2]; Fast-Talk-13 [1]; First Aid-14 [1]; Guns (Pistol)-14 [1]\*\*; Heraldry-14 [2]; History-13 [2]; Intelligence Analysis-14 [2]; Law-13 [2]; Leadership-14 [2]; Literature-12 [1]; Mathematics-13 [2]; Philosophy (Imperial)-14 [4]; Politics-16 [2]\*; Psychology-14 [4]; Research-15 [4]; Savoir-Faire-20 [4\*†]; Singing-14 [1]\*; Speed-Reading-13 [1]; Swimming-12 [1]; Teaching-15 [4]; Writing-15 [4].

\* Includes +2 for Voice.

\*\* Includes +2 for IQ.

† Based on default of IQ+2 due to Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-14 [0]; Vilani-14 [2].

## PRINCE LUCAN

*I promised you the latest gossip, so here it is. Word has it that Varian and Lucan almost came to blows a few days ago . . . over a woman, as usual. I believe you know her – Duke Muendor’s daughter Elia – she’s one of those floating flower petals that we have in great quantity here. Had there been a gun handy, I swear one of the little weasels would have shot the other. Elia evidently got tired of Lucan and decided to drop him for Varian, and Lucan lost what little self-control he had. Naturally, Varian matched him decibel for decibel – they are peas in a pod, in some ways. It was quite the screaming match, I’m told. Windhook (you remember him) was there by chance, and told me what happened.*

*Of course the bodyguards told the Emperor, and he called both of them into his private chambers. It was two hours each individually, than another hour together, then both of them went back to their quarters accompanied by a couple of Strephon’s aides.*

*Varian left town a day or so ago, taking Elia with him – on a Grand Tour, I gather. There are worse ways to spend a year or two than on a yacht with a prince of the blood who has access to an Imperial stipend. Still, how long before she finds him as tiresome as she found Lucan, I wonder?*

*Lucan hasn’t decided what he’s going to do with himself just yet, but I hear he’s thinking about the Navy – or the Navy has been strongly suggested to him. Frankly, I don’t see how it can do anything bad for him. Who knows, it might clear up his complexion!*

*– Countess Vienna Amalfi Zirunkaar of Quildhac, private communication, 139-1116*

Prince Lucan Alkhalikoi Alkhalikoi is also Emperor Strephon’s nephew, and third in line for the Iridium Throne. He was born on 127-1088, the second son of Duke Dresden Paulo Alkhalikoi of Sanches and Princess Lydia Aella Alkhalikoi. Lucan and Varian are twin brothers, but Lucan was born five minutes later, dooming him to a lesser position within the Imperial family. He has inherited no title other than that of Prince.

Like his brother, Prince Lucan attended the Karbiili School (p. 32) and the University of Sylea. Unlike his brother, Lucan actually earned a degree – in his case, in business administration. Even so, he seemed no more likely to find a useful role than his brother. The two of them settled into the lives of spoiled princes, spending a great deal of time in one another’s company.

All that changed in 1117, when Prince Lucan decided to join the Imperial Navy as an ordinary cadet – an unusual step for a 29-year-old noble. He entered the Naval Academy (Core branch) under a pseudonym. Palace spokesmen indicated that the Prince was sincere in avoiding any favoritism, even dispensing with any security arrangements other than those given any noble family member entering Imperial Navy service.

Details of Lucan’s naval career have not been made available to the public, but Palace officials occasionally announce that he is adjusting well. Assuming that he completes his four-year Academy term successfully, he should be commissioned as an ensign some time in 1121.

## Absentee Nobles

Prince Varian is an excellent example of the “absentee” noble. Varian is Duke of Sanches, but he seldom visits his demesne because he prefers life at court – or at least he did until recently. Since he is not a sector or subsector duke, Varian has no duties and the administration of his holdings requires minimal attention from him. Upon inheriting the duchy at age 20, Varian appointed Baron Burnabus Kelvin of Chandos as his seneschal, Kelvin having held the same position for Varian’s father. It is Baron Kelvin who attends to the day-to-day functions. The various family investments, combined with the ducal fief on Sanches and an Imperial stipend, allow Varian and his twin Lucan to live in opulence.

## THE IMPERIAL ARCHDUKES

Although the Imperial archdukes were extremely powerful under Artemsus, by the Civil War they had lost much of their earlier influence. Indeed, one of the Imperial domains – the Domain of Deneb – did without an archduke for centuries after its establishment. By the time Strephon came to the Iridium Throne, the title of archduke was a hollow honor. Most of the work of Imperial government was handled by the Emperor himself or by the many Imperial dukes.

Under Strephon, all of that has changed. Early in his reign, the Emperor delegated some of his power to the archdukes in an attempt to demonstrate concern for local affairs. Since the early 1090s, this policy has been expanded and made a deliberate part of Strephon’s strategy. Meanwhile, the archdukes have been encouraged to assume some of the powers formerly wielded by their dukes, especially with respect to military strategy and the administration of Imperial corporate holdings.

The overall effect has been to make the six archdukes much more powerful players in the business of Imperial governance. Today they work as Imperial viceroys in their domains, issuing decrees that have all the force of law unless the Emperor should choose to override them. The current Emperor rarely chooses to do so.

## ARCHDUKE NORRIS OF DENEB

The Duchy of Regina was established in 629, when Empress Arbellatra elevated Marquis Caranda of Regina, one of her staunchest supporters during the Civil War, to the rank of duke. The Marquisate of Regina continued to exist, but took a secondary status to the duchy. Over the years, the duchy increased in power and influence in the area. Recently, the Duke of Regina has been elevated to the position of Archduke of Deneb – the first holder of that office since the Domain of Deneb was established.

## Early Life

Norris Aella Aledon was born on 048-1063, the second child of Duke Willem Caranda Aledon and Lady Fiorella Havasu Aella. His older brother William was heir to almost all of the family's titles; for years Norris lived in the William's shadow. Upon reaching the age of 13, Norris was designated heir to the Barony of Yori, the least of his father's titles, as partial recompense for the fact he would not inherit the duchy.

Norris and his brother were both educated by private tutors. Norris may have been the more intelligent of the two – he quickly established a reputation as a studious youth with a passion for reading and great attention to detail. He entered the Imperial Naval Academy (Spinward Marches branch) in 1081 and graduated with honors in 1084.

## Military Service

Norris earned his commission as an ensign shortly before the end of the Fourth Frontier War; the war ended before Norris could see action.

Because of his grades in the Academy, Norris was sent to the Imperial Staff College (Deneb branch). He was promoted to sublieutenant upon graduation from the intelligence officer's course in 1086, and posted to the Old Expanses sector. Norris saw action against terrorists on several worlds of the Diaspora and Old Expanses Sectors during 1087-1088, and was promoted to lieutenant in 1090.

In 1092 Norris returned to the Imperial Staff College (Massilia branch) to take the Command and General Staff Officer's course. He was promoted to lieutenant commander in 1093, and transferred back to the Spinward Marches. There he served with the Analysis Office of the Imperial Navy College of Tactics on Macene, and was quickly promoted to Commander.

In 1097, Norris' brother William died under mysterious circumstances, and Norris took a leave of absence to investigate the death. Upon the death of his father in 1098, Norris became simultaneously Baron of Yori, Marquis of Regina, Count of Aledon, and Duke of Regina. He resigned his commission the next day.

## The Fifth Frontier War

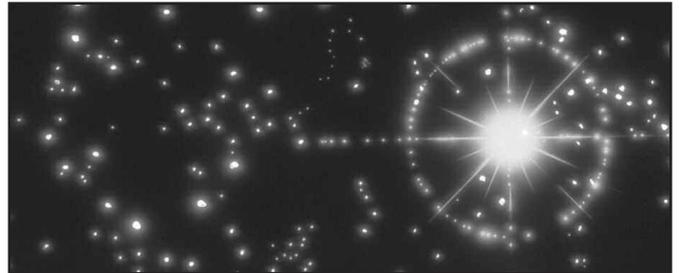
As the leading noble of the Regina subsector, Norris soon established himself as a powerful force in the politics of the Spinward Marches. Even so, he was not sector duke – the aging Duchess Delphine of Mora remained the dominant power in the sector. This situation remained in effect when the Fifth Frontier War began on 186-1107, after a series of border incidents. At first, the war went badly for the Imperium.

Although the details are still classified, it is clear that Norris' intelligence training enabled him to somehow foresee the approaching war as early as 1103. Considerable mystery surrounds his activities in the first two years of the war.

According to announcements made by his seneschal, Duke Norris took ill and was forced to retire from public life. Almost two years later he suddenly reappeared, in possession of an Imperial Warrant (p. 61) that had been sent specifically for him by the Emperor. Why the Emperor sent him a

warrant remains a mystery to the present day. Both Strephon and Norris refuse to comment on the matter, and the debate has been the subject of several scholarly works and a best-selling novel.

In any case, on 132-1109 Norris relieved Admiral Lord Santanocheev of command on the basis of the authority granted him by the Imperial Warrant. The Duke then took personal command of all Imperial forces in the theater of war. The tide of the war turned shortly after this point, and the Zhodani were eventually forced back to their own space.



## Becoming the Archduke

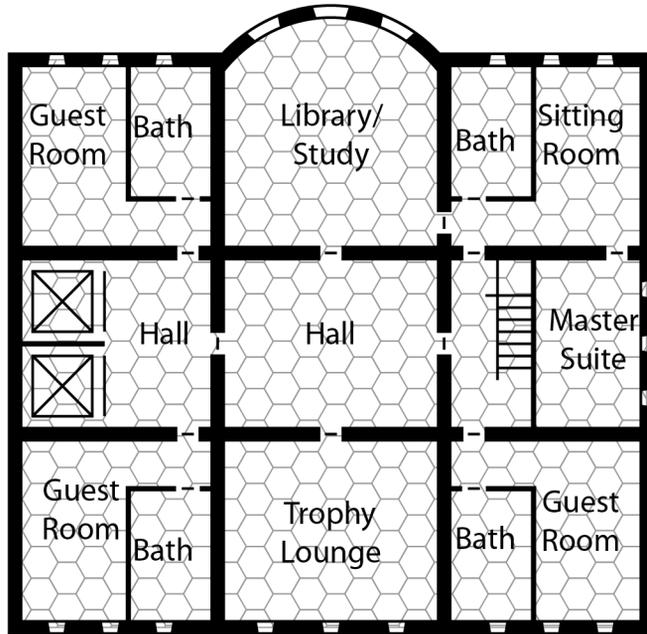
After the war, it was obvious that Duke Norris had been the one Imperial leader most responsible for preserving the Imperial position in the Spinward Marches. He was the man of the hour – but his new prominence was not without cost.

Admiral Lord Santanocheev had many friends in the Imperial command structure, and the manner in which he had been pushed aside bred a great deal of resentment. More important, Lord Santanocheev was a protégé of Duchess Delphine – she had promoted him to Sector Admiral over numerous other contenders for the position. Although the duchess had been unable to take personal military command during the war due to her advanced age, she was still sector duchess for the Spinward Marches, and Norris' actions had seriously undercut her authority.

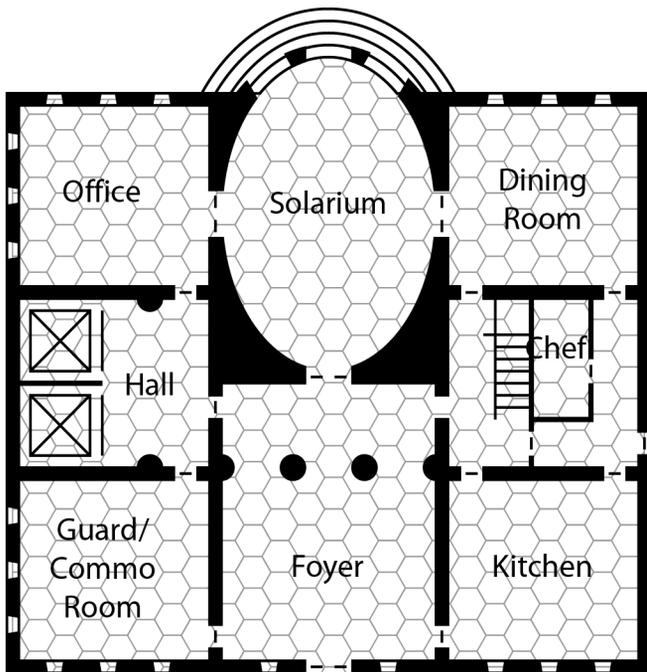
Over the next few years, there was considerable tension between the Duke of Regina and the Duchess of Mora. The two high nobles were careful never to attack each other publicly, but their supporters were not always so careful. The conflict seemed likely to cause significant political instability in the Spinward Marches. Eventually the Emperor himself took a hand, naming Duke Norris as the first Archduke of Deneb. Norris' appointment was a reward for his conduct of the Fifth Frontier War, much in the same way his ancestor was elevated to duke for service to Empress Arbella. It proved to everyone in the domain that the Emperor approved of Norris' actions during the war.

Since returning from Capital in 1117, Archduke Norris has moved quickly to establish the infrastructure of his new office. He has also acted decisively to disarm the brewing conflict between his supporters and those of Duchess Delphine. He has located his archducal seat on Mora itself, where he can consult with the duchess on a regular basis – and, cynics say, where he can keep an eye on her. Although there is still some tension between the two nobles, Norris' new seniority has done much to quell dissension among the sector's aristocracy.

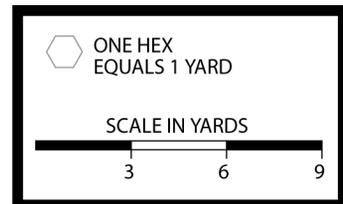
# NORRIS' RETREAT



Upper Level



Ground Level



## Norris' Family

Archduke Norris has no surviving ancestors or siblings. Aside from distant kinsmen, his only living relative is his daughter Seldrian Aledon, who was born on 312-1097.

In fact, Seldrian is a clone, or "true daughter," of Norris, conceived after the death of William Aledon, when Norris knew would soon inherit the Duchy of Regina. Some Imperial nobles who resort to cloning attempt to produce *simulacra*, guiding their clones to form personality and interests similar to their own. Norris refused to take this course, permitting Seldrian to be a "free clone" with her own personality. Indeed, by making Seldrian a cross-gender clone, he ensured that she would develop a personality distinct from his own.

Seldrian is currently attending the University of Mora, pursuing an unusual double degree in astrophysics and political science. What she (or her true-father) have planned for her future is still a mystery.

## Norris' Seneschal

Archduke Norris has an unusually close relationship with his seneschal and advisor, Branj Dilgaadin.

Dilgaadin's origins are something of a mystery; journalists and investigators have never been able to determine much about his birth or early life. He is apparently a commoner, born on Rhylanor in 1065. He joined the Imperial Navy as an enlisted man, and eventually became an accomplished analyst in Naval Intelligence. He met the young Lord Norris in 1094, while the latter was serving at the Imperial Navy College of Tactics. The two men struck up a close friendship that has lasted to the present day.

In 1097, Dilgaadin was placed on attached duty at Norris' request. He accompanied Norris to his home on Regina, and apparently played an important part in the investigation of William Aledon's death. When Norris inherited the Duchy of Regina, he named Dilgaadin as his seneschal – a surprising move, considering the enlisted man's youth, background, and apparent lack of experience. Observers were even more surprised when Dilgaadin immediately proved to be a superb seneschal, taking up the administration of Norris' new holdings with smooth competence.

Dilgaadin has been close to the duke (later archduke) ever since. For over 20 years, the two men have rarely been separated. Even when the archduke travels, Branj Dilgaadin accompanies him. Anyone who deals with Norris for very long realizes that Dilgaadin speaks and acts for him; this is very unusual for Norris, who has a very "hands-on" personality and normally dislikes delegating authority.

Archduke Norris is fond of saying that "Dilgaadin understands my mind on most matters." A few outsiders suspect that this is *literally true*. Although there has never been any evidence to support the claim, Dilgaadin is suspected of being a powerful psionic talent, with telepathy and a variety of ESP gifts. The two men certainly cooperate extremely smoothly, with never a hint of dissension or disagreement. It seems plausible that Dilgaadin uses telepathy to read Norris' mind, and then acts as the archduke wishes.

## ARCHDUKE NORRIS 420 POINTS

Human (Mixed/Imperial). Age 56; 5' 6", 175 lbs.; white skin, black hair going gray, brown eyes, very stocky, usually seen in plain but well-tailored garb.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 12 [20]; **IQ** 13 [30]; **HT** 11 [10].

Speed 5.75; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 7 [35]; Ally (Branj Dilgaadin, 200-point character, 15 or less) [45]; Ally Group (Retainers; medium-sized group, 100-point characters, 9 or less) [30]; Claim to Hospitality (Major) [5]; Filthy Rich [50]; Intuition [15]; Legal Enforcement Powers 2 [10]; Military Rank 8 [40]; Multimillionaire 2 [50]; Reputation +2 (War hero; most Imperial officials, all the time) [5]; Status 7 (Archduke) [5]\*; Strong Will +2 [8].

\* Includes three levels of free Status from high Wealth, and three from Military Rank.

**Disadvantages:** Enemy (Duchess Delphine; 6 or less) [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Overweight [-5]; Reputation -2 (Upstart and troublemaker; "traditionalist" Imperial Navy officers and nobles, all the time) [-5]; Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].

**Quirks:** Hates to delegate tasks; Natural gambler; Political idealist; Uninterested in romantic relationships; Very blunt, somewhat vulgar speaker. [-5]

**Skills:** Acting-13 [2]; Administration-14 [6]; Astrogation-14 [4]; Carousing-12 [4]; Cartography-13 [2]; Computer Operation-14 [2]; Detect Lies-13 [4]; Diplomacy-13 [4]; Disguise-13 [2]; Electronics Operation (Communications)-13 [2]; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-13 [2]; Fast-Talk-14 [4]; First Aid-13 [1]; Free Fall-13 [4]; Guns (Pistol)-16\* [4]; Guns (Rifle)-16\* [4]; Intelligence Analysis-13 [4]; Interrogation-14 [4]; Law-13 [4]; Leadership-15 [6]; Philosophy (Imperial)-12 [2]; Piloting (Contragrav)-12 [2]; Politics-15 [6]; Research-13 [2]; Savoir-Faire-15\*\* [2]; SIGINT Collection/Jamming-13 [4]; Strategy (Space)-13 [4]; Survival (Woodlands)-12 [1]; Tactics (Space)-13 [4]; Tracking-12 [1]; Traffic Analysis-13 [4]; Vacc Suit-13 [2].

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

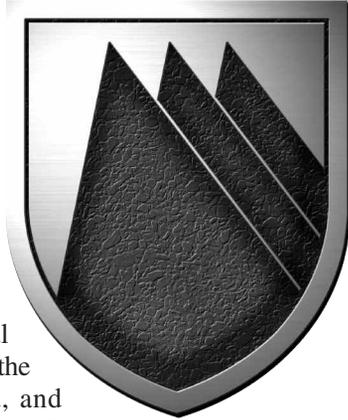
\*\* Based on default of IQ+2 due to Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-14 [0]; Gvegh (Vargr)-13 [2]; Vilani-12 [1]; Zhodani-12 [1].

Some of those who suspect Dilgaadin of being a covert psi also suspect him of being the real power behind Norris' rule of the Domain of Deneb. Of course, when such suspicions are voiced within the archduke's hearing, his reaction is usually a hearty belly laugh. "Any man who could make me his puppet would *deserve* to rule the domain," the archduke responds.

## ARCHDUKE BRZK OF ANTARES

The Domain of Antares was a secondary battleground in the Civil War, experiencing a degree of internal conflict unusual even for that period. Aside from battles among would-be candidates for the Iridium Throne, the domain experienced clashes along racial lines. Vargr corsairs raided the Imperium from coreward, and much of the domain's native Vargr population was restless as well. Regent Arbellastra addressed these problems with a surprising strategy. In 622 she nominated a Vargr to be Archduke of Antares, the first time a non-Human had held such rank under the Third Imperium.



Admiral Soegz had commanded a fleet under Arbellastra's leadership during the Second Frontier War and the final stages of the Civil War. Now the Regent sent Soegz to Antares to settle the domain's turmoil. His first action was to capture the previous Archduke of Antares and execute him for treason. By 628, he had gained the loyalty of the domain's Vargr population and sent the foreign corsairs howling back across the border.

Today the descendants of Admiral Soegz still hold the Domain of Antares, and are the highest non-Human nobles in the Third Imperium. Aside from their Vargr ancestry, they are also unique among the archdukes for maintaining a palace in an orbital station rather than on the surface of a world. Archduke Brzk is the most recent of this line of Vargr archdukes.

### Early Life

Brzk was born 142-1066 at Antares, the oldest child of Archduke Ngekhs of Antares by his mate Lady Kfalakh of Daya.

Archduke Ngekhs was most notable for visibly abandoning the last Gvegh traditions of his line, embracing the Ovaghoun language and culture most common in the trailing regions of the Imperium. This made him very popular among his Vargr subjects. It even improved his status among the domain's Humans; most of them were of Vilani descent and more comfortable with the Vilani-influenced Ovaghoun than with the "wild" Gvegh. Aside from this expression of cultural sensitivity, Ngekhs was a mediocre archduke; he accomplished little during his reign.

Brzk was educated at home, by a series of private tutors. Much of his youthful social contact came from his tribe of siblings. His father had adopted the custom of concurrent polygamy (p. 35) common among high-charisma Ovaghoun Vargr, and had over a dozen children by several different mates. The situation might have led to violent quarrels as the archduke's children approached adulthood, but Ngekhs consistently made it clear that Brzk was the heir and that none of his other children could hope to displace him. As a result,

## ARCHDUKE BRZK 435 POINTS

Vargr. Age 53; 5' 6", 175 lbs.; reddish-brown fur going gray, black eyes, usually wears very plain garb or the uniform of a retired Imperial Navy officer.

**ST** 8 [-10]; **DX** 13 [20]; **IQ** 13 [30]; **HT** 12 [20].

Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

**Advantages:** 3D Spatial Sense [10]; Acceleration Tolerance [10]; Administrative Rank 7 [35]; Ally Group (Retainers; medium-sized group, 100-point characters, 12 or less) [60]; Charisma +3 [15]; Claim to Hospitality [5]; Daredevil [15]; Filthy Rich [50]; Legal Enforcement Powers 2 [10]; Military Rank 8 [40]; Multimillionaire 2 [50]; Reputation +1 (Decorated veteran; all Imperial citizens, all the time) [5]; Status 7 (Archduke) [5]\*; Strong Will +1 [4]; Vargr Racial Template (p. GT83) [0].

\* Includes three levels of free Status from high Wealth, and three from Military Rank.

**Disadvantages:** Impulsiveness [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Workaholic [-5].

**Quirks:** Always pilots his own shuttle or yacht; Curses in Gvegh when upset; Loves ceremony and spectacle; Very affectionate to mates and children. [-4]

**Skills:** Administration-16 [8]; Astrogation-16 [4]\*; Beam Weapons (Laser)-17 [4]\*\*; Carousing-13 [4]; Computer Operation-14 [2]; Diplomacy-13 [4]; Electronics Operation (Communications)-13 [2]; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-14 [4]; Fast-Talk-14 [4]; Free Fall-14 [4]; Gunner (Laser)-15 [2] \*\*; Gunner (Missile)-15 [2] \*\*; Guns (Pistol)-16 [2] \*\*; Law-13 [4]; Leadership-14 [4]; Piloting (Spacecraft)-16 [8] †; Politics-15 [6]; Research-13 [2]; Savoir-Faire-16 [2] ‡; Shipbuilding (Starship)-13 [2]; Shiphandling-13 [2]; Shipmaster-13 [2]; Strategy (Space)-12 [2]; Tactics (Space)-13 [4]; Vacc Suit-13 [2].

\* Includes +2 for 3D Spatial Sense.

\*\* Includes +2 for IQ.

† Includes +1 for 3D Spatial Sense.

‡ Based on default of IQ+2 due to Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-14 [0]; Gvegh (Vargr)-12 [1]; Ovaghoun (Vargr)-13 [2]; Vilani-12 [1].

Brzk got plenty of practice in the use of charisma among his peers, but he avoided lasting quarrels with any of his siblings. In fact, over the years several of Ngekhs' other children have reached high positions in Imperial service. These connections have helped Archduke Brzk considerably in ruling his domain.

### Military Career

Following a family tradition, Brzk entered the Imperial Navy as a youth. He attended the Naval Academy (Antares branch) and graduated with honors, then attended Flight School and became a master pilot. Although his superiors

wanted to place him at the helm of a battleship, he insisted on flying smaller starships instead. “In peacetime, that’s where the action is,” he often said.

Brzk did indeed see action on a number of occasions, fighting Vargr raiders and even taking part in a minor border incident against the Julian Protectorate. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant Commander during his 12 years of active service, and was decorated for his conduct on two occasions.

In 1100, he was considering whether to continue his naval career when word came that his father was terminally ill. He therefore resigned his commission and returned to Antares in time to see his father once more. After the death of Archduke Ngehks late in the year, Brzk inherited the Domain of Antares.

## Brzk the Archduke

Archduke Brzk has a reputation as a competent but uninspired leader. Much of the flair and dash of his Navy years appears to have left him; he now contents himself with providing his domain with good but unexciting government. Renowned for his support of pan-sophont causes, the archduke is the Imperium’s greatest advocate for Human-Vargr cooperation.

Brzk’s family crest was chosen by his ancestor, Admiral Soegz, and consists of an inverted chevron in gold against a blue background. Soegz said the symbol had personal religious significance to him, but many people find a resemblance to a (fanciful) Vargr face in the chevron. The sigil of the archduchy of Antares, however, is similar to that used for the Order of Antares – the three peaks of Gaakish in black against a field of white.

## ARCHDUCHESS ISIS OF ILELISH

*Rumors about Archduchess Isis: A common one is that she and Ciencia are lovers, which if you know anything about either of them is pretty ludicrous. I knew Isis when I was teaching at Karbiili, and she was a bit scatterbrained in those days, but she’s well over that now. In either case, both of them are so straight-laced it almost hurts me to look at them, but you know me.*

*The two main questions about Isis are “When will she see to an heir?” and “What is going on between her and her uncle?”*

*As for number one, the only really juicy gossip about here while she was on Capital for the coronation ceremony was about her and a certain newly honored professor at the U of S. Seems that the doctor in question has been seen in company with both the archduchess and the grand princess. Some say there was a row over that, but I doubt it. I did see Isis and the good doctor together on several occasions, and*

*of course he sat next to the Grand Princess during his induction into the Order of the Arrow.*

*As for her uncle, I’m more than a few parsecs away from Dlan, so I can’t say what is happening there. The admiral certainly resigned his commission very suddenly. Henri tells me that his health is really poor, but not so bad that he can’t administer the family businesses.*

*– Countess Vienna Amalfi Zirunkaar of Quildhac, private communication, 276-1118*

Although the Domain of Ilelish is almost as old as the Imperium, the current archducal family is quite new. When the Archduke of Ilelish died without a clear heir in 1104, Emperor Strephon promoted the Duke of Dlan to the archduchy. This move was widely criticized, as the Duke had a controversial reputation. Nevertheless, during his 12 years as archduke, Dulinor proved a competent, even brilliant ruler. His daughter Isis appears likely to continue in her father’s tradition – which is fortunate, since the Domain of Ilelish is renowned as the most rebellious region of the Imperium.

Isis Arepo Ilethian was born on 076-1088 on Dlan, the only child of Duke (later Archduke) Dulinor Astrin Ilethian and Lady Jessica Dilan Arepo. At the age of 12 she traveled to Capital to enroll in the Karbiili School (p. 32), where she soon met and befriended Grand Princess Ciencia Iphegenia (p. 90). Lady Isis graduated with honors from Karbiili, then continued her studies at the Sibelian University on Dlan, eventually taking an advanced degree in political science.

After completing her education, Lady Isis worked on her father’s staff on Dlan as a political analyst. Her life was turned upside down in 1116, when several disasters struck her family in rapid succession. First, her father was assassinated on the way to Capital (see p. GT30). Then her uncle, Admiral Hutara Astrin Ilethian, abruptly resigned his commission and went into retirement. Finally, Navy Intelligence (according to rumor) apparently foiled a plot to assassinate Lady Isis herself while she traveled to Capital. Although Imperial officials have made no comment, it seems obvious that *something* strange was occurring involving the entire Ilethian family.

In any case, Isis arrived on Capital safely in 1117, was crowned as archduchess by the Emperor himself, and returned home without incident. Since returning to Dlan, Archduchess Isis has performed her duties with energy and vigor. Aside from some minor unrest and a few violent incidents among the Suerrat, her domain has been quiet since her accession. The Archduchess has been forced to rule without much support from her family. Isis’ mother went into seclusion following the death of Dulinor, and her uncle’s health has deteriorated so badly that he can no longer even assist in the management of Ilethian family holdings.



## ARCHDUKE ADAIR

395 POINTS

Human (Solomani). Age 55; 5' 11", 180 lbs.; white skin, light brown hair, blue eyes, craggy features, usually wearing expensive but subdued clothing.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [10]; **IQ** 14 [45]; **HT** 11 [10].

Speed 5.50; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 8 (Fencing).

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 7 [35]; Ally Group (Retainers; medium-sized group, 100-point characters, 12 or less) [60]; Claim to Hospitality [5]; Filthy Rich [50]; Language Talent +2 [4]; Legal Enforcement Powers 2 [10]; Military Rank 8 [40]; Multimillionaire 1 [25]; Status 7 (Archduke) [10]\*; Strong Will +1 [4]; Voice [10].

\* Includes two levels of free Status from high Wealth, and three from Military Rank.

**Disadvantages:** Enemy (Marquis Beaudoin; single formidable individual, 6 or less, see p. 107) [-5]; Reputation -2 (Upstart; Imperial conservatives, all the time) [-5]; Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10]; Workaholic [-5].

**Quirks:** Mild xenophile; Raconteur; Strongly dislikes racism and bigotry. [-3]

**Skills:** Acting-14 [2]; Administration-17 [8]; Bard-17 [4]\*; Beam Weapons (Laser)-14 [2]\*\*; Brawling-12 [4]; Carousing-12 [4]; Detect Lies-14 [4]; Diplomacy-18 [8]\*; Disguise-14 [2]; Economics-13 [2]; Fast-Talk-14 [2]; Fencing-12 [8]; Heraldry-14 [2]; History-14 [4]; Intelligence Analysis-14 [4]; Law-15 [6]; Leadership-15 [4]; Literature-14 [4]; Philosophy (Imperial)-14 [4]; Piloting (Contragrav)-11 [2]; Politics-17 [4]\*; Psychology-13 [2]; Research-14 [2]; Savoir-Faire-20 [4]\*†; Strategy (Space)-13 [2]; Streetwise-15 [4]; Writing-15 [4].

\* Includes +2 for Voice.

\*\* Includes +2 for IQ.

† Based on default of IQ+2 due to Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-16 [0]\*; *Trokh* (Aslan)-15 [1]\*; Vegan-13 [1]\*; Vilani-15 [1]\*.

\* Includes +2 for Language Talent.

Archduchess Isis is a staunch supporter of the Imperium, and indeed has a continuing close relationship with Grand Princess Ciencia Iphegenia. The two women were inseparable while both lived on Capital. Now that adult duties have separated them, they continue to correspond regularly and visit whenever possible.

Archduke Dulinor habitually wore clothing of unrelieved black, thus earning the nickname “Dulinor the Black.” Such garb is traditional for citizens of Dlan who are not followers of the dominant Virasin faith, but the Archduke obeyed the tradition even when away from Dlan. Since her father’s death, Archduchess Isis has followed the same custom, although she is less likely to wear black when traveling away from Dlan.

The Ilethian family crest is three white roses arranged in a row from upper left to lower right against a black background. When choosing a sigil to match this crest, Dulinor’s grandfather settled on a single white rose on black. Every Ilethian since has continued the custom, including Archduchess Isis.

## ARCHDUKE ADAIR OF SOL

The Domain of Sol is in some ways the “youngest” of the seven Imperial domains. Emperor Artemsus established it in 76, but no archduke was appointed to it for centuries. During the initial phase of Imperial growth (the Pacification Campaigns), the Imperium deliberately avoided expansion to rimward. Only in 583 did the Empress Jacqueline I appoint an Archduke of Sol, as part of her strategy of finally integrating the rimward sectors into the Imperium.

The Archduchy of Sol lapsed in 716, after the death of the current incumbent left no available heir who was not already a member of the Solomani Party. The position was not revived until 1003, under Emperor Gavin. Baroness Arielle Adair had been the Grand Admiral of the Rim during the Solomani Rim War, supreme commander of Imperial forces during that bloody conflict. Gavin made her an archduchess to reward her victories, and to oversee the occupation and pacification of the territory conquered by the Imperium. Her great-grandson still holds the Domain of Sol today.

An odd feature of the Adair family line is that the archducal title is customarily associated with the *family* name, even in informal address – thus the current archduke is always addressed as “Archduke Adair” rather than “Archduke Kieran.” The custom derives from local practice on the family’s homeworld in the Old Expanses, and was written into the letter patent (p. 13) that gave Arielle Adair the archduchy.

### Early Career

Kieran Langos Adair was born on 304-1064, the oldest child of Archduke Etienne Helugu Adair and Lady Maria Ioyu Langos. He grew up on Exeter/Diaspora, then the capital of the Domain of Sol. His early education was provided by private tutors, after which he attended Omicron University on Libert/Diaspora to earn a degree in political science.

The Adair dynasty has a tradition of sending its heirs into the Imperial Navy, to serve as officers before taking up their archducal office. As the eldest of three siblings, Adair was expected to enter the Navy, and indeed his younger brother and sister have both distinguished themselves in naval service. Instead, the young Lord Adair entered the Imperial Diplomatic Corps.

Adair spent most of his career as a diplomat in the Reavers’ Deep and Dark Nebula sectors, representing Imperial interests to the various independent states of the region. During this period he had many dealings with the Solomani Confederation, and became a recognized expert on Solomani ideology. His final posting was to Kusyu, where he acted as a *charge d’affaires* assisting the Imperial Ambassador to the Aslan Hierate. This assignment was cut short in 1102 when his father fell ill. He returned to Exeter, taking

power immediately as his father's regent as the old archduke's health failed. He became Archduke of Sol later in the same year.

### *The Diplomat Archduke*

In some ways, Archduke Adair anticipated the Emperor's recent decisions increasing the power and authority of the archdukes. He used his authority to the fullest extent from the moment he assumed his archducal throne, trying to solve the many social and political problems of his domain.

In 1112, Archduke Adair decided that his capital was too distant from the most serious problem area of his domain – the Solomani-dominated worlds along the rimward border of the Imperium. He therefore moved the domain capital to the Solomani Rim sector, placing it on the Vegan homeworld Muan Gwi. He further moved to take up the position of sector duke himself, displacing the duke who had held that office (see *Marquis Robert Beaudoin*, p. 107). These moves took over three years to complete, with the archduke taking up residence on Muan Gwi in 1115. The shift caused considerable controversy, but it appears to have improved the archduke's effectiveness in dealing with crises.

Archduke Adair has done much to reduce tensions in the Imperium's rimward provinces. In particular, he presided over the formal end of the military occupation of Terra, an event considered a triumph of his diplomatic abilities.



Archduke Adair has a very good relationship with Emperor Strephon. Indeed, the rapport between the two men is surprisingly close, considering that they have never met in person. Over the past two decades, they have exchanged thousands of correspondences, much of it personal rather than devoted to affairs of state. Some believe that Adair's advice helped convince the Emperor to increase the authority of the archdukes, thus working against the pressures which tend to divide the Imperium along lines of local culture. Many conservatives in the Moot dislike Archduke Adair as a result, although his staunch loyalty and clear ability to govern have helped him avoid serious conflict.

Archduke Adair has not yet married or produced an heir. His heir presumptive is his younger brother, Captain Alister Langos Adair of the Imperial Navy. Captain Adair serves on his brother's staff as senior military advisor, and has also acted as the archduke's emissary to Capital when direct

consultation with the Emperor is necessary. There has been much speculation about the archduke and various noble ladies of the Rim, but the archduke is careful not to lend any of these rumors too much credibility. He feels that his choice of a bride is a political weapon, best used by holding it in reserve.

## **ARCHDUKE TRANIAN OF GATEWAY**

The Domain of Gateway is in a paradoxical position. Most of its four-sector territory is outside the borders of the Third Imperium, and those portions within the Imperium are divided into two non-contiguous sections separated by over 30 parsecs. As a result, the domain has almost always been a backwater, and its archduke has barely more prestige than most sector dukes.

On the other hand, during the centuries in which the office of archduke was little more than a hollow honor, the Archdukes of Gateway retained more of their original powers and privileges than most. This was largely because the Domain of Gateway played almost no part in the Civil War. No Emperors of the Flag came from the region, and the local Navy forces remained loyal to the Imperium rather than to any particular Emperor. In recognition of this, Empress Arbella and her successors tended to overlook the Domain of Gateway when reining in the powers of the archdukes.

However, perhaps as a result of its frontier nature the Domain of Gateway has always seen unusual *internal* political instability. Most of the domains have been ruled by one or two distinct dynasties of archdukes – but the Domain of Gateway has seen *six* since its foundation. Many of the Archdukes of Gateway have been promoted from the baronage or even from the common population of the domain. The current Archduke is only the second of his line to hold the position.

### *Origins of the Minomoru Dynasty*

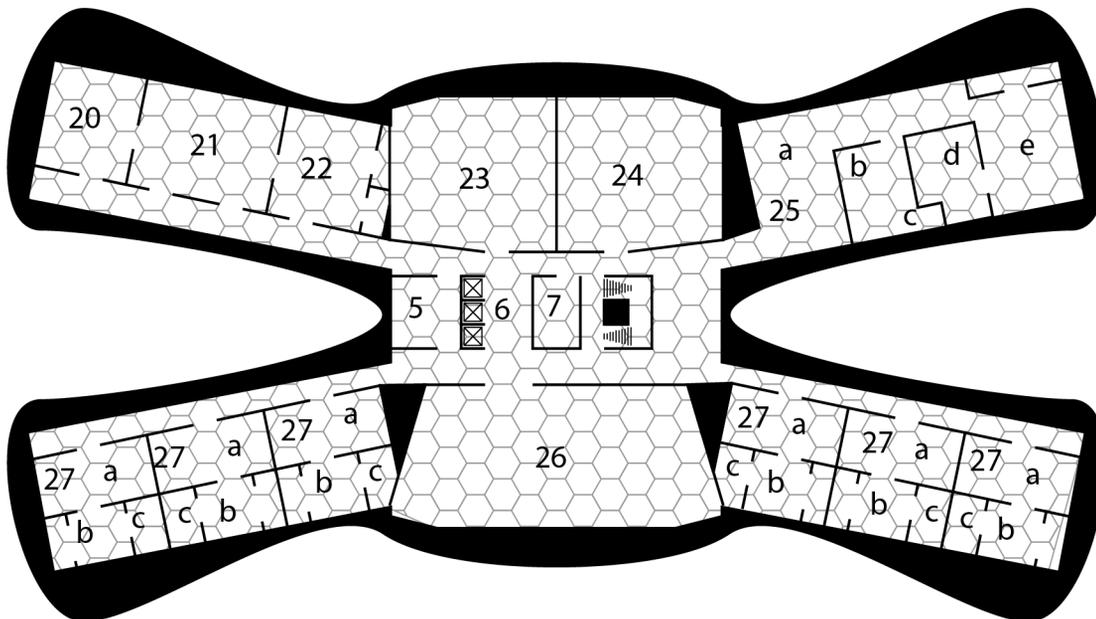
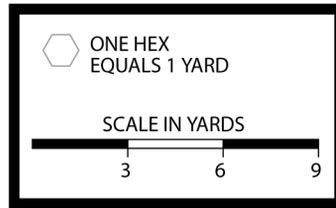
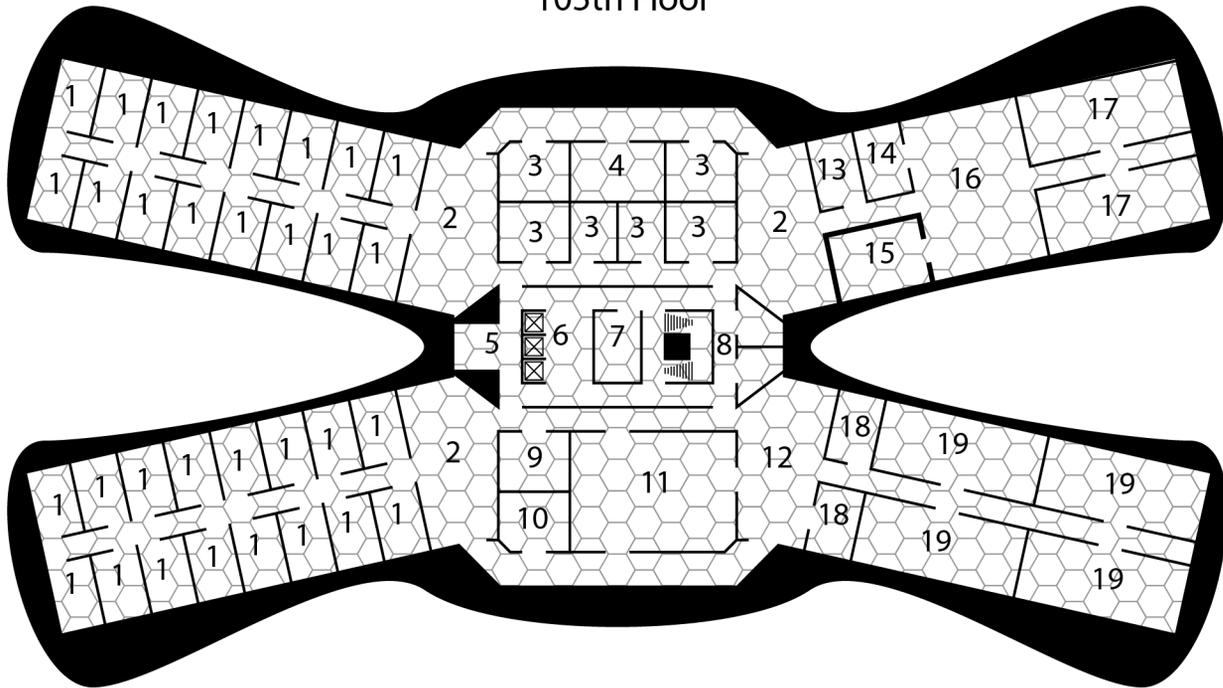
Archduke Tranian's father Brandon Minomoru was native to Daramm, the homeworld of a minor Human race called the Luriani (see pp. T:H103). Brandon was not himself Luriani – instead, he was a member of the Verasti Dtareen caste, derived from Solomani soldiers and administrators of the Rule of Man (p. T:H109). He originally held the title of Count of Daramm, and was one of the most important liaisons between the Third Imperium and the Luriani people.

In this position, he was intimately involved in the social and political crises that wracked the Ley Sector in the early 1070s. While the Archduke of Gateway promoted policies that alienated the Luriani, the Count of Daramm was a voice of reason and diplomacy. It was probably to his sole credit that the Luriani remained loyal to the Imperium – certainly the Imperial dukes of the region were of little help. As a result, when the archduke was deposed by Imperial decree in 1076, the Emperor named Count Brandon to the newly vacant position.

The new archduke was wildly popular in his domain, and enjoyed the unqualified support of the Emperor. For the rest of his life, he spent most of his time at home on Daramm and at the domain capital on Annapabar/Ley. However, he sent his children to be educated on Capital and introduced into the highest levels of Imperial society.

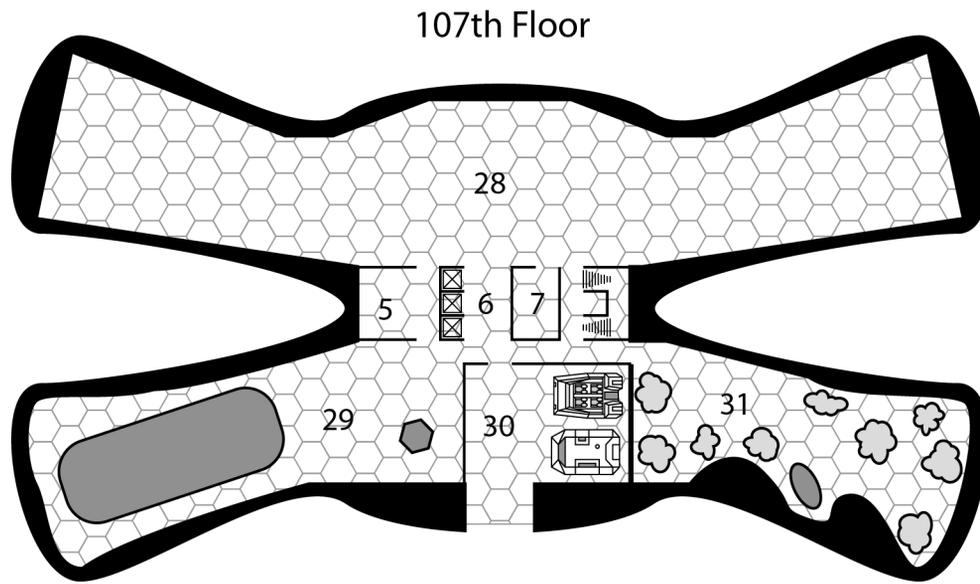
# ARCHDUKE TRANIAN OF GATEWAY'S PENTHOUSE ON CAPITAL

105th Floor



106th Floor

# ARCHDUKE TRANIAN OF GATEWAY'S PENTHOUSE ON CAPITAL



## Legend

- |                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Employee Quarters       | 23. Library          |
| 2. Common Area             | 24. Ballroom         |
| 3. Office                  | 25. Master Suite     |
| 4. Office Pool             | a. Sitting Room      |
| 5. Mechanical Room         | b. Office            |
| 6. Elevators               | c. Safe              |
| 7. Guard Station           | d. Bathroom          |
| 8. Restrooms               | e. Bedroom           |
| 9. Housekeeping            | 26. Dining Hall      |
| 10. Laundry                | 27. Guest Suite      |
| 11. Kitchen                | a. Sitting Room      |
| 12. Open Storage           | b. Bedroom           |
| 13. Security Office        | c. Bathroom          |
| 14. Security Lead Quarters | 28. Great Hall       |
| 15. Armory                 | 29. Pool and Terrace |
| 16. Training Area          | 30. Garage           |
| 17. Security Bunkroom      | 31. Garden           |
| 18. Office                 |                      |
| 19. Storage                |                      |
| 20. Music Room             |                      |
| 21. Lounge                 |                      |
| 22. Salon                  |                      |

## Childhood and Education

Tranian Minomoru was born on 165-1084, the oldest child of Archduke Brandon Minomoru of Gateway and Baroness Imalda Lisun Fierana of Secord. He spent his first few years on his father's ancestral estates on Daramm, but at the age of six he and his private tutors were sent to Capital.

The young Lord Tranian fell in love with Capital and a life centering on the Emperor's court. As a young man he became a protégé of Emperor Strephon, who took an interest in teaching the young archduke-to-be the rudiments of statecraft. He also spent long hours socializing with Grand Princess Iphegenia and the princes Varian and Lucan. He entered the Karbiili School (p. 32), earning mediocre marks but graduating without undue trouble. Later he attended the University of Sylea, studying law and ethical philosophy.

## Recent Career

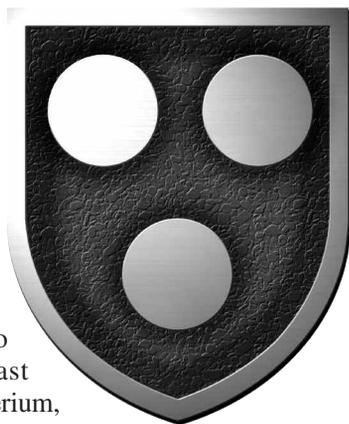
After finishing his formal education, Lord Tranian remained on Capital. He spent much of his time sitting proxy for his parents in the Moot, where he earned a reputation for integrity and legal expertise despite his relative youth.

Archduke Brandon died of natural causes in 1112. His son was crowned archduke by the Emperor's own hand, after which he went home to Daramm for two years to oversee the transition of power. In 1114 he returned to Capital, and he has since spent most of his time there.

The Domain of Gateway is relatively quiet at present, and Archduke Tranian has few duties in the domain that cannot be administered from Capital. He handles the rest through his seneschal, who remains in the Ley sector full-time. Meanwhile, the archduke resides on Capital for most of each year. He is a powerful voice for tradition and honor in the Moot and the Imperium as a whole.

## ARCHDUKE ISHUGGI OF VLAND

The Tauribis of Vland are arguably one of the oldest noble families in the Third Imperium. The first Archduke of Vland was Laerkigar Tauribi, appointed by the Emperor Artemsus in 76, and the dynasty has held the archduchy without interruption ever since. The Tauribis also claim descent from the last Emperors of the First Imperium, so the current archduke can trace his noble ancestry back over 3,000 years.



## Early Career

Ishuggi Tauribi was born on 214-1042, on Vland. He was the *third* child of Archduke Ushari Tauribi of Vland and Lady Musush Igsiirdi; in accordance with an ancient Vilani

custom, Ishuggi's two elder siblings were not in line to inherit the title of Archduke.

The old archduke spent very little of his time on Vland, preferring instead to rule by proxy while remaining part of the social whirl of Capital. Young Lord Ishuggi lived on Capital as well, returning to Vland with his father for short visits. Unusually for a Vilani noble of his rank, he attended the Karbiili School (p. 32) and graduated with honors. He then attended Kaarike University on Vland, earning the equivalent of a doctorate in political science. After completing his education, he joined the faculty of the university.

In 1073, Lord Ishuggi took a sabbatical to visit his father, whose health had been failing for years. He was present on Capital when his father died. Because he was on hand when the title passed to him, Ishuggi was the first high noble to receive his circlet directly from the hand of the young Emperor Strephon.

## The Vilani Archduke

Archduke Ishuggi returned to Vland in 1077, retiring from his university post to fulfill his new governmental obligations. Unlike his father, he has spent very little time on Capital, preferring to remain close to his domain to better discharge his duties. He only attends Court once every six or seven years.

Although he comes from one of the oldest and most conservative Vilani families, Ishuggi Tauribi is moderate in his politics. Many Vilani conservatives suspect that the old archduke absorbed too many non-Vilani ideas while living on Capital. While they are pleased that Archduke Ishuggi lives on Vland most of the time, they still consider him rather radical. For his part, while the archduke feels great pride in Vilani culture and a deep attachment to his ancestors' customs, he recognizes that the Imperium consists of many divergent cultures and that all must learn to coexist.

Archduke Ishuggi's choice to spend most of his time on Vland has separated him from his mother, who has chosen to remain at the Tauribi family's palatial high-rise on Capital. Here she remains the grand dame of Court society, as she has been for over 60 years. Well into her second century – she will be 115 years old in 1120 – she shows all the longevity of the ancient Vilani nobility, and is unlikely to slow down any time soon.

Meanwhile, Archduke Ishuggi's elder siblings live on Vland full-time as well. His oldest sister Ganni lives on the Tauribi family estates, and serves as the family *shugiili* (food-preparer/priest). His older brother Eneri serves as his seneschal, and holds a senior leadership position in the family's business holdings.

As Archduke of Vland, Ishuggi Tauribi continues to use the Tauribi family crest: three red discs against a field of black.

## THE TUKERA FAMILY

Other than the Imperial family and the various archducal dynasties, there are very few noble families with truly Imperium-wide influence. One of these is the Tukera family,

## ***The Tukera and the Aramis Subsector***

The Tukera clan has many far-flung branches, some of whom cooperate only very loosely with the main line of the family. Recent Tukera actions in the Aramis subsector of the Spinward Marches serve as an example of the activities a rank-nobility family can undertake, provided they have enough wealth and influence.

The Tukera family acquired a fief on Lewis/Spinward Marches in the 700s, when a Tukera cousin was created Baron of Lewis, reflecting his status in the burgeoning mercantile climate in the sector. Anticipating the need for a substantial Tukera presence in the developing sector, he got ownership of the entire undeveloped world as private property. He and his successors built a manor on the lands of their fief, naming it Inselberg.

About 950, the then-Baron of Lewis suffered financial reverses. To clear his debts, he was forced to sell much of the world to settlers, who proceeded to colonize it. In order to get a good price for the lands, he gave up governmental control of the planet. Over the next century, the settlements prospered and spread out.

About 1050, Baron James Tukera began a systematic campaign to reacquire the lands sold by his ancestor, but he achieved only limited success. The harsh nature of life on Lewis had created a very stubborn band of settlers, and the discovery of small deposits of lanthanum gave them a measure of financial independence. Tukera had no authority to evict the settlers, and the Ministry of Justice upheld the

settlers' rights during several lawsuits over the period of 1050 to 1080.

In 1103, the Baron's eldest daughter, Arianne, married her kinsman Marquis Leonard Bolden-Tukera (p. 106), and soon gained the Marquis' support in her campaign to remove the settlers. Tukera interests at the Imperial court had the IISS classify the world as a Red Zone due to "local unrest." Even under the interdiction, a special dispensation permitted family members to come and go, but trade and outside contact was otherwise cut off.

At about the same time, the Tukera family appointed Roald Bulolo to be the new Subsector Director of Operations. Bulolo proved a ruthless operative, quite willing to break the law in order to promote what he perceived as Tukera interests. It was under Bulolo's tenure that the settlers began to sell out or die out in large numbers. After James Tukera died in 1104, Lady Arianne inherited the Barony of Lewis. She supported Bulolo as he continued her father's campaign to regain control of the world.

By 1116, Tukera influence in court had waned, and Bulolo had died under mysterious circumstances. Anti-Tukera elements in the Spinward Marches got the interdiction of Lewis lifted, but not before Lady Arianne had taken over 95% of the world. At present, an uneasy peace is in effect between the Tukeras and the few remaining locals, but it remains to be seen whether Lady Arianne will be satisfied with her present share of the world.

an extensive clan with members living in almost every part of the Imperium. The Tukeras hold a controlling interest in Tukera Lines, possibly the largest shipping corporation in Charted Space. They are fantastically wealthy and extremely influential – even the Emperor must pay heed to Tukera concerns.

Tukera Lines has been in operation in one form or another for centuries, and the Tukera family claims it predates the formation of the Third Imperium. The family is a perfect example of honor nobility (p. 13). One of Blaine Tukera's ancestors received the honor title of Count of Alekvadin as a reflection of the social standing and political clout achieved as a result of the accumulation of a vast mercantile fortune. The family has managed to retain this title for over 900 years. The title carries no official duties or responsibilities, and has no fief.

The main line of the Tukera family has never received any other hereditary title of its own. Many Emperors have considered the family already too powerful, and been reluctant to grant it further inherited honors. However, over the centuries many secondary branches of the clan have made marriage alliances with hereditary noble families. As a result, many Tukeras (and members of associated families) hold their own hereditary titles.

### ***Family Leadership***

The current matriarch of the Tukera clan is Arianne Rasaputram Tukera (age 84), widow of Oswyn Maarera Tukera (who died in 1086). Lady Arianne was originally of common

birth, a senior administrator in the vast hierarchy of Tukera Lines. She has retired from active participation in corporate business. She continues to hold court at the ancestral Tukera estates on Capital, and offers her advice to any member of the extended clan who asks.

Lady Arianne's eldest child was Harlan Cameron Tukera, who headed the family until his sudden death in 1092. Harlan Tukera had three sons, all still living: Blaine Trulla Tukera (age 41), Oswyn Trulla Tukera (age 39), and Piotr Trulla Tukera (age 36). These three men are the current leaders of Tukera Lines as a whole; Blaine Tukera serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors, and his brothers serve on the board as well.

The second branch of the family is descended through Arianne's daughter Adorania Cameron Tukera (age 63). Her daughter Hypatia Haldane Tukera (age 38) married Duke Ian Ashran of Cemplas, and they are the parents of Vanessa Haldane-Tukera Ashran (age 15) and Branford Haldane-Tukera Ashran (age 8). Lady Cemplas has recently taken over control of Tukera Lines operations in the Core sector.

Arianne's third child is Brigantia Cameron Tukera (age 60). Brigantia married into the prestigious Aella family (p. 113), but only under the condition that her children keep the Tukera name. She is currently head of Tukera operations in the Domain of Gateway. Her son Marc Aella Tukera (age 38) commands a Tukera Lines freighter in the same region, and is being groomed to take his mother's place in a few years.

Tukera Lines operations in other parts of the Imperium are usually commanded by members of the extended family, more distant from the main line of descent. One notable secondary branch is the Sovolas family, descended from Oswyn Maarera Tukera's youngest sister. The Sovolas line holds baronial rank, and is usually involved in corporate operations in the rimward sectors of the Imperium. The current leader of the Sovolas family is Baroness Katrin Sovolas (age 30), who has recently taken over Tukera Lines operations in the Solomani Rim sector. Baroness Sovolas is sometimes mentioned as a potential marriage partner for Archduke Adair of Sol.

## COUNT BLAINE TUKERA 345 POINTS

Human (Solomani). Age 41; 6', 170 lbs.; light brown skin, black hair, brown eyes, usually wearing expensive clothing with a Tukera Lines sigil (p. 106).

**ST** 11 [10]; **DX** 12 [20]; **IQ** 13 [30]; **HT** 10 [0].

Speed 5.50; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 8 (Chairman of the Board, Tukera Lines) [40]; Ally Group (Retainers; medium-sized group, 100-point characters, 9 or less) [30]; Claim to Hospitality [10]; Filthy Rich [50]; Handsome [15]; Multimillionaire 3 [75]; Status 5 (Count) [10]\*; Strong Will +2 [8].

\* Includes three levels of free Status from high Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** Extravagance [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Workaholic [-5].

**Quirks:** Devoted to wife and family; Loves flashy, expensive clothes and possessions; Social climber. [-3]

**Skills:** Accounting-14 [6]; Administration-16 [8]; Appreciate Beauty-11 [2]; Area Knowledge (Third Imperium)-14 [2]; Bard-15 [6]; Carousing-11 [4]; Computer Operation-14 [2]; Diplomacy-14 [6]; Economics-14 [6]; Finance-14 [5]\*; Law-12 [2]; Leadership-15 [6]; Literature-12 [2]; Merchant (Financial instruments)-16 [8]; Savoir-Faire-16 [2]\*\*; Writing-13 [2].

\* Based on default from Economics.

\*\* Based on default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-13 [0]; Vilani-12 [1].

## COUNT BLAINE TRULLA TUKERA OF ALEKVADIN

Blaine Trulla Tukera was born on 008-1078, the oldest child of Count Harlan Cameron Tukera of Alekvadin and Lady Desiree Kinmon Trulla. He grew up on Capital, acquiring his basic education from private tutors.

### Childhood and Inheritance

Blaine Tukera became the head of the Tukera family quite young. In 1092 his father's courier ship vanished, probably due to misjump, while he was visiting Tukera holdings

in the coreward regions of the Imperium. Since there was no sign of foul play or mishap, it took several years for the count to be declared dead. During that time control of Tukera Lines was maintained by Blaine's grandmother Arianne and by his aunt Adorania.

In 1099, Count Harlan Tukera was finally declared dead. The Emperor confirmed the transfer of the County of Alekvadin to young Blaine, who also inherited the largest block of Tukera Lines shares and the position of Chairman of the Board. At the time, Blaine had just completed an advanced degree in business administration through the independent study program at Monterrey University, one of several schools financed by Tukera money.

The new count was clearly bright, talented, and highly motivated – completing an advanced course at a Tukera school by the age of 21 is no small feat. Still, he was *inexperienced*, and it took him several more years to grow into his role as leader of the Tukera clan. During that time, Tukera operations tended even more often than usual to skirt the edges of law and Imperial policy. Only by about 1110 did Blaine have full and confident grasp of his responsibilities.



### Marriage

Meanwhile, Count Blaine had met the love of his life. In 1108 he was visiting Tukera holdings in the Massilia sector. One evening, he attended a reception hosted by the Duke of Palasha. The Duke was an inveterate matchmaker, and a long-time ally of the Tukeras; it seems likely that what happened next was due to his gentle connivance. Count Blaine met a strikingly beautiful woman who called herself only "Yetrina." He danced with her, and ended up spending hours in private conversation with her in the Duke's gardens. The two parted, regretfully, only as day broke. Only later did Count Blaine learn that his companion for the evening had been Duchess Margaret Alkhalikoi of Delphi, visiting Lord Palasha's estates incognito.

The combination was irresistible. Blaine and Margaret were attracted to each other and intellectually compatible as well. A marriage would combine Tukera wealth with Alkhalikoi social position. The children would inherit one of the strongest power bases in the Imperium.

The courtship was carried out at long distance, in an exchange of letters that lasted almost two years. Finally, in 1110 the lovers met again on Capital, marrying in the Imperial Palace in a blaze of public attention.

### Recent Career

Since his marriage, Blaine has moved his personal headquarters to Duchess Margaret's estates on Anaxias/Delphi. The

location has its disadvantages, being located on the trailing Imperial border and in the midst of the Delphi Rift. Blaine retains his position as Chairman of the Board for Tukera Lines, but he has granted a voting proxy to his younger brother Oswyn Tukera for all matters that must be dealt with at once.

## DUCHESS MARGARET TUKERA OF DELPHI

**340 POINTS**

Human (Mixed/Imperial). Age 38; 5' 5", 125 lbs.; white skin, blonde hair, gray eyes, usually wearing very expensive formal clothing.

**ST** 8 [-15]; **DX** 13 [30]; **IQ** 15 [60]; **HT** 12 [20].

Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 7 [35]; Ally Group (Retainers; small group, 100-point characters, 9 or less) [20]; Claim to Hospitality [10]; Filthy Rich [50]; Legal Enforcement Powers 2 [10]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Military Rank 8 [40]; Single-Minded [5]; Status 6 (Duchess) [10]\*; Very Beautiful [25].

\* Includes one level of free Status from high Wealth and three from Military Rank.

**Disadvantages:** Honesty [-10]; Low Empathy [-15]; Sense of Duty (Delphi sector) [-10].

**Quirks:** Ambitious; Devoted to husband and family; Dislikes competing for social position; Nostalgic for "classic Imperial virtues;" Tends to address every problem in terms of economics. [-5]

**Skills:** Accounting-15 [4]; Administration-16 [4]; Bard-14 [1]; Chess-17 [4]; Computer Operation-16 [2]; Computer Programming-18 [4]\*; Dancing-13 [2]; Diplomacy-15 [4]; Economics-17 [8]; Intelligence Analysis-15 [4]; Leadership-12 [2]\*; Mathematics-18 [4]\*; Merchant-13 [4]\*\*; Piloting (Contragrav)-12 [1]; Politics-13 [4]\*\*; Research-16 [4]; Savoir-Faire-18 [2]†; Speed-Reading-15 [2]; Swimming-14 [2]; Teaching-16 [4]; Writing-15 [2].

\* Includes +3 from Mathematical Ability.

\*\* Includes -3 from Low Empathy.

† Based on default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-15 [0]; Vilani-15 [2].

## DUCHESS MARGARET OF DELPHI

In 1033, Emperor Paulo III created the Duchy of Anaxias in the Delphi sector, and awarded the new title to his youngest brother Prince Asan. Most observers agree that the move was designed to remove Asan from the Imperial court. The Prince was very selfish and gifted only in intrigue, and would likely have been a constant disruption if permitted to remain on Capital. The Emperor considered Anaxias – safely away from the Imperial core and located in the midst of the Delphi Rift – to be at about the right distance.

Prince Asan made the best of his situation, holding court on Anaxias for the rest of his life. He married into a local baronial family, the Iellas, and established a cadet branch of the house of Alkhalikoi in the Delphi sector. Although his lineage was very prestigious, his position as Duke of Anaxias carried very little actual power.

Prince Asan's descendants continue to carry the Alkhalikoi line forward in the Delphi sector. Indeed, in the current generation a combination of clever dynastic moves and sheer luck have suddenly made this cadet branch of the Imperial family extremely influential.

### *The Delphi Heiress*

Margaret Yetrina Alkhalikoi was born on 228-1081, the only child of Duke Anedon Iella Alkhalikoi of Anaxias and Lady Cassir Yumash Yetrina.

Lady Cassir Yetrina was the younger daughter of Duke Altoveros II of Delphi, sector duke for the Delphi sector. In 1099, Margaret's mother and grandfather both died in rapid succession, both of natural causes. On the duke's death, his title and responsibilities would normally have gone to his older daughter Triana – but Triana was unmarried, childless, and almost 60 years of age. She decided to refuse the title and retire into obscurity. The young Margaret was next in line to inherit; Emperor Strephon confirmed her as Duchess of Delphi *in absentia*.

Margaret's accession to the Duchy of Delphi brought with it the position of sector duchess as well. However, some of the other nobles of the Delphi sector contested this, feeling that the position was too important to be held by a 19-year-old girl. Margaret's opponents called a meeting of the ducal Senate and forced a vote (p. 58), but the tactic backfired. After considerable debate, and an immense amount of backroom politicking by Margaret and her backers, she managed to win election.

Some two years later, in 1102, her own father died, leaving Margaret the Duchy of Anaxias as well. As a result, Margaret has ever since held *two* ducal titles. Imperial policy usually discourages such situations, but there are a number of mitigating circumstances in this case. The Duchy of Anaxias is a fairly hollow honor, and does little to increase Margaret's power. For that matter, Margaret has proven to be a very competent noble, and has no difficulty discharging the responsibilities associated with both titles. Emperor Strephon has requested that Margaret divide her titles among her children, but has not insisted that she relinquish either of them. In any case, while Margaret prefers life on Anaxias, she normally uses only the senior title (Duchess of Delphi) in informal circumstances.



## Education and Later Career

Even while fulfilling her duties, Duchess Margaret found time to complete an advanced education at Palatine College, a private school on Murland/Massilia. Her degree was in economics, suiting the talents she had already shown as an administrator.

Since 1107, Margaret has come fully into her own as sector duchess. Almost all opposition to her rule has vanished, and she is now widely regarded as one of the most competent high nobles in the sector. Her marriage to Count Blaine Tukera (p. 104) has given her access to almost immeasurable resources; she has spent the last decade cooperating with Tukera Lines to develop the Delphi sector's economy.

If Margaret has a weak point, it is in her excessive rationality. She has great difficulty understanding irrational, or "noneconomic," motives in other people. She has some ability as a diplomat, but she is most effective when resolving trade disputes or making commercial agreements. When confronted with truly intractable social problems, such as religious conflicts or outbreaks of nationalistic fervor, the Duchess tends to flounder. So far her reign has seen few such conflicts – but a true test of Margaret's abilities may come at any time.

Although Duchess Margaret has become one of the Imperium's leading nobles, she refuses to spend much time at Capital. Despite her rank and resources, at Court she would be forced to compete with the Imperium's highest for a dominant social position. In Delphi, she can be a very big fish in a much smaller pond. She spends most of her time at her ancestral estates on Anaxias, traveling around Delphi, or making occasional visits to centers of high society in the nearby Massilia sector.

When Prince Asan arrived in Delphi, he chose as his family crest the *lowalaa*, a common bird of prey in the region, to symbolize the creation of a new family line and emphasize his attachment to Delphi over the Imperial core. Duchess Margaret has followed this tradition, and still uses the *lowalaa* as her crest.

## MARQUIS LEONARD BOLDEN-TUKERA OF ARAMIS

The Marquis of Aramis is a good example of a minor member of the Tukera clan, of a type that can be found by the hundreds all over the Imperium. He is also a good example of a "lazy" noble, born to power, but unlikely ever to put them to good use.

Leonard Fratelli Bolden-Tukera was born on 347-1075 on Aramis, the only child of Marquis Jorge Hayashi Bolden-Tukera of Aramis and Dame Marcella Fratelli.

On his father's side, Leonard is descended from Marova hault-Hayashi, first Marchioness of Aramis, who was granted the title by the Empress Arbellaatra in 631. He is also descended from the Bolden family, one of whose members married a minor Tukera heiress about 950; the family considered the connection important enough to incorporate it into a hyphenated family name. Leonard's mother was a former Marine

## MARQUIS LEONARD BOLDEN-TUKERA

**195 POINTS**

Human (Solomani). Age 44; 5' 11", 210 lbs.; white skin, blond hair, blue eyes, usually wearing very expensive formal clothing.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 13 [30]; **IQ** 11 [10]; **HT** 13 [30].

Speed 6.50; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 8 (Fencing).

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 5 [25]; Ally Group (Retainers; small group, 9 or less) [10]; Claim to Hospitality [10]; Fashion Sense [5]; Filthy Rich [50]; Legal Enforcement Powers 2 [10]; Status 4 (Marquis) [15]\*.

\* Includes one level of free Status from high Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** Gullibility [-10]; Laziness [-10]; Overweight [-10].

**Quirks:** Takes bribes, but thinks of them as "gifts;" Thinks business should be run according to his notions of fairness and interferes accordingly; Wears lots of jewelry. [-3]

**Skills:** Accounting-10 [2]; Administration-10 [1]; Appreciate Beauty-11 [8]; Carousing-13 [2]; Dancing-14 [4]; Fencing-13 [4]; Gambling-12 [4]; Guns (Pistol)-14 [2]\*; Piloting (Contragrav)-13 [2]; Savoir-Faire-15 [4]\*.

\* Includes +1 for IQ.

\*\* Based on default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-11 [0].

officer of common birth, who had been knighted for her service against Vargr raiders on the Imperial border.

As a youth, Leonard was sent to Capital to attend the Karbiili School (p. 32) and the University of Sylea. He barely managed to graduate from both institutions, although he loved the whirl and leisure of life on Capital. After his father's death in 1099, the new marquis returned to the Spinward Marches without any significant skills.

Soon after returning home, the marquis married his distant cousin Arianne Tukera, daughter of the Baron of Lewis. The partnership was a good one, from Lord Leonard's perspective – Lady Arianne had all the ambition and all the administrative skills, while the marquis had wealth and power that he disliked working to maintain.

Ever since his marriage, for over 20 years the marquis has lived a life of leisure on Aramis and in the pleasure resorts of the Spinward Marches. Occasionally he tries to interfere in Tukera operations, usually in an attempt to enforce his sense of "fair play." His wife or other Tukera administrators can usually convince him that whatever they want to do is the morally correct course of action.

Marquis Bolden-Tukera holds the economic center of the city of Leedor on Aramis as a personal fief. By local statute, he is also hereditary ruler of Aramis. He leaves almost all of his political responsibilities to his wife and to his seneschal

(p. 128). He has the authority to raise a company of huscarles (p. 62), but he has no interest in military command and has not taken advantage of the privilege. The Marquis owes fealty to Count Steros Hamil Knowln of Celepina (in the Rhylanor subsector), who in turn owes fealty to Duke Leonard Stephanos Kirgashii of Rhylanor.

## INDIVIDUAL NOBLES

This section describes some of the more famous, infamous, or simply interesting nobles of the present-day Imperium.

### DUCHESS DELPHINE MUUDASHIR OF MORA

*I last saw Delphine when she came to Capital about 45 years ago – the last time she visited, I believe. I didn't like her then, and from what everyone tells me she hasn't changed any since. She is incredibly intelligent and very competent, but also vain, manipulative, and so devious she can't ask for water when she's thirsty.*

*The main question about Delphine is: "Does she use anagathics?" She has some Vilani ancestry, but there are many people with more Vilani blood who have died much younger. I am reliably informed that she does make use of an advanced medical regime (much the same as we all use – vitamins, diet, creams, lotions – and more than a little reconstructive surgery) but that she does not stoop to anti-aging drugs. I am sure she does not engage in any of the illegal or immoral activities that rumor ascribes to her – vivisection is the least of them, believe me.*

*Frankly, I think she died 50 years ago and is too stubborn to admit it.*

*– Countess Vienna Amalfi Zirunkaar of Quildhac, private communication, 149-1119*

Delphine Adorania Muudashir was born on 021-979, the eldest child of Duchess Lutetia Ammon Muudashir of Mora and Lord Eneri Truell Adorania. Today, she is Matriarch and Duchess of Mora, K.S.C., and Sector Duchess of the Spinward Marches. At 140, she is one of the oldest nobles in the Third Imperium. She is also one of the most senior Knights of the Order of Starship and Crown – Emperor Gavin, Strephon's grandfather, knighted her in 1018.

Delphine was educated at home by a series of tutors, and then attended the Lynwa Academy, a private university on Mora with an Imperial charter (p. 33). After graduating, Delphine served with the Mora office of the Ministry of Justice in a number of capacities.

The Duchy of Mora is unusual in several respects. It is matrilineal, descending solely through the female line – as does the family name Muudashir, in a departure from ordinary Imperial usage. The duchy is also one of the few that involves local planetary government; the Duchess of Mora is also the Matriarch, the hereditary monarch of the planet Mora.

Delphine ascended to the matriarchy and Duchy of Mora when her mother abdicated in her favor on 001-1014. Her approach to sector politics was slow but sure, and involved as

much covert intrigue as it did open politicking. By the 1050s, she became sector duchess of the Spinward Marches, a position which she has held ever since.

Duchess Delphine was instrumental in maintaining the Imperial position during the Fourth Frontier War. However, by the time of the Fifth Frontier War, the aging Delphine was unable to take direct command of the military forces of the sector. Instead she appointed her protégé, Santanocheev, as sector admiral of the Spinward Marches. This move backfired badly and led to Delphine's eclipse by Archduke Norris (p. 92).

Today many observers are wondering how much longer the great Matriarch will continue to cling to power. Her heir is her grandniece Elane Shankarr Muudashir, C.E.G. Dame Elane has just taken a graduate degree in political science from the University of Mora, and has announced she will soon depart on her Grand Tour (p. 34).

### MARQUIS ROBERT BEAUDOIN

The Beaudoin family has been a fixture in the Solomani Rim sector for centuries. Empress Jacqueline I made an ancestor Count of Sebasta, when the Dingir League first joined the Imperium. Despite its new honors, the family remained somewhat obscure. However, the Beaudoins remained stubbornly loyal to the Imperium even after the foundation of the Solomani Sphere. For centuries they remained at home, resisting assimilation into Solomani society and refusing to give up their status as Imperial aristocrats.

On the eve of the Solomani Rim War, the then-head of the family made a risky journey out of the Sphere in order to join the Imperial Navy. Although he was killed in the war, the Emperor Gavin made his heir the Duke of Dingir in recognition of the family's loyalty. This event made the Beaudoin family's fortunes; over the following century they rose to great prominence.

#### *Early Career*

Robert Stephanos Beaudoin was born on 150-1057, the oldest child of Duke William Beaudoin of Dingir and Lady Alexandra Stephanos. He was educated by private tutors, and then attended the University of Terra to earn a degree in military history.

During his university years, Lord Beaudoin took part in the Naval Officer's Training Corps. He entered the Imperial Navy upon graduation, serving with distinction for 16 years and reaching the rank of commander. In 1095 he left naval service at his father's request. His father died two years later and Robert succeeded to the Duchy of Dingir.

#### *Sector Duke*

The new duke was a very ambitious man, certain that the Imperium needed his brand of leadership. Almost as soon as he had taken his father's ducal scepter, he launched a campaign to become sector duke of the Solomani Rim. For two years, he applied quiet persuasion, thundering oratory, and a bit of stab-in-the-back intrigue. Eventually he won support for a vote of no confidence against the incumbent, Duke Shulgi Inaari of Concord.

## MARQUIS ROBERT BEAUDOIN 155 POINTS

Human (Mixed/Imperial). Age 62; 5' 9", 155 lbs.; white skin, silver-white hair, brown eyes, usually wears well-tailored but subdued clothing.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 12 [20]; **IQ** 13 [30]; **HT** 10 [0].

Speed 5.50; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

**Advantages:** Ally Group (Retainers; small group, 9 or less) [10]; Claim to Hospitality [5]; Courtesy Rank 5 (Retired Imperial Navy Commander) [5]; Very Wealthy [30]; Status 4 (Marquis) [15]\*.

\* Includes one level of free Status from high Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** Enemy (Archduke of Sol; 6 or less) [-5]; Fanaticism (Imperial patriot) [-15]; Jealousy [-10]; Reputation -2 (Uses ruthless, underhanded tactics; all Imperial nobles, all the time) [-5]; Stubbornness [-5].

**Quirks:** Conniving; Devoted to his daughter; Hates Solomani activists and radicals; Political ultraconservative; Vengeful. [-5]

**Skills:** Administration-14 [4]; Astrogation-14 [4]; Bard-14 [4]; Computer Operation-13 [1]; Diplomacy-14 [6]; Fast-Talk-15 [6]; Free Fall-13 [4]; Guns (Pistol)-16 [4]\*; Heraldry-13 [2]; History (Military)-13 [4]; Intelligence Analysis-12 [2]; Intimidation-14 [4]; Law-11 [1]; Leadership-14 [4]; Literature-11 [1]; Philosophy (Imperial)-13 [4]; Piloting (Spacecraft)-14 [8]; Politics-16 [8]; Savoir-Faire-16 [2]\*\*; Shipbuilding-13 [2]; Shipmaster-13 [2]; Strategy (Space)-13 [4]; Streetwise-13 [2]; Tactics (Space)-13 [4]; Vacc Suit-13 [2]; Writing-12 [1].

\* Includes +2 from IQ.

\*\* Based on default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-13 [0].

In 1098 the Rim Senate met for the first time in over 50 years. The debate was contentious, exposing deep conflicts within the sector's aristocracy. In the end, the Senate voted to depose Duke Shulgi from the sector duke's office, elevating Duke Beaudoin in his place. The whole affair left a bitter taste in the mouth of many local nobles, especially after the broken Duke of Concord committed suicide the next year. Still, the Emperor confirmed Beaudoin's elevation, so the matter was settled, for the time being.

Duke Beaudoin proved an able sector duke, reforming the sector's naval organization, rationalizing trade routes, and keeping Solomani unrest under control. Although he made plenty of enemies, he also won a great deal of grudging respect.

### *Abdication*

Unfortunately, one of Duke Beaudoin's enemies was one of the few men with senior authority. Archduke Adair of Sol was not at all impressed by the fall of Duke Shulgi, and over the next few years he found much to dispute in the new sector

duke's actions. Finally, he decided to take a direct hand in what he regarded as the most critical sector of his domain.

In 1112, Archduke Adair of Sol announced that he would be moving the domain capital into the Solomani Rim sector (p. 99), establishing his new seat on the Vegan homeworld of Muan Gwi. At the same time, the Archduke announced that henceforth he would himself act as sector duke for the Solomani Rim. He praised Duke Robert for his loyal service, and bade him accept the thanks of a grateful Imperium.

Despite the diplomatic language, the archduke's move was clearly intended to demote Duke Robert. Enraged, the duke considered his options for several weeks, then apparently capitulated. Late in 1112, he abdicated in favor of his daughter Erika Chandos Beaudoin, who did not claim the honors of sector duke.

However, before abdicating, Duke Robert wrote a diplomatic letter of his own – to the Emperor himself. He stopped short of *complaining* about his treatment at Archduke Adair's hands, but he did request that his "long and faithful service" be rewarded with an honor title. In an attempt to smooth over relations, the archduke supported this request, and in 1114 Lord Robert was given the honor title of marquis. In a departure from normal practice, the title was made nonhereditary; Lord Beaudoin will retain it for life, but cannot pass it to his heir.

For the past few years, Lord Robert has apparently remained in retirement, uninvolved in politics except to support the career of the new Duchess of Dingir. In fact, Robert's resentment of Archduke Adair remains very strong, and he has built a circle of conservative aristocrats who feel the same way.

There is a possibility that the marquis will go into open opposition to the archduke at some point in the future. The most likely approach for him is to stir up trouble in the nearby Alderamin and Esperance subsectors. This region is important to Archduke Adair's power base, but it is undergoing severe racial tensions between Human and Vegan populations, exacerbated by a disputed ducal succession. How Duchess Erika would react to such a move is an open question – while she is devoted to her father, she is also a staunch supporter of the archduke.

## MARCHIONESS ALESSANDRA DA SILVA OF TERRA

Alessandra Ribeira da Silva was born 312-1033 on Terra, the youngest daughter of Joseph da Silva and Martina Ribeira. Her entire family was of common origins. Indeed, young Alessandra grew up on a Terra that was still under tight military occupation, with Imperial troops in every city and district. Terra had no associated Imperial noble, and Imperial nobles visited the planet only with great care.

### *Education and Political Career*

Alessandra attended a branch of the University of Terra in Rio de Janeiro, earning an advanced degree in Terran history. She then took the unusual step of leaving Terra for a number of years, accepting several academic positions elsewhere in the Solomani Rim sector. She later referred to this



period as her “growing time,” a kind of commoner’s Grand Tour (p. 34) during which she tried to learn as much as she could about the diverse worlds of the Third Imperium.

When Alessandra returned to Terra in 1068, it was not to continue in academia, but to begin a career in politics. Military rule had recently been relaxed somewhat, permitting the election of regional assemblies with a role in the formulation of policy. With civilian elections about to begin, political organizations were also permitted so long as they had no connection to the forbidden Solomani Party. Alessandra pulled together several tiny splinter organizations, establishing the so-called Freedom Party in the urban arcologies of South America.

Over the following decades, Alessandra da Silva became one of Terra’s leading political figures. The Freedom Party was instrumental in winning concessions from the Imperial military regime. Alessandra herself was one of the architects of a draft constitution that formed the basis for Terran home rule in 1110. She finally served as the first Prime Minister of the new Terran Commonwealth, retiring when she was elevated to the Imperial aristocracy.

### *Elevation to the Aristocracy*

In recognition of her long service to the people of Terra, Emperor Strephon made Alessandra the first new Marchioness of Terra in 1113. Marchioness Alessandra is one of the foremost examples of a world leader of common birth being raised to important noble status.

The Marchioness continues to hold considerable responsibility in the planetary government. Under the current Terran constitution, the Marchioness performs many of the functions of a constitutional monarch – she may address the planetary Assembly whenever she wishes, she has the authority to dissolve the Assembly when elections are to be held, and she holds a permanent nonvoting seat on the Prime Minister’s cabinet.

Meanwhile, as the leading high noble of Terra, the Marchioness has the serious responsibility of supervising the enforcement of Imperial law throughout the Terran system. She has won considerable respect for the tact and evenhandedness with which she carries out this charge. Her fief is the land around the old Imperial Residency, on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the high Andes Mountains.

Marchioness da Silva’s heir is her grandson, Tomas Costa da Silva (age 30). Although the Marchioness remains sharp of wit, she has been growing increasingly frail in recent

years. She may soon step down in favor of her grandson – but most observers expect her to remain long enough to greet the Empress Iolanthe during her planned Imperial visit to Terra in 1121.

## **BARONESS JYNEL HAUT-KURSHAR**

Jynel haut-Kurshar was born on 215-1058 on Rhylanor/Spinward Marches, the eldest child of Baron Roderick haut-Kurshar and Arell Davison. The Kurshar family is part of the local nobility on Rhylanor. An ancestor served as a Fleet Admiral during the Third Frontier War, and was granted a barony in recognition of his accomplished leadership during the conflict. Despite this auspicious beginning, the family became an undistinguished one – by the time of Jynel’s birth, no Kurshar had even taken a post in Imperial government in over 50 years.

### *The Merchant Baroness*

As a young woman, Jynel won a scholarship to the Makhidkarun merchant academy on Mora. While attending the academy and earning very high marks, Jynel spent a great deal of time at the court of Duchess Delphine, and became an avid partisan of the duchess. After leaving Mora, she spent over 20 years as an officer on passenger liners belonging to Arean Transport, Makhidkarun’s luxury passenger subsidiary. She eventually rose to independent command, and spent nine years as the captain of the line’s Spinward Marches flagship, the *Antarean Sunset*.

In 1098, while she was still working for Arean Transport, Jynel inherited her father’s baronial title. Aside from a brief visit back to Rhylanor to see to the transfer of family holdings, she didn’t permit her new rank to interfere with her career. If anything, her baronial honors helped her win promotion to the rank of Line Commodore, from which position she spent the last few years of her career overseeing Arean Transport activities in the Rhylanor and Mora subsectors.

Finally Jynel retired, having made a comfortable fortune over her years of mercantile service. She had also made a tremendous variety of contacts – as the captain of a luxury passenger liner, she had enjoyed the opportunity to meet *hundreds* of the sector’s wealthiest and most influential people. At first she had no immediate plans to use those contacts in pursuit of any political aim, but within a few years her intentions changed drastically.

## The Crusader

At the outbreak of the Fifth Frontier War, Baroness Jynel offered her services to the Imperial Navy. Her social network, especially her old connections to Duchess Delphine, made it possible for her to win a position as a civilian consultant on Sector Admiral Lord Santanocheev's staff. From there, she watched the course of the war with growing dismay.

Jynel's personal crisis came when Duke Norris of Regina used the power of an Imperial Warrant to relieve Santanocheev of command. During the subsequent purge of the Navy's command structure, Jynel was told that her services were no longer required. She returned home to Rhylanor, just in time to watch fearfully as the Imperial Navy mounted a last-ditch defense of the system against a Zhodani offensive.

The Navy won, in no small part due to Norris' timely actions – but Baroness Jynel didn't see it that way. She concluded that Norris was a dangerous upstart, and probably a criminal to boot. His spectacular rise to the Archduchy of Deneb didn't change the Baroness' opinion of him. If he could

even deceive the *Emperor*, then he was clearly a terrible threat to the Imperium and everything that Jynel held dear.

Since the end of the war, Baroness Jynel has been mounting a one-woman crusade to “dig up the facts” about Norris, to discredit him before the sector's nobles and eventually before the Emperor. Although her feelings about Norris are not rational, the baroness has considerable personal talent to bring to bear, and her extensive network of contacts is also very useful. If Norris *can* be damaged, Baroness Jynel may be just the person to manage it.

Baroness Jynel can serve as a good adversary for adventures in the Spinward Marches. Anyone even remotely connected to Archduke Norris' faction might become a target for her investigation, and agents working directly for Norris or his supporters might find the baroness opposing them just for the sake of opposition. The archduke is aware of the baroness' crusade against him, but has taken no action in retaliation as yet. Meanwhile, although Duchess Delphine has given Jynel no *official* support, she would probably not be displeased to see the baroness succeed.

### BARONESS JYNEL HAUT-KURSHAR

125 POINTS

Human (Imperial/Mixed). Age 62; 5' 4", 120 lbs.; olive-brown skin, silver hair, brown eyes, always wears clothing that is well-made but about 20 years out of fashion.

**ST** 7 [-20]; **DX** 8 [-15]; **IQ** 14 [45]; **HT** 9 [-10].

Speed 4.25; Move 4.

Dodge 4.

**Advantages:** Claim to Hospitality [5]; Status 3 (Baroness) [10]\*; Very Wealthy [30].

\* Includes one level of free Status from high Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Imperial, see p. 120) [-10]; Obsession (Bring down Archduke Norris) [-10].

**Quirks:** Always wears expensive but old-fashioned clothing; Despises Zhodani and their “sympathizers” within the Imperium; Pedantic. [-3]

**Skills:** Accounting-15 [6]; Administration-17 [8]; Area Knowledge (Spinward Marches)-18 [8]; Astrogation-15 [4]; Carousing-9 [2]; Computer Operation-15 [2]; Criminology-13 [1]; Detect Lies-13 [2]; Diplomacy-13 [2]; Electronics Operation (Communications)-14 [2]; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-14 [2]; Fast-Talk-14 [2]; Freight Handling-14 [2]; Guns (Pistols)-11 [2]\*; Interrogation-14 [2]; Law-16 [8]; Leadership-17 [8]; Literature-13 [2]; Piloting (Spacecraft)-10 [8]; Politics-15 [4]; Research-15 [4]; Savoir-Faire-18 [4]\*\*; Shipbuilding (Starship)-14 [2]; Shiphandling-14 [4]; Shipmaster-15 [4]; Streetwise-14 [2]; Tactics (Space)-12 [1]; Vacc Suit-13 [1]; Writing-14 [2].

\* Includes +2 from IQ.

\*\* Based on default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-14 [0]; Vilani-14 [2].

### BARON MARC HAULT- OBERLINDES OF FERI

Marc Oberlindes was born on 227-1027, the eldest child of Eric Oberlindes and Emily Casul. Today he is the head of the Oberlindes family (p. 115), and owner of a majority interest in the shipping corporation Oberlindes Lines.

Marc Oberlindes was born on Regina, and has spent his entire life building up a small merchant outfit into a major interface line. When he was 18 he went to merchant college on Mora, graduating with honors. Shortly after that he brokered the *Emissary* deal (p. 115) and led a trade expedition into the Vargr Extents. Following the first successful expedition he captained the *Emissary*, building up the Vargr trade, for 16 years. Only when his father retired did he return to the Spinward Marches to take over management of the company.

In 1101 Marc was awarded a baronial patent, complete with estates on Feri, for his contribution to the economic recovery of the Marches following the Fourth Frontier War. He is the first member of his family to enter the peerage; he is determined that he will not be the last.

All his life Marc has dreamt of making Oberlindes Lines an Imperium-wide megacorporation, but has realized that it will not happen in his lifetime, and probably not in his son's either. He is leaving more and more of the day-to-day management to others. This semiretirement from the business is not due to old age – thanks to the wonders of advanced medicine he is still hale and hearty, able to keep up with people half his age. Rather, he has decided to concentrate on politics.

Marc's present goal is to be elevated to the rank of marquis. This objective may now be hard to attain. With the frequent absence of Archduke Norris, Countess Josephine Hortelez Aella of Efate has taken over the administration of the Duchy of Regina. She and Baron Marc's liege, Count Evan of Roup, are political rivals. As a result, the countess is less sympathetic toward Oberlindes' ambitions than Duke Norris used to be.

Marc delights in outwitting others, especially bureaucrats; the *Emissary* scheme is a typical example of the way his mind works. He is a firm believer in the Golden Rule, however, and is as honest as he can afford to be. Of course, if all else fails he is not above turning to extralegal means. For example, in 1102 he secretly financed the rescue of his son from a prison in Nebelthorn on Ruie, where Sergej was serving a sentence of 30 years' hard labor.

## DOCTOR FRATER GANIDIIRSI SIMALR, F.A.

Ganidiirsi Ling Simalr was born on 302-1084, the eldest child of Duke Khugi Laragii Simalr of Ushra and Lady Jessica Gaarasa Ling. He is the heir to the Duchy of Ushra, in the Dagudashaag sector.

Lord Simalr was educated at the prestigious Karbiili School (p. 32), after which he attended the University of Sylea. He graduated with honors in 1106, and went on to take a doctorate in sophontology a few years later. After completing his doctorate, he accepted a tenured position at the university.

Dr. Simalr was attached to the IISS Contact and Liaison Branch for several years, as a consultant from the University of Sylea. During that period he made a name for himself in the field of comparative sophontology. He was appointed to the Banasdan Chair of Comparative Sophontology on 120-1118, and was knighted for his contributions to science. Dr. Simalr presently teaches several graduate-level courses at the University of Sylea, and is rumored to be an unofficial advisor to the Emperor.

Simalr's father the duke is still in excellent health and, being of Vilani ancestry, can be expected to live for many more years. The newly knighted heir therefore intends to pursue a full career in academia before taking up the mantle of the duchy. Speculation also identifies him as one of the suitors of Grand Princess Ciencia Iphegenia.

## SIR MUTAVA TABARI, C.S.

Mutava Tabari was born to a wealthy family on Eleusis/Solomani Rim, on 330-1079. His family had been in Imperial service for two generations, never quite reaching the ranks of the aristocracy but building a reputation for solid competence. From an early age, young Tabari was fiercely ambitious, determined to outdo his ancestors and earn a letter patent (p. 13).

Tabari attended the University of Eleusis and took part in a naval officer's training corps there. He had no difficulty earning a commissioned officer's appointment to the Imperial Navy. At first, he appeared likely to be on the fast track to very high rank. By the age of 34, he had already held command of two small starships and was on the short list for promotion to captain.

In 1116, Tabari won a superb opportunity for advancement – assignment to the staff of Duke William of Concord as a naval aide. The job carried with it captain's rank and a knighthood in the Order of Sol, and seemed likely to open the door to even better opportunities in the future.

## DOCTOR FRATER GANIDIIRSI SIMALR 190 POINTS

Human (Vilani). Age 35; 5' 11", 210 lbs.; olive-brown skin, black hair, gold-hazel eyes, usually wears fashionable academic's clothing with a traditional Vilani sash.

**ST** 11 [10]; **DX** 12 [20]; **IQ** 15 [60]; **HT** 11 [10].

Speed 5.75; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

**Advantages:** Claim to Hospitality [5]; Comfortable [10]; Heir [5]; Reputation +2 (Famous scientist; to academics, all the time) [5]; Status 5 (Ducal heir) [25]; Versatile [5].

**Disadvantages:** Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Duty (Teaching duties at University of Sylea; non-hazardous, 12 or less) [-5]; Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10].

**Quirks:** Beer connoisseur; Mutters in Old High Vilani when angry; Observes archaic Vilani customs; Very soft-spoken, except when teaching. [-4]

**Skills:** Anthropology-17 [8]; Archaeology-14 [2]; Astro-gation-14 [1]; Bard-16 [4]; Beam Weapons (Laser)-16 [4]\*; Cartography-14 [1]; Computer Operation-15 [1]; Dancing-11 [1]; Electronics Operation (Communications)-14 [1]; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-14 [1]; Fencing-12 [4]; First Aid-14 [1]; Free Fall-12 [2]; History-14 [2]; Intelligence Analysis-14 [2]; Linguistics-12 [1]; Literature-14 [2]; Philosophy (Imperial)-13 [1]; Piloting (Spacecraft)-12 [2]; Psychology-14 [2]; Research-16 [4]; Savoir-Faire-18 [2]\*\*; Speed-Reading-14 [1]; Survival (Desert)-14 [1]; Teaching-16 [4]; Vacc Suit-14 [1]; Writing-15 [2]; Xenology-17 [8].

\* Includes +2 from IQ.

\*\* Based on default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-16 [0]\*; Old High Vilani-15 [1]\*; Vilani-16 [2]\*.

\* Includes +1 from Linguistics.

Unfortunately, at this point Tabari made a crucial mistake. He became romantically involved with the duke's eldest daughter, in a short affair that ended badly once the duke discovered its existence. Duke William was a fair and honest man about most things, but his daughter's romantic life was not one of them. He resolved to remove Tabari from his household, and had him reassigned to shore duty on a distant world.

This was a terrible blow for Tabari. He still had his naval rank and his knighthood, but the reassignment effectively ended his naval career. With the Duke of Concord as an enemy, he had little hope of further advancement in civilian life. He seemed to have little choice but to return home in bitter disappointment.

After finishing his tour of duty, Tabari resigned his commission and left the Imperial Navy for civilian life. Enraged at the death of his ambitions, he turned against all Imperial nobles, vowing to do everything in his power to harm the aristocracy.

Since 1118, Sir Mutava Tabari has wandered the Solomani Rim sector, sowing trouble wherever he can. His preferred method is blackmail; if he can discover evidence of a noble's misdeeds, he will use it either to coerce the noble into paying substantial sums, or to ruin the noble's reputation. He has also become a duelist, and has killed three minor nobles in affairs of honor. Sir Mutava is a crack shot, and is also an accomplished fencer in the *gendao* school of swordsmanship taught on his homeworld.

Sir Mutava has acquired a mysterious ally in his quest to cause trouble among the sector's aristocrats. The identity of this secretive patron is unknown to him – contact is made entirely through hired intermediaries and coded Xboat transmissions. Sir Mutava's patron suggests likely targets, provides him with information, and has twice sent legal experts to bail him out of trouble. Whoever the patron is, he or she must be very well connected, possibly a member of the sector nobility in his own right. Sir Mutava is determined to discover his patron's identity, but so far has had little success.

## SIR MUTAVA TABARI 230 POINTS

Human (Solomani). Age 40; 5' 11", 210 lbs.; dark brown skin, black hair, brown eyes, usually wears well-tailored Imperial fashions.

**ST** 11 [10]; **DX** 14 [45]; **IQ** 13 [30]; **HT** 11 [10].

Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 7; Parry 12 (Fencing).

**Advantages:** Charisma +2 [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Courtesy Rank 6 (Retired Imperial Navy Captain) [6]; Attractive [5]; Patron (Secret; extremely powerful, 12 or less) [20]; Status 2 (Knight) [5]\*; Strong Will +2 [8]; Wealthy [20].

\* Includes one level of free Status from high Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** Enemy (Duke of Concord; 6 or less) [-5]; Jealousy [-10]; Reputation -4 (Duelist and blackmailer; Imperial nobles and naval officers, 7 or less) [-4]; Stubbornness [-5]; Workaholic [-5].

**Quirks:** Extremely reserved and self-controlled; Fond of female companionship; Never touches alcohol. [-3]

**Skills:** Administration-13 [2]; Bard-13 [2]; Computer Operation-14 [2]; Computer Programming-12 [2]; Diplomacy-11 [1]; Fast-Talk-13 [2]; Fencing-16 [8]; Forgery-12 [2]; Free Fall-14 [2]; Guns (Pistols)-19 [8]\*; Intelligence Analysis-13 [4]; Interrogation-13 [2]; Intimidation-13 [2]; Leadership-13 [2]; Mathematics-12 [2]; Piloting (Spacecraft)-14 [2]; Politics-13 [2]; Psychology-13 [4]; Research-14 [4]; Running-10 [1]; Savoir-Faire-16 [2]\*\*; Savoir-Faire (Military)-16 [2]\*\*; Shiphandling-12 [2]; Shipmaster-13 [2]; Strategy (Space)-11 [1]; Streetwise-14 [4]; Survival (Desert)-12 [1]; Tactics (Space)-13 [4]; Vacc Suit-13 [2].

\* Includes +2 from IQ.

\*\* Based on default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Languages:** Eleusinean (native)-13 [0]; Galanglic-13 [2].

Sir Mutava can serve as a good adversary for any noble on the Solomani Rim, or any party working for such a noble. Similar characters can be found anywhere in the Imperium, so with suitable changes in his biography he can be useful in campaigns set elsewhere.

## LADY ELIA HORTALEZ MUENDOR OF LODE

Elia Hortalez Muendor was born on 235-1097, the youngest child of Duke Pellinor Esfahan Muendor of Lode and Lady Merri Kinmon Hortalez. Elia is entitled to the courtesy title "Lady" as the younger child of a noble, even though she is unlikely ever to inherit.

Lady Elia attended the Karbiili School on Capital (p. 32). Upon graduation, she entered Wingdale College, a small, private school on Capital, taking a very light class load with an unspecified course of study. She has never completed a degree, although she intends to do so . . . eventually.

Throughout her "education," Lady Elia took part in the social life around the Imperial court. She met Princes Varian and Lucan while still attending Karbiili, and has been a part of their social circle for several years.

For a time, gossip in the Imperial court connected Elia and Prince Lucan romantically; the two were a common sight on the "party circuit" on Capital, including the informal gatherings held at the twin Princes' quarters within the Imperial Palace. More recently, it appears that Elia and Lucan have had a falling out; Elia is rumored to have accompanied Prince Varian on his "Grand Tour of the Imperium" (p. 34).

Elia is a member of a noble family with considerable disposable income; she is a minor scion of a lesser branch of the Hortalez clan (p. 113). On the other hand, she is not a direct heir. She therefore falls into the class commonly known as "indolent." She is a pleasure seeker and a dilettante, without a care in the world.

## NOBLE FAMILIES

Every noble comes from a family – and many nobles come from ancient and widespread clans. Here are some of the most influential noble families of the Third Imperium.

### THE AELLA FAMILY

The Aella family traces its beginnings to the latter days of the Rule of Man, and boasts both Vilani and Solomani among its forebears. The family has prospered from political and financial dealings over the years, and has connections with the Imperial family as well as the Archduke of Deneb and a number of other high families.



The current center of family influence is in the Gushemege sector, but it has branches over much of the coreward Imperium.

Strephon's mother was Elbet Osmanlia Aella, a distant cousin of Archduke Norris' mother Fiorella Havasu Aella. This makes Norris a distant relative of the Emperor, and some observers believe that this is at least a partial explanation for why Strephon would issue an Imperial Warrant to Norris. The degree of consanguinity is very small, however, and relationships such as this are not at all unusual in the Third Imperium. The real explanation probably lies elsewhere.

The Aella family crest is a white dolphin on a blue field, representing the constellation of Delphas, which dominates the night sky of Parsifal, the homeworld of the Aella family.



## THE DELGADO FAMILY



The Delgado family owns or controls 47% of the stock of Delgado Trading, the youngest of the megacorporations (founded 997). It has parlayed the income generated from this into social and political clout, by marrying into other noble families. The family claims to be of Solomani descent – for all practical purposes, this simply means they tend to choose

Solomani names. It controls several duchies in the Diaspora and Massilia sectors as well as numerous lesser titles.

The current head of the Delgado family and chairman of the board of Delgado Trading is Etian Tanaka Delgado, Count of Rigold. Count Etian was elevated to the title upon the death of his father in 1104, even though the honor title is not hereditary; this is another example of the tendency of certain honor titles to be granted to the same family year after year (p. 13). Count Etian is also Baron of Mysariy, a knight of the Order of the Emperor's Guard (p. 22), and a knight of the Order of Sylea (p. 22). He holds proxies for stock held by his various relatives, except for his siblings, Clarissa and Antonio Delgado. The count operates his financial empire from Capital, where the family maintains an arcology containing both offices and living quarters.

Etian's son Aboki Delgado is married to Heleni Zawa Delgado; they have a nine-year-old son, Marilo. Aboki Delgado is a baronet and a knight of the Order of Sylea. As a member of the Delgado Board of Directors, he is clearly being groomed to take his father's place as head of the corporation.

Etian's sister, Clarissa Delgado Ganaare, is married to Duke Hansi Tauribi Ganaare of Tamayo (in the Vland sector).

## LADY ELIA HORTALEZ MUENDOR 90 POINTS

Human (Solomani). Age 22; 5' 4", 120 lbs.; white skin, black hair, brown eyes, always wears expensive or expensive-looking fashions.

**ST** 8 [-15]; **DX** 12 [20]; **IQ** 11 [10]; **HT** 12 [20].

Speed 6.00; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

**Advantages:** Beautiful [15]; Claim to Hospitality (Minor) [2]; Fashion Sense [5]; Independent Income [5]; Status 4 (Non-inheriting child of a duke) [15]\*; Wealthy [20].

\* Includes one level of free Status from high Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** Combat Paralysis [-15]; Intolerance (Poor people and "commoners") [-5]; Laziness [-10].

**Quirks:** Loves moving in high-ranking social circles; Outrageous flirt; Proud. [-3]

**Skills:** Carousing-12 [2]; Dancing-13 [4]; Fast-Talk-12 [4]; History-9 [1]; Literature-9 [1]; Performance-11 [2]; Piloting (Contragrav)-11 [1]; Savoir-Faire-15 [4]\*; Sex Appeal-13 [4]; Singing-13 [2].

\* Based on default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Languages:** Galanglic (native)-11 [0]; Vilani-10 [1].

She controls a significant block of Delgado stock, which she exercises through her daughter Macri Ganaare's membership on the Board of Directors.

Antonio Tancredi Delgado, Etian's brother, is Duke of Dezik and subsector duke of the Ten Suns subsector in the Massilia sector. His wife is Sophia Adorania Delgado; they have a daughter named Kleopatra. Antonio holds his own block of stock in the megacorporation, but is too busy with his ducal responsibilities to participate in corporate affairs. In order to keep his brother Etian from gaining too much control, Antonio delegates his proxy to a distant cousin who sits on the Board of Directors.

The Delgado family arms consist of an owl, on a background of blue. Their sigil is a white owl on a blue background.

## THE HORTALEZ FAMILY

The Hortalez clan is very old and widespread across the Imperium, intermarried into almost every major noble family, with titles and property in every sector of the Imperium . . . and substantial holdings outside of it. The family has founded universities, charitable organizations, and foundations almost without number, and has wealth and social connections rivaling those of the Emperor.



The various members of the Hortalez family own 74% of Hortalez et Cie – which in turn owns significant interests in General Products, GSbAG, Instellarms, Ling-Standard Products, Makhidkarun, Naasirka, SuSAG, Sharurshid, Sternmetal Horizons, and Zirunkariish (see pp. T:BC13-17). This web of holdings gives the clan tremendous influence over Imperium-wide commerce.

The Hortalez Family Trust controls the family’s financial interests, including its shares of Hortalez et Cie. This institution is administered by representatives of the senior branches of the family, and has its main office on Capital in the Hortalez Arcology. The current Chairman of the Board and chief administrator of the Hortalez Family Trust is Sir David Hutara Hortalez, Marquis of Talleren, K.O.S.C. Lord Talleren has held his position since 1108, when his Uncle Harlan Aella Hortalez retired. He submerges himself in his work, and rarely participates in social events on Capital unless he feels they are necessary to the family business.

The Hortalez family arms are a pair of scales in gold against a green and red background (red vertical stripe against a green field). Different branches of the family incorporate variants of this basic design into their individual arms.

## THE IGSIIRDI FAMILY



The Igsiirdi family is one of the oldest noble houses in the Third Imperium, tracing its ancestry back thousands of years to the time of the First Imperium. The main Igsiirdi line is almost unique in having very little Solomani ancestry, and this places its members among the *de facto* leaders of the pro-Vilani segment at court.

The clan is very proud of its reputation for refusing to marry any Solomani outside of the Imperial family itself. The family’s ownership of a substantial percentage of the megacorporation Naasirka (p. T:BC16) has given it a financial power base to match its social and political power.

The family name has no relation to the central ruling council of the First Imperium, also called the *Igsiirdi*. The two words have different tonal qualities, not normally rendered in the transliteration to Galanglic, and are unrelated. This has not prevented the family from encouraging rumors that it was the founding family of the First Imperium.

Although not the current head of the family, the most famous Igsiirdi is the Dowager Archduchess of Vland, Musush Igsiirdi-Tauribi, the grand dame of society on Capital.

The arms of the Igsiirdi family are a yellow crown on a field of black; their sigil is a crown in gold. The family arms originally incorporated the Vilani circlet in gold, but this was changed shortly after the foundation of the Third Imperium –

the only current heraldic use of the Vilani circlet is in the arms of the Order of Vland (p. 23).

## THE LING FAMILY

The Ling family no longer holds a controlling interest in Ling-Standard Products (p. T:BC15), although its holdings still guarantee substantial income. It has spread itself widely across the Imperium, so that there is no single predominant branch, and no single family leader.



The Lings boast several dukes, including the sector Duke of Dagudashaag (Duke Jai Shiishug-insa Ling) and hundreds of lesser peers. The number of Ling family members in the peerage is enough to make them a large voting bloc in the Moot, if they were all to vote together. However, the various branches find it difficult to agree on any but the most basic of principles.

The Ling family arms were originally three gold anchors against a black background, but the clan’s numerous branches have taken up many variations in color, number, and arrangement. The family sigil is a single anchor (lacking the “fouled” rope coiled around it common in military usages of this symbol) against a plain background, each branch of the family using a different color scheme.

## THE MURDOCH FAMILY



The Murdoch family rose to prominence in the 620s, when Axel Murdoch founded the megacorporation Instellarms (p. T:BC15). His descendants retain control of the megacorporation through a controlling interest in Murdoch Holdings, which owns 32% of Instellarms and 8% of Ling-Standard Products.

Axel Aella Murdoch, Marquis of Haley (in the Fornast sector) is 16th in direct line from the first Axel Murdoch. He inherited the title on the death of his father in 1113, but he is still a minor and his mother Lynette Hutara Murdoch is acting as regent until the boy reaches age 18 (in 1123). At present, he is being tutored in the family palace on Capital. Axel’s uncle, Hiroshi Rutan Murdoch, Count of Boylan, presently administers Murdoch Holdings. He was elected to the presidency of Murdoch Holdings in 1113.

The Murdoch arms consist of a sword crossed over a quill pen (both in silver), against a background of red.

## THE OBERLINDES FAMILY

The Oberlindes family is an up-and-coming mercantile family. They are influential only in parts of the Spinward Marches, but in their region of influence they are in direct competition with the long-established Tukera clan (pp. 102-104). The current head of the family, Marc hault-Oberlindes (p. 110), is the first to hold rank in the peerage. He has elaborate dreams of pushing his company to megacorporate status, and of winning high place in Imperial society.



### Early History

Strictly speaking, Oberlindes Lines is the second company to bear that name. The first was established in 487 by Roxanne Oberlindes, the owner of one of Regina's largest import-export firms, to serve the needs of that firm. The line grew and prospered in a modest way, until the events of the first two Frontier Wars inflicted major losses and forced the family to sell off a large number of shares in order to gain new capital. The family did manage to retain control of the company for many years thereafter, but the Third Frontier War inflicted new losses. In 990, a group of shareholders forced the resignation of managing director Amanda Oberlindes and installed a whole new Board of Directors. Four years later, the company was forced to cease operations and lost its Imperial charter.

During the bankruptcy proceedings, it transpired that a number of the ships were actually owned by their individual captains (all members of the Oberlindes clan) and just leased to the company. As a result, the canny family emerged from the crash with eight freighters of various sizes. Additionally, the original import-export firm had never been part of the company, and remained in the hands of the family.

For the next two generations, the Oberlindes family was formally just a group of free traders tied together by family bonds. In practice, they still functioned as a family-owned company. The head of the family, first Amanda and later her son Eric, served as a sort of informal managing director. The clan even kept using the Oberlindes Lines name and logo, on their ships if not on their official paperwork.

### Revival

The first major increase in Oberlindes' size came in 1049. At the time, Marc Oberlindes was the 22-year-old eldest son of family patriarch Eric Oberlindes. He proposed a scheme to his kinsmen for the acquisition of *Sparkling Distress*, a 60,000-ton *Lightning*-class cruiser declared surplus by the Imperial Navy. The cruiser would be refurbished as a merchant ship, and used as a spearhead in the search for new markets in the Vargr Extents.

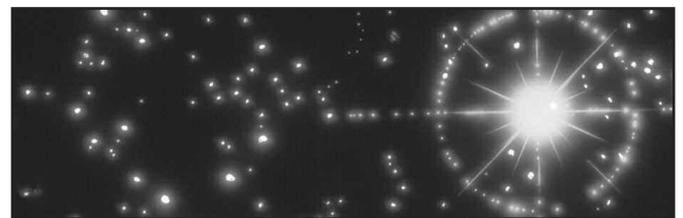
The purchase was approved, and Marc put his plan into action. Through a convoluted and slightly illegal procedure, Marc not only managed to buy the ship for its scrap value, but also with its complete weapons array left intact. When challenged by his father, he explained with impeccable logic) that the weaponry was necessary for trading expeditions into the Vargr Extents.

The ship was renamed *Emissary* and served as the flagship for Oberlindes' trade expeditions into the Vargr Extents. The venture proved highly successful. Due to the circumstances surrounding the sale, *Emissary* could not reenter the Imperium, so a base was established just beyond the Imperial border on Pandrin (Gvurrdon 2240). This base served as a clearinghouse for trade shipments between Regina and the Vargr worlds.

Marc Oberlindes himself served as the captain of the *Emissary* in the early years, and forged many valuable contacts in the Thoengling Empire and the Commonality of Kedzudh. The profits from these trade ventures were invested in new ships, and as the years went by the family found it harder and harder to keep up the pretense of being just a group of individual free traders.

The start of the Fourth Frontier War in 1082 caused the Imperial Navy to seize a number of civilian freighters, and to start the construction of a number of new ships – mostly combat vessels but also some transports. When the war ended abruptly two years later, the Navy found itself with a considerable number of surplus transport ships. Marc Oberlindes, now the head of the family, used contacts in the Navy to acquire a large number of these surplus vessels on very good terms.

It was just after the turn of the century that Marc Oberlindes gained an accolade that he has cherished ever since. In 1101 the Emperor named Marc to the newly vacant Barony of Feri, in recognition of his mercantile success and his support of the Imperial effort during the Fourth Frontier War. The new baron was also able to gain a new Imperial charter for Oberlindes Lines, making it a legitimate shipping firm once more.



### Recent History

Using his new ships, Marc hault-Oberlindes has gained a solid position in the Regina market. Oberlindes Lines was operating over 100 ships in 1090, and over 200 by 1105.

In the mid-1100s, Oberlindes began an aggressive move into the Aramis subsector, disrupting several established trade routes and touching off a trade war with Tukera Lines. For reasons never made public, Tukera backed down from the conflict after only a few months, leaving Oberlindes firmly established in Aramis.

The Fifth Frontier War caused little damage to Oberlindes Lines. Under Lord Oberlindes' clever guidance, losses due to enemy activity were kept to a minimum. The only major reverse occurred near the start of the war, when the 40th Squadron (see p. T:AI77) and its corsair allies took over the base on Pandrin. This move cut the *Emissary* off from its lines of communication home.

At the time, Marc's son and heir, Sergei hault-Oberlindes, commanded the *Emissary*. Sergei immediately took his ship to Kedzudh and obtained sanction from the Imperial ambassador to raid the supply lines of any enemy of the Imperium. He then organized a squadron of friendly corsairs and went hunting. Sergei did well and his prizes helped offset some of the company's wartime losses.

Following the war, the company's attempts to expand further have met with limited success. The momentum lost in the war is difficult to regain, and the company finds itself having to fend off several hostile moves from various competitors. In 1117, Tukera attempted to throw Oberlindes out of Aramis again. The attempt failed, but it cost both companies dearly.

The long-term objective of the company is to expand its services into the Jewell, Vilis, Lanth, and Rhylanor subsectors. Some steps have already been taken in that direction. As early as 1106, Oberlindes broke Tukera's monopoly on transporting ore from Macene to Risek. In 1112 the company established J-3 passenger runs to Arden. Over the last three years it has bought three brand new J-5 passenger liners, and established J-5 service to Rhylanor via Echiste. Other ventures have met with less success, sometimes with outright failure, but the overall success rate of the company is impressive.

### Organization

Oberlindes Lines is organized as a family business. There is a Board of Directors elected by the shareholders; since Marc hault-Oberlindes holds an absolute majority of the stock, he will be Chairman of the Board for as long as he wishes to be. The directors are also the chief officers of the company, many of them related to the Oberlindes family by blood or marriage. Marc himself is nominally in charge, but increasingly the day-to-day management has been taken over by his son Sergei and his daughter-in-law Zinovia.

## THE SCHUNAMANN FAMILY

There are presently 18 family groups descended from Gustav Schunamann, the founder of the megacorporation SuSAG (p. T:BC16). Gustav's descendants still own 52% of SuSAG. As with most other large business families, they have formed a family trust to administer the shares to their mutual advantage. The largest



single block of stock is under control of Irene Gani Schunamann-Linuuksa, Countess of Pendragon, and Chairman of the Board of SuSAG.

The Schunamann family crest consists of a crescent moon and a single six-pointed star in silver against a blue background, a single white crescent being the family sigil.

## THE SHIISHUGINSA FAMILY



The Shiishuginsas are an old Vilani mercantile family, which founded the megacorporation Zirunkariish in -425. Today the family still owns 29% of Zirunkariish (which in turn owns 13% of Sharurshid).

The Shiishuginsa family is closely associated with the Alkhalikoi dynasty. This association dates to the time just after the Civil War, when the clan was among the leaders of the pro-Vilani faction at court. One member of the family, Antiama Shiishuginsa, married the Emperor Zhakirov in 679. The Shiishuginsas have been staunch supporters of the dynasty ever since, and are one of the few Vilani noble families to spend most of their time on Capital. Today they retain extensive private holdings there.

Another prominent member of the clan is Duke Enlil Igsiirdi Shiishuginsa of Vland, sector duke of the Vland Sector. Duke Shiishuginsa is a close friend and confidante of Emperor Strephon, and spends about half of each year at Capital to be on hand should the Emperor need advice on Vilani affairs.

## THE TANCREDI FAMILY

The Tancredi family achieved prominence during the early days of the Third Imperium. Helmut Tancredi, the founder of the dynasty, was one of the "merchant princes" who spread Sylean financial influence throughout the stars during the reign of Cleon I. Tancredis have married into almost every noble family in the Third Imperium, and a good many outside it.



Today the Tancredi family holds a few minor counties and duchies scattered through the Dagudashaag and Core sectors, but its real power comes from owning a controlling interest in Ichiban Interstellar and a sizable portion of Antares Holdings. Proxies for these shares are controlled by Annanias Aella Tancredi, the 108-year old Marquis of Pendergast, who lives as a virtual recluse in the Tancredi arcology enclave on Capital.

# Characters

*Of course, the event of the social season has been the Emperor's Birthday ball hosted by the Dowager Archduchess. She's been organizing these for almost 50 years, reasoning that since the Emperor can't be bothered to put on the dazzle for his own Birthday, she may as well do it for him. Every year she gets more extravagant. I keep expecting the Archduke to tell his mother to pick a budget and stick to it, but it never happens.*

*It was held on the Tauribi estate, of course, and the staff went to great lengths to decorate. The whole place was picked out with caged glitterbugs and starlights, and there was white and cloth-of-gold drapery everywhere. Aside from the guests in military uniform, the men were instructed to wear stark white while the ladies wore a rainbow of primary colors. It might have hurt the eyes if the lighting hadn't been so subdued.*

*The Dowager Archduchess placed herself at the heart of things and held court, of course. Archduke Ishuggi was there too, probably to keep an eye on his mother and make sure she didn't do anything scandalous at her age. Unlikely!*

*Archduke Tranian was there, looking stiff and proper as usual – he's far too young to be so sour; don't you think? He needs to find a wife. Or perhaps something else would suit him better.*

*I counted 15 dukes, notably the Duke of Tansa, the Emperor's father-in-law. He's certainly a fine figure of a man for someone over a century old. Must be the Vilani blood again – we should be so lucky. He and his wife circulated for an hour, then settled close to the dowager and spent the rest of the night there. The Duke of Cemplas was there too, with his wife and a cluster of little Tukeras in tow. For a pair of stodgy married plutocrats, they certainly could dance!*

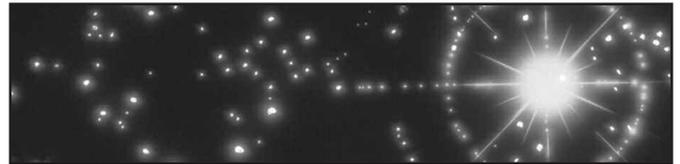
*I tried to count lesser lights, but as usual I lost track – it's hard when they move around so. There was the usual cluster of naval peers over by the wine bar, talking shop – or ship, more likely. They were handsome men and women all, but far too respectable for me.*

*Respectable, all of it was respectable. Still, even at a Tauribi gathering you can find some gossip, if you know where to look. It's the gardens, all those miles of hedge mazes and leafy grottoes. I overheard a certain young Countess we both know in pursuit of her latest conquest, one of those crude-but-handsome frontier barons from the Marches. Yes, her. I sometimes feel like asking her to leave some for the rest of us.*

*Oh, and I spotted the old Duke of Kakadan walking among the rose trellises with the Baroness of Iishaanka, his arm around her waist. Rather sweet, if he's finally about to find someone to take the place of his lost Duchess.*

*The Emperor and his family came, of course. He and the Empress led one dance, and then spent the rest of the evening with the dowager as usual. Ciencia Iphegenia looked to be having a marvelous time, though. As always, she had half the young noblemen in the room paying court, but I noticed her giving more dances than chance would allow to a certain young Vilani scientist-knight. There may be something to that . . .*

*– Countess Vienna Amalfi Zirunkaar of Quildhac, private communication, 208-1120*



Aside from their exalted position in Imperial society, nobles actually have very little in common as individuals. Almost any skill set found in the general population will also be found among the aristocracy.

## POINT TOTALS

The point budget for a noble character depends strongly on the power level of the campaign.

### Almost Common

Very low-ranking nobles, and nonheir members of noble families, can be built on a total of 100 points. This point level can also be used to represent young aristocrats, who have not yet entered on an adult career. Characters at this stage have very little power in the aristocracy, but may be able to draw on social contacts while pursuing other adventures.

### Knights and Barons

Members of the lower aristocracy (knights through marquises) can be built on the *GURPS Traveller* standard of 150 points. Such characters have some influence, but also have healthy skill sets due to a complete education and possibly a substantial career in some field.

### Movers and Shakers

High nobles with significant Imperial responsibilities should be designed on a budget of 200 points or more. Very high-level nobles spend most of their points on Allies, Contacts, Status, and Wealth rather than on very high skill levels. Chapter 6 presents several examples of nobles at this level of power.

# ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS

A number of character traits are useful in representing nobles' aristocratic origins and greater influence.

## ADVANTAGES

The following advantages require special handling for noble characters.

### *Administrative Rank* *see p. C19*

Nobles and other characters within the Imperial civilian ministries hold Administrative Rank. The exact title and level of responsibility associated with each level of Administrative Rank depends on the ministry. In most cases, Rank 0 to 4 indicates a subordinate position in the local hierarchy, Rank 5 is typical for the leading official in a given Imperial ministry for a single world, Rank 6 for an official with subsector-wide authority, Rank 7 for an official with sector-wide authority, and Rank 8 for an official with Imperium-wide authority. For an example of one ministry's rank structure, see p. T:ST48.

High nobles always have Administrative Rank covering *all* of the Imperial ministries with offices in their demesne, reflecting their supervisory authority (p. 54). A high noble baron, marquis, viscount, or count usually has Rank 5, a high noble subsector duke has Rank 6, a sector duke or archduke Rank 7, and the Emperor Rank 8.

Nobles who work in a *corporate* hierarchy may have Merchant Rank (see p. T:FT81). At the higher levels of corporate administration, officials have Administrative Rank. Again, the exact titles vary from one corporation to the next, but Rank 5 is appropriate for an official with planetary authority, Rank 6 for a subsector chairman, Rank 7 for a sector chairman, and Rank 8 for a director of an Imperium-wide megacorporation.

### *Allies* *see p. B23*

Many nobles have Allies: a bodyguard, a seneschal, a family member with useful skills, a former shipmate or fellow soldier, and so on. Higher-level nobles probably have Ally Groups (p. B232) of retainers or bodyguards. See the character write-ups in Chapter 6 for examples.

An Ally is *not* an ordinary employee or follower – he is an utterly reliable companion, who is likely to go along on even the most unusual adventures. Imperial nobles may have *thousands* of people working for them on a daily basis, but very few of these qualify as Allies.

### *Alternate Identity* *see p. B233*

Under Imperial law, it is legal for a noble to use a false identity for privacy, although the noble's correct identity must be revealed to any legal authority. The noble's real identity can easily be discovered by anyone with police contacts, or through the use of appropriate skills – Administration to arrange an ID check, Area Knowledge to recognize the

noble, and so on. This is a “weak” Alternate Identity, and costs no points.

Sometimes a high noble or his heir takes on a full Alternate Identity, when he accepts a public position in which he is expected to set aside the privileges of his full aristocratic status. This is especially common for high nobles who enter the Imperial armed services. The most prominent example at present is Prince Lucan, who is serving in the Imperial Navy under a *nom de guerre* (p. 15). This form of Alternate Identity requires the permission of the noble's feudal superior, and of senior officials in his chosen service. It is a Legal Alternate Identity, and costs 5 points.

### *Claim to Hospitality* *see p. C121*

Imperial aristocrats, especially members of the high nobility, have personal and family connections in all manner of unexpected places. This network of casual contacts is best represented by a Claim to Hospitality. Nobles do lend one another hospitality when traveling, and are usually willing to give one another minor assistance when called upon.

The cost of this advantage depends on the size and dispersion of the noble's extended network of contacts. A *minor* Claim to Hospitality, costing 2 points, can represent contacts spread across a dozen or so worlds. A *major* Claim to Hospitality, costing 5 points, can represent a network covering most of the major worlds in a single sector. An *extensive* Claim to Hospitality costs 10 points and covers almost every major world in the Imperium – and a sampling of the minor ones as well. An extensive Claim to Hospitality may be limited to members of the Imperium's most influential and widespread noble clans (see Chapter 6 for examples).

### *Clerical Investment* *see p. B19*

Many nobles hold positions in local religious organizations, with the corresponding duties. It is appropriate for any such noble to have the Clerical Investment advantage at the 5-point level, gaining a +1 reaction from fellow members and a special title. Most local religions are not significant enough on the Imperial scale to grant more than 5-point Clerical Investment.

### *Heir* *see p. C125*

This advantage can be used to “hold a place” for Status and Wealth that a character may receive later in the campaign. It is very common for the children of Imperial nobles, while they are out on their Grand Tour (p. 34) or putting in a period of military service (p. 33).

### *Legal Enforcement Powers* *see p. B21*

Imperial high nobles have this advantage by definition, as they are responsible for enforcing Imperial law within their demesnes (p. 60). High nobles have wide-ranging jurisdiction and the authority to engage in covert investigations, but they must respect Imperial law and cannot kill within impunity. A high noble holds Legal Enforcement Powers at the 10-point level.

Outside the high nobility, most Imperial nobles do *not* have this advantage. A noble's involvement in the Imperial

judicial system is most likely as a member of the judiciary, not as an arresting officer. Nobles who do serve as law-enforcement agents for local governments may have this advantage at the 5-point level. Only agents of the Imperial Ministry of Justice (or a similar agency) hold the advantage at the 10-point or 15-point levels.

**Legal Immunity** *see p. B237*

Imperial nobles *do not* have this advantage, as they are subject to all local and Imperial laws. The only form of immunity they enjoy is in the fact that a non-Imperial court cannot sentence them to death; this costs no points.

**Military Rank** *see p. B22*

Military personnel gain free Status according to their current Military Rank, according to the rule on p. B22. This applies to members of the Imperial Army and Marines (as established by *GURPS Traveller: Ground Forces*), and also to members of the Imperial Navy. It does *not* apply to members of the Imperial Scout Service, even those serving in the Scout Bureaucracy. Discharged military personnel with Courtesy Rank do not gain free Status from it, although they may buy Status normally.

High nobles often get Military Rank from their position, especially if they command units of huscarles (p. 62). The exact level of Military Rank varies depending on the size and armament of the commanded units. A typical high noble baron may have Military Rank 4, while a marquis, viscount, or count may have Military Rank 5.

High nobles at the level of duke and above *always* have Military Rank 8 – this represents not only command over their personal huscarle units, but command authority over all Imperial military forces within their demesne (p. 60).

**Patrons** *see p. B24*

A noble can also have a higher-ranking aristocrat as a personal patron, usually at the 15-point level. Nobles who are active in Imperial government often have a Patron of their ministry or service. Secondary agencies, such as the Ministry of Colonization or the Scout Service, are 25-point Patrons. Major Imperial agencies, like the Ministry of Justice or the Imperial Navy, are 30-point Patrons.

**Security Clearance** *see p. C129*

Many nobles in direct military or government service hold some level of Security Clearance. The Imperium uses a standard system of classification which includes four levels – or at least four levels which are known to the public. These levels, and the associated clearances, are *Confidential*, *Sensitive*, *Secret*, and *Most Secret*. Confidential clearance costs no points, and is effectively held by everyone in the appropriate military branch or Imperial ministry. Higher levels of clearance require the Security Clearance advantage, which costs 5 points per level for Imperial personnel.

For more details on the Imperial classification system, see p. T:GF64-66.

**Status** *see p. B21*

The basic Status table for *GURPS Traveller* is given on p. GT83. A number of *GURPS Traveller* supplements give more details of how the Status advantage works in the Third Imperium. The new table summarizes and adds to these details, and is an official Status table for the Third Imperium.

**EXTENDED STATUS TABLE**

Level	Status Notes
8	Ruling Emperor of the Third Imperium
7	Imperial Consort, Grand Prince, or Archduke
6	Prince, Duke Ruler over PR 9-10 (Billions of people)
5	Count Ruler over PR 8 (Hundreds of millions of people)
4	Marquis, Viscount Ruler over PR 7 (Tens of millions of people) Leading Imperial bureaucrat at the sector level Leading corporate manager at the sector level
3	Baron Fabulously wealthy citizen (Two or more levels of Multimillionaire, see p. C127) Ruler over PR 6 (Millions of people) High-level general or flag officer (Military Rank 8) Leading Imperial bureaucrat at the subsector level Leading corporate manager at the subsector level
2	Baronet, Knight Extremely wealthy citizen (One level of Multimillionaire, see p. C127) Ruler over PR 5 (Hundreds of thousands of people) Senior military officer (Military Rank 5-7) Leading Imperial bureaucrat at the single-world level Leading corporate manager at the single-world level
1	Wealthy citizen (Wealthy, Very Wealthy, or Filthy Rich) Valued professional (Doctors, attorneys, academics, gaming industry writers) Senior NCO or junior commissioned officer (Military Rank 2-4) Owner of a starship
0	Ordinary citizen (Struggling, Average, or Comfortable) Ordinary enlisted man (Military Rank 0-1)
-1	Lower-class citizen (Very Poor or Poor)
-2	Beggar or outcast (Dead Broke)

*Rulers* are people in positions of absolute political authority – planetary kings, dictators of nation-states, and so on. Their relative Status depends on the population of the world or region they rule. Elected or appointed rulers – planetary Presidents, prime ministers, consuls, and so on – also receive Status from their position, but as their power is limited and they do not hold their positions for life, they receive one less level of Status. Note that the ruler of an Imperial world, whether absolute or elected, is very likely to hold some title within the Imperial aristocracy. This title is not likely to grant the same level of Status as his position at home, but it does serve to place him in the Imperial order of precedence.

*Leading Imperial bureaucrats* are the highest-ranking officials from each of the Imperial ministries at the given level. Their staff and subordinates have lower Status, depending on the actual level of power and responsibility. Leading Imperial bureaucrats associated with single worlds may hold higher or lower Status than indicated here, depending on the size and importance of the world. For example, the Port Director of an Imperial starport on an average world usually has about as much status as a knight – and may *be* a knight. On a high-population world with tremendous trade volume, the Port Director may be the equivalent of a baron, while the Port Director of a backwater Class II port only has the status of a “valued professional.”

*Leading corporate managers* are the highest-ranking managers for their corporations at the given level. Corporate managers at the sector level are almost certainly associated with megacorporations. Subsector managers may be associated with megacorporations or regional corporations. Again, the actual Status held by a corporate leader at the single-world level can vary depending on the size and economic influence of the world.

*Wealthy citizens* get free Status (see p. B18 and p. CI27). They may buy more Status normally. Many people who are expected to have high Status for other reasons (Imperial peers, corporate officials, world rulers, and so on) are likely to be very wealthy, gaining some of their Status for free.

In general, the spouse, and children, and designated heir of an Imperial peer have Status one level below that of the peer, if they do not already have higher Status from some other source, such as their own titles (see *Courtesy Titles*, p. 29). Other children and immediate family members should have Status two levels below that of the peer. The GM may apply this rule (with caution) to other Imperial citizens, although in general it should not reduce anyone’s Status below 0.

In a *GURPS Traveller* campaign centering on noble characters, the GM may wish to strictly enforce the costs of living given in the basic Status table on p. GT83. An “impoverished” noble who misses more than one or two cost-of-living payments should retain his Status, but acquire a negative Reputation (“Fails to keep up appearances,” to all Imperial nobles, all the time). The Reputation penalty should be -2 for every level of Status that is not being supported by cost-of-living payments, for a total cost of -5 points per level of

unsupported Status. Nobles who fail to live up to their social position soon earn the contempt of their peers!

Note that the *GURPS* Status advantage does *not* simply represent precedence in Imperial society. It represents precedence *along with* many less tangible indicators of power, prestige, and deference. For example, the planetary King of Langelos in the Solomani Rim sector is the absolute ruler of a world with a population in the billions, and has Status 6 as a result. However, he holds only the title of baron in the Imperial aristocracy. When he attends a ball held by the Duchess of Dingir (who also holds Status 6), he takes a place in the receiving line along with all the other barons, in the normal order of precedence (p. 30). However, later in the festivities the Duchess is likely to make the time to talk with him *as a near equal* about matters of mutual interest . . .

## NEW ADVANTAGE

The following advantage (originally from *GURPS Steampunk*) is appropriate for the Third Imperium setting.

### *Independent Income*

*5 points*

You have a source of income that does not require you to work. The source of income is up to you: a trust fund, a pension, rent on land or houses, income from a small Imperial fief – use your imagination! Income per month is 5% of the starting wealth for your wealth level. At the GM’s discretion, you may need to spend 10 hours a month looking after financial matters – doing anything from standing in line at a pension office to reading reports from trustees.

This advantage only applies to those who normally *would* work for a living, i.e., from Poor to Wealthy. If you are Very Wealthy or better you already have it, and the same 5% of starting wealth per month can be used to determine your income.

If your income comes from investments, their exact value need not be specified; it is assumed that you cannot or will not invade your capital.

## DISADVANTAGES

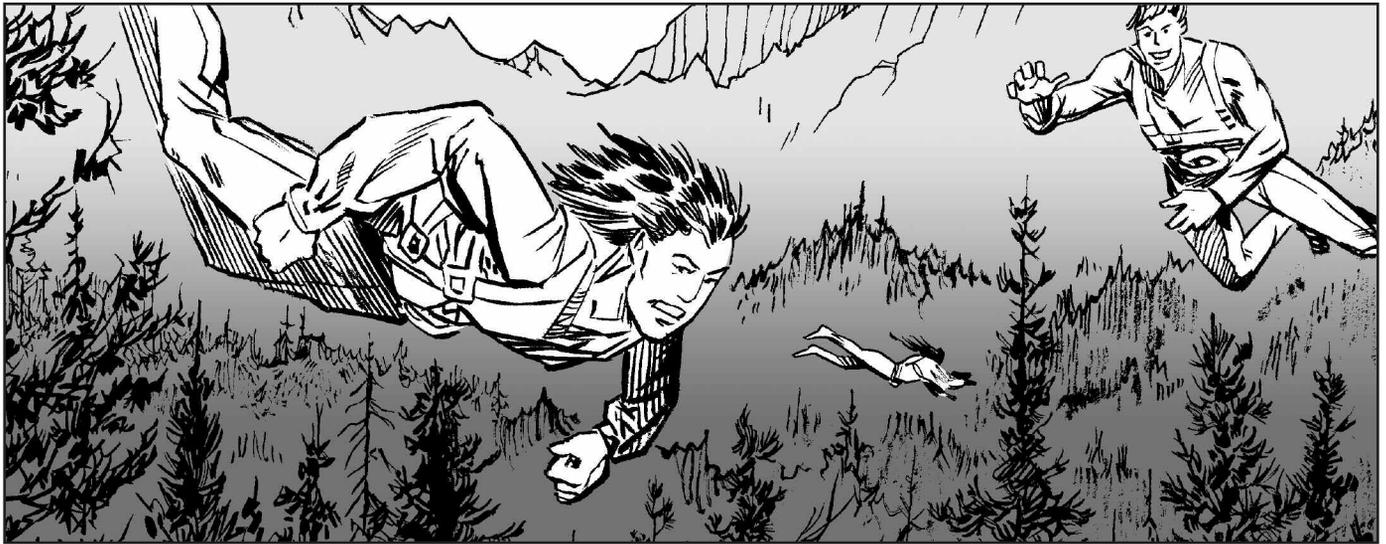
Several disadvantages are appropriate for Imperial nobles, especially those who take their responsibilities seriously.

### *Code of Honor*

*see p. B31*

Many Imperial nobles are taught an unofficial code of behavior, similar to the Gentleman’s Code of Honor on p. B31. This *Imperial Code of Honor* is as follows: Never break your word or your oath of fealty to the Emperor. Never ignore an insult to yourself, to your feudal superiors, or to the Imperium. Expect deference from Imperial citizens of lesser rank, but always work to protect and defend them. Always solve problems yourself, without needing to call on higher authority to help you, but it is acceptable to call on your *subordinates*.

The Imperial Code of Honor is a -10-point disadvantage.



*Duty* *see p. B39*

An Imperial noble with a Duty is usually responsible to his feudal superiors, or to the Imperial agency or service he works for. Honor nobles rarely have these Duties – they received their title as a *reward* for a lifetime of service (p. 13). Many knights and barons do not have the Duty disadvantage either. Unless a noble is in military service, any Duty he holds is probably not hazardous and is therefore worth fewer points.

*Honesty* *see p. B33*

The Imperium has a government of men, not laws. Nobles and Imperial officials are sometimes forced to bend or break the law in order to serve the Imperium more effectively. How often this happens in practice is up to the GM – see *Good vs. Evil Imperium*, p. 136. However, some nobles *do* exhibit an instinctive respect for Imperial and even local laws, and have the Honesty disadvantage.

*Sense of Duty* *see p. B39*

Many nobles have Sense of Duty (Immediate subordinates) for -5 points, or Sense of Duty (The Imperium) for -10 points. This disadvantage is particularly appropriate for nobles who have no formal responsibilities, but who are still closely involved in Imperial dealings.

## SKILLS

Some skills require special treatment in the context of the Imperial aristocracy.

*Intimidation* *see p. B246*

Aristocratic confrontations in a conference room or audience chamber can be extremely intimidating, even if no one's voice is raised and there is no threat of violence. In a high-society situation, the GM may wish to increase the bonus for witty or frightening dialogue, especially if the person issuing the threats is attacking a social or political position the target values greatly. Overt brutality in word or deed may actually backfire, imposing a *penalty* to Intimidation.

*Literature* *see p. B61*

In an aristocratic society, Literature can actually be a *social skill*. Nobles use artistic accomplishment as a measure of who really “belongs” in high society. In particular, a good grasp of literary classics can be a sign of intelligence and refinement. Any noble character may want to invest in Literature skill, to have a ready stock of quotations and literary allusions on hand.

*Philosophy* *see p. B245*

The aristocratic culture of the Third Imperium is based strongly on a common philosophy, which incorporates elements of personal ethics, political theory, and historical myth. Nobles may study Philosophy (Imperial) to give them a solid grounding in this body of thought. As always, adventurers can use this skill to determine the “right” course of action, or to predict the actions of others who are ruled by the same philosophy.

*Politics* *see p. B64*

Imperial nobles do not “run for office” in the sense that they campaign for democratic election. They still pursue specific goals of their own, which involve persuading other people and exchanging political favors. The Politics skill can be applied to political maneuvering within the aristocratic community. A noble might use the Politics skill to win favors from his peers, campaign to be placed in a specific office, weigh the political impact of a decision, or determine the arrangement of political factions within a group of other nobles.

*Writing* *see p. B48*

Imperial nobles often have occasion to deliver speeches on public occasions. If the speech is carefully prepared in advance, it can be more effective than a speech given extemporaneously. The GM may permit a noble to make a roll against Writing to compose a good speech for himself or someone else to deliver. A success on the Writing roll may grant a small bonus to the Bard or Leadership roll to deliver the speech.

# CHARACTER TEMPLATES

The following character templates are appropriate for various classes of noble and for various kinds of people with whom nobles are likely to interact. Nobles can also be built using any of the templates on pp. GT87-105 or in other *GURPS Traveller* supplements – just add Status and useful social advantages to taste.

## Using the Templates

The templates here are divided into three groups.

The first seven templates (Noble Academic, Noble Bureaucrat, Noble Dilettante, Noble Diplomat, Noble Merchant, Noble Naval Officer, and Noble Rogue) represent the basic accomplishments of an Imperial noble from one of the “careers” most often associated with the aristocracy (see *Noble Career Paths*, p. 74). The next four templates (Knight, Impoverished Baronet/Minor Peer, Wealthy Baronet/Minor Peer, and High Noble) are *lenses*, representing the position the noble currently holds in Imperial society regardless of the career path he chose to arrive there. To design a typical Imperial noble using the templates in this chapter, choose one of the seven basic templates *and* one of the four lenses, then customize to taste.

Finally, there are 11 templates (Loyal Retainer, Bodyguard, Seneschal, Ministry of Justice Special Agent, Court Legate, Imperial Court Judge, Moot Page, Imperial Palace Page, Imperial Palace Footman, Calendar Compliance Officer, and World Ruler) covering people with whom Imperial nobles frequently interact. These may be useful for NPCs, or for PC adventurers who are often in the company of aristocrats.

## NOBLE ACADEMIC 65 POINTS

Although you were born to privilege (or you were raised to it later in life), you are primarily driven by the pursuit of knowledge. You may be a researcher at the cutting edge of Imperial science, or you may be a wandering dilettante. In either case you are committed to the next piece of data, the next crucial discovery. Whatever wealth or influence you have is also devoted to this quest.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points selected from Alertness [5/level]; Collected [5]; Higher Purpose [5]; Imperturbable [10]; Intuition [15]; Language Talent [2/level]; Lightning Calculator [5]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Reputation (Famous academician) [Varies]; Single-Minded [5]; Strong Will [4/level]; Tenure [5]; and Versatile [10].

**Disadvantages:** Curious [-5]; and a total of -15 points selected from Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Sight [-10], Clueless [-10], Code of Honor (Imperial, see p. 120) [-10], a higher level of Curious [-5 to -10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Delusions (Crackpot theories) [-5], Hard of Hearing [-10], Intolerance (Uneducated people) [-10], Jealousy [-10], Low Empathy [-15], Obsession (Personal

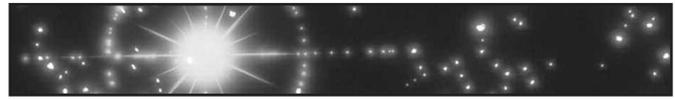
projects) [-5 to -15], Shyness [-5/-10/-15], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Research (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-15; and one of Anthropology, Archaeology, Artificial Intelligence, Astronomy, Botany, Chemistry, Computer Programming, Cryptology, Ecology, Economics, Geology, History, Law, Literature, Mathematics, Paleontology, Philosophy, Physician, Physics, Psychology, Theology, or Zoology, all (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-16; or Biochemistry, Genetics, Hyperspace Physics, Linguistics, Nuclear Physics, Paraphysics, Physiology, or Psionics, all (M/VH) IQ [8]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Computer Operation (M/E) IQ [1]-14; Electronics Operation (any) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13; and Writing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13.

**Background Skills:** Any two of Administration (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-12; Electronics (any) (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-11; Language (any) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-12; Leadership (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-12; Mechanic (any) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-12; or Teaching (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-12; and a total of 4 additional points in any primary or secondary skills.

**Customization Notes:** Although many academics are strongly specialized, most have professional-level knowledge in two or more of the primary skills listed; use the extra background skill points to choose a secondary field of study. Some of the advanced fields of study listed (especially the M/VH scientific skills) have prerequisites; if one of those skills is selected, make sure the prerequisites are also met.



## NOBLE BUREAUCRAT 60 POINTS

You have spent much of your life in government service, working either for your homeworld or directly for the Imperium. No matter how much wealth or status you may have inherited, you have never shirked in your duty to keep the machinery of government well oiled.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points selected from Administrative Rank [5/level]; Common Sense [10]; Imperturbable [10] or Unfazeable [15]; Intuition [15]; Security Clearance 1-3 [5/level]; Single-Minded [5]; and Strong Will [4/level].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points selected from Bully [-10]; Code of Honor (Imperial, see p. 120) [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Incurious [-5] or Obdurate [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (“Officious,” “Pedantic,” or similar) [-5 to -15]; Overweight [-5]; Secret (Dishonest) [-10]; Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Unfit [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15; Research (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15; and Writing (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Computer Operation (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Leadership (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Politics (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Speed-Reading (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

**Background Skills:** Pick a total of 9 points in Typing (P/E); Bard, Criminology, Fast-Talk, Interrogation, Intimidation, Merchant, or Teaching, all (M/A); or Accounting, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Economics, Law, or Psychology, all (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** Use the background skills to reflect your region of administrative expertise. For example, a Ministry of Commerce bureaucrat should have Accounting, Merchant, and Economics, while a Ministry of Justice clerk should have Criminology and Law.

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*There are some who think the Imperial Navy is the best possible career choice for the socially minded. They are wrong. It is the **only** choice if you're looking for social advancement.*

*– Admiral Leah Havasu Novatna*

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## NOBLE DILETTANTE 65 POINTS

For most of your life, your career has been not having a career. Whether you inherited great wealth or you are just scraping by, you have education and taste and your primary goal in life is to enjoy them. Stuffy duty-bound aristocrats look down on you, and respectable commoners think of you as scandalous, but such criticism means little to you in your quest for beauty and pleasure.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 25 points selected from Alcohol Tolerance [5]; Appearance [5 to 15]; Claim to Hospitality (Allied noble families or wealthy people) [5 to 10]; Fashion Sense [5]; Language Talent [2/level]; Light Hangover or No Hangover [2 or 5]; Luck [15]; Musical Ability [1/level]; Reputation (Celebrity) [Varies]; Sensitive or Empathy [5 or 15]; Versatile [5]; and Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points selected from Addiction [Varies]; Alcoholism [-15]; Chummy [-5]; Compulsive Carousing [-5 or -10]; Compulsive Gambling [5 to -15]; Compulsive Spending [-5 to -15]; Extravagance [-10]; Greed [-15]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Incompetence (Administration) [-1]; Intolerance (Poor people or commoners) [-5]; Jealousy [-10]; Laziness [-10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Low Pain Threshold [-10]; Manic-Depressive [-20]; Overconfidence [-10]; Pacifism [-15]; Selfish or Self-Centered [-5 or -10]; Short Attention Span [-10]; or Xenophilia [-5 or -15].

**Primary Skills:** Appreciate Beauty (M/VH) IQ [8]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** Carousing (P/A(HT)) HT+1 [4]-11; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and Intimidation (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 6 points in Beam Weapons (any) or Guns (any), both (P/E); Calligraphy, Dancing, Driving (any), Fencing, Piloting (any), Riding (any), or Sports (any), all (P/A); Chess, Games (any), or Musical Notation, all (M/E); Singing (M/E (HT)); Architecture, Bard, Falconry, Gambling, Poetry, or Writing, all (M/A); Sex Appeal (M/A; HT); or Artist, History, Literature, or Musical Instrument (any), all (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** A noble dilettante may have a few useful skills, but he is unlikely to develop them to high levels. He may very well take a nearly useless skill and develop it to a very high level out of sheer personal interest.

## NOBLE DIPLOMAT 70 POINTS

You are an Imperial aristocrat who has served in a diplomatic role. Perhaps you served in one of the branches of the Imperial Diplomatic Corps (p. 65). You may have represented your homeworld to its neighbors or to the Imperium. Or you may simply have spent years working as a “one-man fire brigade,” traveling about the Imperium and helping to smooth out local disputes. In any case, you have much experience in negotiations, and hope to continue putting that experience to good use.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 30 points selected from Acute Hearing [2/level]; Administrative Rank [5/level]; Alertness [5/level]; Alternate Identity [15]; Appearance [5 to 25]; Charisma [5/level]; Cultural Adaptability [25]; Diplomatic Immunity [20]; Fashion Sense [5]; Language Talent [2/level]; Sanctity [5]; Security Clearance 1-3 [5/level]; and Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points selected from Code of Honor (Imperial, see p. 120) [-10]; Enemy (Rival or representative of a hostile power) [Varies]; Fanaticism (Imperial patriot) [-15]; Overconfidence or Glory Hound [-10 or -15]; Secret (Spy) [-20]; and Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10]; Unfit [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Bard (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14; and Language (any) (M/A) IQ [2]-13 or (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** Politics (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Research (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Writing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and a total of 6 points in Acting or Fast-Talk, both (M/A); Detect Lies, Economics, History, Intelligence Analysis, Law, or Psychology, all (M/H).

**Background Skills:** A total of 7 points in Beam Weapons (any) or Guns (any), both (P/E); Fencing (P/A); Carousing (P/A (HT)); Chess (M/E); or Disguise, Holdout, Lip Reading, or Photography, all (M/A).

**Customization Notes:** Choose character traits to fit a diplomatic archetype: Detect Lies, Economics, and Psychology for a trade negotiator; Alternate Identity, Fast-Talk, and Intelligence Analysis for a spymaster; Fencing, History, and Law for a traditional diplomat.

## NOBLE MERCHANT

### 90 POINTS

You are from a long-established mercantile family, or you earned your noble rank through success in commerce. Today you remain a merchant prince, trading goods across interstellar distances. Your colleagues in the bureaucracy and military may look down on you, but you are confident in your role as one of those who keep the Imperium prosperous and strong.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 30 points selected from 3D Spatial Sense [10]; Charisma [5/level]; Common Sense [10]; Contacts (Business; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3 per contact]; Cultural Adaptability [25]; Imperturbable [10]; Intuition [15]; Language Talent [2/level]; Lightning Calculator [5]; Luck [15]; Merchant Rank [Varies]; Reputation (any) [Varies]; Sensitive or Empathy [5 or 15]; Ship Owner or Ship Patron [Varies]; and Strong Will [4/level].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points selected from Code of Honor (Imperial, see p. 120) [-10]; Compulsive Gambling [-5]; Compulsive Generosity [-5]; Compulsive Spending [-5]; Enemy (Rival or legal official, 6 or less) [-5]; Extravagance [-10]; Greed [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Miserliness [-10]; Overweight [-5] or Fat [-20]; Selfish [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Leadership (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Merchant (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15; and one of the following two options:

**Merchant Administrator:** Accounting (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Economics (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Finance (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Market Analysis (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14.

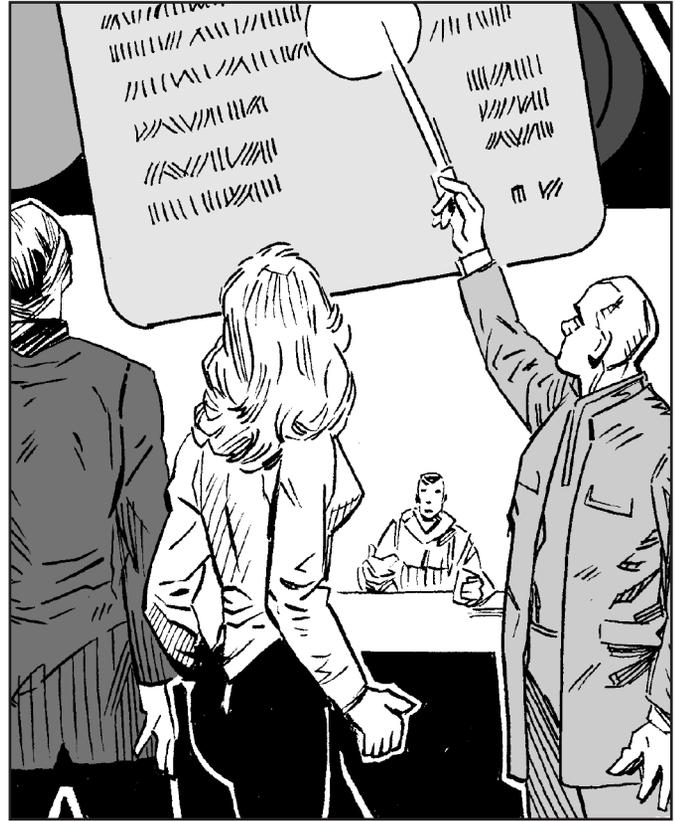
**Merchant Starship Commander:** Astrogation (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Freight Handling (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Piloting (Starships) (P/A) DX+2 [8]-12; Shipbuilding (Starships) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Shiphandling (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Shipmaster (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and Tactics (Space) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11.

**Secondary Skills:** Computer Operation (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and Law (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 12 points in Beam Weapons (any), Brawling, Fast-Draw (Pistol), or Guns (any), all (P/E); Free Fall (P/A); Carousing (P/A) (HT); Gambling, Holdout, Intimidation, Language (any), Streetwise, or Vacc Suit, all (M/A); Detect Lies or Forgery, both (M/H); Appreciate Beauty (M/VH); or any primary or secondary skill.

**Customization Notes:** Many high-level merchants have experience in both starship command and planet-based administration, so it is appropriate to spend background skill points in the primary skill option not chosen. Choose background skills to reflect the size of the operation you spent

your time running. A planet-bound chief executive can take Appreciate Beauty-13 [8] and put the rest of his points into administrative skills. The noble owner of a frontier merchant line can have Beam Weapons (Lasers)-14 [4] (with an extra +2 for IQ), Carousing-10 [2], Free Fall-11 [4], Streetwise-12 [1], and Vacc Suit-12 [1].



## NOBLE NAVAL OFFICER

### 100 POINTS

You have followed one of the oldest traditions of the Third Imperium – from the upper ranks of civilian society, you have entered the Imperial Navy and risen to command. Today you have retired from the Senior Service, although you continue to serve the Imperium in new ways. Your political influence may be considerable, especially given your ability to call on old friends and shipmates.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 11 [10].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points selected from 3D Spatial Sense [10]; Acceleration Tolerance [10]; Charisma [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contacts (Military; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/contact]; Courtesy Rank 3+ [1/level]; Danger Sense [15]; G-Experience [10]; Improved G-Tolerance [10]; Reputation (Decorated) [Varies]; Strong Will [4/level]; and Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points selected from Callous [-6]; Chummy [-5]; Code of Honor (Imperial) [-10]; Duty (Reactivation, 6 or less) [-2] or (9 or less) [-5]; Fanaticism (Imperial patriot) [-10]; Honesty [-10]; Intolerance (Enemy race or culture) [-5]; Jealousy [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (“By the book,” “Martinet,” and so on) [-5]; Overconfidence [-10] or Glory Hound [-15];

Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; and Workaholic [5].

**Primary Skills:** Astrogation (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Leadership (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Piloting (Starships) (P/A) DX+2 [8]-14; Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Shiphandling (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Shipmaster (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and Tactics (Space) (M/H) IQ [4]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-12; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Free Fall (P/A) DX [2]-12; Vacc Suit (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and either Beam Weapons (any) or Guns (any), both (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-13\*.

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

**Background Skills:** A total of 9 points in Astronomy, Engineer (Vehicles), Intelligence Analysis, SIGINT Collection/Jamming, Strategy (Space), or Traffic Analysis, all (M/H); Parachuting (P/E); Gunner (any ship-mounted) (P/A); or Armoury (any), Aviation, Cartography, Heraldry (Ship's Markings), Mechanic (J-Drive), Mechanic (M-Drive), Mechanic (Power Plant), Navigation, Planology (any), Shipbuilding (Starship), or Survival (any), all (M/A).

**Customization Notes:** The template assumes that the naval officer has made his way into the Line Branch, the elite corps of deck officers who command Imperial Navy starships. However, many officers reach the Line Branch through service in one of the other branches, so choose background skills to reflect the details of your former career. A former fighter pilot may select Aviation, Parachuting, and Survival, while a former ship's engineer may choose Engineer and Mechanic specializations.

## NOBLE ROGUE 100 POINTS

When the common Imperial citizen talks about the "bad" aristocracy, *you* are who he's talking about. You inherited great privileges – or lied and cheated your way into them – but you serve only yourself and not the Imperium. Your corruption and crimes are on a grand scale, making use of the influence and resources that come with your social position. Of course, you may be a criminal hero with a heart of gold, but if you help people it's still going to be on your terms. In the meantime, you'll need to watch out for local law enforcement – and hope the Ministry of Justice doesn't take enough interest in your activities to pursue you across the stars.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 11 [10].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points selected from Alcohol Tolerance [5]; Alertness [5/level]; Alternate Identity [15]; Appearance [Varies]; Charisma [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contacts (Street; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3 per contact]; Danger Sense [15]; Daredevil [15]; Luck [15]; Night Vision [10]; Sanctity [5]; Versatile [5]; and Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points selected from Callous [-6]; Code of Honor (Merchant's or Pirate's) [-5]; Compulsive Gambling [5 to -15]; Compulsive Lying [-15];

Enemy (Local law-enforcement agency, 6 or less) [-15] or (Imperial Ministry of Justice, 6 or less) [-20]; Extravagance [-10]; Greed [-15]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Kleptomania [-15]; Laziness [-10]; Light Sleeper [-5]; Loner [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Paranoia [-10]; Reputation (Criminal) [Varies]; Secret [-5 to -20]; Selfish or Self-Centered [-5 or -10]; Trademark [-1 to -15]; and Trickster [-15].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Streetwise (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; and one of the following options:

**Cat Burglar:** Appreciate Beauty (M/VH) IQ-1 [4]-12; Climbing (P/A) DX [2]-12; Electronics Operation (Security Systems) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Holdout (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Lockpicking (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Stealth (P/A) DX+1 [4]-13; and Traps (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

**Computer Criminal:** Computer Hacking (M/VH) IQ [8]-13; Computer Programming (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Cryptanalysis (M/H) IQ [2]-12; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Finance (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and Mathematics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

**Confidence Man:** Acting (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Bard (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Disguise (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15; Forgery (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Sex Appeal (M/A; HT) HT [2]-11; and Stealth (P/A) DX+1 [4]-13.

**Corporate Raider:** Accounting (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Administration (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Finance (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14; Intimidation (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Law (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and Merchant (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14.

**Organized Crime Boss:** Administration (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Bard (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Brawling (P/E) DX+1 [4]-13; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Intimidation (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Leadership (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; and Merchant (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

**Smuggler:** Accounting (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Administration (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Freight Handling (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Holdout (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15; and Merchant (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** Beam Weapons (any) or Guns (any), both (P/E) DX+4 [4]-16\*; Carousing (P/A; HT) HT [2]-11; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ [1]-13; and Gambling (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

**Background Skills:** A total of 6 points in Fast-Draw (any) or Knife, both (P/E); or Escape, Pickpocket, or Sleight of Hand, all (P/H); Mimicry (Human Speech) (P/H (HT)); Gesture (M/E); Courtesan, Research, Shadowing, or Survival (Urban), all (M/A); Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Poisons, or Psychology, all (M/H); or any primary or secondary skill.

**Customization Notes:** This template resembles the Rogue template on p. GT98, but is oriented more toward the criminal possibilities of high social status. Add background skills to support the kind of crimes that the rogue is likely to commit. Influence skills and skills facilitating non-detection are most important.

## KNIGHT

**30 POINTS**

The Emperor or one of the archdukes has granted you minor status in the aristocracy, almost certainly because of achievements in your primary career. The accolade grants you greater status in Imperial society, but is unlikely to bring you more wealth or power.

**Advantages:** Status 2 [10]; plus 10 points selected from Ally (Assistant or bodyguard; 100-point character, 9 or less) [5]; Ally Group (Old colleagues; 9 or less) [10]; Contacts (Any; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3 per contact]; Heir [5]; Independent Income [5]; Patron (Personal ally; powerful individual, 9 or less) [10]; Reputation (any) [Varies]; and Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -10 points selected from Enemy (Rival; 6 or less) [-5]; Secret (any) [-5 or -10]; and Wealth (Struggling) [-10].

**Primary Skills:** Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+3 [2]\*.

\* Based on a default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Secondary & Background Skills:** A total of 18 points in the primary, secondary, and background skills of the base template.

**Customization Notes:** This lens is probably not appropriate for the Noble Rogue base template . . . although there are plenty of characters in fact and fiction who swindled their way into the upper crust of society. It easily fits any of the other base templates. Use skill points to boost some professional skills to master level, to explain why you were granted a knighthood in the first place. Remember that you cannot take Wealth as both an advantage and a disadvantage.

## IMPOVERISHED

### BARONET/MINOR PEER

**20 POINTS**

You are a “poor” member of the lower ranks of the aristocracy, with a prestigious lineage but little or no ready cash. You may have no significant family and be the last of your line, you may have fallen out of favor with your family, or your income may simply be unable to support you. Your family may help arrange connections and otherwise smooth the way, but they are unable or unwilling to give you financial aid. You must fend for yourself in some profession, hoping to replenish your family’s wealth and standing.

**Advantages:** Status 2 [10]; and a total of 20 points in Ally (Loyal retainer; 100-point character, 9 or less) [5] or (12 or less) [10]; Ally Group (Old colleagues; 9 or less) [10]; Contacts (Any; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3 per contact]; Heir [5]; Independent Income [5]; Patron (Family ally; 9 or less) [10]; Reputation (any) [Varies]; and up to two more levels of Status [5/level].

**Disadvantages:** Wealth (Struggling) [-10] or (Poor) [-15]; and -5 or -10 points (for a total of -20 points) selected from Disowned [-5]; Duty (Family) [-5 or -10]; Enemy (Rival; 6 or less) [-5]; Obsession (Regain personal or family wealth) [-5 or -10]; Reputation (Actions that caused his family to lose its wealth or disown the noble,

or “fails to keep up appearances,” see p. 34) [Varies]; Secret (any) [-5 or -10]; and Sense of Duty (Family) [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+3 [2]\*.

\* Based on a default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Secondary & Background Skills:** A total of 8 points in the primary, secondary, and background skills of the base template.

**Customization Notes:** This lens fits well with any of the base noble templates. Choose advantages and disadvantages to fit the reasons why the noble is impoverished. A noble whose family was already poor when he was born might take Patron and Sense of Duty (Family), while a noble who was personally responsible for his family’s loss of security might take the Obsession and a bad Reputation.



## WEALTHY

### BARONET/MINOR PEER

**60 POINTS**

You are a wealthy member of the lower aristocracy, with plenty of independent resources – a stipend from family investments, income from a fief, and so on. You may or may not have serious responsibilities – you could be a carefree “indolent” noble, a hard-working megacorporate executive, a hard-bitten but retired Imperial Navy officer, or anything in between. You can easily arrange to go on random adventures and you have the resources to assist your companions too.

**Advantages:** Status 2 [10]\*; Wealth (Comfortable) [10]; and a total of 40 points in Ally (Bodyguard or loyal retainer; 100-point character, 9 or less) [5] or (12 or less) [10]; Ally Group (A dozen retainers or old colleagues; 9 or less) [10] or (12 or less) [20]; Contacts (Any; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3 per contact]; Heir [5];

Independent Income [5]; Patron (any) [Varies]; Reputation (any) [Varies]; up to two more levels of Status [5/level]\*; and Wealth (Wealthy) [20], (Very Wealthy) [30], or (Filthy Rich) [50].

\* Purchasing additional levels of Wealth may grant free levels of Status, changing these point values.

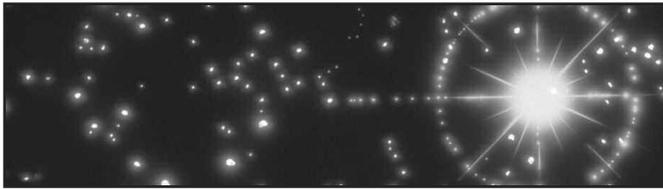
**Disadvantages:** A total of -10 points chosen from Enemy (Rival; 6 or less) [-5]; Reputation (any) [Varies]; and Secret (any) [-5 or -10].

**Primary Skills:** Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+3 [2]\*.

\* Based on a default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Secondary & Background Skills:** A total of 8 points in the primary, secondary, and background skills of the base template.

**Customization Notes:** This lens fits well with any of the base noble templates. Choose advantages to give the noble greater influence and more resources. Remember that Independent Income is useless if you have Very Wealthy or better.



## HIGH NOBLE 135 POINTS

You are a noble who can wield the Imperial Mandate, making you the Emperor's direct representative in some part of the Imperium (p. 58). You spend most of your time on the business of Imperial government, and have little time for personal adventures. Still, on those rare occasions when you can take a direct hand in events, you can call on truly awesome resources.

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 5 [25]; Status 3 [15]\*; Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50]; and a total of 50 points in more Administrative Rank [5/level]; Ally (Bodyguard or loyal retainer; 150-point character, 9 or less) [10] or (12 or less) [20]; Ally Group (Retainers or old colleagues; 100-point characters, 9 or less) [20] or (12 or less) [40]; Contacts (Any; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3 per contact]; Military Rank 4+ [5/level]; Multimillionaire 1 [25] or Multimillionaire 2 [50]; Reputation (any) [Varies]; up to four more levels of Status [5/level]\*.

\* Purchasing additional levels of Wealth may grant free levels of Status, changing these point values.

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points chosen from Duty (The Imperium) [-2 to -15]; Enemy (Rival; 6 or less) [-5] or (Rival political faction; 6 or less) [-10]; Reputation (any) [Varies]; Secret (any) [-5 to -20]; and Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10].

**Primary Skills:** Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+3 [2]\*.

\* Based on a default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Secondary & Background Skills:** A total of 18 points in the primary, secondary, and background skills of the base template.

**Customization Notes:** This lens fits well with most of the base noble templates, although there are probably not very many Noble Rogues (p. 125) at this level of power and responsibility. Remember to choose advantages to give the noble greater influence and more resources.

## LOYAL RETAINER/SERVANT 40 POINTS

Every noble household, except possibly the *very* poorest, needs retainers and servants. You are one of the household staff, living with the noble, performing tasks that are too menial for the aristocrat to undertake, but are too complex to be handled by automation. Although you live close to privilege, you have little of your own – but you still take pride in keeping the noble's home an efficient machine.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 15 points selected from Acute Taste and Smell [2/level]; Alertness [5/level]; Ally (Senior staff member; 100-point character, 9 or less) [5] or (12 or less) [10]; Composed [5]; Less Sleep [3/level]; Patron (Noble employer; powerful individual, 9 or less) [10]; Unfazeable [15]; and Versatile [5].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (Noble employer, non-hazardous, 12 or less) [-5]; and -10 points selected from Laziness [-10]; Poverty (Struggling) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Noble and family) [-5]; Shyness [-5/-10/-15]; Truthfulness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Savoir-Faire (Servant) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-14; and any one of the following specializations:

**Butler:** Administration (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Bartender (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Merchant (M/A) IQ [2]-12; and increase Savoir-Faire (Servant) to IQ+3 [6]-15.

**Chauffeur:** Driving (any) or Piloting (any), both (P/A) DX+1 [4]-11; and Mechanic (any) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

**Cook:** Beverage Making (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-14; and Cooking (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-14.

**Maid:** Professional Skill: Housekeeping (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-13; and Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-10.

**Nurse:** Diagnosis (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Fast Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-12; First Aid (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Professional Skill: Child Care (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Singing (P/E (HT)) HT [1]-10; and Teaching (M/A) IQ [1]-11.

**Secondary Skills:** One of Acting or Fast Talk (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; or Diplomacy (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-13.

**Background Skills:** A total of 7 points chosen from Area Knowledge (any) or Scrounging, both (M/E); Language (any) (M/A); Sex Appeal (M/A (HT)); Riding (any) (P/A); Carousing (P/A (HT)); or primary skills from any other specialization.

**Customization Notes:** A cinematic butler should be built on substantially more points, with at least IQ 12 and a wider variety of skills. Some nobles may have retainers that are active or former low-ranking members of the military; use the appropriate Army, Navy or Marine template, then add elements from this template. The head servant in a very prestigious household may have Status 1 [5].

## BODYGUARD 75 POINTS

Aristocrats often have enemies, and even those who have none must be mindful of the occasional criminal or madman. You are the specialist on the noble's household staff – the man or woman who accompanies him in public and ensures that he comes to no harm. You are well paid for your services, and you enjoy extra prestige within the household. You still know that you may be forced to pay the ultimate price in exchange, stepping between your principle and a bullet or beam.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** One of Alertness +3 [15], Combat Reflexes [15], or Danger Sense [15].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (Employer) [-5 to -15]; and -5 to -15 points (for a total of -20 points) selected from Callous [-6]; Code of Honor (Professional ethics) [-5]; Edgy [-5]; Light Sleeper [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Selfless [-10]; or Sense of Duty (Client) [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Body Language (M/H) IQ [4]-12; Intimidation (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Shadowing (M/A) IQ [2]-12; *one* of Brawling (P/E) DX+2 [4]-14, Boxing (P/A) DX+1 [4]-13, Judo (M/H) DX [4]-12, or Karate (M/H) DX [4]-12; and an additional 8 points in appropriate Combat/Weapon skills.

**Secondary Skills:** Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [2]-11; Tactics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; *either* Criminology or Streetwise (both M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; *either* Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10 or Interrogation (M/A) [1]-11; and *one* of Poisons (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11, Holdout (M/A) IQ [2]-12, or Traps (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

**Background Skills:** *Either* Armoury (any) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11 or Electronics Operation (Weapons) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; and Savoir-Faire (any) (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11.

**Customization Notes:** The choice of combat and weapon skills is dependent on the social situation of the bodyguard's principal. In societies where the blatant display of weapons is discouraged, small and easily concealed weapons are more appropriate. Lawless worlds call for a less subtle approach. Bodyguards often double as personal assistants, so a few points in skills like Administration, Driving, or Piloting are appropriate. Remember to take Fast-Draw for weapons that have the option, and that any Beam Weapons, Gunner, and Guns skills receive a +2 from IQ 12.

## SENESCHAL 90 POINTS

You are a combination chief of staff, public relations officer, personal assistant, and “deputy noble.” Your aristocratic principal has heavy governmental duties, and it's your job to make those duties manageable. When your employer is out of contact or incapacitated, you may even be required to rule in his stead. Your position is very prestigious – indeed, you may hold a lesser position of your own in the aristocracy.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 40 points selected from Administrative

Rank [5/level]; Ally (Assistant; 100-point character, 9 or less) [10] or (12 or less) [20]; Ally Group (Subordinate staff members; 9 or less) [10] or (12 or less) [20]; Appearance [5 to 25]; Charisma [5/level]; Fashion Sense [5]; Intuition [15]; Patron (Noble employer; powerful individual, 9 or less) [10] or (extremely powerful individual, 9 or less) [15]; Reputation [Varies]; Status [5/level]; Unfazeable [10]; Voice [10]; Wealth [10 to 30].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (Noble employer; non-hazardous, 15 or less) [-10]; plus -20 points selected from Bully [-10]; Callous [-6]; Code of Honor (Professional ethics) [-5] or (Imperial) [-10]; Enemy (Personal rival; 9 or less) [-10]; Extravagance [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Megalomania [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Reputation [Varies]; Sense of Duty (Underlings) [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-15; Detect Lies (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-15.

**Secondary Skills:** Accounting (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Acting (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Leadership (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and any *three* of Economics, History, Intelligence Analysis, Law, Politics, or Psychology, all (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 7 points in any of Boating, Driving (any), Fencing, Piloting (any), or Riding (any), all (P/A); Falconry, Language (any), Merchant, or Streetwise, all (M/A); or Artist, Tactics (Space), or Strategy (Space), all (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** Nobles at all levels of the hierarchy employ seneschals when they have significant corporate or government duties to perform. As a general rule of thumb, a seneschal has Status up to 2 levels below that of their employer; an Imperial knight employs a Status 0 seneschal, while an archduke's seneschal may well be an Imperial count in his own right. A seneschal who heads a high noble's professional staff has some level of Administrative Rank, usually one or two levels less than the Status of his employer. Very skilled seneschals are in high demand – consider adding more points to the primary and secondary skills.

## MINISTRY OF JUSTICE SPECIAL AGENT 85 POINTS

You are an agent of the Ministry of Justice, with authority to pursue criminals anywhere they may flee, within the Imperium and beyond. You have authority to investigate and apprehend members of the aristocracy for high crimes. Many an erring noble has had reason to be concerned when you arrived on the scene. You have made many enemies among the aristocracy – but you regard the existence of such foes as high praise, as you revel in your role as the final custodian of Imperial honor.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 2 [10]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; and an additional 20 points selected from Alertness [5/level]; Charisma [5/level]; Favor [Varies];

Security Clearance 1 to 3 (p. 119) [5/level]; or Strong Will [4/level].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (Imperial Ministry of Justice; 15 or less) [-15]; and an additional -15 points selected from Bad Temper [-10]; Bully [-10]; Cannot Harm Innocents [-10]; Enemy [Varies]; Honesty [-10]; Intolerance (Criminals) [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Criminology (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Forensics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Interrogation (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Judo (P/H) DX-1 [2]-10; Law (Imperial) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10/16; Professional Skill: Law Enforcement (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Writing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and *either* Beam Weapons (Lasers) or Guns (Pistol), both (P/E) DX+4 [4]-14\*.

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

**Secondary Skills:** Acting (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Bard (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Electronics Operation (Security Systems) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Holdout (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Intimidation (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Psychology (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Shadowing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Stealth (P/A) DX+1 [4]-11; and Streetwise (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 7 points in Brawling or Guns (Rifle or Shotgun), both (P/E); or Driving (any) or Piloting (any), both (P/A); Computer Operation or First Aid, both (M/E); Disguise, Language (any), Lockpicking, or Research, all (M/A); or Accounting (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** Ministry of Justice agents who are often assigned to deal with the aristocracy may need higher levels of Social skills than indicated above. Consider more points in Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, and Savoir-Faire.

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*To be a good legate is to walk a tightrope. You must not be pompous or overbearing, yet you need to keep your judge informed of the law, so you cannot be meek or too humble.*

*– Professor Laslo Finemann Ostrov*

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## COURT LEGATE 60 POINTS

You are a legal expert tied to the Imperial court system. Your job is to advise a noble judge on the details of the law, especially in cases where the judge is not himself certified to practice law! A good judge appreciates the work you do to keep the Imperial legal system honest – unfortunately, not all judges are good ones.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points selected from Administrative Rank 1-3 [5/level]; Charisma [5/level]; Security

Clearance 1 to 2 (p. 119) [5/level]; Status 1 [5]; Strong Will [4/level]; and Versatile [5].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points selected from Code of Honor (Professional ethics) [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Secret (Dishonest) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Judicial system) [-5] or (The Imperium) [-10]; Truthfulness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Law (M/H) IQ+3 [10]-16; Research (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; and *either* Bard (M/A) IQ+1 [2]-13 or Fast Talk (M/A) IQ+1 [2]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Teaching (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and Writing (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

**Background Skills:** A total of 3 points in Criminology, Interrogation, Intimidation, or Politics, all (M/A); Accounting, Detect Lies, or Psychology, all (M/H); or more points in any other skills in this template.

**Customization Notes:** Court legates often specialize in Law (Admiralty), Law (Civil), or Law (Criminal), depending on the court they are assigned to (pp. 67-71). Background skills should be selected to fit as well. Legates assigned to a noble judge in a backwater region are less likely to specialize, since their court may function in all three modes.

## IMPERIAL COURT JUDGE 65 POINTS

You are a noble, usually from the lowest ranks of the aristocracy, who is currently serving on the Imperial judiciary (p. 67). Your primary assets are your intelligence and integrity (assuming that you are an *honest* judge). For knowledge of the law, you may lean on a court legate or, if you are very confident in your own research abilities, simply function as a layman.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Status 2 [10]; and a total of 20 points selected from Charisma [5/level]; Common Sense [10]; Intuition [15]; Security Clearance 1-3 [5/level]; more Status [5/level]; and Wealth [10 to 20].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points selected from Code of Honor (Professional ethics) [-5] or (Imperial, see p. 120) [-10]; Delusion (“I know the law better than any lawyer” or “Common sense is more important than knowing the law”) [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Secret (Dishonest) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Those coming before the court) [-5] or (The Imperium) [-10]; Truthfulness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Research (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and *either* Bard (M/A) IQ+1 [2]-13 or Fast Talk (M/A) IQ+1 [2]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and Writing (M/A) IQ [2]-13

**Background Skills:** A total of 10 points in Criminology, Interrogation, Intimidation, or Politics, all (M/A); Accounting, Detect Lies, Law, or Psychology, all (M/H); or additional points in any other skills in this template.

**Customization Notes:** Some judges have little or no knowledge of the law and rely either on their default, a court legate, or both (remember the +4 bonus when dealing with the laws of your home area). A noble that takes his legal duties more seriously uses most of his background skill points on Law – or on some specialization, often relating to the noble’s court duties or business interests. This template is primarily intended for NPC judges; PCs serving on the bench can be designed using any of the base templates and lenses earlier in this chapter.

## MOOT PAGE 35 POINTS

You are one of the young men and women who work in the Imperial Moot or in one of the local noble assemblies found at domain, sector, and subsector capitals all over the Imperium (pp. 72-74). You have no administrative duties as such – your job is to guide visitors and run errands for members of the Moot as needed. You are almost certainly a scion of the aristocracy yourself, attending a finishing school when off duty and serving the Moot as part of your political apprenticeship. You are not likely to suddenly find yourself in an adventure, but you *are* spending hours at a time in the presence of the highest-ranking aristocrats in the Imperium . . .

**Attributes:** ST 9 [-10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Heir [5]; Status 1 [5]; and an additional 20 points selected from Absolute Timing [5]; Appearance [5 or 15]; Charisma [5/level]; Common Sense [10]; Contacts (Any; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/level]; Favor [Varies]; Language Talent [2/level]; more levels of Status [5/level]; Strong Will [4/level]; Voice [10]; and Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (The Imperial Moot; 12 or less, not hazardous) [-5]; Youth (Age 15) [-6], (Age 16) [-4], or (Age 17) [-2]; and -16 to -20 points (for a total of -27 points) selected from Bully [-10]; Compulsive Carousing [-5]; Intolerance (Commoners) [-5]; Jealousy [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Overweight [-5]; Proud [-1]; Responsive [-1]; Shyness [-5 to -15]; Skinny [-5]; Stuttering [-10]; and Weak Will [-8/level].

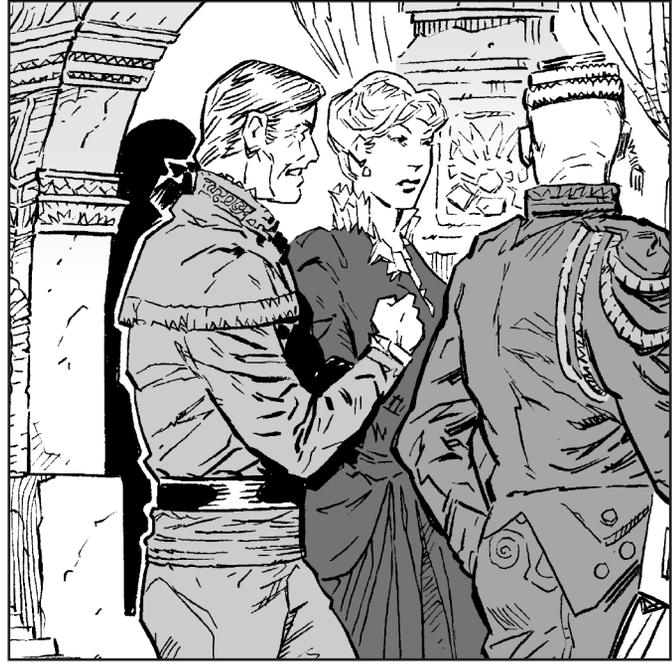
**Primary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Area Knowledge (Moot Spire) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Economics (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Law (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Politics (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Research (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+3 [2]-15\*; and Writing (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10.

\* Based on a default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Secondary Skills:** Accounting (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ-1 [1]-12; Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Leadership (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Merchant (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Psychology (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9; and Scrounging (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11.

**Background Skills:** A total of 5 points in Fencing (P/A); Carousing (P/A (HT)); or Judo or Karate, both (P/H); Games (M/E); Gambling or Language (any), both (M/A); or History or Musical Instrument (any), both (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** Moot pages are almost always students in their off-duty hours, and are old enough to be pursuing some specialized coursework in preparation for their university years. A few extra points in an academic field (or boosting the template skills) are appropriate.



## IMPERIAL PALACE PAGE 65 POINTS

A step up from the kids who do page service in the Moot Spire, you are an Imperial Palace page – or you may serve at one of the high noble courts around the Imperium, many of whom use a similar system of pages and footmen. Again, you are almost certainly a noble’s son or daughter, but in this case a little more is expected of you in the way of tact, quick thinking, and social skills.

**Attributes:** ST 9 [-10]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Heir [5]; Status 1 [5]; and an additional 20 points selected from Absolute Timing [5]; Appearance [5 or 15]; Charisma [5/level]; Common Sense [10]; Contacts (Any; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3 per contact]; Favor [Varies]; Language Talent [2/level]; more levels of Status [5/level]; Strong Will [4/level]; Voice [10]; and Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (The Imperial Palace; 12 or less, non-hazardous) [-5]; Youth (Age 15) [-6], (Age 16) [-4], or (Age 17) [-2]; and -16 to -20 points (for a total of -27 points) selected from Bully [-10]; Compulsive Carousing [-5]; Intolerance (Commoners) [-5]; Jealousy [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Overweight [-5]; Proud [-1]; Responsive [-1]; Shyness [-5/-10/-15]; Skinny [-5]; Stuttering [-10]; and Weak Will [-8/level].

**Primary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Area Knowledge (Imperial Palace) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-13;

Judo (P/H) DX-1 [2]-10; Law (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Politics (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-11; Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+4 [4]-17\*; and Writing (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-11.

\* Based on a default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Secondary Skills:** Accounting (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-10; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ-1 [1]-13; Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-10; Economics (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-10; First Aid (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Leadership (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Merchant (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Psychology (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-10; Research (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-11; and Scrounging (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 6 points in Fencing (P/A); Carousing (P/A (HT)); or Karate (P/H); Games (M/E); Gambling or Language (any), both (M/A); or History or Musical Instrument (any), both (M/H).

**Customization Notes:** Like Moot pages, Imperial Palace pages are almost always students in their off-duty hours, and are old enough to be pursuing some specialized coursework in preparation for their university years. A few extra points in an academic field (or boosting the template skills) are very appropriate.

## IMPERIAL PALACE FOOTMAN (SECURITY) 95 POINTS

You wear the drab uniform of an Imperial Palace footman (p. 44). You spend most of your time carrying messages, serving meals, and generally playing the ideal servant. Most visitors to the Palace never notice you – unless they intend to start trouble, in which case they soon learn that appearances can be deceiving. Even with bare hands you are a formidable foe. You may instead be a footman in a noble's court somewhere else in the Imperium, since many high nobles use a system similar to that of the Imperial Palace.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points selected from Alertness [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Common Sense [10]; Composed or Unfazeable [5 or 15]; Danger Sense [15]; Less Sleep [3/level]; Patron (Senior official; 9 or less) [10]; and Versatile [5].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (The Imperial Palace; 12 or less) [-10]; and a total of -15 points selected from Callous [-6]; Careful [-1]; Code of Honor (Professional ethics) [-5]; Edgy [-5]; Humble or Selfless [-1 or -10]; Light Sleeper [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Sense of Duty (The Imperial household) [-5]; Shyness [-5 to -15]; Truthfulness [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (Imperial Palace) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Bartender (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Body Language (M/H) IQ [4]-12; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Intimidation (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Savoir-Faire (Servant) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Shadowing (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-13; and Judo or Karate, both (P/H) DX+1 [8]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Holdout (M/A) IQ [1]-11; Scrounging (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; and Tactics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

**Background Skills:** A total of 6 points in Beam Weapons (any), Fast-Draw (Pistol), or Guns (any), all (P/E); Fencing (P/A); Criminology, Interrogation, or Politics, all (M/A); Law (M/H); or any primary or secondary skill.

**Customization Notes:** Palace footmen attached to the Office of Security lead a double life – servants and guardsmen. Any extra points they may have go into increasing their alertness and combat abilities.

## CALENDAR COMPLIANCE OFFICER 95 POINTS

You are an official of the Office of Calendar Compliance (p. 65). You have the freedom to travel everywhere, examining local cultures in one of the few areas in which the Imperium interferes in planetary affairs: the standardization of weights and measures. Local governments often resent your presence, but they rarely suspect your real role as a secret agent. Even in this role you rarely do more than gather information, but your work is still crucial to the stability of the Imperium, as you serve as the Emperor's eyes and ears in the provinces. You are expected to report to the Emperor or his highest subordinates whenever you find signs of incipient crises among the thousands of Imperial worlds.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Administrative Rank 2 [10]; Security Clearance 3 [15]; plus a total of 20 points selected from Alertness [5/level]; Alternate Identity [15]; Appearance [5 to 15]; Charisma [5/level]; Collected or Imperturbable [5 or 10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contacts (Any; skill 18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3 per contact]; Danger Sense [15]; Intuition [15]; Language Talent [2/level]; Luck [15]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Sanctity [5]; Strong Will [4/level]; Versatile [5]; and Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (The Emperor; 12 or less) [-10]; Secret (Agent of the Emperor) [-10]; and a total of -15 points selected from Curious [-5 to -15]; Enemy (Local government agents; 6 or less) [-15]; Insomniac [-10 or -15]; Light Sleeper [-5]; Loner [-5]; Nightmares [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Paranoia [-10]; and Sense of Duty (The Imperium) [-10].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Detect Lies (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Interrogation (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Research (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Astronomy (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Chemistry (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Computer Programming (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Disguise (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Escape (P/H) DX-1 [2]-10; Holdout (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Physics (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-11; and one of Beam Weapons (any) or Guns (any), both (P/E) DX+3 [2]-14\*.

\* Includes +2 for IQ.

**Background Skills:** One of Driving (any) or Piloting (any), both (P/A) DX [2]-11; and 7 points in Cartography (M/A); Cryptanalysis, Cryptography, Cryptology, Forensics, Forgery, or SIGINT Collection/Jamming, all (M/H); or Computer Hacking (M/VH).

**Customization Notes:** This template *assumes* that the official is a secret agent – in fact, depending on the GM’s vision of the Imperium, most Calendar Compliance officials may be simple commerce inspectors with no undercover role! Such characters will have many of the Professional and Scientific skills of the base template, but will lack Security Clearance, the Secret, and most of the skills useful in covert operations.

## WORLD RULER 100 POINTS

You are a sovereign ruler. You may be a hereditary monarch, an elected leader, or a bloody-handed dictator – but whatever the path you took to power, the Imperium recognizes your control over one of its member worlds. You may or may not hold your own title in the Imperial aristocracy, but you deal with Imperial nobles on a regular basis.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Status 2 [10]\*; Wealth (Comfortable) [10]; and a total of 60 points in Administrative Rank [5/level]; Alertness [5/level]; Ally Group (Bodyguards, retainers, or staff; medium group, 9 or less) [20] or (12 or less) [40]; Appearance [5 to 25]; Charisma [5/level]; Clerical Investment [5]; Common Sense [10]; Contacts (Any; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/contact]; Empathy [15]; Independent Income [5]; Intuition [15]; Language Talent [2/level]; Legal Enforcement Powers [5 to 15]; Military Rank [5/level]; Reputation (any) [Varies]; up to four more levels of Status [5/level]\*; Strong Will [4/level]; Voice [10]; and Wealth (Wealthy) [10], (Very Wealthy) [30], (Filthy Rich) [50], or Filthy Rich plus one level of Multimillionaire [75].

\* Purchasing additional levels of Wealth may grant free levels of Status, changing these point values.

**Disadvantages:** A total of -30 points selected from Alcoholism [-15]; Bad Temper [-10]; Bully [-10]; Code of Honor (Imperial) [-10]; Enemy [Varies]; Fanaticism [-15]; Hidebound [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Incurious or Obdurate [-5 or -10]; Intolerance (any) [-5 or -10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Megalomania [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (any) [-5 to -15]; Overconfidence [-10]; Overweight or Fat [-5 to -20]; Paranoia [-10]; Sense of Duty (Subordinates) [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; Unfit [-5]; and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Area Knowledge (Homeworld) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-15; *one* of Bard (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14, Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-13, or Fast-Talk (M/H) IQ+1 [4]-14; Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Politics (M/A) IQ [2]-13; and Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+3 [2]-16\*.

\* Based on a default of IQ+2 due to high Status.

**Secondary Skills:** Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Law (M/H) IQ-1

[2]-12; Psychology (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and Research (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 7 points in Beam Weapons (any) or Guns (any), both (P/E); Driving (any) or Piloting (any), both (P/A); and Carousing (P/A (HT)); Computer Operation (M/E); Criminology, Heraldry, Language (any), or Streetwise, all (M/A); Sex Appeal (M/A; HT); or Accounting, Economics, History, Literature, Strategy (any), Tactics (any), or Theology, all (M/H)

**Customization Notes:** The level of Status and Wealth should depend on the population and prosperity of the world ruled (see the *Extended Status Table*, p. 119). Rulers of high-population worlds should take very high levels of both (and have many more points than the base 100-point template). Rulers of medium-population and backwater worlds can get by with basic levels of Status and Wealth. Choose background skills to reflect how you got to power. An elected ruler should take Economics and History, while a military dictator is likely to have Strategy, Tactics, and Combat/Weapons skills.

## STARSHIPS

Nobles often use custom-built ships, from the venerable *Vanderbilt* and *Lady of Shallott* class yachts (p. GT136) to the most up-to-date racing shells. The following are examples of some of the variety available to the Imperial aristocracy.

### WANDERER-CLASS 100-TON YACHT (TL10)

The *Wanderer* is a typical small yacht. The class was developed by GSbAG in 1023, and is now built under license by many shipyards across the Imperium. The *Wanderer* bears an uncanny resemblance to the *Suliemman*-class scout/courier, which has led to nicknames like “the noble’s courier.” Two of the luxury staterooms have been merged into a master suite, which leaves two for guests. The hall is usually outfitted as a dining hall, but it can be configured as a small audience chamber as well. The space dock can hold two small air/rafts or one larger grav speeder.

The crew is composed of a captain/pilot, a co-pilot, two engineers, two stewards, and a cook.

**Subassemblies:** VGSL Hull +8, Turret +5.

**Powertrain:** Engineering, 3 Jump Drive, 5 Maneuver, Combination Gravitics System.

**Fuel:** 20 Jump Fuel Tank.

**Occ:** 4 Staterooms, 4 Luxury Staterooms **Cargo:** 2 dtons

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
All:	4/100	4/100	4/100	4/100	4/100

#### Equipment

**Hull:** Fuel Processor; compact Basic Bridge; Luxury Hall; Galley; 1-dton Spacedock.

## Statistics

Size: 120'×85'×45' Payload: 15 stons Lwt.: 176 stons  
 Volume: 100 dtons Maint.: 22 man-hours/day Price: MCr21  
 HT: 12. HPs: 15,000 [Hull] 1,200 [Turret].  
 sAccel: 1.1 Gs/1.2 Gs empty Jump: 2 aSpeed: 1,180 mph



## CONDOR-CLASS 100-TON RACING YACHT (TL12)

The *Condor* was one of the first jump-6 ships in Division S100 racing; unfortunately, it has mediocre acceleration and Spartan accommodations. Over medium and long distances, the jump-6 drive can compensate for the time that is lost during refueling stops, and racing enthusiasts happily accept living conditions that are worse than an Imperial prison.

The *Condor* has an extra-light frame built from advanced materials.

The standard crew is composed of a captain/pilot, a copilot, a navigator, and two engineers. If passengers are carried, they are expected to assist the crew with basic maintenance work.

**Subassemblies:** VGSL Hull +8.

**Powertrain:** Engineering, 7 Jump Drive, 5 Maneuver.

**Fuel:** 60 Jump Fuel Tank.

**Occ:** Bunkroom.

**Cargo:** None

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Hull:	4/100	4/100	4/100	4/100	4/100

### Equipment

Hull: Fuel Processor; Compact Basic Bridge; Astronomical Instruments.

## Statistics

Size: 80'×60'×20' Payload: 1 ston  
 Lwt.: 161 stons Volume: 100 dtons  
 Maint.: 31 man-hours/day Price: MCr41.8  
 HT: 12. HPs: 3,750 [Hull].  
 sAccel: 3.1 Gs Jump: 6 aSpeed: 1,935 mph

## MIDAS-CLASS 800-TON COURIER (TL11)

The *Midas*-class courier was first developed by Tukera Lines in 1066, and has been used for decades as a luxurious fast transport for the *extremely* wealthy and powerful. Several examples of the class are still in Tukera service, registered as ordinary merchant vessels, but their most important cargo are senior Tukeras on family business.

The unstreamlined ship has a box-like hull with three decks. The top deck is divided into a double-size master suite, 10 staterooms for guests or senior staff, a large conference room, and offices. The crew deck contains the bridge, staterooms for the crew and junior staff members, the cargo hold, and bays for a pinnace and a skimmer. The engine deck holds jump drives, maneuver drives, and most of the tanks.

The armor of the *Midas*-class courier is bonded superdense material.

The core crew is composed of a captain, pilot, navigator, sensor operator, communications operator, six gunners, eight engineers, and a medic. Stewards are added as required, unless the passengers bring their own servants.

**Subassemblies:** USL Hull +10, 6×Turret +5.

**Powertrain:** 2 Engineering, 48 Jump Drive, 100 Maneuver.

**Fuel:** 400 Jump Fuel Tank.

**Occ:** 15 Staterooms, 12 Luxury Staterooms

**Cargo:** 25 dtons

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Hull:	4/400	4/400	4/400	4/400	4/400
Turrets:	4/200	4/200	4/200	4/200	

### Weaponry

2 Turrets with 6×390-MJ Lasers [3 per Turret].

2 Turrets with 6×250mm Missile Racks [3 per Turret].

2 Turrets with 6×Sandcasters [3 per Turret].

### Equipment

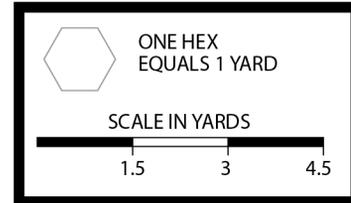
Hull: 2 Utility; Command Bridge; 2 Luxury Office; Luxury Hall; 40-dton Vehicle Bay (for Fuel Skimmer); 40-dton Vehicle Bay (for Pinnace); Sickbay; Safe.

## Statistics

Size: 160'×80'×40' Payload: 490 stons Lwt.: 2,174 stons  
 Volume: 800 dtons Maint.: 85 mh/day Price: MCr311  
 HT: 12. HPs: 60,000 [Hull] 1,200 [each Turret].  
 sAccel: 4.6 Gs/5.9 Gs empty Jump: 5

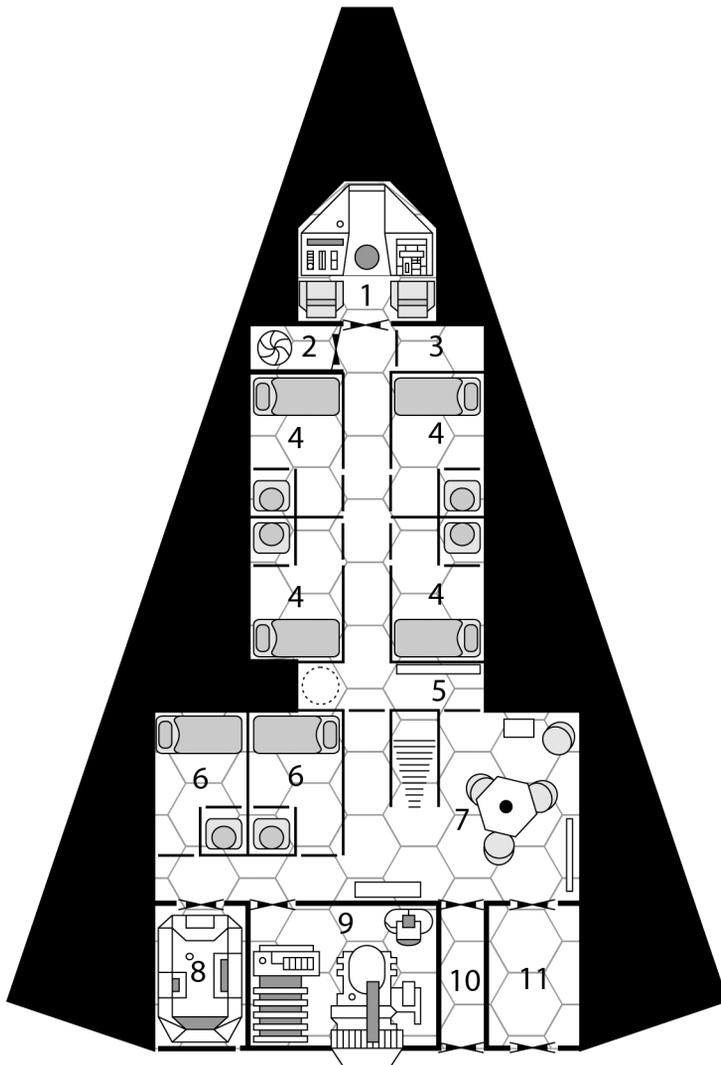
# HISTORY'S PLEASURE

This example of the 100-ton *Wanderer*-class yacht, named *History's Pleasure*, is owned by Elissya Hault-Neiral, youngest daughter of Baron Georgi Hault-Neiral. The young, adventurous noble fancies herself as a historical scholar and her vessel is equipped to be a luxurious explorer of old cultures and ruined civilizations. The lounge is equipped with an assortment of expensive and useful computer equipment, while still being useful for entertaining guests (often other scientists). Her suite, however, is elegantly decked out in the manner of ancient Darrian architecture, a favorite subject of the young lady.

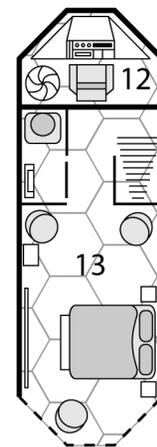


## Ship Details

1. Bridge
2. Forward Airlock
3. Ship's Locker
4. Crew Stateroom
5. Galley
6. Guest Stateroom
7. Lounge
8. Air/Raft Bay
9. Engine Room
10. Aft Airlock
11. Cargo Hold
12. Turret Control
13. Owner's Suite



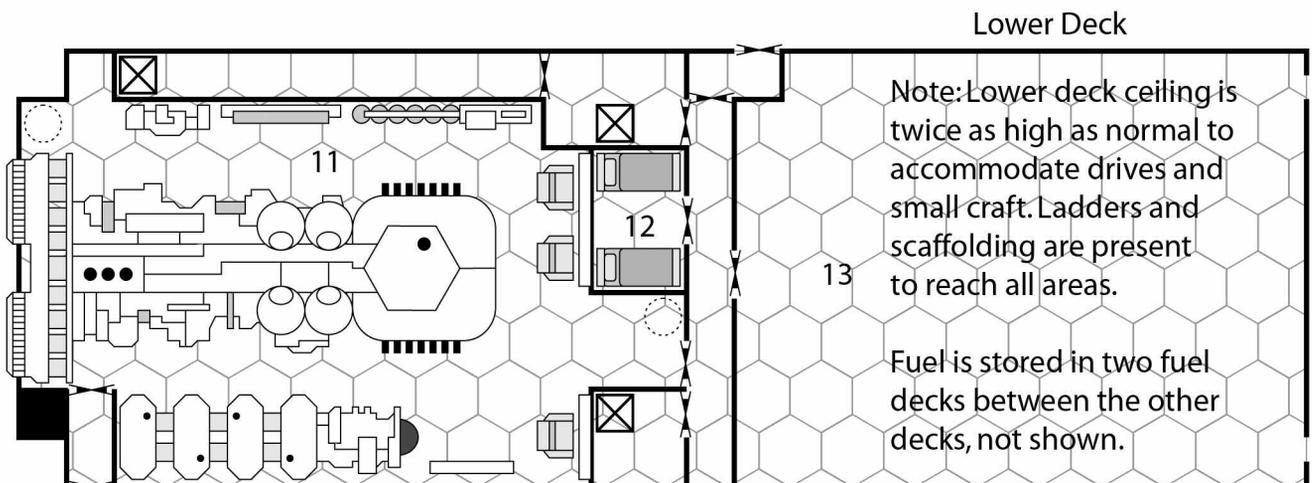
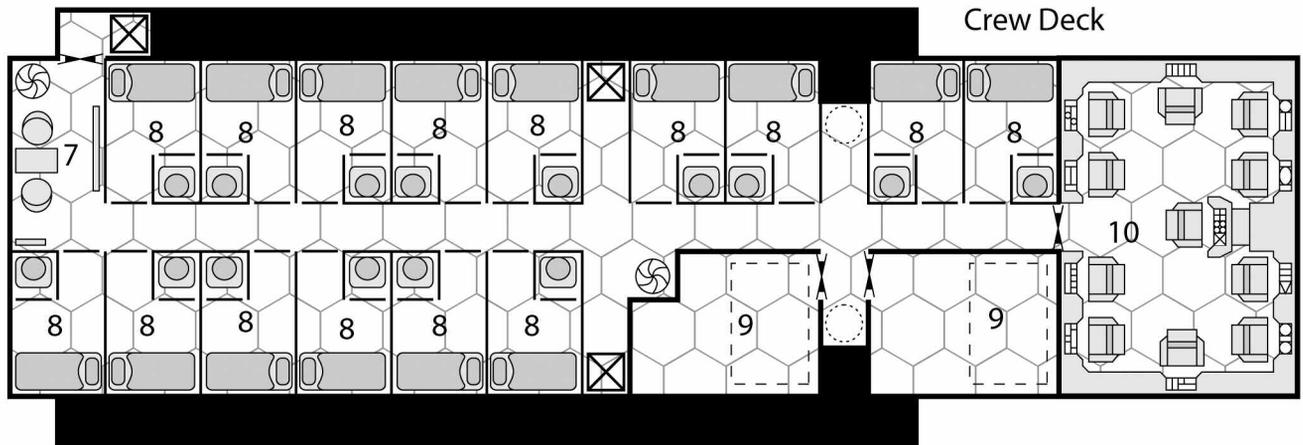
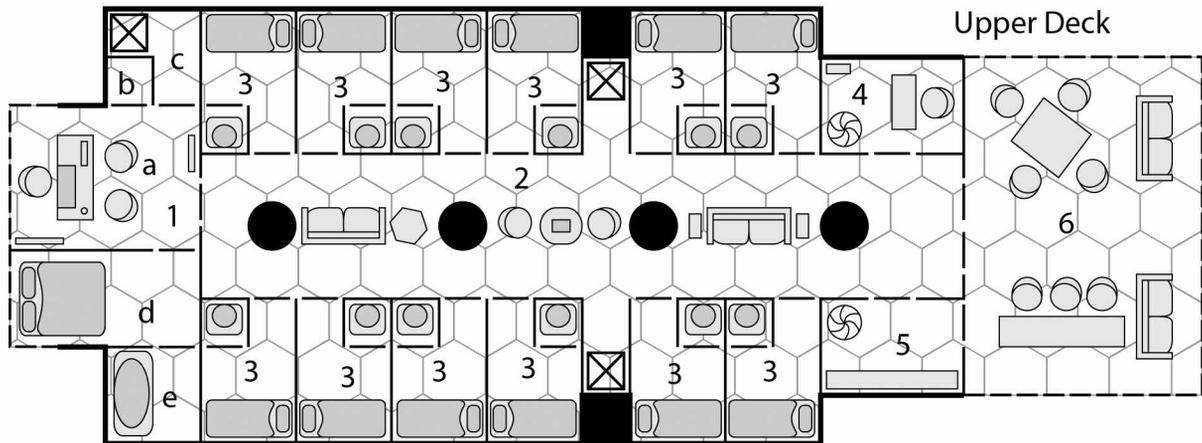
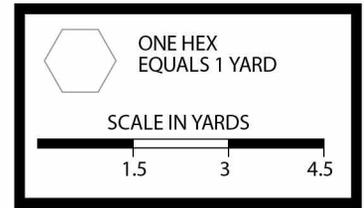
Lower Deck



Upper Deck

# MIDAS-CLASS COURIER

- |            |                |                   |
|------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Suite   | 2. Grand Hall  | 8. Crew Stateroom |
| a) Office  | 3. Guest Suite | 9. Cargo Hold     |
| b) Safe    | 4. Office      | 10. Bridge        |
| c) Lift    | 5. Galley      | 11. Engineering   |
| d) Bedroom | 6. Lounge      | 12. Sickbay       |
| e) Fresher | 7. Common Area | 13. Hangar        |



# Campaigns

Nobles can be a part of almost any type of *Traveller* campaign, both as player and non-player characters (see pp. GT11-12). However, before beginning, GMs may wish to put their personal spin on the game's background.

## BACKGROUNDS

*Traveller* fans differ in their background preferences. Consider a traditional RPG "alignment" graph, where one axis measures the *strength* of the Imperium (Strong/Weak) and the other measures the *morality* of the Imperium (Good/Evil). A specific approach to the *Traveller* setting can then be described by its position on both axes (Strong/Good, Weak/Good, and so on).

### STRONG OR WEAK IMPERIUM

The relative strength of the Imperium is measured by the level of Imperial presence in local, planetary affairs.

In a Strong Imperium the Imperial government is heavily involved in most aspects of life, especially interstellar relations. There is intersystem extradition for most crimes. A strong military presence discourages piracy, slavery, and large-scale extortion schemes involving hypervelocity planetoids. A huge Imperial bureaucracy ensures compliance with the laws.

In a Weak Imperium, the Imperial government provides very little other than border defense and sporadic enforcement of interstellar contract laws. Individual worlds are left largely to their own devices.

The official *Traveller* universe has actually moved a significant distance along this axis over the years. Early *Classic Traveller* materials tended to describe an Imperium that was distant and relatively impotent. Since then, the general concept of the Third Imperium has grown significantly stronger as more details have been published. The *GURPS Traveller* "official Imperium" can be considered moderately Strong; the Imperial military establishment and bureaucracy are effective in their area of jurisdiction, while local affairs are still left almost entirely to local authorities.

### GOOD OR EVIL IMPERIUM

The morality of the Imperium is measured by whether it acts as a positive force in interstellar affairs.

In a Good Imperium, almost all high nobles (p. 12) are of the highest moral fiber. Indolence is not tolerated at higher levels of the aristocracy, and it is discouraged at the lower levels. There is a high sense of *noblesse oblige* toward all citizens.

An Evil Imperium has little social mobility. Nobles are very likely to act solely in their own interests, even at the highest levels of the aristocracy. There is a very high proportion of indolent nobility.

The official *Traveller* universe has consistently been neutral on the subject of the Imperium's moral value. Most of the aristocracy seem at least *loyal* to the Emperor, but some individual nobles are corrupt, arrogant, and tyrannical. The Imperium generally tends to act in the interest of all its citizens, but there have been plenty of exceptions.

### HOW MANY NOBLES?

Most *Traveller* campaigns occasionally involve the aristocracy – the noble patron or adversary, the adventurer who holds a knighthood, and so on. These aristocrats appear on an individual basis, as needed to support the story. The GM rarely needs to know much about the aristocratic community they inhabit when they aren't dealing with random adventurers.

In a campaign that *centers* on the aristocracy, the GM may need to know more. In particular, he may want to decide how many nobles there are in the area of his campaign. Here are some guidelines.

#### Dukes

There is normally one duke for each subsector. In some regions toward the Imperial core there is occasionally a second duke. A subsector which contains only a few Imperial worlds, or which is a remote backwater, often does not have its own duke.

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*All the GM has to decide is what Imperium-spanning plot the students might be in a position to foil.*

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#### Counts

There is normally about one count for every four to six worlds in a subsector. Each count is usually associated with a *county*, a cluster of at least two to three neighboring worlds. Not every Imperial world needs to be in a county, but most worlds with populations of 100 million or more are. True backwater or frontier regions, with almost no high-population worlds, have very few counts.

## Lesser Peers

There is normally about one marquis for each world with a Class IV or V starport and at least 100 million people. Some major worlds have no marquis, while a few marquisates are associated with lesser worlds. Very important worlds (Class V starport, population in the billions, and on important trade routes) may have more than one marquis. Worlds dominated by Vilani culture are less likely to have an associated marquis.

There is *always* at least one baron for each world. High-population worlds may have more, up to about one additional baron for every 250 million people.

This last population shows considerable variation. High-population worlds with very little outside contact have very few barons – truly isolationist worlds may have only the minimum of one, no matter how large their population. Worlds that are thoroughly integrated into Imperial society may have more barons than the guideline suggests.

## Baronets and Knights

There is about one baronet or knight for every 12,500,000 people on each world. In most regions, there is about one baronet for every five knights. This is an Imperium-wide average; there is *very* wide variation in these numbers on a local level.

Worlds with a strong tradition of involvement in Imperial society generate more baronets and knights. An unusual number of knights serve in or are retired from the Imperial Navy, so a world with a naval base generally has more knights. Isolationist worlds may generate *no* baronets or knights; note that the minimum number per world at this level is zero.

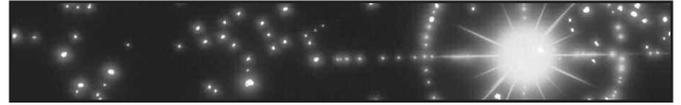
There is also considerable variation from one domain to the next. The Domain of Deneb has few knights and almost no baronets, as Archduke Norris has not had time to create many. The Domain of Sol has nearly the Imperial average of baronets and knights, but the number falls off dramatically on worlds close to the Solomani Confederation border. The Domain of Sylea has more than the usual number of knights, but almost no baronets since the Emperor traditionally creates very few of them. Even within each domain, there will be some variation from region to region.

## Building the Model Imperium

The number of Imperial nobles depends strongly on where the GM wants the Imperium to fall on the Strong/Weak and Good/Evil axes. The ranks of the high nobility are well established in earlier *Traveller* canon, but the population of barons, baronets, and knights can grow or shrink to fit.

For a stronger Imperium, increase the number of barons, baronets, and knights, and assume that more of these low-ranking nobles are directly involved in government. For a weaker Imperium, cut the number of low-ranking nobles drastically. Reducing the number of low-ranking nobles by as much as two-thirds ensures that most nobles are overworked – reducing them further will leave the Imperial armed forces unsupervised and the bureaucracy impotent.

The position of the Imperium on the Good/Evil axis has less effect on the size of the aristocracy – although it does affect the *quality*. A Good Imperium can probably get by with somewhat fewer nobles, as titles are handed out only to those who really deserve them. An Evil Imperium may have more nobles – but it will also have a higher proportion of lazy or corrupt ones.



## NOBLES IN THE CAMPAIGN

A long tradition exists in *Traveller* of noble player characters, all the way back to the Imperial dukes who emerged with surprising frequency from the random-generation tables in *Classic Traveller*. To this day many players remain tempted to design noble characters. Taken to an extreme, this tendency can present a quandary for the GM.

## NOBLES AS PCs

Adventuring parties including many nobles present considerable problems for an ongoing campaign. A campaign organized around such a party works best if most or all of the adventurers are “idle” nobles, without administrative responsibilities. If most of the party is composed of *governing* nobles, it becomes difficult to explain why all of these important aristocrats are in the same place at the same time, much less how they all find the time to enjoy free-ranging adventures!

A more versatile campaign design involves no more than one or two leading PC nobles, with the rest of the players taking the roles of staff, friends, relatives, or companions – some of whom may have lesser titles. This does require some cooperation among the players, who must agree on who gets to be the boss and who has to play the underlings. Most of the campaign frames that follow assume this kind of party organization.

## Finishing School

This campaign frame is centered on the activities of a set of young aristocrats, as they acquire their educations at an elite school. The Karbiili School (p. 32) is one choice for *very* elite students, but there are similar schools throughout the Imperium. In sober fact, children at these schools are actively *prevented* from having “adventures.” Still, the conceit is certainly part of Imperial popular fiction . . .

Students at a finishing school are relatively young, and do not have access to much of their family’s wealth. Even their status does them little good . . . being a noble isn’t all that useful when all of your peers are, too. They *do* have skills, quick wits, and plenty of confidence. All the GM has to do is decide what Imperium-spanning plot the students might be in a position to foil.

## Grand Tour

In this campaign frame, the group is composed of one or more young nobles embarking on their Grand Tour (p. 34). The whole idea of the Grand Tour is to experience a wide variety of cultures and situations – ideal for an ongoing *Traveller* campaign. The tour provides a motivation for travel that does not involve trade, espionage, or military action, a fact that some groups of players will appreciate.

The adventurers can be long-time friends, barely acquainted, or some of both. Likewise, some of the group can be designated heirs of a noble family, while others can be nonheirs. Families provide the financial support. The band travels in a single starship, most likely a yacht, provided with a crew of presumably loyal retainers and a line of credit. Such a campaign most likely ranges over a sector or two at the most, and three to five years of game time is ample for a wide variety of adventure situations.

## Remittance Man

As described on p. GT100, a *remittance man* is usually a non-heir from a noble family, paid to keep far away from his home. The differences from the Grand Tour are that the campaign is open-ended, with no bounds on either time or location – the patron can travel pretty much anywhere and do pretty much anything his stipend allows, except go home. On the other hand, unless the remuneration is enormous, the patron is unlikely to have complete freedom of action. He is, for example, unlikely to have a yacht and thus probably needs to travel by other means.

To maintain player interest, the GM needs to add other features. Why is the noble not wanted at home? Is the situation simply a cover for some hidden agenda? Does the remittance man have a tendency to meddle while he travels? How many enemies has he acquired in his travels, and how determined are they? What happens if disaster strikes at home and the formerly unwanted traveler becomes the heir?

## Merchant Prince

In this campaign frame, the main noble character is the owner of a small merchant trading company, or the heir to a large one. In the former case, he may be the captain of a single ship, or the supervisor of a two- or three-ship line, captained by other PCs. In the latter case, he is in charge of one of the larger company's ships, or supervising a subsector for his noble parent.

The group is required to show a profit in spite of the actions of competitors, hijackers, pirates, and whatever else

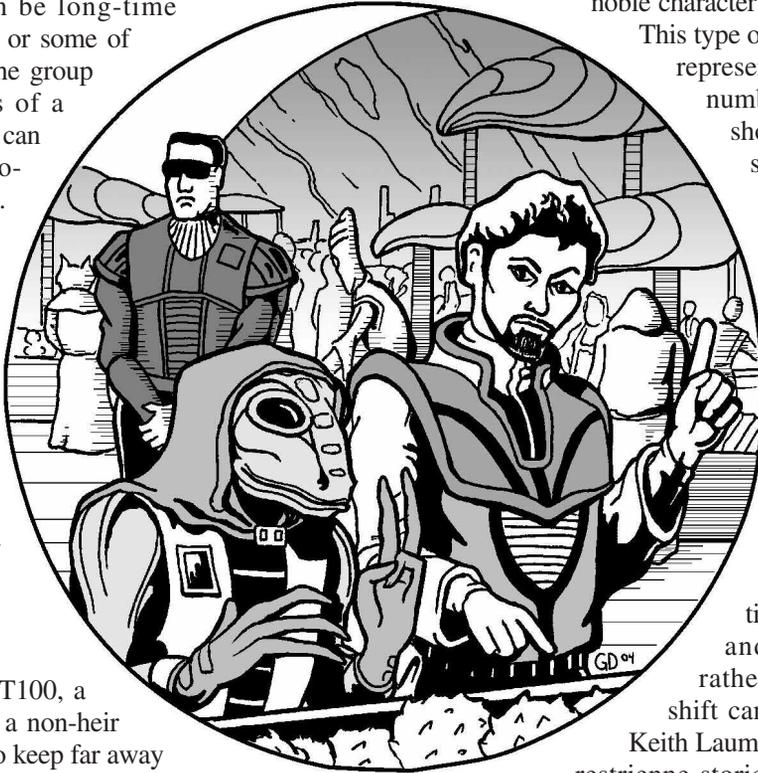
the GM decides to throw at them. The Nicholas van Rijn stories of Poul Anderson are an excellent source of inspiration for mercantile campaigns of all sorts. Andre Norton also wrote numerous books dealing with interstellar merchant enterprises.

## Diplomat

For a more intensive campaign, the primary noble character can be an Imperial diplomat.

This type of campaign can be long term, representing many missions over a number of years. Or it could be short term, representing a mission to a single world, lasting less than a single year of game time. Since the patron is a government representative, he has more resources available, and the pressures and situations must be correspondingly greater to maintain player interest.

An alternative campaign can be created by making the noble a representative of a megacorporation rather than a government, and the mission mercantile rather than political. A stylistic shift can involve taking ideas from Keith Laumer's Corps Diplomatique Terrestrienne stories, planning a light-hearted campaign conducted with tongue firmly in cheek.



## NOBLES AS NPCs

Several possibilities exist for campaigns where *no* player characters are nobles. The adventurers can serve the noble NPC in several capacities: escorts, advisors, bodyguards, technical staff, servants, and so on. The noble can provide a motivation for the campaign that can remain under the GM's direction – for instance, a starship the adventurers do not own and a source of funds they do not control. Some players may initially resent the GM's increased control, but such a situation can still provide a long and interesting campaign.

## Grand Tour

In this campaign frame, the adventurers have been hired to escort one or more young nobles on the Grand Tour (p. 34). The primary noble NPC has his own yacht as well as an expense account, the size of which depends on his family. The nature of the Grand Tour means that the group and its patron are unlikely to remain in one place for very long, and are not likely to return to any given system once they leave.

The patron in this situation is not the noble NPC taking the Grand Tour, but *his parents*. They want him to return alive, in good condition, and preferably a better person for his travels. Depending on the character of the young heir, this

campaign can range from near-slapstick to moderately dangerous, and can provide a break from more intense campaigns.

GMs should arrange for the young noble to travel to as wide a possible variety of worlds in the region chosen for the Grand Tour.

### *Remittance Man*

When the remittance man is an NPC, the players can take on the roles of his staff, bodyguards, crew, and/or traveling companions. This campaign frame is less attractive to some players – they are not completely in control of where they go and how long they stay. In a situation like this, the GM can make the NPC noble wealthier, assign him a yacht or other personal starship, and add a few plot twists to keep the players interested. A possibility is that the patron is the remittance man's *family*, and the job is to follow the traveling noble and ensure he remains far away from the old homestead.

### *Diplomat*

When the noble NPC is an Imperial diplomat, the adventurers can form his staff or a crack team of troubleshooters in his employ. This type of campaign is especially well suited to tongue-in-cheek adventures, especially if the noble is less than competent.

### *Scientist/Researcher*

In this campaign frame, the noble NPC is driven by the pursuit of knowledge. Depending on the tastes (and sanity) of the patron, this can be a light-hearted campaign, a deadly serious one, or any combination of the two. The subject (or obsession) of the patron's study is a matter for the GM's preference. The patron can be a serious amateur scientist, a total crackpot, or any shade in-between. He may be collecting artifacts, comparing styles of native artwork on several different worlds in a sector, or trying to prove that the Aslan are one of the missing tribes of Israel!

This can be as free ranging or as limited a campaign as the GM desires – the action can be limited to a single system where the patron carries out his explorations, or it can cover the entire Imperium. The patron may have a yacht or a lab ship fitted out for his needs, and need a crew and a technical staff to assist him.

Additional complications can be added by a hidden agenda. The patron may be a spy, an interstellar assassin, or a master criminal. Or he may have simply stumbled across something incredibly valuable, and tucked it away in his sample bin awaiting the more complete study for which he never seems to have time.

### *Mercenaries*

A wealthy noble NPC can be a godsend for a mercenary unit, providing financing, contacts, and political protection. If the noble also has military talent, he can come along and be more than just a banker and booking agent. If the noble *thinks* he has more military talent than he actually has, he can be a challenge to the rest of the unit.

## ADVENTURES

The following adventure and campaign seeds can provide inspiration for *Traveller* games centering on the aristocracy.



## ADVENTURE SEEDS

Individual adventures often follow the traditional *Traveller* view of the “noble patron,” who provides money and other assistance in exchange for accomplishing various critical tasks. This works best when the aristocracy is not the focus of the campaign – otherwise the plot device can easily be overused.

### *Feeding Gourmets*

According to popular stereotype, nobles are always seeking some rare comestible: an obscure and hard-to-come-by vintage, a rare animal, or even a forbidden fruit for their table. Connoisseurs in times past paid huge fortunes to eat or drink something unique, and there are many such things in the Third Imperium. In this adventure, the adventurers are hired to acquire such a rare commodity for a noble connoisseur – or, ideally, a regular supply of such a commodity. This adventure seed can be used to link two other unrelated adventures, when the GM needs to get the group to travel to a specific place. “That’s the job” becomes the answer to “Why do we have to go there?”

### *The Lewis Chessmen*

*Thus, there are today 93 known pieces: 82 in the British Museum, 11 in Edinburgh in the National Museums of Scotland. It is entirely possible that one or more pieces are still in private hands and have never been recognized.*

– Neil Stratford, *The Lewis Chessmen*,  
British Museum Press

The Lewis Chessmen are a group of ivory chess pieces, found on Terra prior to the Interstellar Wars. They are the largest surviving group of secular objects from the Romanesque period of Terran art. Their worth is incalculable, and the discovery of even a single additional piece is a momentous discovery to any student of Terran history. A piece with a proper provenance can conceivably sell for millions of credits to a wealthy scholar or collector.

A GM worth his salt should not have difficulty introducing a small piece of walrus ivory carved in the shape of a chess piece into the game. The adventuring group can be in on the discovery of the piece, be experts hired to investigate its authenticity, or hired to escort it to a museum. (A good way to get the group to Terra is to have the owner donate it to the 1120-era equivalent of the British Museum.) The group can also be hired to recover a newly discovered chessman that was stolen in transit to its new owner. Finally, they can be assigned to investigate a murder committed to hide a forgery of a Lewis chessman – or hired to create such a forgery!

## War Crimes

In this adventure, the group includes a low-level noble serving in the Imperial Navy and his staff. They are assigned to investigate a violation of the Imperial Rules of War.

The GM needs to develop the situation that led up to the possible war crime – most probably, a brushfire war on a medium-population planet, involving mercenary troops or the armies of rival nation-states. Witnesses are unreliable, and may be placed under political pressure by some of the parties involved. If Imperial nobles or institutions are involved, the investigative team needs to be particularly aware of the political consequences of their actions.

### The Nemesis

*Traveller* campaigns involving the aristocracy often resemble period adventure fiction. One of this genre's more useful conventions is the *nemesis*, a recurring villain who personally opposes the adventurers. Some of the best villains in fiction have been nemeses – Darth Vader in *Star Wars*, the Deaf Man in the 87th Precinct books, Moriarty in the Sherlock Holmes stories, and Obadiah Hakeswill in the Sharpe books are all superb examples.

The nemesis is a character whose primary function is to turn up at inconvenient moments and cause trouble. Of course, the nemesis should be specifically tailored to the individual campaign. A proper nemesis gives adventuring groups something to struggle against, something to focus their anger on. He gives the opposition a name and a face, making the conflict personal. A nemesis need not be a supervillain like Darth Vader, or a criminal mastermind like Moriarty. Obadiah Hakeswill, for instance, is barely functional in society and obviously crazy as a loon – but as Sharpe's darker image, he opposes the hero in ways a more conventional villain could not match.

Another quality of a proper nemesis is his near indestructibility. The heroes can thwart his plans, destroy his criminal enterprises, confound his politics, and frustrate his knavish tricks, but they can never (well, hardly ever) completely destroy him. Of course, continual failure to destroy the nemesis can eventually frustrate the players. The GM should arrange for occasional victories.

## CAMPAIGN SEEDS

The following campaign frames suggest the variety of long-term plots that can focus on the Imperial nobility.

### Nightmare

This campaign requires a noble NPC patron, either a remittance man (p. GT100) or another form of wandering dilettante (p. 123). The patron has a fairly large stipend financing his travels and no relatives or other people to ask inconvenient questions. He has a vessel at his disposal (in the 200 to 400 dton range), large enough for about a quarter of the vessel to be taken up with his private quarters. His

personal staff consists of one or two very closed-mouthed servants – the rest of the ship's crew are transients, hired as the need arises.

The patron hires the adventuring group as starship crew, technicians, and so on. The contract is for a set number of jumps, with the provision that they never visit the same system twice, and should be prepared to travel at short notice. The adventurers are forbidden to enter the patron's private quarters, and the security systems protecting this section of the ship are *very* expensive and *very* sophisticated.

At each destination, the patron leaves his personal staff aboard ship and depart in a covered air/raft. After a few days he returns, docking the air/raft in the secured section of the ship, and the vessel is ordered to jump to a new destination. While the patron is away, the adventurers are told that they may occupy themselves in any way they see fit, provided they can return to the ship on a few hours' notice.

The patron is a serial killer, and kidnaps a new victim at each port of call . . . He uses the air/raft and the secure section of the ship to minimize any evidence left behind. The patron changes crews periodically, so he can change the ship's markings and swap out ID transponders without arousing suspicion – a pilot would soon notice these things. The patron is experienced and clever, and will not stop at killing anyone who threatens him.

The group is probably intrigued by the secrecy aboard ship, and commences an investigation as soon as circumstances permit. Indeed, the GM should encourage them to do so! The patron's henchmen are fanatically loyal and not stupid, and the GM may wish to have a couple of NPCs available to "vanish mysteriously while investigating." It is up to the individual GM to determine the extent of the patron's crimes, and precisely what happens inside the "forbidden zone" on the patron's starship.

### Power and Politics

This campaign involves two groups of nobles in political opposition. If the PCs are all high-level nobles, this sort of campaign is not really role-playing, but more like a political simulation. An easier arrangement for all concerned can be to have the players be a troubleshooting team, possibly including lower-level nobility, working for a highly placed noble who is one of the factions' leaders.

There need not be any deep-seated ideological differences between the two sides. Conflict can arise simply because each side believes itself best suited to run things in a particular area and strives to reduce the power of all opposing factions.

*Fact Finding:* This is another name for espionage. It can involve one or more adventurers planted on the staff of an opposing faction in order to gather useful data.

*Covert Operations:* Like "fact finding," this is a euphemism . . . this time for sabotage. Covert operations include behind-the-scenes dirty tricks calculated to embarrass the opposition. In rare cases, they may involve direct attacks on the opposing position; be careful not to leave behind evidence of responsibility for Imperial crimes! (*GURPS Covert Ops* is a good reference for this kind of campaign.)



*Rebellion against the Imperium:* Inhabitants of an Evil Imperium (p. 136) may want to overthrow it. It takes only a few minor adjustments to “nastify” the official Imperium; rebellion was one of the original campaign concepts when *Traveller* was first designed. Adventures can be set just about anywhere in the Imperium. The adventuring group can have almost any character concepts, possibly making up a single underground “cell” of the revolutionaries operating within the Imperial government. Nobles can easily appear on both sides of the conflict – corrupt ones supporting the Imperium, idealistic ones trying to establish a new era of freedom.

### “Silent” Partner

In this frame, the adventuring group is composed of officers and key NCOs in a mercenary unit with a noble NPC patron. The patron is wealthy enough to equip and maintain the unit at a high standard, he has connections to get them very lucrative contracts, *and* he has enough political influence to get them out of most jams.

There is only one problem with this otherwise ideal arrangement. The patron fancies himself a soldier of fortune and insists on accompanying the force on all its tickets! He has also watched too many adventure movies, and enjoys things like mirrored sunglasses, highly polished leather equipment belts, a very expensive laser sniper’s rifle for which he has no training, and an enormous G-carrier outfitted as his “headquarters.”

The group goes on mercenary tickets and military adventures that are otherwise normal – but every adventure is affected by the need to see that the noble patron comes to no harm. At the same time, the “Golden Goose,” as he is called behind his back, must be kept sufficiently occupied so that he does not feel the need to interfere with the unit’s operations out of boredom. The GM should encourage creative solutions to the problem of what to do with “the Goose” – drugging him and similar solutions are guaranteed to result in the patron finding another unit to finance!

### Special Investigators

In this campaign, the adventurers are the staff of an honor noble (probably a baron or marquis) working for the Imperial Ministry of Justice, assigned to investigate special crimes. The party has opportunity to travel long distances and visit a wide variety of worlds, pursuing possible criminals who have attracted Imperial attention with their activities. The campaign works whether the primary noble is himself a PC or simply an NPC patron. The GM’s discretion determines the geographic and chronological limits of each investigation.

### Stereotypes

For a light-hearted campaign, consider modeling a small adventuring group on the classic stereotypes of the bumbling but well-meaning noble (an NPC) and the clever but discreet servant (a PC). This arrangement presents several challenges to the servant, as the overall direction of the campaign is not under his direct control. Behind-the-scenes manipulation of the “master” is necessary if the servant is to affect his own destiny. GMs may find the Jeeves and Wooster stories of P.G. Wodehouse a useful reference for this type of campaign.

### HIGH-LEVEL PLOT LINES

The *GURPS Traveller* universe incorporates several high-level political plotlines, which players and GMs may wish to use in a power-politics campaign.

### Death of an Archduke

The death of Archduke Dulinor on 131-1116 remains a mystery to most citizens of the Imperium. Rumors persist that the archduke’s death was somehow connected to a plot to overthrow the Emperor. What this plot entailed, who was involved, and how much of the plot remained active after Dulinor’s death remain unsolved questions.

The official position of the Imperium is that the archduke was almost certainly murdered. While the motives behind the murder remain unsolved, there is no evidence that he intended the death of the Emperor or any attempt on the Iridium Throne. Imperial spokesmen point out that while Dulinor was outspoken and a radical thinker, he was willing to work within the system and had no interest in breaking it.

Meanwhile, even as the official version of events is maintained, everything possible is being done to cover up the fact that there *was* a conspiracy to assassinate Strephon, involving one of the highest-ranking nobles of the Imperium.

Many mysteries remain, and may not even be clear to Imperial officials who know about Dulinor’s aborted plot.

Who actually carried out the assassination of Dulinor? Was it a branch of the Imperial government, such as Naval Intelligence, acting with or without the knowledge and consent of the Emperor? Was it carried out by a megacorporation or a criminal cartel? Did a turncoat in Dulinor’s own organization do it? Does Strephon know who did it or is he as mystified as everyone else?

How much did Dulinor’s daughter Isis and his wife Jessica know of Dulinor’s alleged plot? Whatever they knew of the plot beforehand, they must have been informed of it after Dulinor’s death, undoubtedly by Strephon himself.

Dulinor's brother, Admiral Hutara, was obviously in on the plot. Is Hutara being held incommunicado by his niece, or by the Imperial Navy with her agreement? Emperor Strephon obviously trusts Isis, since he confirmed her as Archduchess in her father's place (p. 97). Is he right to do so?

Naturally, GMs are free to create their own "true" answers to these questions, matching their personal approach to the *Traveller* universe. Perhaps the Emperor was protected by a small group, unknown to any Imperial authority and devoted to preventing the Rebellion by any means necessary. Or perhaps time travelers stopped Dulinor's plot . . .

### *Varian and Lucan*

The Alkhalikoi dynasty does not have an untarnished reputation for responsibility and stability. Strephon's great-grandfather was an irresponsible dilettante who was eventually forced to abdicate. His two uncles were both incompetent, and one of them may have been a murderer. In the current generation, the leading contenders for the title of "worst Alkhalikoi" are the twin princes, Varian and Lucan.

Until the Grand Princess produces an heir, the twin brothers are second and third in line for the Imperial throne. About the same time that Archduke Dulinor was killed, the princes fell out over a woman who had just dumped Lucan for Varian (see *Lady Elia Hortalez Muendor of Lode*, p. 113). In the *GURPS Traveller* timeline, the argument didn't reach the point of murder – possibly by the narrowest of margins.

Presently, Prince Lucan is off on a character-building tour in the Imperial Navy (p. 92). This may or may not have the effect that the Emperor clearly wants. Lucan could become a functional adult ready to take a positive role in Imperial society . . . or he could emerge as spoiled and mal-adjusted as ever, but wearing a uniform.

Prince Varian, killed under mysterious circumstances in the Rebellion timeline, is an unknown factor in the *GURPS Traveller* universe. He is Lucan's twin and was raised under identical circumstances, which may indicate that he has the same potential for devious, murderous behavior. Or he may reveal himself to be quite different from his brother – Lucan's shining opposite, or a moral monster who could cause Lucan to look good in comparison.

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*Prince Varian . . . is an unknown factor in the **GURPS Traveller** universe.*

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### *Rivalry in the Spinward Marches*

It can be presumed that Archduke Norris no longer has any ambitions to become sector duke of the Spinward Marches. Even so, the rivalry between him and Duchess Delphine of Mora continues unabated. This is almost the textbook example of a rivalry between high Imperial nobles – neither leader is driven by any specific ideology, but each is convinced that he is *much* better suited to be in charge!

Of course, at present it seems that Norris has decisively won the struggle. His authority in the Spinward Marches is now paramount, and in any case Duchess Delphine is showing increasing signs of age and weakness. The Duchess' heir apparent is certainly a capable woman, but she is much younger and less experienced than the Matriarch. The next round of political intrigue may be *within* Delphine's faction – to determine who will pick up the standard of opposition to the archduke.

Meanwhile, Norris may be talented and in a position of strength, but he is not invincible. His career includes several points at which he may have bent or even broken Imperial law. Although the support of the Emperor is likely to absolve him of many sins, any tarnish on his reputation may well make his political position more difficult.

### *Exile and Resistance Houses*

At the other end of Imperial space, another round of internal political intrigue is well under way.

In the Solomani Rim sector, Imperial noble houses tend to fall into two camps, depending on how their ancestors responded to the growth of the Solomani Sphere in the period from roughly 700 to 1000. The so-called "Exile Houses" fled their demesnes as anti-Imperial sentiments grew among the Solomani, moving closer to Capital until the Imperium could properly extend its rule over the Rim once again. Meanwhile, the "Resistance Houses" stayed in the sector, stubbornly keeping the flame of Imperial loyalty alive. Naturally, both of these represent minorities of the original Rim aristocracy; most of the pre-700 noble families in the region joined the Solomani Movement and gave up their titles during the period of Solomani domination.

Today the Exile-Resistance division remains important in Rim politics. Exile Houses tend to be radical and combative, fiercely opposed to the Solomani Movement and willing to advocate harsh measures to keep Imperial worlds quiet. Some of them even advocate renewed war against the Solomani Confederation, insisting that the Imperium has a claim to every Human-settled world on the Rim. Resistance Houses are quieter, more pragmatic, and less militant. They are primarily interested in providing good government for the peoples of the Rim, including Solomani citizens of the Imperium. They are much more committed to peaceful solutions for the problems of the region.

Although the distinction between Exile and Resistance Houses is still not a matter of formal ideology, the two camps do very nearly comprise formal political parties. Low-level intrigue and mutual sabotage are a common occurrence in Rim politics.

The situation on the Rim is complicated by a rivalry between Archduke Adair and a loose faction of conservative nobles, most often led by Marquis Robert Beaudoin (p. 107). The archduke and his rivals do not fall neatly into the main political camps, although the archduke is usually more sympathetic to the Resistance Houses and his rivals often find common ground with the Exiles. The marquis has few qualms about doing anything to rid himself of his rival (p. 108), and any fallout could cost the Imperium a great deal . . .

# Index

- Abdication, 72, 108-109.  
Academic, *character template*, 122.  
Adair, Archduke Etienne Helugu, 98-99, 108-109, 142; *character sheet*, 98.  
Administration skill, 118.  
Administrative Rank advantage, 118.  
Admiralty, 63, 66-68, 70; *Board of*, 63; *court*, 67-68, 70; *law*, 66.  
Advantages, 118-120.  
Adventure seeds, 139-140.  
Advocates, 66, 69.  
Aella family, 18, 88, 93, 103, 111, 112; *crest*, 113.  
Aledon, Duke Norris Aella, 18, 25-26, 33, 37, 44, 49, 53, 61-63, 92-95, 107, 110-111, 113, 137, 142; *as Archduke of Deneb*, 93; *character sheet*, 95; *family*, 95; *Fifth Frontier War*, 93; *military service*, 93; *Norris' Retreat*, 94; *title*, 27, 29.  
Aledon, Seldrain, 29, 37, 95.  
Alkhalikoi family, 88-92; *see Imperial family*.  
Alkhalikoi, Duke Dresden Paulo, 28, 91-92.  
Alkhalikoi, Emperor Strehon Aella, 13-14, 18-22, 43, 50, 52, 57, 62-63, 88-89, 91-93, 97, 99, 102-103, 110, 116, 141-142; *Birthday*, 13, 21; *character sheet*, 90; *family*, 19; *goals*, 89; *naval career*, 89; *parents*, 88; *relationship with Archduke Norris*, 93; *title*, 28.  
Alkhalikoi, Grand Princess Ciencia Iphegenia Guuilbataashullibaa, 20, 22, 26, 89-91, 97-98, 102, 112, 142; *character sheet*, 91; *title*, 28.  
Alkhalikoi, Prince Lucan, 19, 28, 91-92, 102, 113, 118, 142; *title*, 28.  
Alkhalikoi, Prince Varian, 19, 28, 91-92, 102, 113, 118, 142; *title*, 28.  
Ally advantage, 118.  
Alternate Identity advantage, 118.  
Ancients Foundation, 56, 66.  
Annapabar, 24, 99.  
Anointing Bowl, 49.  
Anointing Spoon, 49.  
Antares, 81, 96; *Guard*, 55; *Holdings*, 116; *Order of*, 14, 24, 97; *Order of badge*, 24.  
Apkallu kibrat arban, 8, 10, 18.  
Apkallu kiduunuuzii balandin, 23.  
Aramis, 18, 27, 103, 106, 116.  
Arbellatra, Empress, 49, 51, 73, 78, 81, 91-93, 99, 106; *title*, 28.  
Archdukes 18; *civil courts*, 68; *rank*, 18; *fief*, 18; *history*, 18-19; *responsibilities*, 57; *table*, 71; *title*, 27.  
Arden, 87, 116.  
Area Knowledge skill, 118.  
Artemus, Emperor, 15, 18-19, 22, 49, 78, 92, 98, 102.  
Artistic skills, 42, 46.  
Aslan, 26, 50, 55, 77-78, 139; *dewclaw*, 50; *dueling*, 50; *female*, 77; *guard* 55; *heraldry*, 77; *Imperial aristocracy*, 77-78; *responsibilities*, 77.  
Attire, 42, 44, 51-52.  
Audiences, 52-53; *personal*, 55.  
Banishments, 48, 71, 138, 140.  
Bar Association, 66.  
Bard skill, 121.  
Baronesses, *see Barons*.  
Barons, 15; *amount of*, 137; *rank*, 15; *fief*, 15; *history*, 15; *table*, 71; *title*, 27.  
Barons, 15-16, 27, 30, 60, 71, 137; *amount of*, 137; *demesne*, 60; *membership in the peerage*, 15; *rank*, 15; *fief*, 15; *history*, 15; *point totals*, 117; *table*, 71; *title*, 27, 30.  
Beaudoin family, 107-108, 112.  
Beaudoin, Marquis Robert Stephanos, 107-108, 142; *abdication*, 108-109; *character sheet*, 108.  
"Beyond a reasonable doubt," 68-69, 71.  
Bodyguards, 38, 118; *character template*, 128.  
Bolden-Tukera, Marquis Leonard Fratelli, 103, 106-107; *character sheet*, 107.  
Bribes, 46, 62, 74.  
Brzk, Archduke, 14, 24, 96-97; *character sheet*, 96; *military career*, 96.  
Bureaucrats, *character template*, 122-123.  
Bureaux, 7, 9.  
Business, 38, 65.  
Calendar Compliance Officers, *character template*, 131-132.  
Campaigns 137-139; *seeds*, 140-141.  
Capital punishments, 70-71.  
Careers, 74, 121.  
Ceremonies, 49, 51-54; *coronation*, 51-52; *funeral*, 53; *investitures*, 53; *wedding*, 53.  
Chess, 34, 139.  
Children, *naming*, 26; *adoptions*, 36.  
Civil court, 67-70; *administration*, 68; *inheritance of title*, 69; *justice*, 69; *penalties*, 70; *proceedings*, 69.  
Civil law, 66-70.  
Civil legate, 69.  
Civil War, 73, 88-89, 92, 96, 99, 116.  
Claim to Hospitality advantage, 118.  
"Clear and convincing proof," 68-69.  
Clerical Investment advantage, 118.  
Client states, 86-87.  
Cloning, 37, 95.  
Code duello, 50.  
Code of Honor (Imperial) disadvantage, 62, 120.  
Code of Military Justice, 68, 70.  
Collecting, 45-46.  
Commission, 62, 75.  
Commoners, 36, 52, 75, 109; *point totals*, 117.  
Companions, 22-23.  
Concord, 107, 111.  
Contest of Skill in Politics, 73.  
Coronation, 51-52.  
Counts, 16-17, 27, 30, 58, 60, 71, 136; *amount of*, 136; *demesne*, 16, 60; *fief*, 16; *history*, 17; *rank*, 16; *responsibilities*, 58; *table*, 71; *title*, 27, 30.  
Countesses, *see Counts*.  
Court legates, 67, 70, 75; *character template*, 129.  
Courts martial, 68.  
Courtesy ranks, 119, *titles*, 29.  
Crime, 49, 66, 140.  
Criminal court, 67-68, 71; *administration*, 67; *proceedings*, 68.  
Criminal law, 66.  
Crown of Cleon, 49, 52.  
Dagudashaag, 111, 116.  
Death penalty, 48, 68-69.  
Delgado family, 112-113; *coat of arms*, 113; *Delgado Trading*, 113; *sigil*, 113.  
Demesne, 12, 16, 40, 60-61, 118-119.  
Deneb, 18-19, 21, 25, 27, 44, 53, 55, 62, 92-93, 112, 137; *established as Domain*, 19; *guard*, 55; *Oil Jade*, 44; *Order of*, 18, 21, 25, 27; *Order of badge*, 25.  
Dilettantes, 140; *character template*, 123.  
Dingir, 9, 108.  
Diplomats, *campaign*, 138-139; *character template*, 123.  
Divorces, 35.  
Dlan, 24, 48, 97.  
DNA, 36-37.  
Duchesses, *see Dukes*.  
Dueling, 50, 112.  
Dukes, 17-18, 27, 30, 58, 60, 68, 136; *amount of*, 136, *civil courts*, 68, *demesne*, 60, *fief*, 17; *history*, 17-18; *rank*, 17; *sector and subsector responsibilities*, 58; *succession*, 58; *table*, 71; *title*, 27, 30.  
Duty, 121, 126; *disadvantage*, 121.  
Education, 31-34, 137.  
Efaté, 18, 110.  
Eggs, *Denuli Gems*, 45-46.  
Emissary, 110, 115-116.  
Emperors, 20, 28, 42, 51-56, 57-67, 136; *as guest*, 42; *coronation of*, 51-52; *demesne*, 60; *history*, 20; *rank*, 20; *seneschal*, 56; *signing law*, 73; *table*, 71; *title*, 28.  
Emperor's Seneschal, *Imperial Chief of Staff*, 56.  
Empresses, *see Emperors*.  
Esquires, 14.  
Ethics, 47.  
Etiquette, 47.  
Evil Imperium, 65, 121, 136, 141.  
Extended Status table, 119.  
Extradition, 66.  
False titles, 15, 118.  
Fealty, 6, 59, 107.  
Festivities, 41.  
Feudalism, 5-6, 77.  
Fief, 12-13, 38, 49, 87, 92, 103, 126; *as reward*, 49; *letter of enfeoffment*, 13; *stripped*, 49.  
Finishing school, *campaign*, 137.  
Food, 42, 139.  
Footmen, 55; *character template* 130.  
Forfeitures, 48.  
Fratr, 22, 27, 111-112.  
Frontier Wars, 18, 49, 61, 63, 81, 89, 93, 107, 110-111, 115; *First*, 49; *Third*, 109, 115; *Fourth*, 89, 93, 107, 110, 115; *Fifth*, 18, 49, 61, 63, 93, 107, 110, 116.  
Funerals, 54.  
Furniture, 44.  
Gateway, 23-24, 49, 55, 99, 103; *guard*, 55; *Order of*, 23-24, 49; *Order of badge*, 24.  
Gavin, Emperor, 25, 98, 107-108.  
Gems, 44-45.  
Genetic engineering, 66, 80.  
Gifts, 42.  
Grand Princes, 20; *rank*, *history*, 20; *title*, 28.  
Grand Princesses, *see Grand Princes*.  
Grand Senate, *see Sylean Federation*.  
Grand Tours, 32, 34-35, 40, 89, 91, 107, 109, 112, 118, 138-139; *campaign*, 138-139.  
Hault-Oberlindes, Baron Marc, 111, 115-116.  
Haut-Kurshar, Baroness Jynel, 110-111; *character sheet*, 110.  
Heirs, *advantage*, 118; *titles*, 29; *none*, 48.  
Heraldry, 44-45, 77, 79.  
High court, 67, 70-71.  
High nobility, 11-13, 31-34, 57-62, 68, 75, 106, 117, 127, 136; *character template*, 127; *education*, 31-34; *fief*, 38; *point totals*, 117; *responsibilities*, 57-62; *source of*, 20; *titles granted*, 12.  
Hivers, 79.  
Hobbies, 46.  
Holiday 13, 21, 32; *List*, 13.  
Honesty disadvantage, 62, 121.  
Honor, 11, 13, 50, 53, 62, 74, 104, 113, 120-121.  
Honor nobility, 11, 13, 53, 74, 104, 113, 121; *titles granted*, 13.  
Honor titles, 13, 53, 113.  
Hortalez family, 112-114; *coat of arms*, 114.  
Hosting, 41-42.  
Huscarles, 12, 38, 55, 61-62, 106, 119.  
Igsiirdi family, 102, 114; *coat of arms*, 114.  
IISS, *see Imperial Interstellar Scout Service*.  
Ilelish, 24, 48, 55, 97; *guard*, 55; *Order of*, 24; *Order of badge*, 24.  
Ilethian family, 98; *crest*, 98.  
Ilethian, Archduchess Isis Arepo, 24, 48, 53, 97-98, 141-142.  
Ilethian, Archduke Dulinor Astrin "the Black," 48, 97-98, 141-142.  
Imperial Archives, 66.  
Imperial Army, 34, 54, 56, 60, 63, 69, 75, 77, 119, 127.  
Imperial Bureau of Trademarks, 44.  
Imperial charter, 33, 107.  
Imperial Chief of Staff, 56.  
Imperial College of Arms, 44.  
Imperial consort, *title*, 28.  
Imperial courts, 57, 67, 129-130; *judge character template*, 129-130.  
Imperial Diplomatic Corps, 65, 89-90, 98, 123; *foreign*, 65; *home*, 65.  
Imperial Division of Heraldry, 44.  
Imperial family, 11, 19-20, 54, 56, 88-92, 113, 116; *members*, 19-20.  
Imperial guard, 55, 62.  
Imperial High Command, 55, 63.  
Imperial Interstellar Scout Service, 22, 54, 60, 66, 69, 91, 103, 112, 119; *communications branch*, 66; *Director of*, 66.  
Imperial law, 48-50, 61-62, 64, 67-71, 73; *creation*, 67.  
Imperial Laws of War, 68.  
Imperial legate, 75.  
Imperial liaison, 58, 76.  
Imperial Mandate, 12-13, 16-18, 20, 58-61, 70, 127; *authority*, 60-61; *organization*, 60; *origin*, 59.



- Imperial Marines, 34, 54-56, 63, 69, 75, 77, 106, 119, 127; *Commandant of*, 63; *guard*, 55.
- Imperial ministries, 64-66, 75.
- Imperial Naval Academy, 33, 89, 92, 93, 96.
- Imperial Navy, 33, 34, 54, 56, 61, 63, 69, 70, 75, 77, 89, 91, 92, 95, 96, 98, 108, 110, 111, 115, 118, 119, 124, 125, 126, 127, 140, 142.
- Imperial Palace, 13, 51-56, 63-64, 70, 88, 90, 105, 130-131; *Chancellor of*, 54; *staff*, 56, 130.
- Imperial Proclamation 19; *of welcome*, 53.
- Imperial Scepter, 49, 52.
- Imperial Starport, 60-61, 66, 75.
- Imperial Universities, 33.
- Imperial Warrant, 14, 61, 63-64, 81, 93, 110, 113; *unlimited, limited*, 61.
- Imperium, *creating model*, 137; *Emperor Strepthon*, 88-89; *foundation of Second*, 8; *foundation of Third*, 10; *good or evil*, 136; *Great Seal*, 20; *knighthood in Third*, 14; *nobility classes*, 11; *origins of nobility system*, 5; *regalia*, 49; *strong or weak*, 136; *translation of Vilani tiles*, 9.
- Impoverished, 34, 120, 126; *Baronet/Minor Peer character template*, 126.
- Independent Income advantage, 120.
- Inheritance, 36-37, 83; *normal*, 36; *regency*, 36-37; *unusual, restrictions on age, sex, cloning*, 37.
- Intimidation skill, 121.
- Investiture, 53, 83.
- Iolanthe, Empress, 89, 90, 91, 109.
- Iridium Throne, 51, 89, 91, 92, 96, 141.
- Ishimkarun, 7, 23.
- Julian Protectorate, 87, 97.
- K'kree, 83; *heraldry*, 79.
- Karbiili School, 32, 90, 97, 102, 106, 111, 112, 137.
- "Keeping up appearances," 40, 120.
- Kiduuunuzii, 8, 14.
- Kirgashii, Duke Leonard Stephanos, 18, 61, 107.
- Knight, 14, 21-26, 30, 53, 71, 117, 126 137; *amount of*, 137; *character template*, 126; *dubbing*, 53; *fief*, 14; *history*, 14; *orders of*, 21-25, *point totals*, 117; *rank*, 14; *table*, 71; *title*, 26, 30.
- Knighthood, 21-25, 45, 75, 86; *orders of*, 21-25, 45; *planetary orders of*, 86; *seven domains*, 23.
- "Last shall be first," 30, 52, 120.
- Law, 48, 66, 123, 129.
- Legal Enforcement Powers advantage, 118-119.
- Legal Immunity advantage, 119.
- Letter patent, 13, 36, 49, 75, 111.
- Lewis, 37, 106, 139.
- Libert code, 50.
- Lifestyle, 40-42.
- Ling family, 114; *coat of arms*, 114; *Ling-Standard Products*, 114.; *sigil*, 114.
- Literature 47; *skill*, 121.
- Local, *assemblies*, 73; *customs*, 48; *law*, 48-50.
- Local nobility, 12-13; *titles granted*, 12.
- Long Hall, 51.
- Long Night, 9, 49.
- Lord Grand High Chamberlain, 51, 53-55.
- Loyal Retainer/Servant, *character template*, 127.
- Loyalty, 13, 136.
- Luxuries, 42-45.
- Macene, 93, 116.
- Marquis, 16, 27, 60, 71, 137; *amount of*, 137; *demesne*, 60; *fief*, 16; *history*, 16; *rank*, 16; *table*, 71; *title*, 27, 30.
- Marriage, 26, 35-36, 53; *dynastic considerations*, 36; *financial*, 36; *name*, 26; *political*, 36; *polyamory*, 36;
- polyandry*, 35; *polygamy*, 35; *same-sex*, 35; *social*, 36; *wedding*, 53.
- Mercenaries, 141, *campaign*, 139.
- Merchant, *character template*, 124; *Prince campaign*, 138; *Rank advantage*, 118.
- Military 25, 33-34, 40, 62-63, 68, 75, 118-119; *command*, 62-63; *courts*, 68; *regulations*, 68; *i33*, 40, 75, 118; *uniforms*, 25.
- Military academies, 33-34, 75; *curriculum, locations*, 33; *life at*, 34.
- Military Rank advantage, 119.
- Ministry of Colonization, 65, 119.
- Ministry of Commerce, 60-61, 65-66, 75, 123.
- Ministry of Conservation, 65-66.
- Ministry of Defense, 63, 75; *Minister of*, 63.
- Ministry of Information and Communication, 66.
- Ministry of Information, 66.
- Ministry of Justice, 48, 61, 64, 66-68, 70, 103, 107, 119, 123, 125, 128-129, 141; *Minister of* 64, 67; *special agent character template*, 128-129.
- Ministry of State, 53, 64; *Minister of*, 53, 64.
- Ministry of Technology, 65.
- Monetary Board, 65.
- Moot, Imperial, 14-15, 18-19, 21, 28, 49, 51, 56, 67, 70, 72-75, 79, 81, 99, 102, 114, 130-131; *President of*, 73; *resolutions of*, 73; *Speaker of*, 73.
- Moot Spire, 21, 28, 51, 56, 72-73, 130-131.
- Mora, 18, 25, 27, 61, 73, 76, 93, 107, 110, 142.
- Muan Gwi, 25, 81-82, 99, 108; *Order of*, 82.
- Muendor, Lady Elia Hortalez, 112; *character sheet*, 113.
- Multiple titles, 28.
- Murdoch family, 114; *coat of arms*, 114; *Murdoch Holdings*, 114.
- Muudashir, Duchess Delphine Adorania, 18, 61, 93, 107, 110, 142; *title*, 27.
- Naval Intelligence, 95, 97.
- Naval Officer, *character template*, 124-125.
- Nemesis, 140.
- Nonrenewable resources, 66.
- Oberlindes family, 110, 115-116; *Oberlindes Lines*, 110, 115-116.
- Office of Calendar Compliance, 65, 131.
- Office of News and Public Relations, 56.
- Office of Personal Transportation, 56.
- Office of Security, 55-56, 131.
- Office of Standards, 65.
- Office of the Emperor, 54.
- Office of the Judge Advocate General, 68, 70.
- Office of the Mint, 65.
- Office of the Palace, 54-55.
- Officer Training Corps, 75.
- Official appointments, *listings*, 13.
- Offworlder nobles, 16.
- Orb of Power, 49.
- Orbital skydiving, 46.
- Order of Gvadakoung 14, 21, 24, 81; *emblem*, 81.
- Order of Hlyuea, 21, 78; *emblem*, 78.
- Order of Imperial Sunburst, 21.
- Order of the Arrow, 22, 26-27, 90-91; *badge*, 22.
- Order of the Emperor's Guard, 21-22, 113; *badge*, 21.
- Order of the Starship and Crown, 21, 107; *badge, headquarters*, 21.
- Pages, 52, 54-55, 130; *character template*, 130.
- Patron, 112, 119, 126, 138-141; *advantage*, 119.
- Paulo III, Emperor, 50, 88, 105.
- Peerage, 14-15, 48, 75, 111, 115.
- Philosophy skill, 121.
- Planetary law, 48.
- Planetary nobility, 11, 15, 83, 86; *responsibilities and obligations*, 86.
- Plotlines, 141-142.
- Pocket empires, 86-87.
- Politics skill, 73, 121.
- Prejudices, 82-83.
- Prime Minister, *Terra* 109; *Darrian Council*, 78.
- Princes, 19-20, 28; *history*, 20; *rank*, 19; *title*, 28.
- Princesses, *see Princes*.
- Prisons, 49, 64, 70-71, 111.
- Private world, 37, 40, 56.
- Proxy, 41, 63, 72, 81, 92, 102; *open*, 72; *limited*, 72.
- Psonics, 46, 49, 61, 66, 82, 95.
- Psychohistory, 89.
- Punishment, 67-71.
- Rank, 11-12, 14-19, 74.
- Rank nobility, 11-12, 14-19, 74; *titles granted*, 12.
- Regalia, 49, 52-53.
- Regent, 36-37; *regency council*, 37.
- Regina, 18, 61-62, 115.
- Remittance man, 138-140; *campaign*, 138-139.
- Renewable resources, 66.
- Residence, 40.
- Rhylanor, 18, 46, 61, 107, 110, 116.
- Rim, the, *see Solomani Rim*.
- Robots, 41.
- Rogue, 125-127; *character template*, 125.
- Rule of Man, the, 8-10, 14, 17, 20, 34, 99.
- Rules of War, 61, 68-69, 140.
- Saarpuhii, 8, 17.
- Santanocheev, Admiral Lord, 63, 93, 107, 110.
- Sarrii, 8, 16.
- Savoir-Faire skill, 42, 47.
- Schunamann family, 116; *crest*, 116.
- Scientist/Researcher, *campaign*, 139.
- Security Clearance, 119, 132; *advantage*, 119.
- Seneschal, 41, 75, 92, 95, 103, 106, 118, 128; *character template*, 128.
- Sense of Duty disadvantage, 121.
- Servants, 41; *staff, household*, 41.
- Shakkanakhu, 8, 17.
- Shiishuginsa family, 116.
- Shiishuginsa, Empress Antiama, 32, 116.
- Shipping Commission, 65.
- Sigil, 41, 44, 97.
- Simalr family, 48, 111.
- Simalr, Doctor *Frater Ganidiirsi* Ling, 111-112; *character sheet*, 111.
- Slavery, 41, 61.
- Small claims courts, 69.
- Social skills, 42.
- Social-climbing, 42, 50.
- Soegz, Admiral, 81, 96-97.
- Sol, 21, 25, 49, 55, 98-99, 108, 112, 137; *badge*, 25; *guard*, 55; *Order of*, 21, 25, 49, 111.
- Solomani, 5, 7, 35, 79-80, 83, 99, 107-109, 112-114, 142.; *Imperial aristocracy*, 80.
- Solomani Autonomous Region, 37.
- Solomani Confederation, 79-80, 83, 98, 137.
- Solomani Movement, 17, 48.
- Solomani Party, 79-80, 98, 109.
- Solomani Rim, 16-17, 21, 25, 37, 55, 58, 81, 98-99, 108-109, 111, 120, 142; *Senate*, 108; *War*, 21, 25, 55, 98, 107.
- Spinward Marches, 16, 18, 27, 37, 46, 58, 73, 76, 80, 87, 91, 93, 103, 106-107, 109-110, 142; *duchies*, 18; *Senate*, 73.
- Sports, 46.
- Spouses, *titles for*, 29.
- Staff of Office, 49, 51-52.
- Starport Authority, 60-61, 66, 75.
- Status advantage, 119-120.
- Status, 42, 118-119, 122; *table*, 119.
- Subinfeudation, 6, 38, 77.
- Summary of Imperial Positions, *table*, 71.
- Sword Worlds, 43, 80; *Imperial aristocracy*, 80.
- Sylea, 9-10, 14, 21-23, 30, 33, 41, 44, 46, 53, 55, 113-114, 137; *guard*, 55; *marriage ceremony*, 53; *Order of*, 14, 21, 23, 113, 113; *Order of badge*, 22-23; *system of nobility*, 9.
- Sylean Federation, 9-10, 14, 23, 30, 41, 44; *Grand Senate*, 9-10, 14, 23.
- Tabari, Sir Mutava, 111-112; *character sheet*, 112.
- Tancredi family, 116.
- Tauribi family, 102.
- Tauribi, Archduke Ishuggi, 8, 23, 102-103.
- Taxes, 57, 65.
- Terra, 5-6, 8-9, 14-15, 21, 25, 33, 35, 43, 45, 79-80, 108-109, 139; *ancient*, 14; *Middle Ages*, 15, *navy* 8-9; *nobility precursors*, 5-6; *Order of*, 21, 25; *Sons of*, 80.
- Terraforming, 60, 66.
- Throne Room, 51-52, 55.
- Title, 7-9, 12-18, 27-30, 69, 48-49, 53, 83-85, 113, 118; *courtesy*, 29; *extinct*, 48; *false* 15, 118; *local*, 84-85; *multiple*, 28; *planetary*; 83; *revoke*, 48-49; *Vilani*, 7-8, 14-18.
- Treason, 48-49, 62, 67-68, 71.
- Trial, 49, 67-71.
- Tribunal, 67, 69.
- Tuhuir, 81, 82.
- Tukera family, 38, 102-106, 115-116; *Tukera Lines*, 102-106, 115.
- Tukera, Count Blaine Trulla, 104-106; *character sheet*, 104.
- Tukera, Duchess Margaret Yetrina Alkhalikoi, 19, 36, 105-106; *character sheet*, 105.
- Tukera, Lady Arianne Rasaputram, 103-104, 106.
- Unified Armies, 54-56, 58, 60, 62-63; *Lord Marshal of*, 63.
- Universities, 32-33, 90-91, 102, 106, 108-109, 111; *entrance requirements, curriculum*, 32; *Imperial*, 33; *of Sylea*, 33, 90-91, 102, 106, 111; *of Terra*, 33, 107-108.
- Vargr, 81, 83, 87, 96-97, 106, 110, 115; *Extents*, 81, 115; *Imperial aristocracy*, 81.
- Vegan, 81, 108.
- Vegan Autonomous District, 81.
- Verdicts, 68, 70-71.
- Vilani, 5, 7-9, 14-18, 34, 36, 44, 83, 87, 89-90, 96, 103, 113, 116, 136; *assimilated*, 9; *beer*, 43; *bureaux*, 7; *central council*, 7; *chess*, 34; *de-emphasizing of bureaux*, 9; *early noble titles*, 8; *Imperium*, 7, 9; *nobility precursors*, 7-8; *titles translated by Imperium*, 9; *titles updated to Third Imperium*, 14-18.
- Viscountesses, *see Viscounts*.
- Viscounts, 16, 27, 58, 60, 71; *demesne*, 16, 60; *history*, 16; *rank*, 16; *responsibilities*, 58; *table*, 71; *title*, 27.
- Vland, 15, 23, 44, 49, 55, 90 102-103, 114; *guard*, 55; *mashakhir*, 44; *Order of*, 15, 23, 114; *Order of badge*, 23.
- Voting, 73-74.
- Wanderer*; 132-133.
- War crimes, 69, 140.
- Wealthy, 38, 74, 77, 118, 120, 126-127; *Baronet/Minor Peer character template*, 126-127; *Very*, 120, 127.
- World ruler, *character template*, 132.
- Writing skill, 121.
- Yacht, 46, 132-135, 140; *Class 100-ton courier*, 133; *Class 100-ton racing*, 133; *Class 100-ton*, 132; *deck plans*, 134-135; *racing*, 46.
- Zhakirov, Emperor, 17, 20, 37, 116.
- Zhodani, 49, 82, 89, 110; *Consulate*, 82.
- Zhunastu, Emperor Cleon I, 10, 14, 16-18, 20-22, 44, 49, 51, 60, 64-66; *consolidation of knighthood*, 14.

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