

Charted Space

We place the age of the universe at more than fifteen billion years. The oldest stars in Chartist Space are dim red dwarfs some ten billion years old. This is an area roughly 500 parsecs across within which are concentrated more than a hundred starfaring races on, or regularly visiting, 80,000 worlds. Expeditions toward the galactic core have explored (and settled parts of) a narrow corridor some 30 parsecs across and more than 7000 parsecs long. Expeditions toward the galactic rim have reached nearly 3000 parsecs toward intergalactic space. Lateral expeditions have reached kiloparsec in each direction.

The results have always been the same. First, there is life everywhere. Worlds naturally spawn their own lifeforms, and some produce intelligent races. Second, nowhere beyond Chartist Space has intelligence produced the jump drive that makes interstellar travel possible. Worlds are full of life: space is empty.

Starfarers

Intelligent life first appeared in Chartist Space more than two billion years ago. Intelligent beings first began sublight travel between the stars more than a billion years ago. Short-lived beings found sublight travel tedious and frustrating and contented themselves with confinement to a few star systems. Longer lived races ranged far and wide using generation ships, cold sleep, and even electronic personality transfers.

Jump Drive

Jump drive was an unrealized dream until 350,000 years ago. The Ancients, ancestors of today's Droyne, travelled extensively throughout a region nearly 1000 parsecs across.

Scattered throughout Known Space are the ruins of a civilization that once dominated this region of the galaxy. Early Vilani explorers thought that each site represented a different race, but excavations and explorations soon showed that they were all examples of the same civilization.

Sources of our Knowledge

Our knowledge of the Ancients comes from the exploration and analysis of ruins scattered throughout the region of the galaxy now dominated by humaniti. Much information about the Ancients is classified: many militaries have shown special interest in the Ancients and their technology, primarily because of its potential for weapons and star flight applications. Still, much information, laundered to remove sensitive material, is available as official publications of various governments.

Early Vilani researchers who discovered these ruined sites thought each to be representative of a different race, but excavations and further investigation soon showed that this was not so - common factors demonstrated that all were examples of the same civilization. The term *Ancients* has been generally adopted in recognition of the antiquity of the culture.

No one has found the Ancient homeworld. Investigators always hope that the next Ancient site they discover will be the homeworld; theoretically, there would be fossil evidence that the Ancients had evolved on such a world and the evidence would confirm the find. Some propose that the search is futile: the homeworld was undoubtedly reduced to an asteroid belt during the Final War. Others have at least conjectured as to what the Ancient homeworld would be like. They have analyzed the Droyne, and determined that the race evolved on a small world with a standard or dense atmosphere and at least some water. They base this on the fact that the Droyne have wings and can fly if the world is small enough and the atmosphere dense enough.

Droyne Pre-History

The Droyne first showed evidence of intelligence three million years ago. By about -500,000 they had established city-states which served as trading centers along rivers and coasts. These city-states had populations of about one million, and controlled an area of almost 10,000 square kilometers. Large agricultural areas were worked, often under irrigation. Buffer areas between the city-states were under the control of no one. A warrior class developed to resolve disputes over resources. Technology advanced under pressure from the continuing warfare. After perhaps 10,000 years, the Droyne advanced to a solid tech level 5.

By -470,000, warfare had evolved into a form of ritualized combat involving only the warrior and worker castes. Technology stopped advancing with this development. From -470,000 to about -350,000,

Droyne society remained at a technological plateau.

Ancient Civilization

The Ancients discovered jump drive in -350,000. They appeared suddenly, burst into space, and expanded to hundreds of worlds. They almost certainly ranged beyond the limits of explored space. Their civilization lasted for less than 50,000 years.

The Ancient civilization was wide-ranging. Confirmed Ancient sites have been found in every sector of the Imperium, as well as throughout Vargr and Aslan territory. It is reported, but unconfirmed, that Ancient sites also occur with great frequency in Zhodani territory. It is almost certain that the Ancients ranged beyond the limits of explored space, and that evidence of their travels lies beyond the borders of existing human empires.

The total number of Ancient sites visited by the Imperium is more than 200. All sites have been dated as established at around -300,000. The allowance for error in the dating methods is about 10,000 years: the conclusion is that the Ancient civilization lasted less than 50,000 years in total. Imperial studies of the reported locations of Ancients sites have produced some statistical data. While purely statistical, the results point toward certain conclusions. Overall, the frequency of Ancient sites declines with distance from a central point. That central point is somewhere in the Spinward Marches.

The Ancients apparently had a relatively small population. The planets they settled usually only had one, or at most a handful, of bases. Population estimates vary, but do not exceed one million per world. Some investigators believe that their high population worlds held billions, and that these were reduced to asteroid belts; that only low population worlds were not completely destroyed. Others counter that none of the evidence found in the asteroid belts confirms this. If the asteroid belts created by the Ancients were worlds with populations in the billions or tens of billions, then total population of the Ancients at their height could have been in the trillions. If those worlds, like other sites, held no more than one million each, then the total population of the Ancients has been estimated at less than one billion.

Nothing is known of their languages today. Few Ancient artifacts show any sign of written language, although now and again one is found with external markings on it. The entire extant corpus of the written Ancient language would take fewer than 100 pages of actual-size photographs. Unfortunately, this body of writing is as diverse as other features of Ancient sites, and shows little uniformity from world to world.

Ancient Technology

The most striking aspect of Ancient technology is not its dramatically high level, but its diversity. Of the hundreds of Ancient sites which have been excavated and analyzed, each appears to express a different *type* of technology. It was easy for the Vilani to take each site as a different culture. It appears that each site involved the near total re-invention of even basic technology as it was constructed. The high technology equipment is entirely compatible within a site, but rarely do artifacts from different sites show any ability to function together. One site might use familiar screw fasteners, while another would depend on adhesives for the same tasks. Still others depend on rivets, interlocking ellipsoids, or silicon plastic clamps. One site might show evidence that it used silicon circuit chips; another performed the same function with fiber optics, still another used fluid dynamics, yet another used channelled heat transfer. Even writing, data formats, recording formats, systems, and standards vary between sites.

In some cases, the Ancients moved whole worlds. Their exploits in such matters were so great that even the Final War was unable to destroy them.

The Ancients created a rosette of five worlds at Tireen (in the Vargr Extants). Five planets were shifted to points equidistant from each other in the same orbit, and then transformed into identical habitats. Evidence as to what the worlds were like before the shift is lacking, so the degree of transformation is unknown, but even shifting worlds in their orbits consumes unbelievable amounts of energy, and the Ancients shifted at least four worlds in that system. Each of the worlds has similar physical characteristics, especially hospitable to Droyne. At least one of the worlds in the rosette was inhabited by Droyne when the system was discovered by Vargr in -2530, but they have since died out.

The Ancients also created a ringworld in the Leenitakot system of the Hinterworlds. Even their approach to building a ringworld puzzles the experts. It circles a dim M1 V star at less than 30 million kilometers. The ringworld is a narrow band less than 100,000 kilometers wide, and the construction looks unfinished, without soils, atmosphere, or any provision for life to live on its inner surface. And even so, this small ringworld has an inner surface area equal to 25,000 Terras.

The Ancients

Rarely do excavations of Ancient sites produce working artifacts. One site proved to be a treasure trove with more than 2,000 operating black globes generators almost waiting to be installed in Imperial ships. Each of the devices found was a small metal device measuring about 300 cm on a side with a shiny metal finish. Two minor discolorations on the surface were the on and off switches.

When the device was activated, it projected a black force field in a sphere around the device at a radius of about one meter. In the first experiments with the device, a researcher was cut in half by the force field when he touched the switch. The second was activated remotely by a rod. Both of the Black Globes could not be then turned off, because the off switch was inside the force field.

Eventually, methods of controlling the radius of the field were established. the black globe generator actually absorbs and re-channels energy: the sphere expands as additional energy is applied. Researchers discovered that a ship's energy capacitors could be used to give a measure of control over the devices, channelling sufficient energy to generate an initial field. Fields large enough to encompass the typical larger fighting ship, however, were inherently unreliable; when capacitors become overloaded, the ship explodes. The Imperial Navy adopted the black globe as a form of armor for its fighting ships. Using the many black globe devices found, the navy has been able to produce crude duplicates of them, but researchers are still a long way from a good understanding of how these devices work.

Ancients can also claim the most diverse configurations and uses of robots. Sizes ranged from ultra-miniaturized robots to some the size of small planets. Technical achievements include the full gamut of psionic abilities and true artificial intelligence (independent creative thought). At the height of the Ancient's civilization, robots conceived and carried out vast research projects.

Genetic Engineering

The Ancients had great capabilities as genetic engineers. They could alter living matter to perform specific tasks or fill specific functions. Many life forms still exist today which have been shown to be the result of Ancient genetic tampering.

It has been fairly well established that the Ancients were responsible for transporting humans from Terra to a number of other worlds. It is estimated that humans were taken to more than a hundred worlds, with evidence of their presence on at least 90 worlds. On about 40 worlds, humans took root, surviving a period of barbarism before achieving civilization. Once the Solomani Hypothesis (which theorized that all humaniti came originally from Terra) was accepted, it was simple to analyze the gene pools available to each of the distinct human races. Studies concluded that the Ancients visited Terra many times, taking groups of between 1,000 and 10,000 humans to each of perhaps 100 planets. A few indications suggest that genetic engineering was used on some of these transplanted groups to encourage rapid adaption to their new environments, but that the vast majority of human races were not so tampered with. The reason for Ancient interest in humaniti is unknown. Theories involving humans as slaves, assistants, workers, even as pets have been advanced, but there is not enough evidence to support any specific conjecture.

At approximately the same time that the Ancients snatched human samples from Terra, they took samples of the family *Canidae*. This dog stock was genetically engineered to produce an upright posture, an opposed thumb, and intelligence. Just as the reason for Ancient interest in humaniti is unknown, so is the reason for the Ancients interference in creating the Vargr. Ancient manipulation of the Vargr seems directed at developing the race's potential, instead of directly producing a desired result. This has scholars speculating that the enigmatic race took an incredibly long-term view. They could actually contemplate watching a race evolve over countless millennia. There is evidence that the axial tilt of Lair, the Vargr "home world", was altered to 23.5 degrees (to match Terra's tilt) about -300,000.

The Final War

The Ancient's civilization was destroyed in a cataclysmic war. Over a period of about 2,000 years, they fought with such ferocity that hardly any traces of their existence now remain. Archaeologists today work under a severe handicap trying to piece together a coherent picture of the Ancients, their lifestyle and their works from the bits and fragments that remain. The war was fought with technology far beyond that available to the Imperium, or any civilization which has existed since the days of the Ancients. Estimates place the resources used at tech level 25 or greater, a level virtually incomprehensible to any contemporary mind.

The weapons of the Final War were brutal in their power. They were capable of great destruction. Entire planets were reduced to asteroid belts by what must have been planet-buster bombs. In other

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cases, planetoids and small moons were seized, moved, and directed toward planets to obliterate what must have been bases, cities, and installations. Many worlds still bear the marks of such attacks. Entire worlds appear to have escaped the war unscathed, except for the site itself. Frequently, it is only when an Ancient site is discovered does it become apparent that particular site was the target of an attack. There is no evidence of misses, no pattern bombing, no random attacks. What was attacked was hit: high technology controlled the attacks.

There are various inconsistencies, again, not always explicable, which can be taken as evidence of a great diversity in technologies and abilities. The attacks were seemingly unstoppable even given Ancient technology.

Droyne

Although the Droyne race is well known and has been researched by academics extensively, it was not established that the Droyne lived on multiple worlds until 790. Subsequent research pushed back further and further the time when the Droyne had FTL travel. Only in the last 300 years has the relationship between the Ancients and the Droyne been even partially understood.

The Droyne are known to be physically identical with the Ancients. That is to say, the known installations of the Ancients are physically compatible with the dimensions and requirements of the Droyne. Doors and furniture are best adapted to the limbs and sizes of the Droyne; ledges and balconies are compatible with the flying abilities of the Droyne; pictorial representations of the Droyne can be found in many known Ancient sites. What remains unknown is why the Droyne show no sign of having retained the superior technology of the Droyne.

By -75,000 the race was close to extinction. No Droyne group was above TL 1 or 2. Virtually no group retained the ability to caste. On about twenty worlds, the Droyne simultaneously underwent a renaissance, based on rediscovering the ability to caste. All the recoveries stagnated at about -50,000, again at about TL 5. No further progress was made until the Droyne were contacted by other starfarers.

Humans

The forty-five known human races continued to develop. Three eventually developed jump drives. The others underwent a wide range of cultural and technological development. While some stayed at TL 0, others advanced as high as TL 12. The Suerrat achieved interstellar travel using generation ships. The Geonee developed jump drive from a derelict Ancient starship on their homeworld. The Geonee hold the unshared view that they are a major race: they believe themselves to be descendants of the Ancients. Their homeworld population stabilized at 2,000,000 about -200,000, and they limited themselves to a subsector-size state in Massilia sector.

Then, in -9235, the humans on Vland discovered jump drive.

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Vilani Prehistory

Encounters with the Ancient Automatons

Vilani legends are full of wars between gods, terrible destruction, and occasional intervention in human affairs by the gods. Legends tell of explorers finding great living stone-metal gods with enormous magical powers. Archaeologists believe these "gods" were automated war machines left over from the Final War. These robots, immense juggernauts, and self-repairing installations fought on for 200,000 years after the Final War ended. As they wore out, the battles subsided, and human survivors emerged from their mountain valleys.

The Vilani developed on the smaller major continent. When extended sea voyages became possible, ships ventured to nearby islands. Initial explorers returned with tales of "gods" on the major continent. The search for these robots and their installations drove the first great exploration of Vland. Empires were founded on the power of just one juggernaut. Fortunes were made by programming a simple installation to make steel swords and spearheads. The last of these machines finally ran down around -20,000. Their effects had always been magical. The Vilani did not develop the science to do these things for themselves for 10,000 years.

Vilani homeworld

Vland is a hothouse planet, with an equatorial temperature often exceeding 60 C in the daytime. Its mere 6% axial tilt makes for moderate variations of seasonal weather conditions. While hospitable, Vland boasts an independently developed biology. Humans have difficulty digesting and metabolizing its proteins, sugars, and amino acids. The Vilani just could not use the local plant and animal life for food. Shugilii (miller) is one of the oldest occupations in Vilani society. They used aging and chemical treatment to produce edible food, a task more equivalent to shaman than to cook. Since virtually no food was edible without some treatment, they were powerful members of society. The primitive humans found no need for medically oriented shaman. The alienness of Vland biology was reciprocal: predators could not eat humans, parasites found no nutrition, and bacteria and viruses could not invade and take over. There were few human diseases (and no disease with animal vectors). Even surgery was relatively free from the danger of infection.

Early Vilani society

Three groups dominated society: the shugilii, the aristocrats, and the merchants. Shugilii were the all important food processors, and the merchants controlled trade. The nobility descended from the shugilii. Society allowed nobles multiple marriages: this tended to preserve family property. The third child of every noble was noble: the others were commoners. Higher nobles could create new, lower nobles.

Vilani culture flowered around -11,000, as Vland experienced an industrial revolution. All of the three groups increased their power by participating in creating industrialized wealth. Monogamy prevailed for all classes by the time tech level 4 was achieved. The restriction of nobility to third children remained: it tended to keep the number of nobles constant.

The language now known as Old High Vilani was codified before they entered space. With periodic additions from new technology and the gradual changes any languages experience over time, it served the First Imperium until the Rule of Man.

Biology on Vland

The biological sciences developed painfully slowly on Vland. Biology received little impetus from medical research. Consider the difficulties: no Vlandish animal is as closely related to a human as a lobster or even an oak tree is. The findings of anatomical or biological experiments on animals had no validity for humans.

Scientists found it very hard to fit humans into a theory of evolution. Fossil evidence existed for the rest of Vlandish life, but theories of human evolution relied on far-fetched lines of descent based on superficial similarities. No theory of man's descent received more than tentative acceptance.

Interstellar expansion

Sublight exploration

The first Vilani space explorations occurred in -10,011. Scientific bases in the Vland system were established in -9,900. The Vilani launched sublight interstellar colonization missions starting in -9,800.

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These encountered a non-Vilani human civilization in -9,310.

Tauri/Vland, a mere 2.17 light years from Vland, was the first system visited by their sublight ships. Over 500 years, the Vilani created a small interstellar community of six systems, each with its own colonies and scientific stations. In -9310, an expedition to Tahaver discovered intelligent life, a race of aquatic mantas. Soon thereafter a colonial expedition to Khula discovered archeological evidence of a human civilization which had died out several thousand years before.

Vilani discover Jump Drive

The jump drive was discovered on Vland in -9235. A research team working on the fringes of the Vland system created the first working prototype, and demonstrated its effects.

The Vilani Main is one of the largest jump-1 chains of worlds in charted space. In 10 years, Starships had been built and sent to every system within 20 Parsecs. The astrographic fact of the rifts channelled Vilani exploration and expansion.

Racial Encounters

The Vilani immediately discovered a number of technologically primitive human races on worlds within 60 Parsecs. None of them had developed interstellar travel. The Vilani easily dominated these less advanced races. Dominance allowed the Vilani to impose their culture, law, and interstellar economic community on all of the worlds they encountered. The subject races made few objections: the rewards were too great. Vilani help gradually brought these races to a high technology level. They were assimilated into a loose interstellar community bound by trade and common culture. The Vilani "conquest" was economic, not military, subjugation.

Human homeworld proposed

The Vilani discovered interfertile human races, all alien to the other life forms on their planets, and non-human sophonts clearly related to lower animals on their planets. The two facts sparked a new, correct theory that humaniti originated on one world and that an unknown agency scattered it across the galaxy. Discovery of numerous ruins pointed to the Ancients as the likely agents. Still, some theorized about a previous human galactic empire. Note that the Vilani initially theorized that each Ancient site originated from a different cultural or technological background. The inability to completely tie all the ruins together left open the possibility of a previous human civilization.

In -9000, Vilani scouts in Massilia sector encountered another human race that possessed jump drives. The Geonee claimed to *be* the Ancients. After several centuries, the Vilani discovered that the Geonee had developed their jump drives from a derelict Ancient vessel on their home world.

Where was humaniti's home world? Scientists generally accepted Urunishu in Antares. It possessed a native human race and many species obviously very similar to man.

Creation of the Bureaux

Expansion tested Vilani ability to maintain control across great distance with only jump-1 technology. Also, Vland's three power classes found themselves threatened. The Vilani established three independent bureaux, and assigned each a territory. They initially espoused different philosophies.

Makhidkarun originated with the aristocracy. It emphasized interstellar government. Its coreward territories were the sectors of MESHAN, Mendan, and Amdukan.

Sharurshid originated with the merchant class. It emphasized interstellar trade. The rimward sectors were placed under the control of Sharurshid - which specialized in trade and transport.

Naasirka originated with the *Shugilii*. It floundered when it could not control food supplies on most of its worlds. Ultimately it became a broad-line organization emphasizing energy, transport, and luxury goods.

Each was a complete interstellar government operated for a profit, but responsible for the welfare of its citizens, control of its subjects, and defense of its territory. Terran examples include the British East India Tea Company. The bureau had rights of taxation, defense, and legislation in its territory. Bureau fleets protected its shipping and trade. Bureau armies defended its installations and conquered new worlds if necessary. Mutual assistance agreements allowed them to call upon each other for help or

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reinforcement. The bureaus were nominally responsible to a central ruling council, the Igsiirdi. The Igsiirdi nominally ruled Vland. It received tribute (or taxation) payments from the bureaus and used them to administer public works on Vland. It also allocated newly discovered territories to the bureaux. When considering its powers, realize that the three bureaux appointed its members. In practice, it served only as a forum for the three bureaux to interact.

Continuing expansion

Vilani exploration continued. In -5889, Vilani scouts exploring Sabmiqys (in Antares sector) were destroyed. Fearing the inhabitant's not-understood *Gashukubi* ("Certain death") weapons, the Vilani interdicted the system.

About -6000, the Vilani sphere reached a rough radius of 60 parsecs. At this time the Vegans received jump drive from Vilani-influenced traders. The client races were connected to Vland only by economic and cultural ties. They were not governed or occupied. The client races eventually explored beyond the local sphere, contacting and trading with still more races. The races contacted by Vland's clients gained their technology without being assimilated into Vilani culture. Some retained their own values, which often clashed with the Vilani. The increasing cultural friction resulted in warfare.

The Consolidation Wars

In -5400, the Vilani government began the Consolidation Wars. The Igsiirdi committed the Vilani to subjugating the resisting fringe states. Consolidation brought a marked change in the texture of Vilani society. Before, it stressed peaceful expansion. Neighboring worlds were assimilated in a trade community, and gradually absorbed into Vilani society. Scouts had explored far afield. Exploration ceased when the Consolidation Wars began. The Vilani ignored the undeveloped worlds of Deneb sector, and instead conquered civilized space. Vland conquered and absorbed enemies, allies, and neutrals alike for a thousand years.

In -5430, the Vilani discovered jump-2. They maintained a jealous monopoly of its secrets. The Vilani were at tech level 9 and 10 prior to the founding of the First Imperium. Vland tightened control of its trade sphere, organizing it into a centralized state. In -5273, the Igsiirdi became the governing council of Vland and its trade sphere. It directed the course of the Consolidation wars, managed absorption of the conquered states, and distributed the conquered territories to the bureaux. The central government consisted of a ruling assembly and bureaux responsible for various aspects of government. The First Imperium encompassed ten sectors and nearly five thousand worlds.

The Igsiirdi directed the course of the Consolidation Wars. The Vilani bureaux faced small interstellar states, but each bureau had a separate military. The Igsiirdi arranged coordination when necessary, shared the burden equitably, and prevented over-expansion. The Igsiirdi allocated conquered *territory* to the bureaux. The bureaux, unlike the Domains of the Third Imperium, were not created to annex territory. Territory was not allocated on its discovery. When it was conquered, the Igsiirdi allocated it. The bureaux generally arranged how territory would be allocated before they conquered it.

The Igsiirdi managed the *absorption* of conquered *states*. Interstellar states continued to exist as subject states. They were absorbed into Vilani society as much as possible. Races that were unable to fit into Vilani society were severely restricted.

End of the Wars

The last war ended in -4045. Vland expanded until there were no civilized states on its borders. They did not know of another race possessing jump technology.

In -5,415m the Zhodani discovered the jump drive. After -4,000, they directed their efforts coreward. Thus, they did not know the First Imperium at its prime.

In -3810, the Vargr discovered the jump drive. The Windhorn Rift stopped their initial expansion in the trailing direction. Had they met the Vilani before the Imperium declined, what would have happened?

Ziru Sirka: The First Imperium

In -4045, the **Igsiirdi**, the Vilani ruling council declared the **Ziru Sirka**, the Grand Empire of the Stars. Vilani dating begins at that point. The First Imperium bore many names in its long life, including the Grand Imperium of the Stars, the Grand Imperium, and the Vilani Empire. The Empire initially had no Emperor. Within 10 years, the chairman of the *Igsiirdi* (elected for life by the Council) was the *Ishimkarun* - the Shadow Emperor. In -3610, the Shadow Emperor became the Emperor of the Stars. The Emperor

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ruled through published proclamations, never appearing in public. Upon his death, the *Igsiirdi* elected a successor from its members. The bureaux heads became the *Karunii*, the Little Emperors, all-powerful in their territories. The bureaux supervised all aspects of trade, industry, and government.

With no exterior threats, the Pax Vilanica lasted for nearly 1200 years. The stability raised world tech levels, living standards, and trade levels. Insistence on Vilani dominance and centralized control led to stagnation and cultural rigidity. All exploration was stopped by -4000. Research was initially controlled, and then stopped altogether by -3800. Technology edged into tech level 11 in the Imperium's early centuries. There it stopped for the duration of the Imperium.

At its height, attained in -3500, the First Imperium contained 27 sectors and over 15,000 worlds. It had added 13 sectors to the 14 in the Vilani sphere after the Consolidation wars ended. This increase came from absorbing conquered states, settled regions graduating from "territorial" to "sector government" status, and continuing colonization of previously explored space. Expansion following the beginning of the wars was into civilized areas. Thus, the twenty-seven sectors dominated by the Vilani were congruent with the boundaries of interstellar civilization.

Vilani culture achieved stability at the cost of stagnation. Maintaining centralized control over this vast expanse created cultural rigidity. The old Vilani culture *which developed during the First Imperium* was a rigid caste structure. The three bureaux became increasingly identical. Hereditary positions became commonplace in all three bureaux. A hereditary caste system emerged, or was begun. Each citizen had a specific and set place in the universe. It was each citizen's duty to remain in that place. Society could not afford to let individuals do as they pleased. The subject races that could not be completely absorbed into this society did poorly in the First Imperium. All races who resisted integration into the rigid Vilani culture were severely restricted. The interstellar Vilani society had different degrees of impact on subject cultures. The Darmine culture survived as a submerged cultural identity within the First Imperium. However, the Vilani had little impact on the Droyne way of life.

With cultural maturity, the First Imperium became a pinnacle of interstellar diplomacy. Client states under the protection or the patronage of the Vilani numbered in the thousands. By -3000 the Imperium had begun to decline. Its client states became restive, stretching their growing muscle and expanding. The Imperium's waning power was stretched thin. No new sectors were added to the First Imperium after -2900.

The Imperium was safe as long as there was no exterior threat. It could no longer afford to absorb new interstellar states. Despite all efforts, technology leaked across the borders to aid new interstellar states developing outside of Vilani control. Many threats pushed at many different places along the border. Some carved out small portions of the Imperium: Imperial reactions crushed others. Where it could, the Imperium used diplomacy to play off enemies against one another, but there was still territorial shrinkage over the centuries. It gradually lost territory along its coreward and trailing marches. About -2800, the rigid Vilani culture was shown to be brittle. The young governments took larger and larger chunks of territory, often with the open acceptance of the local citizenry. Mutinies, insurrections, and civil wars became increasingly common. The texture of Vilani culture was decaying.

Contacts: Vargr and Solomani

About -2400 the Vargr began pillaging the civilized areas. Between that date and -1700, Vargr fleets appeared around both sides of the Windhorn Rift.

The rise and expansion of the Terrans led to a series of interstellar wars. Only the Imperium's decadence and inefficient management allowed the Terrans the time needed to build a sizable fleet.

Collapse of the Ziru Sirka

The Ziru Sirka collapsed in -2204 when its leaders lost the will and the popular support to resist. Although the bureaucracy survived, the Vilani Empire admitted that it could not administer itself.

Its fall was accompanied by the rise of the Rule of Man. The new governors could not overcome inertia. The drift toward disintegration was too strongly rooted in the fabric of the Vilani Empire. The ensuing **Long Night** was the inevitable result of the long, oppressive rule of the Vilani Empire. Its effects were felt throughout Vilani dominated space, an area that extended much farther than the Empire's borders.

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Terran Confederation (-2499 to -2204)

The Terran Confederation was founded with the Treaty of New York in -2499. This treaty placed the armed forces of the major nations of Terra under the centralized control of the United Nations (until then, a loose organization of nation states, with no government authority.) The Secretary General exercised a wide range of executive powers. The Secretariat was the chief legislative body. The powerless General Assembly served merely as a forum for debate.

With the admission of the first colonial representative to the General Assembly, the United Nations changed its name to the Terran Confederation. Terran representatives (and thus Terran interests) dominated the Secretariat and the General Assembly throughout their history.

Terran Invention of the Jump Drive (-2431)

The jump drive was initially used within the Terran system, because it was not realized that the drive had interstellar range. Also, the nearest star was jump-2 away. After several years, an expedition placed intermediate refuelling supplies and travelled to a nearby system, Barnard's Star. They encountered a Vilani mining outpost. Joint international expeditions met with the Vilani, and explored nearby systems. The tales they heard of the size of the Vilani imperium were staggering. It came as a shock that most of the worlds beyond a few parsecs away were already claimed. A quick effort was made to settle Barnard's Star even as Vilani prospectors were working on that world. Individual nations built starships and expanded their armed forces. Outposts were reinforced and strengthened. The Terrans progressed to jump-2 in only a few years.

First Interstellar War (-2408 to -2400)

The first military engagement between the Vilani First Imperium and the Terran Confederation began when a Vilani trade caravan ignored traffic control signals. The Terran UNSCA exercised a tenuous fleet control over the several national squadrons.

Fortunately for the Terrans, the Vilani scarcely knew that a war was going on. This war, considered a Terran victory, began the ascendance of the Terrans. It also led to strengthening of the central Terran government. The peace that concluded the war was both uneasy and short.

In -2400, representatives from the Terran colonies were admitted to the General Assembly. The Terran government then changed its name to the Terran Confederation.

The Escalating Interstellar Wars

The second through seven wars were marked by seesaw exchanges of territory, mostly confined to the Dingir and Sol subsectors. After the winning the first three wars, the Terrans finally realized the immensity of the Vilani imperium. They also realized that they could win. The Terrans applied every force they could bring to bear on their enemy. They believed that their successes in gradually expanding their territory were entirely of their own making. For example, in -2389 the Terran Navy began purchasing robots, mainly heavy-duty construction types for making temporary structures used as advanced bases.

The Vilani fought these initial wars with only the forces available to the Vilani provincial governor. He was charged to win wars and maintain the Empire's power - on a limited budget. Appeals to the Emperor were avoided, because they cost heavily in personal power. The local governors often compromised, agreed to some territorial concessions, and then reported victory to their supervisors. Other problems preoccupied the central government. Vilani power, even at this late date, was sufficient to crush the Terrans had it been applied.

Eighth & Ninth Interstellar Wars

The eighth war finally broke open the frontier and ended in the first major Terran victory. After the capture of Dingir, Terran Grand Admiral Manuel Albadawi exploited Vilani confusion by seizing and fortifying Oudh (then Ensular.) The Treaty of Enulsar (which ended the war) ceded all of the First Imperium rimward of Vega to the Terrans.

The Imperium finally took notice, and dispatched major fleet elements to the area, but the time for action was past. Terran invention of the jump-3 drive made the ninth war a crushing victory for Terra. The Imperium relinquished most of the Solomani Rim.

The Nth Interstellar war (-2235 to -2219)

The Terrans were almost constantly on the offensive. Subsequent hostilities were confused. All the later conflicts were interrupted several times by cease-fires, armistices, or shaky periods of peace. Indeed, a new war could break out before the existence of a peace treaty could be conveyed to the respective capitals. All the wars after the Ninth are referred to with the indeterminate variable 'N'. Proper usage calls for the war to be defined with the actual years being discussed.

The Terrans deployed ship-mounted meson guns during the Nth Interstellar War. Rumors that they were using the Gashukubi ("Certain death") weapon largely broke the Vilani will to fight. The series of wars ended when the First Imperium collapsed, as much from its own weight, age, and decadence as from the Terran victories. The First Imperium collapsed when its leaders lost the will and the support of the people to resist.

RULE OF MAN

The Rule of Man is also called the *Second Imperium* and, disparagingly, the *Ramshackle Empire*. This short-lived interstellar empire formed after the defeat of the First Imperium by the Terran Confederation. By this time, the Terrans were fully united under a world government. Many Vilani subject races welcomed the Terrans. The Vegans, restricted under the First Imperium, welcomed Terran victory. The Terrans moved quickly to occupy the remaining Vilani territory. They carried their technology with them, including robots.

Terran naval officers were dispatched throughout the Vilani Empire. Between -2219 and -2204 more than 100,000 naval officers were sent to take control of the reins of government, direct local bureaucracies, and maintain peace and order. In some cases, Terran ensigns administered whole worlds and mere commanders whole subsectors.

The 15-year Peace & Declaration of the Rule of Man

The conquered territories were under military rule from -2219 to -2204. Vilani military forces were incorporated into the Terran forces. Terran naval officers occupied key posts in the Vilani bureaucracy, which was otherwise retained intact. The Terrans were called upon to administer an immense interstellar empire that had already admitted it was too strained to do the job itself. If the bureaucracy had collapsed (and trade ceased), hundreds of worlds would have died as sources of supplies were cut off.

Between -2219 and -2204, the Terran Navy learned to deal effectively with the Vilani, and to be sympathetic to the Vilani people. That the Vilani openly accepted the Terrans made it easier to view them as friends deserving of respect and protection.

In -2204, the Terran Secretariat voted to transfer control of the conquered territories directly to Terra, and incorporate the Vilani Imperium into the Terran Confederation. Such a move would make all Terrans millionaires, but at an untold cost to citizens of the Vilani Imperium. Admiral Hiroshi Estigarribia, the commander-in-chief of the Terran Navy, realized that the Confederation government could not possibly control the vast territories of the First Imperium. He proclaimed himself Regent of the Vilani Imperium and Protector of Terra, with both states now united in the Rule of Man.

Nearly all of the fleet sided with Estigarribia, both because it was composed mainly of colonials (who were under represented in the Terran Confederation government) and because of his careful preparation. The Confederation was dissolved without significant resistance. Terran fleet headquarters at Dingir became the capital of the Rule of Man. The bureaucracy remained centered on Vland, although arrangements were made to gradually transfer it elsewhere.

Establishment of the Imperial Line

Upon Estigarribia's death, his chief of staff succeeded him, and crowned himself Emperor Hiroshi II. Estigarribia did not actually assume the crown, but is known as Emperor Hiroshi I. Hiroshi II transferred all government functions from Dingir and Vland to a more centrally located world, renamed bilingually Hub/Ershur. This world remained the capital of the Rule of Man for the next four hundred years.

The Vilani had coped with the problems of ruling a large empire by a rigid caste system, with all citizens permanently rooted in their places. Terran rule was no more enlightened or progressive than that of the Vilani. From a tight, paternalistic economic empire, the pendulum swung to a disjointed military empire. Neither was really tenable over such a large domain.

The Solomani came first as conquerors, then as administrators, and finally as citizens. Their

The Third Imperium

establishment in positions of power lasted into the Third Imperium. The Terrans abolished this system, but were unable to replace it with a new social order. Destruction of the caste system swept away the foundations of society. Key industries fell apart as their workers moved elsewhere.

Although fairly brief, the Rule of Man allowed the Solomani to spread throughout much of the region presently ruled by the Third Imperium. The Terrans were superb in expanding to other systems and other worlds. People of Terran ancestry or culture (many of them assimilated Vilani) assumed positions of power on most worlds, becoming industrialists and administrators. During the Rule of Man wealthy Vilani tended to change their names to Solomani surnames.

Large Vargr migrations passed through Meshan, Mendan, and Amdukan. Many worlds gained and retained Vargr populations. The territory became self-governing, except for a small bureaucracy imposed by Terra that presided over it.

Spinward events

Historians believe that many worlds in the Trojan Reach were settled during the Rule of Man. Some worlds have been isolated from outside contact since they were first settled. Fleeing Vilani colonized the Trojan Reaches in -2074. Ergyn subsector is believed to have been settled -1700 and since regressed to low-tech societies.

In -2,000, Zhodani traders encountered Vilani in Provence and Corridor. Imperial citizens next contacted the Zhodani in 50.

Reasons for Eventual Collapse

The new blood that the Terrans infused staved off collapse for 400 years, but the Terrans could not stop the inevitable. After 2000 years, the collapse of the Vilani Imperium was inevitable. The problems of sheer size and scientific stagnation, which brought about the fall of the First Imperium, continued to plague the Rule of Man. The -1776 date for the end of the Rule of Man is arbitrary, and notes the financial collapse of the central government. Monetary circles lost confidence when the Hub/Ershur Treasury refused to honor a monetary draft of the Antares branch treasury. This marked the end of large-scale interstellar trade, and of effective government power within the Rule of Man.

Although it lasted for many years, the Rule of Man had ceased to be a viable interstellar community. The period known as Twilight had begun.

THE LONG NIGHT

Twilight (-1776 to -1526)

The failure of the Rule of Man triggered the collapse of most of interstellar civilization. Twilight, the period of collapse, began in -1776 and lasted for two and a half centuries. Financial collapse ended large-scale interstellar trade within the Imperium. Government lost efficiency, businesses failed or retrenched, and the public was content to wait out the problems around them.

Actions were seen as building a new and better order, but without agreement on what was being built or why. The public lacked confidence in existing institutions, but it also lacked confidence in the new ones that were created. Both collapsed, leaving nothing in their place. Vargr raids and colonization increased after the Rule of Man collapsed. The Sack of Gashikan in -1658, however, demonstrated why Vargr corsairs became a byword for pillage and violence. The Vargr who reached into the human-dominated reaches of Gashikan and Mendan moved on to eventually settle the Vargr Enclaves. By -1700, Vargr pillaging had stopped.

The many worlds of the Imperium turned inward. Interstellar travel and commerce continued, but at a greatly reduced rate. Interstellar trade retracted to local markets, leaving a lawless waste open to piracy and raiding. Many worlds died, unable to maintain their previous standard or to recapture the lower technological levels necessary for survival. Some worlds did not even know for sure that the empire had fallen; communication ships simply stopped coming.

Some worlds banded together in pocket empires, mere shadows of the **First Imperium**. Some fought for the scraps of empire that were left. The fighting and the turmoil lasted nearly 250 years. The end of Twilight is commonly accepted as -1526, when the last government body claiming to be the Rule of Man ceased to exist.

9 P.M. (-1526)

Historians consider this the point where true darkness begins for two reasons. First, industrial output throughout the Imperium declined. Second, trade ships could not travel over one year (30 Parsecs) without being attacked.

Virtually all humans in Vilani-dominated space pulled back from space. Some small human governments retained their starship technology, and served their own worlds (usually no more than twenty or thirty) and their neighbors. Interstellar trade ceased otherwise, unless taken over by aliens (usually intermittently.) Vargr traders visited (and sometimes raided) the coreward sectors. Aslan traders wandered through the rimward sectors. In -1044, the Aslan discovered the route across Great Rift.

The self-defeating nature of piracy eliminated it as a threat by -1400. There was no longer enough commerce to make piracy viable. Night continued for another twelve hundred years. Worlds turned in on themselves, developing local resources and moving in their own directions.

Psionics

Until c. -1000, psionics was little studied in most regions, except on a disorganized level (parapsychology, the occult, spiritualism, etc.) It was known and practiced by the Zhodani and some minor races, but it was by no means widespread. When many races (human and non-human) turned introspective, and began to study psionics seriously. Study revealed much about the empirical nature of the phenomena, and psionics assumed scientific validity. The principles involved were, and remain, little understood: psionics remained a backwater science.

Dawn (? to -0)

There were several false dawns: worlds expanded, met apathy or financial losses or opposition, and abandoned the projects. The first successful dawn occurred on Sylea in -30.

Solomani Rim

Terra retained at least TL 9: it was the center of a ten-parsec trading community. In -1110, the Terrans established a new interstellar government, the Old Earth Union. Numerous splinter states emerged at the same time. The Easter Concord (all worlds within 10 parsecs of Easter) and the Dingir League (all worlds within five parsecs of Dingir) are the other examples in the Solomani Rim. The Vegan Polity survived the Long Night relatively intact.

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Spinward Marches

Darrian was contacted by Terran traders in -1511, when 30,000 Terrans (TL 10) settled on Daryen (TL 3). The culture achieved jump drive in -1137, and rapidly progressed to tech level 15. In -924, disastrous solar flares devastated the homeworld. The Darrians regained space flight only in -271.

The Zhodani Consulate reached its present size c. -1000. This included some small settlements in the Marches, which lasted until they were evicted between 200 and 400.

Algine (Spinward Marches 2308) was settled c. -1000 by Solomani sublight colonization ships. In -420, colonists left Terra. They eventually settled the Sword Worlds subsector in -399.

Contact with the Aslan

Daibei sector was on the frontier with the expanding Aslan. When human and other races resisted Aslan settlement, a series of low level raids became the norm. The Aslan settled and raided incessantly, and the sector launched incessant raids into Aslan territory in return.

Successor states in the Imperium

Vland remained a center of technology and culture throughout the Long Night. Few worlds on the Vilani Main (in Vland sector) gave up interstellar travel during the Long Night.

The Darmine cultural region, in Ilelish, survived the Long Night with little harm.

Meshan, Mendan, and Amdukan sectors survived as a number of human and Vargr dominated confederations.

The Sylean Federation formed in -650.

Sylean Federation (-650 to -30)

The Sylean Federation grew to eventually become the Third Imperium. Established on Sylea in -650, the Federation grew slowly, absorbing several surrounding worlds and increasing trade and interaction between worlds. It reestablished trade between certain worlds, and as the Federation grew, technology was rediscovered. Shudusham was one of the first worlds to join. Its rich mineral ores formed the backbone of the new Federation's industrial and military power.

The noble Shiishuginsa family founded *Zirunkariish* in -425. The oldest records of *Tukera's* and *GSbAG's* existence are agreements with the Sylean Federation. *LSP* grew with the Federation. These four comprised the Sylean industrial base.

In -143, Dover-Gabe, a Sylean mining and manufacturing company, was awarded a contract for courier robots. They provided efficient and secure transportation of secret military communications. In -112, a terrorist attack killed the premier of Fornol (Core 1715) aboard the 90,000-ton Sylean battleship *Empires Banner*, which was on a goodwill mission. This led to the Shudusham Accords of -110, which regulated use and responsibilities for robots.

Only Sylean ships had meson screens. The Sylean Federation had a solid tech level of 12, and a definite lead over competing interstellar states.

EXPANSION (-30 to 0)

By -30, the real power in the Federation was an industrial consortium headed by Cleon Zhunastu. Cleon used his family's industrial base and the support of other families to obtain control of the Federation government. He began an active campaign to increase the number of worlds under its control. This small group of industrialized worlds began a campaign to restore interstellar trade on a grand scale. It succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. The campaign restored trade and communications between hundreds of worlds. The Long Night was finally coming to an end.

A firm industrial base, a strong interstellar government, and high population pressure provided the impetus necessary to establish an empire. *Zirunkariish* was a major source of funds for Cleon's campaign. Thirty years of diplomatic maneuvering, public relations campaigns, active commercial warfare, and occasional military action extended Federation control to the edges of Core sector.

The Sylean Federation Scout Service (SFSS) was largely responsible for rapidly turning the Sylean Federation into the Third Imperium. The SFSS was established with two main functions: exploring neighboring regions, and re-contacting their inhabitants and using advanced Sylean technology to lure planets into the Federation.

CREATION OF THE THIRD IMPERIUM

The tightly-controlled, highly-centralized Federation government was not suitable for a large interstellar state. A more suitable form would allow greater local autonomy, but maintain cohesion over large distances. Cleon decided the Federation had served its purpose. He envisioned a territory larger than a single sector. To claim all former territories of the First and Second Imperiums, Cleon founded the *Third Imperium*.

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 backwards through this emperor to the Rule of Man and the First Imperium. In the 651st year of the Sylean Federation, the Grand Senate of the Federation "persuaded" Cleon to accept the Imperial crown. He was crowned Emperor of the Third Imperium and proclaimed the 651st year of the Sylean Federation to be the Year Zero of the Third Imperium.

The Imperium initially bypassed areas unwilling to join, while expanding to encompass as much former imperial territory as possible. It used a link and branch system for exploring systems, connecting worlds and societies, and establishing bases. The Imperium sponsored the links, and others created the branches.

Vilani participation in establishing the Imperium

Vland joined the Third Imperium soon after its formation. This enabled the Imperium to expand into the only frontier available: Corridor, Deneb, and Spinward Marches sectors. The Imperium also benefited by bringing the three Vilani megacorporations (*Naasirka*, *Makhidkarun*, and *Sharurshid*) under the same banner with the Sylean industrial base, working to expand the Imperium and their markets. All segments of the Imperium benefitted by having three more megacorporation with which to trade.

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The Vilani were heavily involved in settling Corridor and Deneb sectors, and later with the Pacification Campaigns in Gushemege and Lishun sectors. The conservative nature of Vilani society fostered intensive development of nearby areas (as opposed to more distant), while the spinward sectors were settled almost entirely by Solomani.

Cleon I set down the basic policy that the worlds ruled themselves. Likewise, the rights and duties of nobility may vary between worlds and cultures. This policy naturally helped in convincing different cultures to join. No interstellar groupings of systems was allowed within the Imperium. The Imperium controlled interstellar space: only peerage nobles (counts and higher) had interstellar authority. All nobles were made responsible for enforcing and affirming Imperial law. In these early years, Cleon I created the system of nobility that has ruled the Third Imperium to this day. The major orders of knighthood were established in this period. Cleon I established the *Order of Starship and Crown* in 17, and Cleon II created the *Order of the Emperor's Guard* in 52. It has been argued that Cleon I used such distinctions to distract the nobility. As worlds and splinter states joined the Imperium, they fought for honors and positions when they could have contested real political power instead.

Likewise, setting legislative authority at the sector level provided a balance to the abolishment of interstellar states. Such states initially formed voting blocs that controlled legislation. Long-term pressures in such a setting guaranteed the breakdown of such blocs as problems separated special interests. Cleon did not create any organization larger than the sector, except the Imperial bureaucracy. Most Imperial bureaux were set up with offices in each subsector. This tended to keep blocs from forming; it also provided more opportunity for local patronage.

Emperor Cleon II abdicated in 54 in favor of his chancellor, Artemsus Lentuli, and spent the rest of his life as a one-man fire brigade at the edge of Imperial expansion. Emperor Artemsus was responsible for the Pacification Campaigns and the creation of the Domains.

In 50, the first contact between the Third Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate occurred. In 53, Imperial Scouts contacted the Sword Worlds. While the scouts explored the Spinward Marches, the megacorporations established a sprawling base at Deneb. Corporations, independent merchants, and settlers set off from Deneb to worlds off the mainstream. Deneb absorbed colonization efforts for 50 years. Imperial settlement of the Marches began in earnest when LSP sponsored settlement of Mora in 60 as a base for exploring and colonizing the sector. Others quickly developed the branch to Regina. In 75, Regina was settled. Imperials quickly settled other worlds near Regina. Increasing trade moved the center of spinward trade from Deneb to Mora.

Settlement demanded better information. Between 60 and 160, the IISS surveyed in detail Deneb and Spinward Marches sectors. In 148, scouts contacted the Darrian Confederation. During these early years, the frontier was a peaceful place, relatively secure and stable, while the Imperial interior was racked with Pacification Campaigns and ugly little wars.

PACIFICATION CAMPAIGNS (75 TO 120)

By 75, large areas had become impediments to continued expansion and consolidation. Several approached a full sector in size. The Imperium prepared to force membership on worlds. Emperor Artemsus created the Domains as instruments for continuing Imperial expansion. Each Archduke was to reduce resistance in his Domain. The Imperium aimed to incorporate all worlds within the former borders of the First and Second Imperiums.

A series of operations forced membership in the Imperium upon those worlds which resisted the initial efforts to annex them. Although predominantly economic and diplomatic in nature, the campaigns did see the Imperium use force when peaceful methods failed. Imperial battle fleets and ground forces rarely failed when brought to bear. Conclusion of the Pacification Campaigns in 120 marked the end of the initial phase of the Imperium's growth.

Vilani Pacification Campaign:

The Archduke of Vland pacified Dagudashaag sector. This campaign targeted portions of Dagudashaag and Gushemege sectors. Parts of Gushemege were extensively ravaged. They were resettled from Vland sector under a special program sponsored by Makhidkarun.

Ilelish Pacification Campaign: Ilelish Domain was easily incorporated into the Imperium for two reasons. First, the populace welcomed a successor to the Rule of Man. Second, the region was still fragmented and disorganized from the effects of the Long Night. The Archduke of Ilelish pacified Ilelish sector and the Darmine region in Zarushagar. This cultural region, suppressed by the First Imperium, had

been independent throughout the Long Night.

The Sylean Pacification Campaign: The Emperor, as Archduke of Sylea, pacified in Fornast and Delphi sectors.

The Antarean Pacification Campaign: Antares Domain was only partially absorbed into the Imperium. Most of it had not been part of the Rule of Man, and it was not seriously affected by the Long Night. The Archduke of Antares pacified much of Lishun sector. In 89, the Antarean Pacification Campaign annexed the Antares Cluster, twelve worlds lying rimward of Antares. The Imperium failed to incorporate the coreward sectors of Meshan, Mendan, and Amdukan sectors.

In 100 IISS scout ships reached the Solomani Rim sector.

REDIRECTION (120 TO 175)

After the campaigns were declared over, efforts turned to integrating and developing the acquired worlds. Exploration was directed at improving knowledge of territories within the frontiers.

Rydel expeditions (153 and 160): Inesh Rydel led expeditions seeking a usable jump route across the Great Rift from Corridor (rimward) to Deneb. A viable rift route would make the frontier sectors "behind the claw" much more accessible, cutting travel and communication time dramatically. The first expedition originated from Sinta (Corridor 2037) and eventually arrived by various routes at Ashishinipar (Corridor 0931). Nearly a year was spent trying to find a way to go further but to no avail.

A second attempt, made by a different route, ended on Ishirdu (Corridor 0338). This proved closer, but not close enough to Yoma/Vast Heavens (Deneb 3031), the closest possible world in this area of the rift.

THE JULIAN WAR (175-191)

The failure to annex Meshan, Mendan, and Amdukan sectors was the biggest failure of the pacification campaigns. Martin I, frustrated after nine years of negotiations, mobilized the Imperial fleets in 175 to annex those sectors. In 178, Imperial forces captured Lasla, the capital, and several important industrial worlds deep in Meshan sector. The populace refused to concede. Sporadic fighting along the Meshan and Mendan borders characterized the fighting until 185.

In 185, concentrated forces of the Julian Protectorate crossed the rift of the Empty Quarter in an end run against Antares sector. Long range raids virtually destroyed the Depots in Antares and Ley sectors. The Imperium withdrew fleets from the frontier to defend interior communication lines. Protectorate fleets concentrated against the Antares Cluster. Relatively undefended, it fell to a brief campaign. Using it as a base of operations, the Protectorate carried the war into the Imperium.

After narrowly losing several battles to regain the Antares Cluster, Emperor Martin I agreed to peace terms. The Antares Cluster was organized into the League of Antares, and given autonomous status within the Imperium.

ANTEBELLUM

After the bad experience with Antares, the Emperors returned to peaceful expansion and colonization as the primary means to increase the number of imperial worlds. Antebellum, the period 210 to 604, was characterized by Imperial expansion, large-scale colonization efforts, integration of numerous regions into the Imperium, and an overall mood of growth and exploration.

Vargr Campaigns (220 to 348): Martin II recognized the growing importance of Deneb and the Spinward Marches. He began the Vargr Campaigns to clear the routes connecting the frontier districts to the main territories of the Imperium. The expanding Imperium met established Vargr states of varying sizes. The period encompasses wars, encounters, conflicts, and disputes between the Imperium and various Vargr states in Vland, Corridor, and Deneb sectors along the Imperium's coreward edge. These sectors required heavy Vilani involvement. Meanwhile, other coreward areas rebuilt fleets and armies used up or drained during the Julian War.

The major Imperial expansion and settlement of the Spinward Marches occurred between 200 and 400. Regina and six nearby worlds joined the Imperium in 250. Still, the area remained a frontier. Even in 326, many worlds were at low tech levels. Travel between the few high technology (and well-settled) worlds was a dangerous undertaking.

New megacorporations:

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In 221, Lucienne Hortalez founded *Hortalez et Cie*. this insurance house specialized in loans to planetary governments and underwriting large-scale projects. Schunamann founded *SuSAG* in 252, with money from new techniques for refining psionic drugs. SuSAG used Schunamann's techniques to process other drugs. It engaged in a wide variety of chemical, pharmaceutical, and gene engineering activities. Sternmetal also grew to megacorporation size in this period. It has always been primarily a mining and manufacturing entity, making power generation and food synthesis equipment. These three grew by filling basic needs of new settlements: financing, medicine, energy, and food.

Cleon the Mad (244-5)

Cleon III ascended the throne in 244, and quickly proved himself a homicidal maniac. He marched suspected traitors off the sky palace's many terraces. When his advisors contradicted him, he had them shot or shot them himself. Cleon refused to abdicate, and personally shot those who asked him to step down. The dwindling cabinet agreed that he had to go. A secret meeting of the Moot approved the decision in advance. The Duchess Porfiria, Minister of Justice, performed the deed. The gunfight lasted less than three minutes. Porfiria's heroic action and position was sufficient for the Moot to confirm her as Empress. This action also established precedent for succession by right of assassination.

Around 300, rimward Imperium expansion reached the edge of the Solomani Rim sector. At this point, Imperial technology reached a widespread tech level 13.

PEACE ONCE AGAIN (348 to 418)

By the end of the Vargr Campaigns, the First Imperial Survey was well under way, having begun in 318. With the increasing amounts of survey data, the scouts needed a place to store it. In 399, the Scouts refurbished the research station on Reference/Core as the repository for survey data.

Episodic, but continuing, struggles between Aslan clans and human settlers had gone on for a millennium. Gradual Imperial annexation of the regions led to a series of peace treaties (*Peace of Ftahair*) with the clans involved. These established a thirty-parsec wide buffer zone between the Imperium and the Hierate. Many worlds had been incorporated into the Imperium by then. As a gesture of peace and mutual respect, the Aslan Guard regiment was formed from Aslan native to the Imperium and stationed at the Imperial Palace.

ILELISH REVOLT (418-435)

Imperial expansion aimed at increasing the number of worlds under Imperial authority led to reduced priority for the problems of high population member worlds. In 399, several high population worlds in the Ilelish sector began negotiating for an autonomous region in their sector. They felt that greater control over their own interstellar trade was the key to greater profitability.

In 418, the world of Ilelish declared its independence from the Imperium. Twelve other high population worlds joined it in the following year. By 420, the revolt had spread to six subsectors.

Martin II imposed a blockade around the revolt. Massed Imperial fleets enforced the blockade, and, one by one, cowed the rebellious worlds into surrendering without any actual large-scale violence. Ilelish surrendered in 435. Its equatorial zone was evacuated, and then blasted into sterility. Dlan, a loyal high-population world became the new sector capital. It was hoped that this would put an end to such rebellion.

FRINGE EVENTS

In 420, the Scout Service released the first astrographic and demographic survey of the Imperium. This publication, more than a century in the making, made the Imperium's records available for public use.

Ancient sites

Many new Ancient sites were found during the century-long First Survey. The obvious example is Antiquity/Corridor, the only functioning site ever discovered. The Deneb, Spinward Marches, and Trojan Reach sectors are the regions in which the largest number of Droyne worlds and Ancient sites were found. The Imperium discovered over 200 sites; the Regina subsector alone has three sites. Of these, the two earliest sites discovered were Yori and Beck's World. The other site, on Efate, was discovered in 354.

Terra Annexed

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In 426, the Imperium incorporated the Easter Concord, an interstellar state in the Solomani Rim sector. In 588, the Imperial border reached and incorporated the Solomani home world. A subsequent scientific expedition proved the truth of the Solomani Hypothesis, the theory that all human races originally came from Terra.

SEEDS OF DISCORD (435 TO 589)

In 475, Empress Nicholle and her immediate family were assassinated. Cleon IV is believed responsible. Claiming that Nicholle had been too weak to govern, he ascended the throne. He based his claim to legitimacy on a distant relationship to the Zhunastu dynasty. He did have strong supporters among the nobility. The blackmailed Moot elected Cleon emperor, but he was generally regarded as an interloper. He afterward kept the Moot at bay by threatening violence against its members.

In 555, Emperor Cleon IV was assassinated. Jerome ascended by right of Moot election. In 582, Emperor Jerome was assassinated.

Empress Jaqueline ascended by right of Moot election. She implemented new policies based on cost-effectiveness that led to expansion of the Imperium's rimward fringe.

Beginnings of the Frontier Wars

The deviousness of non-psionic human races repels the Zhodani. They felt that the Imperium sought to hamper Zhdant's slow, conservative expansion by preempting the best planets.

Imperial expansion between 200 and 500 expelled the minor Zhodani settlements in the Spinward Marches. By 500, Imperial settlement reached the edges of the Zhodani settlement. In 500, the Imperium began exploring into Zhodani territory. By 550, the two empires had intermingled their settlements, sharing systems in some cases. Mutual differences heightened tensions, bringing conflict and then open warfare.

The original Outworld Coalition formed in the early 500s as the Zhodani rallied some of the Vargr in Gvurrdon sector to their side. Memories of the Imperial campaigns against Vargr states in Corridor sector swayed some Vargr into joining with the Zhodani. The coalition's early history was of continual struggle for organization. Establishing and maintaining Vargr governments in power continually occupied the Zhodani.

Imperial alliance with the Darrian Confederation alienated the Sword Worlds. They cite the 470 absorption of most of Vilis subsector as another reason they, too, joined the Outworld Coalition against the Imperium.

FIRST FRONTIER WAR (589 TO 604)

According to the battle plan of the Coalition, the Vargr were to harry the coreward edge of the Spinward Marches, especially Regina and Aramis subsectors, while the Zhodani took Cronor and Jewell subsectors. Initial Zhodani attacks (well planned and executed with speed, accuracy, and precision) easily expelled Imperial settlements from Zhodani territory in Foreven/lakr sector. The Vargr's dismal failure, however, caused the Outworld Coalition to collapse. Fortunately for the aggressors, unpreparedness and communication lags caused the Spinward Marches to fight the war on its own.

Raids against high population worlds deep in the sector characterized the next fifteen years of fighting. The Zhodani confined their commerce raiding to the Imperial worlds in the eight coreward subsectors of the Spinward Marches. Extensive commerce raiding lasted until 597.

The Darrian Confederation allied with the Imperium during the war, after Zhodani ships penetrated the Confederation's coreward borders.

In 604, Grand Admiral Olav Hault-Plankwell inflicted a massive defeat on an expeditionary Zhodani/Vargr fleet at Zivije following its raid against Jae Tellona. Tremendous losses crippled both sides ability to fight. The war ended as a military stalemate. The negotiated armistice left the Zhodani in control of the Cronor subsector of the Spinward Marches, but established extensive Imperial claims elsewhere in the sector. It was acclaimed an Imperial victory. Admiral Olav Hault-Plankwell simultaneously castigated the central Imperial authority for its lack of support during the war.

The Imperium was ousted from Foreven/lakr sector. The Zhodani had achieved their aim of stopping the threatening pace of Imperial expansion. The Frontier War brought a desire for cooperation to the Sword Worlds that led to the first unified Confederation in centuries, the Second Dominate. Later annexation of four worlds started the continuing conflict with the Darrian Confederation.

THE CIVIL WAR

Outbreak:

The First Frontier War threw off the spark that started the Civil War. The lag-time in interstellar communication, reduced expansionist tendencies, rivalry for power among major military commanders, and the diverse background of the Imperium's many constituents all combined to fan the Civil War into full flame. The power struggle lasted through eighteen years and eighteen Emperors. The "Emperors of the Flag" were all naval officers of flag (admiral) rank. All were genetically pure Solomani. Seven were assassinated, ten died in battle, and one survived - Arbellatra.

The Nature of the Fighting:

A succession of pretenders appeared, each commanding a battle fleet that tried to gain control of the Imperium. The fleets and squadrons that resisted them often did so without leadership, instead defending the idea of the Imperium. Battles were of two varieties. Fringe battles occurred throughout the Imperium as rival factions took bases and recruited forces. Once any power bloc built up enough strength to make victory seem possible, its forces moved to the Core to seize control of the Imperial bureaucracy or wrest it away from someone else. The major battle fleets were jump-3 capable, although some select squadrons were jump-4 capable. Travel from Rhyllanor/Spinward Marches to Capital/Core required 58 jumps. News often travelled even more slowly.

Olav I's reign

Grand Admiral of the Marches Olav halt-Plankwell found solid support for a new government. Dissatisfaction with the lack of support during the recent frontier war was widespread in the Spinward Marches. After jumping his war fleet to Capital in 606, he forced an audience with Empress Jacqueline I, supposedly for recognition of his war effort. Plankwell's assault forced most of the Imperial Guard to surrender. The Aslan Guard fought until it was virtually destroyed, gaining fame and its reputation as one of the toughest and most loyal of the Guard regiments. This gave Jaqueline's Escort Force time to prepare its last ditch defense. It died to the last man defending her.

Plankwell personally murdered the Empress. He proclaimed himself Emperor by right of fleet control. His fleet gave the Moot no choice but acquiescence. Plankwell disbanded the Guard: it was not reformed until after the Civil War was over. It had so decimated his marines and ship's troops, however, that he did not have enough loyal troops to retain control.

In 609, Ramon, Olav's chief of staff, convinced large portions of the fleet to attempt to overthrow Olav I. In the Battle of Tricanus 5, Ramon's forces were apparently defeated. In a final closing action, however, Olav's flagship was destroyed with all hands. The lack of enough marines aboard Plankwell's flagship led directly to his death in a last minute boarding action.

The Moot elected Ramon emperor. Ramon inherited none of Plankwell's strengths and greater weaknesses. The weakness of his position (as an almost defeated pretender) and losses in the War Fleet made a challenge inevitable. The disturbed times, however, prevented any successor from gaining a majority in the Moot.

Constantus murdered Ramon I later in 609, and claimed to be emperor by right of assassination. The Moot did not accept his claim. The fleet sided with Constantus in his attempts to find a power base in the core.

Nicolai defeated and killed Constantus in 610 at the Battle of Rakakaka. The remnants of Plankwell's troublesome War Fleet scattered. The Moot elected Nicolai emperor: he ruled for two years.

George murdered Nicolai in 612. The Moot again did not acknowledge the right of assassination, and George was murdered in 613. Between 613 and 615, numerous emperors ruled fragments of the Imperial Core, but the Moot supported no one. The Sylean Home Worlds formed a temporarily autonomous state. Historians hold that there was no break in the continuity of the Imperium, because the bureaucracy continued to function.

Cleon V rose to prominence and in 615 subjugated the Sylean Home Worlds. Later that year, a close vote in the Moot finally proclaimed Cleon V emperor. Upon receiving news of the Second Frontier War, he appointed Arbellatra Grand Admiral of the Marches for the Domain of Deneb.

In 618, radical nobles in the Moot instigated an uprising. Joseph attacked Cleon V, and killed him in the Battle of Markatch. The Moot proclaimed Joseph emperor by a very close margin. Many nobles refused to swear allegiance to him. Joseph was defeated and killed later in 618 by Donald in the Battle of Arakoine. The Moot denied Donald's claim: the radicals held enough influence to deny him recognition. He was the only emperor to defeat his predecessor in battle and still fail to gain the Moot's support.

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Emdiri assassinated Donald still later in 618, but she also failed to gain the Moot's support. Donald had begun a program against the radicals in the Moot, but Emdiri's opportunistic power play failed to gain even their support. She was the last claimant unsupported by the Moot.

In 619, Catharine murdered Emdiri, but was later murdered by Ramon II. In the Battle of Nivzhine Belt, Jaqueline II defeated Ramon II. In the Second battle of Arakoine, Usuti defeated Jaqueline II. None of the five ruled longer than three months.

620: Marava defeated Usuti at the Third Battle of Arakoine. After a brief siege, her forces destroyed the Grand Sky Palace of Martin II. Ivan subsequently defeated Marava in the Battle of Sulgami.

621: Martin VI defeated Ivan in the First Battle of Zhimaway. He was murdered by Gustus, who then took the throne.

SECOND FRONTIER WAR (615 TO 620)

The Outworld Coalition reformed in 609, wishing to reverse their defeat in the First Frontier War. The Second Frontier War began with an attack on Cipango (Spinward Marches 0705), and then expanded to engulf three subsectors. Although the Vargr again failed to take any territory permanently, their performance as a whole was considerably improved. This time the Coalition took portions of Jewell subsector.

The fierce initial battles strengthened local resolve, and drew the fighting out. With meager local and Imperial forces, Grand Admiral of the Marches Arbellatra fought a holding action accompanied by raids into enemy territory in the Jewell subsector.

The Darrian Confederation allied with the Imperium after Zhodani ships penetrated its coreward borders. It hired large numbers of Aslan at this time. There are unconfirmed reports that the Zhodani withdrew from Darrian space after uncovering evidence that the Darrians were investigating the possibility of inducing sub-nova flares in several nearby systems.

After three years of holding the enemy, the Imperium had again assembled large forces to face the Coalition. The completion of several dreadnoughts in local shipyards and the arrival of reinforcements from trailing sectors enabled Arbellatra to fight a decisive battle. Losses crippled both sides, and forced a stalemate.

Arbellatra secured a peace treaty by ceding more territory. The Imperium lost Cronor subsector. A dozen systems in Vilis subsector asked for and received released from their allegiance to the Imperium. The peace did establish reasonably secure borders, which would stand for 350 years.

The Imperium occupied 11 worlds of the Sword Worlds Confederation for five years after the war. This only aggravated anti-Imperial feeling on these worlds.

END OF THE CIVIL WAR (620 TO 629)

Arbellatra, like Olav, jumped her fleet to the Imperial Core. After several months of cat-and-mouse maneuvering, she defeated the putative Emperor, Gustus, and the remnants of the Central Fleet at the Second Battle of Zhimaway. She did not seize the throne, but instead held power in trust for a rightful successor. This act, giving the image of patriotic responsibility, brought the first trickle of legitimacy back to the Iridium Throne. Her selection as Regent ended the Civil War.

Arbellatra granted an Imperial absolution for all military actions fought during the Civil War. She also replaced the Archduke of Antares with Admiral Soegz, for the treason of not supporting her as Regent. This unopposed act ended organized dissent against the Regency. The search for Jaqueline's heir continued for seven years. Stability during the Regency impressed the government and enabled Arbellatra to build a broad power base. Ultimately, the Moot approached Arbellatra to take the throne herself.

STABILITY (629 TO 760)

In 629, in one of her first acts, Empress Arbellatra reformed the Imperial Guard, drawn from all regions of the Imperium. She began a third floating Grand Palace which was finished in 633. Its sheer magnitude, a one-kilometer sphere, was meant to signal that a new era of power and progress had begun.

In 660, the Imperium stabilized at its present size. The Imperium turned more attention inward, devoting resources to internal development and consolidation. Renewed efforts to develop existing Imperial territory provided a new focus for the bureaucracy.

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In a sense, the Illeish Revolt had finally succeeded. The Imperium focused on the problems of member worlds instead of continued expansion. It is, however, true that post-war policies ended the unstable period which began with either the Illeish Revolt in 418 or the assassination of Empress Nicholle in 475.

Post Civil War Trends:

In the stability following the Civil War, several trends emerged.

Vilani resurgence: In the troubled Civil War period, Vilani leaders and industrialists began to challenge Solomani dominance of the Third Imperium. The reaction was the formation of the vocal Solomani Movement.

Solomani Movement: Solomani influence at court peaked after the Civil War, and then began to decline. In 679, Emperor Zhakirov married Antiama Shiishuginsu, and banished the more vocal Solomani from the Imperial court. Following rifts at court, the Imperium established the Solomani Autonomous Region (or Solomani Sphere) in 704. It then ignored the region, allowing it to develop independently while the central government concentrated on its coreward frontiers, the Spinward Marches, and Gateway sector.

Domains de-emphasized: The post-war emperors de-emphasized the Domains. The Domains ceased to be a level in the naval hierarchy, and the title Grand Admiral of the Marches became obsolete. This reduced the power of the Archdukes, but was also motivated by belief that the domains had served their function of bringing territories into the Imperium.

Psionics: After 650, Psionics underwent a tremendous boom in popularity. It reached its peak in the latter half of the 700's. In the 790's, however, the crest of popular opinion broke with the revelation of scandals within the Psionics Institutes.

Technology: The Imperium attained tech level 14 around 700. In 711, Makhidkarun developed the first TL 14 robot brain.

XBoat network: In 624, Arbellatra established an express boat system to enhance government, commercial, and private communication. It covered the entire Imperium by 718. Typically, communication routes connect, or pass within three hexes of, worlds with A or B starports.

Battle Riders: In the 700s, the Imperial Navy largely converted to battle rider squadrons. Between ships of equal tonnage, the one without jump drives (and tanks) will mount more armament and protection. A BatRon of Riders will inevitably defeat an equal tonnage squadron of jump-capable battleships. The initial concept focused on the number of line ships, usually around 10 per battle squadron. Consequently, initial squadrons consisted of three carriers with three riders each or five carriers with two riders each.

Two new Megacorporations:

In the post Civil War years, two new megacorporations emerged.

General Products formed from the merger of several smaller manufacturers shortly after the end of the Civil War, it produced mainly spacecraft at first. There was a boom time for shipyards after the Civil War. Merchant and military losses were replaced, the XBoat system was being established, and there was a general economic rebuilding. General grew to megacorporation status through timely diversification.

Instellarms was founded by Axel Murdoch. He used contacts in the Imperial military to purchase excess equipment cheaply, but he still had to have raised billions somehow. Instellarms came to dominate the interstellar mercenary arms trade throughout the Imperium in two centuries, mainly because of the risks it was willing to take.

MINOR WARS

Gashikan: Between 750 and 825, fierce wars occurred which resulted in the unification of the Second Empire of Gashikan on the Imperium's coreward border. Imperial and Julian influences are probable, but not acknowledged.

Kamurinmur Rebellion (760): This rebellion, in Gushemege sector, was suppressed by the Imperial Navy.

Darrian War (788): A short war between the Darrian and Sword Worlds Confederations resulted in the Darrians recovering four worlds lost in the First Frontier War. Resulting outcry caused the collapse of the current Sword Worlds Confederation, and led to governmental instability until 852.

RISING PUBLIC UPHEAVALS

Droyne Proved to Be a Major Race: In 790, Imperial scientists confirmed through archeological evidence that the Droyne had used jump travel before the modern dominant races entered space. Subsequent cross-checking pushed the date they had jump travel farther and farther back. It is presently accepted as at least -7,000. This contributed to categorizing races as major or minor. The "Six Races" concept appeared independently (but vaguely) in Aslan, Vargr, and K'Kree sources. It had been accepted that these six "important" races must be major races; now the "Six Races" concept supported division of races in major and minor category. Classifying the Droyne as a Major Race, and counting the "major" branches of humaniti as one race permitted the accepted identification of six major races. Discovery that *only* these races appear on Droyne *coyns* validated making this distinction. Why these races appear on *coyns* up to 75,000 years old is unresolved.

PsionicSuppressions (800-826): The revelation of scandals, financial and ethical, at the Psionic Institutes led to widespread suppression of psionists. Psionics had been increasingly popular in the Imperium: public opinion now became strongly anti-psionic. In 800, psi drugs were declared illegal, all plants engaged in their production within the Imperium closed, and all stocks were confiscated and destroyed. A general order to the realm "suppressed" the psionic institutes. Over the next ten years, 65 suppression orders temporarily revoked their charters specifically, and then 65 more revoked the charters.

Solomani Declare Independence: In 871, the government of the Solomani Autonomous Region reorganized itself as the Solomani Confederation. The Imperial government at first ignored this virtual declaration of independence. The Solomani asserted authority over all worlds within 60-parsecs of Terra, regardless of the population's composition. By 900, reports that the Solomani rule of many client worlds within the sphere was over-bearing and heavy-handed forced Empress Margaret to reassess the situation. In 940, by proclamation, she dissolved the Solomani Sphere and reintegrated it within the Imperium. The Solomani resisted reintegration. Significant Imperial fleets supported Solomani client worlds that wanted to reclaim allegiance to the Third Imperium. Ambassadors pressed other worlds to decide to declare for the Imperium. Solomani control was gradually pressed back toward Terra.

Spinward events: Imperial expansion resumed, working around the Sword Worlds and Zhodani borders into the rimward subsectors of the Spinward Marches. Five Sisters subsector drew Imperial military and scout attention, as occupying it preempted Zhodani expansion from Querion to close off the expansion effort.

Serious Imperial colonization in the Five Sisters subsector began c. 740. It was halted in 800, with the disturbances of the Psionic Suppressions. (Activists argued continued colonization would provide a way for psions to escape Imperial justice, and provide a fifth column for Zhodani to exploit.)

The Zhodani remained committed to restraining Imperial expansion. The weak Sword Worlds Confederation broke up in 848. In 852, Gram seized control of the Sword Worlds Confederation (reportedly with substantial help from Zhodani money and advisors).

In 941, District 268 (Spinward Marches) was opened for colonization. One reason was to develop an alternate route to Five Sisters subsector.

THIRD FRONTIER WAR (979 TO 986)

The long period of uneasy peace between the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate erupted into war in 979. After years of saber-rattling, Zhodani battle fleets struck simultaneous blows in the Querion and Jewell subsectors. The Coalition directed its major effort at Efate, Boughene, and Pixie (all in the Regina subsector) in an effort to cut off Jewell subsector. This was essentially the same strategy used in previous wars.

Imperial reaction was deficient initially, although reinforcements were soon brought to the battles. Emperor Stryyx, an ex-marine, was more concerned with the Solomani than with the Zhodani hordes.

After several months, the Coalition launched a subordinate drive through the Vilis and Lanth subsectors, across the Abyss, supported only by a narrow string of bases. The Zhodani hoped to reduce Rhylanor, and establish a major stronghold, before the Imperium could respond. They gained a foothold at Jae Tellona. From there, both Rhylanor and Porozlo were put under siege. Major forces took Porozlo,

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and it provided a supporting base for the siege of Rhylanor.

The salient threatened the rear of the entire Imperial defense for eleven months. The diversion of large portions of the Imperial Fleet from their main engagement in the Regina subsector brought the war to a stalemate. Rhylanor was the scene of several battles, but neither side could advance. Substantial reinforcements from Sabine subsector finally forced the Zhodani salient back.

By 981, the war was back on an even footing. Subsequent naval actions were concentrated in Regina and Vilis subsectors. Hostilities continued until 986 with little gain.

Fighting focused on planetary sieges less than in previous Frontier Wars. Commerce raiding, deep thrusts by cruiser squadrons, and harassment of civilian shipping dominated events. Civilian losses and lack of progress led to disaffection with the high command. The Armistice heavily favored the Zhodani. It ceded systems in the Jewell subsector and allowed Zhodani occupation of several within Querion subsector. Moreover, the Imperium withdrew from their previous positions, creating a demilitarized zone through much of Vilis subsector.

POST-WAR (986 to 990)

The Dienne Coup: In the Imperium there was widespread dissatisfaction with the handling and outcome of the Third Frontier War. With the support of the Imperial General Staff and most of the Imperial armed forces, the Imperial Guard under General Dienne staged a palace coup in 989.

The IISS bodyguard had to be killed in a brief firefight with the Aslan Guard regiment. Styryx was found cowering in his personal fresher. He abdicated in favor of his eldest son Gavin at the point of General Dienne's gauss pistol.

Sol Domain disrupted: In 982, Archduke Ovalle of Sol dreamed about a war involving his domain in the near future. He ordered his court moved to the planet Torrel. However, Ovalle died three months after Styryx's abdication. Archduke Klaxaen, his successor, immediately ended the transfer operation, stranding a billion transferees on Torrel. Some speculate that the dislocation of Sol Domain contributed to Styryx's downfall. This may be overstating, but the disruption did positively contribute to the Solomani's subsequent actions.

SOLOMANI RIM WAR (990 TO 1002)

The Solomani hoped to profit from Imperial preoccupation with the Third Frontier War, and the disorganization following the abdication of Emperor Styryx. In 989, they reasserted their claim to the entire Solomani Sphere, including those portions reabsorbed into the Third Imperium. The Imperium declared war in 990.

The war affected all parts of the Imperium. At Capital, the Solomani Rim Guard regiment was disbanded, because of doubts about its loyalty. Even in the Spinward Marches, Solomani exiles were apprehended and put in detention camps.

The Solomani Confederation was equipped mostly at TL 13. The Imperial Navy was equipped mostly at TL 14, but the Imperium attained a marginal tech level 15 around 1000, during the war. The initial phase went very well for the Solomani Confederation, because the Confederation's massed fleets were superior to the Imperium's sizable border fleets. The Solomani regained most of the border worlds lost in the last 50 years, and occupied some worlds outside the Solomani Sphere.

Solomani fortunes were checked in 993 when a large invasion fleet attempted to regain worlds in the Old Expanses sector. Near-fanatical resistance repulsed it with heavy losses. The period from 993 to 998 was one of stalemate. The Solomani abandoned further expansion to rebuild their forces. Inflexibly defending every border world, however, constantly drained their resources. The Imperium's greater industrial base made its power felt as the Imperial Navy achieved strategic dominance by 998.

The last phase of the war, 998 to 1002, consisted of a near-continuous Imperial advance into the heart of the Solomani Sphere. The Imperials attacked along two parallel axes of advance, while task forces spread out to create a huge pocket. The Solomani were unable to halt the main advances. Liberation of the Vegan District in 1001 gave the Imperium a secure base in Terra's subsector. The Solomani made a desperate gamble. They united their remaining naval forces into a single fleet, and put their best admiral, Ivan Wolfe, in command.

Wolfe struck at the 17th Imperial Fleet first. After inflicting a major defeat on its advance guard at the Battle of Agidda, he then struck at the Imperium's 1st fleet advancing out of the Vegan District. The quick reorganization of the 17th Fleet and its timely arrival at Dingir was decisive. At the Battle of Dingir, in early 1002, the Imperial fleets scattered and substantially destroyed the Solomani Grand Fleet. Wolfe

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collected the remnants of the Grand Fleet and retreated deeper into the Solomani Sphere.

The Solomani fought on fanatically. In 1002, a little-known commando raid eliminated Inthra (Old Expanses 0607) as an Imperial supply source. The planet's environmental controls were concentrated in relatively few control areas. The Solomani commandos shut down those controls, killing billions in a few short hours.

The Imperial high command decided it had to invade Terra to end forever claims of Solomani superiority and use of Terra as a rallying standard. Assembling an invasion force ended pursuit of the defeated Solomani fleet. The Imperium committed 14 battleship squadrons and five corps to capture Terra. The invasion began in the second quarter of 1002, and fighting lasted until nearly the end of the year before the Imperium conquered the planet. The Battle for Terra consumed so much Imperial strength that the Imperial Admiralty felt they lacked sufficient strength to resume the advance into the rest of the Solomani Sphere.

The Solomani military commanders, glad for the opportunity to regroup their remaining forces, agreed to a temporary armistice. Both governments, concerned by the strain of the protracted war on their economies, informally agreed to extend the armistice indefinitely. Thus the war ended.

Although scholars debate the wisdom of invading Terra, the war was a major Imperial victory. The Imperium reabsorbed 25% of the Solomani Sphere, set up a vigorous Vegan District to oversee its interests, and largely discredited the central tenet of the Solomani Movement.

AFTER THE RIM WAR (1002 to 1082)

The navy, which had used battleships since the 700s, largely converted to battle riders after these wars. Replacing war losses and rebuilding the battle line at tech level 15 provided the opportunity to make the change-over. The improved capabilities allowed by the achievement of tech level 15 contributed to the decision that battle riders had come of age, and were the configuration of the future. It was now possible to make tender-battlerider combinations where one rider could carry 8-10 riders in a squadron, and the riders could stand in the line of battle.

Meson Rebellion: Khikaba/Shuna (Lishun 0829) revolted in 1020. The Imperial navy took twelve years to restore order, in part because fleet assets were tied down in the Spinward Marches and on the Solomani border.

Phoenix Project suppressed: The Solomani had made contingency plans for supporting a guerilla movement on Terra. A massive Imperial counter-guerilla effort in 1040-45 was directed at discovering and destroying military caches and arresting the families entrusted with their secrets. In 1045 Imperial intelligence reported penetration of the project command, with subsequent compromise of its basic plans and dismantling of its structure.

Second Survey completed: The data from the first survey of the 400s was badly out of date, and the current data needed to be corroborated, so the Scout Service started the Second Survey. In 1065, the Scout service released the second comprehensive survey of the Imperium. It had taken 70 years to compile, went to greater lengths, and included more world data and more complete astrographic data.

Strephon becomes Emperor: In 1071, Strephon became the forty-third Emperor of the Third Imperium. He was then 22.

The Rachelean Revolts: The Rachele Society, a secret Vilani supremacy group, fomented a major uprising on Pretoria (Deneb/Pretoria). The group favored genocidal policies. An attempt at nuclear blackmail ended in a nuclear explosion that killed 26,000 people and resulted in the imposition of martial law. Although regarded as a local, if violent, event at the time, the incident has since been cited as evidence of rising militancy among Vilani citizens. Most pro-Vilani (or anti-Solomani) groups advocate violence.

THE FOURTH FRONTIER WAR (1082-1084)

An incident near Quar/Cronor unintentionally began the war. A series of battles ensued in the Jewell and Cronor subsectors. Neither side was prepared, and the war was little more than a skirmish—compared to earlier conflicts.

Esalin (Jewell 0204) fell in the opening weeks. The Vargr and the Zhodani jointly assaulted Jewell and Regina subsectors, but the initial assaults stalled at the borders. Most of the later fighting occurred in Jewell subsector.

The final battle, the Battle of Two Suns, was fought midway between Yres and Menorb. Losses on both sides were heavy, but the Imperium held the field. Had the battle gone the other way, the loss of

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both Yres and Menorb would have forced the evacuation of Efate and the collapse of the coreward end of the Regina subsector. Instead, lengthening supply lines prevented further outworld advances.

Emperor Strephon had delegated war powers to Norris, Duke of Regina. This brought a speedy end to a conflict that otherwise could have been hampered by long delays in communications between Capital and the front. An armistice ended the war after 18 months of fighting. Instructions and reinforcements had not reached the Marches from the Imperial capital.

The war resulted in some realignment of accepted boundaries, but in no real gains for either side. The Imperium lost Narval/Chronor, but it regained two worlds from the Sword Worlds. Esalin/Jewell shifted from Imperial control to neutral status. A joint communiqué by the Imperial and Zhodani governments declared Esalin a neutral world in 1098.

THE RECENT PAST (1084 TO 1107)

The Fourth Frontier War demonstrated that the Imperium could no longer achieve a clear superiority at all points along the frontiers. Naval policy had favored a "crust" strategy, with major fleet elements well forward in potential trouble spots such as the Spinward Marches. This strategy worked for decades due to the Imperium's tremendous technological and material lead over its neighbors.

The Admiralty re-examined the Imperium's fundamental naval policy, and evolved an elastic defense posture. Colonial forces in the frontier areas were strengthened and centered around "islands of resistance": high population, high technology worlds capable of withstanding protracted sieges. Colonial fleets and armies now formed the Imperium's first line of defense. The Admiralty reduced fleet assets in border areas, but created much larger reserves. Imperial border fleets were to delay hostile advances and disrupt sieges of key worlds, until major fleet reserves intervene and re-establish the status quo.

The Imperial Admiralty concentrated all Rider BatRons in the strategic reserves, and filled the frontier forces exclusively with ships. Rider BatRons suffered disproportionate losses during the early weeks of the Fourth Frontier War. When facing superior numbers, they were unable to withdraw.

Domains re-emphasized: After the Fourth Frontier War and the communication problems it presented, Emperor Strephon decided a strengthened Archduke position could enable the imperium to respond more quickly to attacks. He reestablished the Domain as a level in the Imperial Navy, and returned to the Domain the right to collect taxes. Later, he gave the archdukes the right to legislate and enforce the emperor's desires on a local level.

Other events: In 1103, the Rachelean Society resurfaced in Lishun sector. In a power play at the Dynam Naval base, Zid Rachele and his followers attempted to steal several mothballed warships. They were quickly defeated, and Rachele's vessel destroyed.

In 1104, Emperor Strephon appointed Dulinor, one of his closest friends, Archduke of Ilelish. Dulinor has actively, and vocally, attacked conservative institutions. He instituted a universal draft, established policies for disseminating technology, and advanced his subject's standard of living.

In 1106, the Islands Clusters (Reft sector) erupted into general warfare.

THE FIFTH FRONTIER WAR (1107-1111)

Following several years of unrest and provocation, Zhodani forces attacked across the Imperial borders, while previously placed guerilla units on selected Imperial worlds began uprisings. Vargr and Sword World forces allied with the Zhodani also participated. In 1107, the Zhodani launched a sneak attack on Regina/Regina. Jewell was besieged, as other worlds in its subsector fell to the Zhodani. Like previous wars, initial Outworld successes faded as Imperial resistance stiffened. The Zhodani provincial governor had assumed that Jewell would surrender when isolated. It did not, and tied down major forces. The Zhodani maintained the siege, but moved ships out of the area in 1108 to prepare another move.

In 1109, Imperial forces defeated first the Vargr, then the Sword Worlders in secondary campaigns. Meanwhile, the Imperial and Zhodani reserves met. The Zhodani 40th Fleet struck in Vilis subsector. It aimed for Rhylanor. In last ditch defensive battles at Rhylanor and Porozlo, the Imperial Corridor Fleet defeated the 40th Fleet. The Zhodani were forced to withdraw behind the Abyss.

The situation had bogged down to a stalemate. Faced with the prospect of a long war of attrition, the two sides agreed a negotiated settlement. The war ended with a return to the pre-war status quo. Although the Imperium eventually triumphed, military experts are critical of the war's direction. Admiral Santanocheev has been widely blamed, but some feel a wider look must be taken at the entire command structure.

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CURRENT EVENTS (1110 TO 1116)

In 1113, Imperial forces soundly routed several Vargr corsair fleets at the Second Battle of Anarsi (in Vland sector). On receiving word of the battle, Baroness Sessoi of Deneb/Usani stated, "Only villains and criminals dare challenge the Imperium's authority to rule the space lanes."