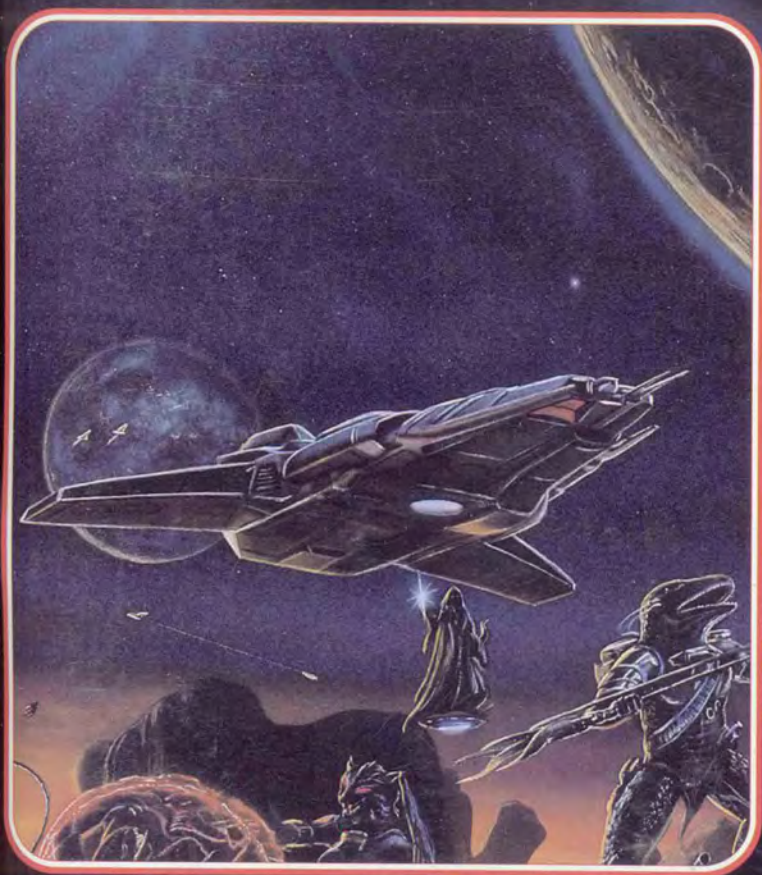




Setting Guide

History, Empires, and Aliens



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Overview/ Quickstart

This book is intended to introduce players to the Guild Space™ Setting. Details on playing the game are found in the Rule Book. Make sure you have read that book before you read this one.

Welcome to Guildspace, located in the Trinium Scape. I am Jodar, your guide to the wonders of this new universe. You have been chosen to help mold the reality of my scape, and to aid me in the coming struggles against the enemies of the Guild and galactic civilization.

This brief introduction is all you need to begin adventuring in this exciting new realm. Below is a general overview of Guildspace, its races, nations, conflicts and dangers. These are all discussed in much greater detail later in this book, but for now all you need to do is read the following.

Guildspace

The race you know as humans are known in this scape as Anthropos. Far advanced from ordinary humans, Anthropos fled their homeworld of Url over 3000 years ago, and spread out into the galactic arm, creating several major stellar nations. The most prominent of these are the Guild, an alliance of democratic, peaceful nations whose main objective is to explore and unite the galaxy; The Company, a corporate state with no true borders, but financial interests in almost every corner of Anthropos space; and the Arthirian Sphere, a militaristic state which once fought a destructive war with the Guild and lost.

The Guild is more than an alliance of Anthropos worlds. Currently, hundreds of alien species have joined the Guild, some inhabiting a single planet, others controlling dozens of star systems. Within Guild boundaries are numerous small, independent states as well, some Anthropos, some alien, some unknown.

Major allies of the Guild include the Draca, a ruthless but honorable empire of powerful reptilians, and the Zin-Shee, or psi-cats, a feline race possessing awesome mental powers.

Beyond Anthropos space lie several alien states. The largest of these, known simply as The Empire, is a totalitarian state ruled by the alien katha, with hundreds of subject races, including Anthropos. The Empire and Guild fought a war several centuries ago, and since then the demilitarized zone between them has been administered by the Arthirians.

The House of Dha

Recently, reports have begun to filter out of The Empire that imperial scientists have developed a new type of "super soldier," an invincible warrior which the Imperials intend to use in a renewed invasion of Guildspace.

For many years, Guild leaders have acknowledged the need for an elite force to deal with The Empire, as well as the other unknown powers and dangers of the galaxy. The reports of the new so-called "Imperial Deathstalkers" caused the Guild to finally form the House of Dha.

Dha warriors are the elite of the galaxy, the finest warriors, psionics, techs, martial artists, and so on. Intended to counter the new Imperial Deathstalkers, and to deal with other threats both within the Guild and beyond, the House of Dha was awarded a harsh protoplanet (dubbed "Dha Prime") deep inside the Acropolis stellar nursery, where training commenced. Today, the existence of the House of Dha and the location of Dha Prime remain largely secret.

Many races joined the House of Dha, but the bulk of membership was made up of the four major (or "guardian") races. Of these, the Anthropos, Draca, and Zin-Shee have already been discussed. In addition to these three, Dha selected the Calemora, a race of primitive yet awesomely powerful warriors who can turn their very bodies into deadly weapons.

Four moons were transported to Dha Prime, each to serve as headquarters for one of the Dha guardian races. Months passed, and slowly, the elite military force which was to become Dha took shape. Now, the House of Dha is finally ready to begin

operations.

The Present

You are now members of the House of Dha. As such, you are among the galaxy's elite. Even at your lowest rank, your powers and abilities are far beyond the finest warriors the Guild has to offer. Your ultimate loyalty is to the Guild, and to the preservation of the society which it has created. You will stand against anyone who threatens the peace of the Guild, and lay down your very life if necessary.

You may choose to play an Anthropos — the highly evolved descendants of modern humans. Your technological skill and luck are legendary. You may be a Calemora — the most dangerous martial artists in the galaxy, capable of manipulating your own body through will alone. Perhaps you are a Draca — grim, brooding, reptilian warriors who live to fight and fight to live. Or you could be a Zin-Shee — agile and awesomely talented with *psionics* and mental abilities.

In addition, your GM may allow you to play two other, mysterious races, the Kryll and the Shanask, whose presence is yet to be felt in Guildspace.

In the chaotic realms of Known Space, friends are rare and enemies are legion. Beyond the borders of the Guild, The Empire schemes and plans, pirates prepare for raids, and hostile aliens expand their spheres of influence. Who knows what threats to the Guild may arise? All you know is that you are Dha, and it will be your job to face them.



Timeline of Known Space History

All dates are considered a.h. (after holocaust), unless listed as b.h. (before holocaust).

-100,000-10,000 bh: Massive alien states grow and prosper, including the Aerolk.

-4,000 bh: Galaxy-wide conflict apparently wipes out most interstellar civilizations. Aerolk depart Known Space, leaving behind vast technological wonders and deadly traps.

-2,500 bh: Empire founded by humanoid katha. Emperor Rallykk I leads imperial starships against neighboring states.

-1,000 bh: First Anthropos spaceflight.

0: Nuclear holocaust destroys Anthropos civilization on Url. Numerous refugees escape into space in a great migration known as "The Scattering."

175: Empire plunged into civil war as numerous claimants to the imperial throne vie for dominance. Known as "The Reign of the Thousand Emperors."

ca. 200: Founding of Arthirian Sphere by Anthropos militarists.

ca. 250: Founding of The Company

450: Dracan Holding founded.

ca. 505: Founding of the Galactic Union of Intelligent Life-forms and Devices (the Guild).

515: Zin-Shee Matriarchy founded by alliance of noble females. Expansion into surrounding space begins immediately.

691: The centuries-long imperial civil war ends with the militaristic Krrang dynasty in firm control. Another century passes as the Krrangs consolidate their power and stamp out the last strongholds of rival power.

705: Dracan Holding utterly destroys the Ixxen, their only rivals for dominance in the region.

805: War between Sphere and Guild begins.

818: Siege of Guildhome.

820: Arthirians defeated and driven back across frontier.

900-1700: Peaceful expansion of Guild frontiers. Arthirian Sphere wracked by social and economic upheavals.

1116: The imperial tradition of "honored slavery" in which slave races are given favored status and influential positions, is instituted.

1260: Draca/Zin-Shee war begins. The war continues, at varying levels of intensity, for over two centuries.

1476: Draca deem Zin-Shee "worthy" of survival after two centuries of conflict.

1775: Skrak and kurg raids begin throughout the Guild. They continue, varying in frequency and ferocity, to this day.

1812: Expanding Zin-Shee Matriarchy invades planet Calemor despite disastrous meteor storm which badly damages their invasion fleet. Beginning of the Blood Feud.

2245: Dark Alliance founded by outlaws, pirates, and anti-Guild planets. Several major raiding campaigns take place in the first century of the alliance's existence.

2333: Massive Dark Alliance raid on industrial world of Carivora. Battle continues for months, leaving world blasted and devastated.

2520: Zin-Shee move capital from Sheapa to Seril in order to better manage war with Calemora.

2602: Guild ships encounter outposts of The Empire.

2610: Imperial slave-ambassadors deliver ultimatum to Guildhome. Guild refuses to surrender.

2611-2690: Empire invades Guild. Unbroken string of Guild defeats.

2632: Arthirian Sphere suffers probing attacks by Empire, and begins channeling supplies and weapons to the Guild.

2702: Imperial forces unexpectedly withdrawn. Peace talks begin between Empire and Guild.

2705: After intense negotiations, demilitarized zone (aka "The Zone") is established, and Arthirians given policing duties.

2712-75: Guild reclaims and rebuilds worlds devastated by war.

2804: Guild starships discover Calemor, observe the Blood Feud.

2808: Guild intervenes in Blood Feud, imposing settlement on both sides. Calemora and many Zin-Shee join Guild.

2856: Provided with information by the Zin-Shee, Anthropos and Calemoran diplomats make contact with the Draca.

2860: After intensive negotiations, discussions and displays of force, Guild and Dracan Holding sign treaties of peace. Draca begin to appear throughout the Guild.

2885: First reports of new imperial warriors (aka "Death Stalkers") begin to appear.

2889: Guild establishes House of Dha.

2891: Construction of Glory commences upon Dha Prime and placement of four "Guardian Moons" is completed.

2893: Mysterious insectoid race called Kryll invades Guild. House of Dha fleet intervenes. Shanask arrive at Dha Prime, help to end hostilities. Kryll and Shanask accepted into Guild (See *Shakna — Assault on the Hive*, the first Guild Space™ Setting adventure).



History of the Guild

Galactic civilization is unfathomably old. Long before the Anthropos' ancestors were even arboreal insectivores, some legends tell of titanic battles with dark forces from other realities, the rise and fall of mighty civilizations, and powerful, godlike entities. Occasionally, strange devices and indecipherable writings are found, or fragments of ancient myths speak of an age of heroes and war, or of chaos and darkness. From this fog of myth and legend emerged the civilized galaxy which we know today.

Before the Guild

Pre-Guild civilization is difficult to piece together, for only a few hints remain of what once was. As it is impossible to separate fact from fiction in these ancient chronicles, most scholars place them in the realm of folklore, and concentrate on the most ancient known civilization, the Aerolk.

Occupying a region coreward and counterspinward of the Guild, the Aerolk are known to have developed a highly advanced civilization which flourished over 100,000 years ago. The Aerolk's appearance and biology are a mystery, for no portrayal of them survived their disappearance.

As to why the Aerolk disappeared, no one can say either. Their legacy lives on, however, in the dangerous reaches of Aerolk space. Here, it is said, many of the Aerolk's incredible tools, devices, weapons, starships and other artifacts may be found by those daring enough to journey there.

Unfortunately, Aerolk Space is one of the most dangerous regions of the Known Space. Laden with time-space anomalies, this region is also full of traps and devices apparently left behind by the Aerolk, either to guard their worlds in anticipation of their return, or to keep their galactic tomb undisturbed. Few who journey to this area have returned to tell of it, or to bring back the wondrous devices of super-science which may still be found there.

The Beginning

The universe we know today began in the flames of atomic war and genocidal destruction. The Anthropos homeworld of Url, long the scene of global conflict and danger, finally exploded in the ultimate atomic war. Survivors of the conflict were few, and each group was driven by the desire to avoid the mistakes of the past.

In ones and twos, or in groups of a few dozen, the survivors came together. A few crawled up from the devastated surface of Url. Others came from Url's handful of offworld colonies. Slowly, the ones and twos became tens and hundreds, and the hundreds became thousands. There was nothing left for them in the Url system now. With heavy hearts and grim determination, the survivors turned toward the distant stars. The Scattering had begun.

Many different groups left Url in the decade following the Holocaust. All were bound for the limitless reaches of space, and the promise of new worlds and new homes. Most didn't make it. Crude stardrives failed, stranding survivors in the interstellar void. New worlds proved hostile or completely incapable of supporting life. Conflicts broke out between factions, wiping out entire communities. Of the handful who escaped from Url, only a smaller handful actually reached habitable worlds.

Within two centuries, several distinct factions of humanity had emerged. Those militaristic humans who believed that the great holocaust could have been avoided by maintaining strength and vigilance found their way to the world now known as Arth, from which they spread out, absorbing the smaller human colonies and alien worlds which surrounded them. The Arthirian Sphere was formed in 200 a.h.

In 250 a.h. the descendants of the corporate powers created a mercantile empire called simply The Company, which directly controlled few worlds, but had financial connections throughout human space.

The Guild

Other small human alliances, states and individual worlds existed as well, scattered throughout Known Space. Some of these were idealized, utopian communities which tried to live in accordance with theoretical social models or religious philosophies. Others were true democracies or republics. Still others were ruthless dictatorships, or pirate alliances which lived by raiding neighboring worlds.

As time passed, many of the worlds settled by the idealists, artisans, philosophers or theologians found they had much in common, and as the science of space travel and interstellar communication advanced, their contacts increased. Faced with the threat of the expanding Arthirian sphere, and the unknown threats which might lie beyond Known Space, they banded together into a formal alliance, with each major faction represented as an official "House."

Soon, the Guild (originally an acronym for "Galactic Unification of Intelligent Life-forms and Devices," but soon simply "The Guild") had been established in 505 a.h.

Guild members were expected to abide by several simple, but significant, laws. Member worlds were free to deal with internal affairs in any way they chose, so long as their citizens retained basic freedoms such as free speech, democratic representation, and a free press. In exchange, member worlds received economic support, technical assistance, disaster relief, and military defense. Military house members were trained for loyalty to the Guild, but such houses were not allowed to participate in the government, lest the Guild degenerate into the militaristic totalitarianism of the Arthirian Sphere.

Even before alien contact, Guild leaders had made provisions for non-Anthropos membership. Many alien races were encountered, some hostile, some neutral, some friendly. Provisions in Guild law had been made to provide for alien biologies and social systems, and each race was considered for membership on an individual basis. All were still expected to have free and open societies, but obvious differences in physiology and social development were always taken into account. Soon, over a hundred species could claim membership in the Guild.

The Arthirian Invasion

Conflict between the major branches of human civilization was inevitable. As Guildspace grew to rival the Arthirians in size and power, the rulers of Arth saw them as a threat to both themselves and the glorious future of humanity. Democratic traditions were seen as weakness, and the full participation of all Guild citizens in Guildspace governance was seen as a fatal flaw. Urgently, and in total secrecy, the Arthirians planned a war of conquest against the Guild.

Fortunately, the Guild houses had anticipated such a move. Spies within the Arthirian Sphere warned Guild leaders that something was up, and so the initial onslaught, in 805 a.h., did not take Guild forces completely by surprise.

All the same, it was a furious conflict. Sphere naval forces broke through the Guild's frontier defenses in several places, shattering the few small flotillas which could be rushed to the scene. The sacrifice of these fleets bought the Guild time, however, allowing the beleaguered alliance to marshal its forces and attempt to blunt the Arthirian advance.



Unfortunately for the Guild, the Arthirians had planned their campaign well. Their fleets advanced with amazing swiftness, slipping through a previously uncharted wormhole into the heart of Guildspace. Guildhome itself was threatened and with it, the entire Guild. The Guild fleet threw up a hasty defense of the Guild's prime world and a prolonged siege began.

These were the Guild's darkest days. Months of maneuvering and skirmishing followed, with Guildhome totally cut off from the rest of Guildspace. A spirited defense, coupled with hit-and-run raids against Arthirian supply lines and bases, kept the invaders off balance and forestalled their final offensive. Both sides knew, however, that the reckoning was coming.

With supply lines overextended and morale deteriorating, Arthirian leaders were forced to press the attack. Preceded by a light screen of corvettes and insystem fighters, the Arthirian battleships advanced toward the interior of the Guild's home system.

Casualties were heavy. An entire flotilla was decoyed into the rings of Kargyr where their sensors functioned poorly, and was wiped out by Admiral Hamor's strike cruisers. Other ships were damaged by

mines and small, one-man fighters intended to distract, rather than destroy. With the advance behind schedule and losses mounting, the Arthirian admirals redoubled their pace and prepared to bombard Guildhome into submission.

This was the moment the defenders had been waiting for. In their haste, the Arthirians had bypassed Guildhome's sister planet, Rexon, without a thorough scan. Hidden beneath its surface in vast caverns was the bulk of the Guild fleet. Rising from its surface, the smaller, lighter Guild ships swept down upon the clumsier Arthirian battleships, inflicting heavy losses before the invaders could maneuver around to respond.

The skies of Great House were lit up that night as the two fleets struggled, fought and died. In this desperate battle, where Admiral Kuranna broadcast a heroic call for resistance against the Sphere and herself died on the bridge of her flagship, the cruiser *Defiant*, the Guild fleet earned the title "House of Defiance."

Bloodily repulsed, the Arthirian fleet limped back for home with less than a third of their original numbers. The Sphere never again attempted an invasion of the Guild, although skirmishes and low-level conflict along the frontier continued for years. The

Guild, badly battered but still alive, took steps to collapse the uncharted wormhole and increase its border defenses.

The first major conflict between humans in space had been a near-catastrophe, from which neither side emerged as a clear winner. The only real victor was The Company, which had managed to supply both sides while remaining scrupulously clear of real conflict.

The Empire

Years passed. The race of humanity evolved through genetic engineering and superior medical science, eventually becoming the advanced species known as the Anthros. The Guild's frontiers steadily expanded, while internal conflict and the massive economic disruption caused by the failed invasion kept the Arthirians occupied.

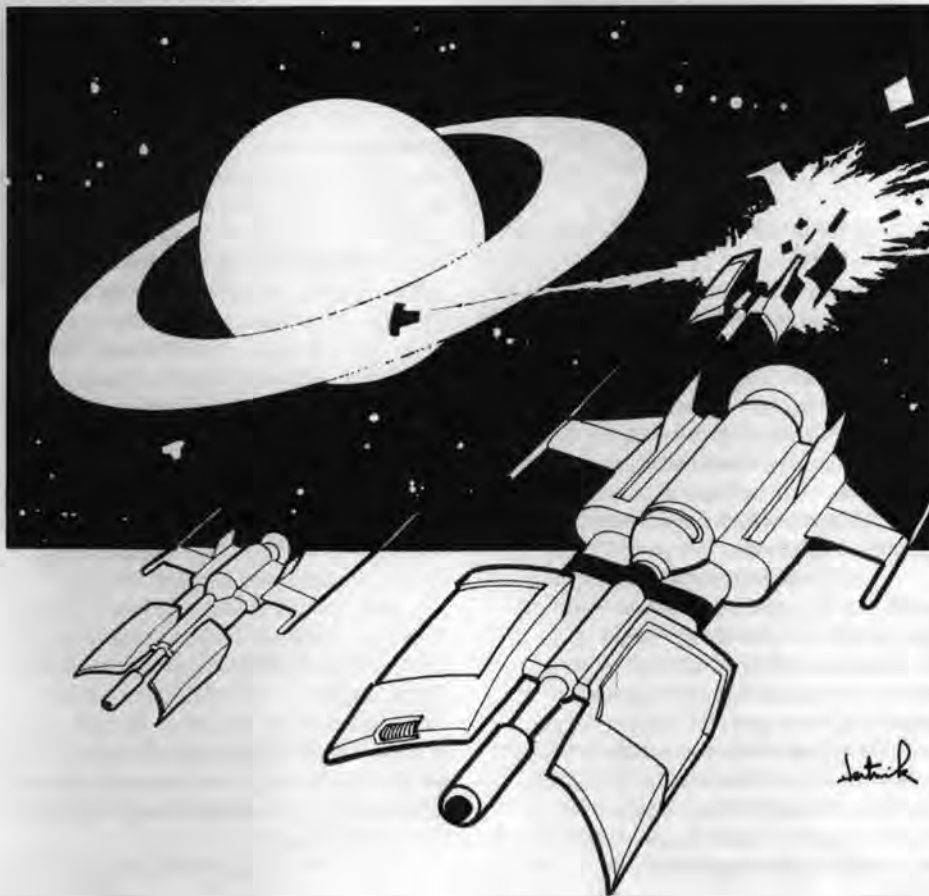
The days of open hostility between Guild and Sphere ended, however, and the expanding Guild slowly crept around the Arthirian frontier, threatening to completely surround its old enemy. Nearly 2000 years of relative peace ensued. However, in 2602 a.h., a danger far greater than the Arthirians was encountered.

Exploring spinward, Guild scouts came upon a heavily fortified frontier. Guild ships which approached were fired upon; some were destroyed — The Empire had been discovered.

The humanoid katha controlled this totalitarian state in the person of the mysterious Emperor and his equally unknown "Council of State." Numerous subject races also served The Empire, with various levels of status depending on their importance and length of servitude. Driven by an intense xenophobia and the arrogance of absolute rulers, the katha had little tolerance for the Guild's philosophy of peaceful coexistence.

In 2610 a.h. imperial slave-ambassadors delivered a stark message to the guild — submit or face destruction. The myriad races of the Guild, despite their different appearances and biology, had one thing in common. All preferred even a doomed struggle to docile submission. The Guild's answer was swift and unequivocal: If the katha wish to make us their slaves, let them try.

Even the centuries of training and rearming which had followed the Arthirian conflict scarcely prepared the Guild for the sheer ferocity of the imperial onslaught. Endless legions of slave-troops swept over outlying Guild worlds, imperial warships laid waste to cities and continents from orbit, and quarter was neither asked nor given.



In the face of such an attack, the Guild had no choice but to fall back with heavy losses. A few triumphs highlight the first decade of conflict, but all were merely honorable defeats and skillful withdrawals. The evacuation of the planet Hralla in the face of an advancing imperial armada, for example, is one such small success, in which a small Guild flotilla led by the dreadnaught *Dauntless*, held an entire Imperial fleet at bay for several days before being completely annihilated. "Remember the *Dauntless*!" was to become a rallying cry to the Guild military and all those who opposed The Empire.

The second and third decade of the conflict saw little change, but slowly, Guild strategy began to change. Utilizing guerrilla tactics, Guild forces managed to delay and frustrate imperial commanders, slowing the pace of their advance somewhat.

In 2632, imperial forces encountered the Arthirian Sphere, and after several sharp exchanges, withdrew their probing forces and concentrated upon the Guild, which imperial commanders considered more vulnerable.

Realizing that The Empire would turn on the Sphere once the Guild was destroyed, the Arthirians finally began to funnel ships, weapons, equipment and supplies to their former enemies. Publicly, however, they remained neutral, hoping to gain favored status with The Empire should the Guild be defeated.

Despite isolated successes, after almost a century of conflict, the Guild seemed doomed. Imperial forces were still strong, and the handful of Guild victories had served only to delay the inevitable. Some Guild members now openly spoke of capitulation, to spare the worlds further tragedy and bloodshed. Whatever happened, it seemed that the Guild would eventually be conquered, one way or another.

It was then, in 2702 a.h., as the Guild steeled itself for the final conflict, that the impossible happened. Imperial forces unexpectedly pulled back, and unilaterally declared a cease-fire. Why this happened remains a mystery, but the most common theory is that The Empire had met another, more dangerous foe, and needed the forces to fight elsewhere.

It took another three years to work out the final terms of peace. Forces were pulled back, leaving a 500 light year-wide strip of uncontested star systems. The Arthirians, who, despite their covert support for the Guild, had remained officially neutral, were given control over the demilitarized zone between the Guild and Empire, and citizens of all three states were allowed free access to the region.

Today, the area, simply called "The Zone," exists as a rich trading region in which numerous states and races may freely coexist. The conflict with The Empire has scarcely ended, however, and imperial forces remain the greatest threat to the Guild's freedom generally known.

After the War

In the meantime, technological advances continued. Guild scientists perfected a method for widening existing wormholes, creating a Guild-wide "rapid-transit" system for emergencies. The only drawback to this system was the huge amount of energy required to widen the normally subatomic wormholes to a practical size, and the extremely brief period which they could be held open.

With The Empire blocking spinward expansion, Guild explorers turned coreward and counterspinward. Here, the richest period of Guild expansion began.

The Blood Feud

Nearly two thousand years previously, in 515 a.h., the catlike Zin-Shee had built their own interstellar state — known as the Zin-Shee Matriarchy — based on the conquest of surrounding worlds and races. Originating in a region of space with few technological races, the Zin-Shee had had an easy time of it. In fact, many worlds voluntarily joined the Zin-Shee after seeing the advantages of doing so.

The Zin-Shee were not cruel conquerors, and generally treated subject worlds well. Rebellion was not tolerated, however, and worlds which tried to break away from the matriarchy usually found their major cities destroyed and their culture forcibly bombed back into pre-technological eras.

After centuries of unopposed conquest, the Matriarchy finally met its match, in 1812

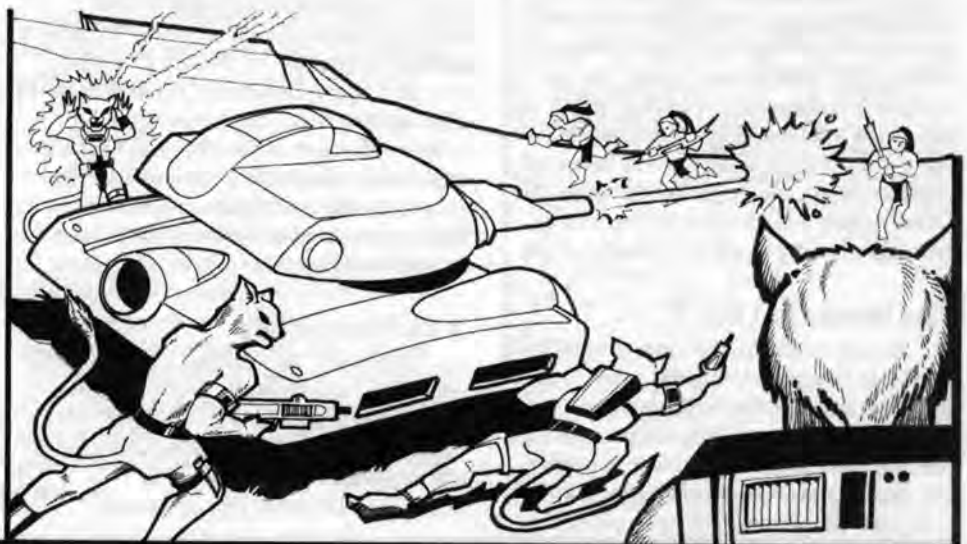
a.h., in the Calemora, a low-tech warrior race inhabiting a huge, high-gravity world orbiting an ancient red giant star. Anticipating a relatively short conflict, the Zin-Shee gamely settled into their familiar conquest routine, expecting their superior technology to dazzle the simple primitives. Things went badly almost from the start — an unexpected meteor storm badly damaged the Zin-Shee invasion fleet, and to the surprise of the Zin-Shee commanders, the Calemora proved tough, resourceful, and highly prolific.

The siege of Calemor had lasted nearly ten centuries when the Guild arrived on the scene. So long had it gone on that the Blood Feud — as it was now known — had become central to both species' cultures, and few could imagine life without it (the Zin-Shee had gone so far as to relocate their capital world from Sheapa to Seril in order to better manage the war). The near-permanent state of war had devastated Calemor, but still, mysteriously, the powerful humanoids hung on.

The war degenerated into little more than a permanent draw, with the Calemora unable to dislodge the invaders, and the Zin-Shee incapable of finally pacifying the planet.

Cloaked Guild ships observed the conflict and saw in the Zin-Shee and Calemora valuable allies against the threat of The Empire. After a long debate, the Guild decided to intervene, forcibly ending the centuries-old conflict.

The Guild fleet and ground forces descended on Calemor in overwhelming force, catching the combatants entirely by surprise. In the face of such superior force, both the Calemora and Zin-Shee realized, albeit with great reluctance, that the war was finally over, and Calemor remained free.



Impressed by the fighting prowess of Guild warriors and by the benefits of Guild membership, the Calemora joined immediately, and turned to healing their devastated planet. As for the Zin-Shee, Guild membership was a more complex matter. Several Zin-Shee worlds, mostly located near the Guild frontier, joined the Guild while maintaining dual membership in the Matriarchy. But, most of the Matriarchy held a thorough dislike of the Guild for ending the war so high-handedly and would not become and rejected Guild membership.

The alliance forces finally prevailed, and soon the Zin-Shee Matriarchy was a de-facto member of the Guild.

Other Allies

Spinward of the Zin-Shee, bordering both Guild and The Empire, was another vast undiscovered alien state, that of the reptilian Draca. The Zin-Shee themselves informed the Guild of the Draca's existence, and emissaries were immediately dispatched to this strange and distant realm.

The Draca proved to be a fearsome race with awesome abilities. Highly militaristic and violent, they practiced genocide on those species which they encountered who proved "inferior," but treated races which proved their military skill as near equals. So far, only a handful of races had passed the test, including the Zin-Shee, whom the Draca had fought for over two centuries before deeming them "worthy."

Calemoran and Anthropros ambassadors were required to demonstrate their martial skill before the Dracan cyber-lords would even speak with them, and even then the Draca seemed standoffish and distant.

Demonstration of Guild military might forestalled a Dracan attack, and within a few years, treaties of friendship and non-aggression were signed between the two states. Many Draca were drawn to service within the Guild, as mercenaries, military officers, and adventurers. Today, the positive influence of the Guild seems to have mellowed the Draca's aggression somewhat, and no small number favor full membership in the Guild. All the same, the Draca remain a fearsome and mysterious race whom many Guild members distrust.

The House of Dha

Recent events in The Empire have led the Guild Council to consider a new and radical change for the Guild military. Reports filtering out of The Empire indicate that imperial scientists are close to perfecting a new type of so-called "super soldier" to be used in renewed conflict against the

Guild and other surrounding powers. The exact nature of these soldiers is not known — the best guess is that they are a new type of genetically-engineered warrior, possibly trained to take more damage, ignore pain and never retreat. Whatever form these new warriors take, the reports were believable enough to spur the Guild to drastic action.

Ever since the first, disastrous confrontation with The Empire, Guild leaders had recognized the need for an elite, independent force of Guild warriors. However the Guild-Empire treaty did not allow for such a military base. But now it seemed that The Empire had taken the first step and the Guild could not afford to idly stand by. The Empire was not the only reason for this conclusion — many unknown forces obviously existed beyond Guildspace, and a highly-trained and -motivated military force might be needed to deal with them. The reports of the new imperial super-soldiers were what finally compelled the Guild to found a new secret military house, the House of Dha.

This move in itself was quite unusual — the Guild military had, up to this point, been organized into large houses, with most military starships belonging to the House of Defiance. Organizing Dha as a separate house gave the new group full independence and freedom from petty regulation.

Dha is a very old Calemoran word meaning, roughly, "chosen." Only the finest warriors, psionics, martial artists, techs, and so on, are selected for admission, and of these, over half fail to attain full Dha status.

The primary Dha races are collectively known as the Guardian Races — Anthropros, Draca, Calemora and Zin-Shee. Many other races have since joined Dha, but the Guardians still make up the bulk of membership.

The House of Dha is a single, independent military unit, with sufficient personnel and equipment to fill any needed role. Small, highly-trained groups of Dha warriors may be sent into enemy territory to gather information or destroy a set objective, or larger numbers of Dha may serve as elite fighting units, supplementing the military chapters of the House of Defiance. In this way, the Guild hopes to offset The Empire's new and frightening military innovations, and to deal with new threats wherever they arise.

Two New Allies

GMs Note: The following section contains information revealed in the first Guild Space™ Setting adventure, Shakna — Assault on the Hive, and should not be read by players before that adventure has been completed.

As the House of Dha grew and

evolved, and its warriors trained and became more experienced, the Guild was again plunged into crisis.

A strange, artificial planet, seemingly made entirely of organic material, appeared on the Guild frontier not far from Dha Prime. Its occupants, deadly insectoid warriors first dubbed "bugs," swarmed immediately to the attack, destroying several House of Defiance ships sent to contact them.

The House of Dha was the only other major military force nearby, and most of the house was marshaled to meet the threat. As Dha ships moved to the attack, a second incredible event occurred. Back on Dha Prime, where only a skeleton staff remained, a mysterious black planetoid appeared, positioned in orbit alongside the four Guardian moons.

A newly trained team of Dha warriors who remained on Dha Prime moved to investigate the new world. Its surface was featureless, save for a single, four-sided obelisk. From this structure emerged a cloaked being, which called itself Shakna. It was one of the Shanask, it said, an ancient race which had arrived to aid the Guild and head off conflict with the aliens.

The Dha warriors accompanied Shakna and managed to prevent war with the Kryll in a surprise twist of fate. Eventually, both Kryll and Shanask were accepted into the Guild and the House of Dha.

The Kryll carried a dire message — an alien horde of unknown origin was approaching the galaxy from the depths of intergalactic space. Several House of the Guide ships were dispatched to investigate. (The outcome of this tale will be told in the adventure: *Into the Horde Wall*.)

The Present

Clearly, Guildspace stands on the brink of a new era. With its alien members and allies, the Guild is a truly integrated state, and with its new military forces, Guildspace may become a force to rival even The Empire itself. The Empire's preparations seem geared to a renewal of conflict with the Guild, and any war between the two states is sure to be momentous.

Guild expansion continues, despite the presence of The Empire, the still largely unknown threat of the alien horde, and other obstacles. Other small states exist even within the boundaries of Guildspace, and no one knows what alien states remain to be discovered. The universe remains a mysterious place, in which the Guild is an island of enlightenment and stability. What the future holds is anyone's guess, but it is certain to be fraught with danger, as well as exciting possibilities.

Major Races of Known Space

Hundreds of species inhabit Guildspace, and thousands more dwell in the parsecs beyond. Six major races are most likely to be encountered by adventurers or members of the House of Dha. The following provides a brief overview of each race, its history, character, abilities, and so on. Following is an overview of several other races found in the Guild and beyond.



Anthropos

The race once called humans originated on the world of Url. Fleeing the effects of an atomic holocaust, they spread out into the galaxy, founding numerous small states, many of which eventually combined to form the major Anthropos states of today.

Appearance

Anthropos have evolved considerably from their human ancestors. Most stand over six feet and weigh around 200 pounds. Their musculature and skeletal system are more advanced than an ordinary humans, and have higher endurance. They have lost almost all body hair, retaining only head and (in males) facial hair. Anthropos' skin, hair and eye coloration show the same variation as their ancestors.

Clothing/Armor

Most Anthropos cover their entire bodies with clothing, save hands and head, although this may vary according to climate and cultural norms. Hats and helmets are also worn frequently.

Jewelry is worn by both sexes as a symbol of wealth and status. Sometimes special pieces of jewelry, such as rings, collars, headbands or necklaces are worn to symbolize membership in a special group or fraternity.

Anthropos prefer to wear at least partial body armor in combat. Suits of powered armor with ranged weapons are favored, often used in conjunction with energy shields. Such equipment can make an ordinary Anthropos the equal of even a Calemora dragon in combat.

Attributes

A typical Anthropos can lift over 300 pounds of dead weight, sprint at speeds as high as 25 mph, and broad jump 20 feet or more. Despite Anthropos' impressive physique, their greatest assets are and always have been their Intelligence, curiosity and luck.

Senses

Anthropos' sight and hearing have also advanced considerably. Hearing range is nearly equal to that of a normal dog, while vision is as sharp as some birds. Taste is probably the Anthropos' most sophisticated sense; Anthropos meals are considered delicacies by many species. The weakest sense is that of smell, although some genetically-enhanced Anthropos are used in The Empire as intelligent tracking and hunting animals.

Communications

Anthropos communicate verbally, and over the centuries have developed many complex and subtle languages. Today, most Anthropos in the Guild know Guildspeak, and a few can communicate psionically.

Activity Cycle

Most Anthropos are diurnal, although considerable variation exists, with some sleeping during daylight and staying awake all night. Most of this race prefer to sleep for eight hours and remain active for 16, though this cycle may change depending upon the cycle of the world they inhabit.

Anthropos eat two to five meals per day, usually immediately before and after sleep periods. They are omnivorous and prefer to consume liquids with meals and between.

Powers

The Anthropos species has no special powers, but their advanced technology makes up for the deficiency.

Sciences

Anthropos are one of the most technologically advanced races in the Guild. They also have access to both Cybernetics and Biotechnology, and are extremely adaptable, developing technologies of other races and turning them to their own use.

Combat

In battle, most Anthropos like to keep their distance and enhance personal safety. Long range energy weapons and armored vehicles are preferred, but armored infantry forms an important segment of Anthropos military technology.

There is no special code of honor among the Anthropos as a whole, although individual fighters or groups may have such things. In most cases, however, Anthropos have no qualms about annihilating an outgunned enemy; a "fair fight" is considered foolish by Anthropos strategists.

Open conflict is usually viewed as a last resort, usually the result of failure in communications. When given a choice, an Anthropos will usually sit down and negotiate rather than fight. Anthropos are notoriously reluctant to enter a fight in which they do not have the advantage.



Personality and Culture

As a race, the Anthropos are one of the most divergent and varied groups known, making it difficult to generalize. For the most part, Anthropos tend to be ruled by emotion, although rational thought and logic are valued. Most decisions, however, are made on the basis of what an Anthropos might call "gut feeling" rather than logic.

Anthropos are curious, inquisitive and, in many cases, downright nosy. Scientists love prying into things which are considered forbidden or imponderable. Explorers and adventurers love to push the boundaries of Known Space. Artists and writers strive to be different and unique.

Anthropos are a highly social race. While solitary individuals exist, most Anthropos cannot survive for long without contact with others. They offer and accept friendship readily, but committed friendship is a valuable thing. Most Anthropos even enjoy the company of aliens, once they have overcome initial surprise or revulsion at an alien's appearance.

Emotions such as love can be intense — it is said that wars have been started over love. Over time, this intensive form of love usually evolves into a less intense form, which still may remain quite strong depending on the individuals involved.

Many marriage practices exist throughout Anthropos space. In some, the father is considered the provider and protector, while the mother is primarily responsible for child-rearing. In others, domestic duties and responsibilities are shared equally. In still other cases, females may be heads of households. As with most other aspects of Anthropos society, the only consistent feature is inconsistency.

Race- and species-hatred is considerably less common in Anthropos than in their human ancestors. Ideally, an Anthropos feels that all races and species are equal, or at least hold the potential of equality, and that discrimination or hatred based on race or species is wrong.

In reality, of course, the same variations exist as have always existed. While there is little racism within the Anthropos species, most Anthropos feel that their species is superior to all others, although they do a good job of hiding this.

Like all other aspects of Anthropos society, their religion runs the gamut from out-and-out atheism to complex polytheistic cultures with ancient histories and endless pantheons. Individual Anthropos planets often have dozens of religions competing for followers, each claiming to be the one true faith. In the past, Anthropos society has been torn by bitter religious wars, but today most faiths are willing to live and let live.

Motivations

Individual motivations for Anthropos are typically the desire for financial independence, personal power or freedom, accumulation of possessions, self-preservation and curiosity.

Species motivations include the exploration of space, treaties with or the containment of other races, freedom of galactic travel, species preservation and technological advancement.





Calemora

Calemoran history goes back over 25,000 years. Theirs is not a technological culture — they have no advanced tools, and their way of life has not changed in over 100 centuries. This does not, however, mean that Calemoran culture is stagnant. While other races improve their devices and technologies, the Calemora improve their bodies, becoming one of the most physiologically advanced species in Guildspace.

Appearance

Outsiders tend to think that all Calemora look alike. While their overall physique is roughly similar, there are many individual differences, which anyone can learn with enough experience.

Calemoran skin tone varies from copper to brown. Hair is dark brown to black, fading to grey and white with age. Facial hair except eyebrows is absent, but older Calemora can sometimes produce enough facial hair to grow a small, goatee-style beard (generally considered a mark of distinction and venerable age). Eyes are dark brown or black.

Calemora average 5'6" in height. The bones and muscles of a Calemora's arms and shoulders are just as massive as those of his legs. A Calemora's torso is a massive, v-shaped affair, supported by a thick, heavily muscled backbone. Calemora average 350 pounds, most of it muscle.

There are no external ears — not even holes. Calemoran hearing is a slightly more complex process than it is for Anthropos, as described below.

All Calemora bear scars, tattoos, or brands. These are intended for personal decoration, and also to identify an individual's catong and rank.

Clothing/Armor

Calemora avoid clothing (except for a basic loincloth) for a variety of practical reasons — receptors on their chest and back enable them to hear. They believe in absolute physical perfection without artificial enhancement, and their natural *psychosomatic* abilities more than compensate for the lack of clothing. Additionally, many of their natural abilities such as communication, body alteration and martial arts would be restricted by clothing.

For similar reasons, armor is rarely worn. *Psychosomatic* enhancement such as *rough skin* helps offset this disadvantage. Some forms of Calemora armor, designed to interfere only minimally with Calemoran abilities, are known, but even these are rarely used.

Attributes

For millennia, the Calemora have been perfecting their bodies. Their arms are just as strong as their legs, enabling a Calemora to lift half a ton, while extremely strong individuals can lift over 1500 pounds.

Mentally, Calemora seem underdeveloped in comparison to other races. They are generally considered rather "slow" and a bit on the dull side. However, the perfection of their bodies has provided the Calemora with a number of phenomenal abilities. Their strong Will Power enables them to withstand extremes which might kill lesser races, and allows for the incredible concentration required to perform *psychosomatics*.

Senses

A Calemora's senses are quite different from those familiar to an Anthropos. While Calemoran sensory apparatus, such as eyes, mouth and nose, are located in familiar places, their use differs radically. The first, and most prominent sense, is sight.

Calemora see in the infrared spectrum. This means that Calemora see heat rather than light. Their brains do not process visible light, but instead perceive objects in shades of red, from white or pink (hot) to black (cold).

Vibrations and pressure changes are detected by receptors in the chest and back. These are processed by the brain as sound, giving Calemora as good as or better hearing than most Anthropos.

Finally, Calemora have been trained by years of combat and natural selection to ignore pain. They are aware of the sensa-

tion, and consider the pain simply as a warning that something is wrong, but even the most extreme pain will not distract a Calemora from the task at hand. They are extremely poor torture subjects for this reason, as imperial interrogators have discovered.

Communication

Ignorant individuals consider the Calemoran language to be simplistic and primitive. In fact, the exact opposite is true. The Calemoran language is simple and direct, as would be required while hunting, or in battle, or when excessive verbiage would be a handicap. Theirs is a deep, vibrating language, which has been compared to the soft beating of a drum. Consonant sounds are often modified by a soft aspirant, creating such words as "Dha."

When using Guildspeak, Calemora also waste few words. Where a Zin-Shee in extreme formal mode might say "Hark unto my words, oh respected individual of higher rank! It is my duty to inform you that the thermal extremes of yonder igneous formation are such that they might cause severe discomfort should the aforesaid formation be manipulated..." a Calemora would simply say "Rock is hot!"

Among themselves, Calemora use verbal communications only when they are a considerable distance apart. When close, they utilize *psychosomatics* to alter their body temperature, with different degrees of heat representing various words and concepts. This form of communication — called "catongi" after the massive martial arts temples scattered across Calemor — is a highly subtle and effective language.

Certain points of the Calemoran body, known as chakra, are particularly sensitive, and are most often used for communication. If one or more of the chakras is covered, this does not prevent catongi communication, but it does slow it down.

Only a few Guild xenolinguists fully understand catongi, and these few admit that they have a lot to learn. Most deep and philosophical thoughts are communicated through the chakra, and are memorized by old or particularly wise Calemora. Books and permanent records are unknown, save for stone carvings on Calemoran catongs. This language is difficult for aliens to learn requiring infravision or infrared equipment.

Activity Cycle

Calemora do not sleep as Anthropos know it. The conditioning and modification of the Calemoran physiology did away with this requirement centuries ago. Calemora function at their peak, however, if they are allowed to rest and meditate for at least four

hours per day. There are no visible ill effects if this meditation is not practiced, but those individuals who do not meditate regularly are known to have shorter lifespans than those who do.

Strict vegetarians, Calemora subsist on the fleshy, moist root-crops of their home world. Once a rich jungle world, Calemor was reduced to a desert during the Blood Feud, so that today only tough, spindly leaves exist above ground, while water and other nutrients are stored below. Calemoran roots are nutritious, and if eaten regularly, need for liquids is all but eliminated.

Away from their homeworld, the Calemora eat roots such as potatoes, carrots and radishes, but must consume liquids to make up for the deficiency.

Powers

The Calemora's greatest power is their mind-over-body control known as *psychosomatics*. This is the ability to mentally alter or control body functions at all levels. A master is able to accelerate cell repair, concentrate his immune system, break down tissues and transfer them to other parts of his body, enhance muscles, alter pigmentation, form natural body armor, and so on.

While it might seem that way, *psychosomatics* is not magic or mysticism of any kind. It is simply supreme neurological control of all bodily functions. Many animal species have the ability to reduce respira-

tion, slow heartbeat, feign death, or control a wide variety of other functions. The Calemora have learned to control and harness this power.

Sciences

Calemoran culture is naturally low-tech. Their mental capacity for technological work and understanding is lower than other races. The real reason for the limitations of their sciences, however, is their basic philosophy of existence.

Calemora shun technology, considering their bodies to be the ultimate machines. It is believed that with proper preparation and concentration, any task can be accomplished. The use of any technological device is considered a betrayal of ancient codes of honor. A Calemora who undergoes cybernetic modification, for example, will become an outcast and be shunned by his fellows for the rest of his life.

Biotechnology is tolerated somewhat better, since it is an outgrowth of basic life processes. However, many Calemora shun it as well, considering it an abomination, and the exploitation of other living things.

Combat

Although they are one of the most peaceful races in the galaxy (their thousand-year conflict with the Zin-Shee notwithstanding), they are also among its most formidable warriors. They feel no pain, display little or no emotion, are physically

superior to most races, are trained masters of the martial arts, and possess powers which can turn their very bodies into deadly weapons.

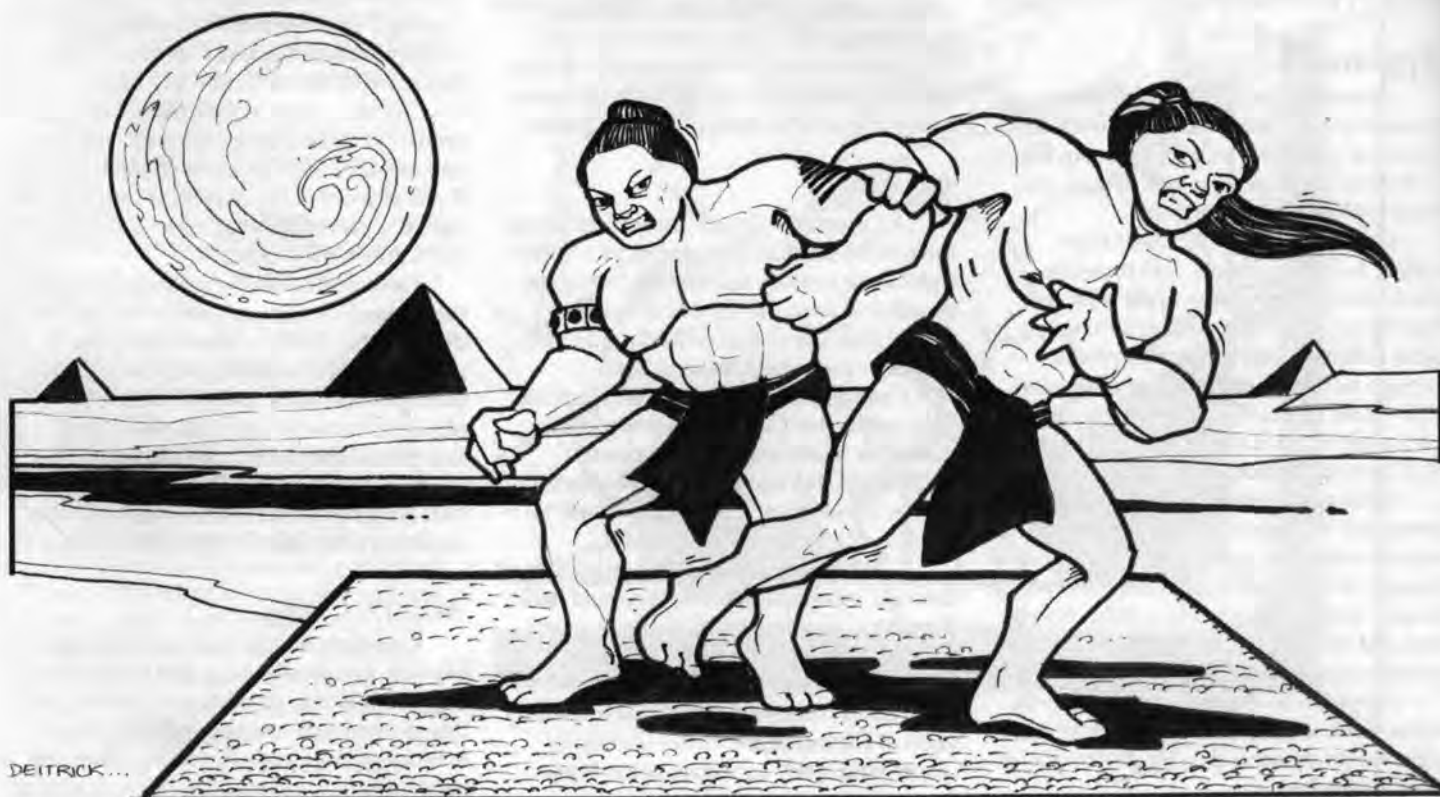
Fortunately for other races, the Calemora's combat effectiveness is limited by several factors: their rigid code of honor, their quest for physical and mental perfection, and their disdain for advanced weapons and technology.

Calemora prefer a straight contest of unaided physical strength. At best, medieval level weapons may be used. Energy-enhanced weapons are usually looked down upon, but have gained some level of acceptance since they still require muscle power to work properly.

Simple thrown weapons are likewise shunned. A Calemora would rather run to fight an opponent hand-to-hand than waste time throwing a spear. Such items are sometimes used, and are not considered particularly dishonorable, but are not preferred.

Propelled weapons (those powered by more than physical strength) are thought of as highly dishonorable, and their use is considered grounds for a total loss of honor.

In battle, Calemora try to match their opponents, avoiding any unfair advantage. If an opponent has no thrown weapons, the Calemora will not use them, either. Should an enemy use dishonorable weapons, however, all rules are suspended, and a Calemora will fight as dirty as is necessary,



so long as his own personal honor is not reduced. The worst mistake an opponent can make is to shoot a blaster at a Calemora.

Calemora do not take prisoners or practice torture. Prisoners are either slain (if considered dishonorable) or set free (if honorable).

Personality and Culture

For thousands of years, the Calemora strove to eliminate emotion from their lives. Although they still harbor some of the behaviors associated with emotion, they have for the most part succeeded. Calemora almost never show outward signs of emotion such as fear, anger, hatred, love, sadness, happiness, etc.

Despite this, Calemora are a gentle race — humble, introspective, and stern but merciful. They avoid instigating emotions in others, they are stubborn and goal-oriented, and retain a profound respect for life and other species.

What little leisure time the Calemora have is devoted to perfecting the body and training the mind. Meditation, martial arts kata, weapon practice — all honorable ways to pass time.

Calemora learn martial arts and philosophy in vast pyramidal structures called catongs. Little is known about the internal arrangements of the catongs or the Calemora's low, blocky cities, as outsiders are never allowed beyond highly-restricted visitors' areas.

While the emotional bonds of friendship familiar to such species as the Anthropros and the Zin-Shee are unknown to the Calemora, they may form close relationships based on mutual respect. Calemora in adventuring or mercenary groups are highly loyal and dependable, although they almost never show any real emotional attachment to their companions.

Virtually nothing is known about Calemoran family life. Families bearing the same name do exist, and form an important part of Calemoran life, but their actual organization is a mystery. So far, only male Calemora have been encountered. The concepts of grandfather, grandson, uncle and cousin have no meaning. Calemora call all elders "father," all of the same generation "brother," and all of younger generation "son." It is difficult, therefore, to determine whether an individual referred to as "father" is truly related or not.

Many theories have been advanced for the monosexual nature of Calemoran society, and none have explained it satisfactorily. Do the Calemora reproduce artificially, creating only males? This is completely contrary to their anti-technological bias. Do they reproduce asexually, with

male Calemora "budding" off their parental unit? This has never been observed, and male Calemora have been observed at all life stages without such thing occurring. Many other hypotheses have been advanced and discarded, and the true nature of Calemoran family life remains a mystery. The Calemora themselves aren't talking, as to do so would be a severe breach of their code of honor (see below).

Within their species, the Calemora are obliged to respect all those with more honor or higher rank, and receive respect from those of lesser status. Their relationships seem cold and impersonal to outworlders, but many who have spent time on Calemor claim that there is a vast and silent bond, almost like a hidden love, which binds the race. Despite their lack of emotion, Calemoran compassion and mercy is near-legendary, and their society remains one of the most peaceful in the Guild.

No one knows what religion, if any, the Calemora practice, although most suspect it is an ascetic faith whose rituals are performed in the secrecy of Calemoran catongs, and is intimately related to Calemoran martial arts and body-control regimen.

Motivations

As may be guessed, personal ambition is suppressed within the Calemoran species. Motivations therefore spring from the desire to live within and help the group — to live honorably, die honorably, build honor for yourself and your catong, learn, adapt, and improve yourself to benefit all. The most overriding and important motivation is to obtain perfect mental and physical balance and to attain perfection as a species.

Calemoran society is governed by a strict code of honor, known as the Code of the Dragon — so called since it was originally developed by the Dragon Catong. To disobey even one law is grounds for exile. An exiled Calemora is shunned by his own race — no one will acknowledge his existence. An exile is totally ignored, unless he attempts to commit a crime, in which case the sentence is instant death at the hands of any Calemora nearby.

The Code of the Dragon is as follows:

- You will not brag.
- You will not suggest or instigate retreat from battle unless you are the commander.
- You will only lie to protect or aid worthy causes greater than yourself.
- You will follow all commands of those ranking above you or resign your post.
- You will protect your family name and add honor to that name.

- You will protect Calemor and add honor to your species.
- You will not show emotion.
- You will spend your time listening, learning, and observing.
- Speaking, especially out loud, will convey information in as short and efficient a manner as possible.
- You will study and observe the ways of your Catong.
- You will honor your master and the other members of your Catong.
- You will not hear personal insults. However, insults to your species, family, catong or post will be taken as a challenge to a personal duel.
- Time is irrelevant.
- Once you decide upon a course of action you will not waiver without good reason.
- You will not procrastinate.
- You will not allow substances to enter your body which reduce your physical perfection.
- You will maintain your body at peak physical condition.
- You will avoid unnecessary luxuries.
- You will personally own only that which you can carry.
- You will not complain.
- You will not speak of our ways with outworlders.





Draca

These reptilian warriors are among the most fearsome in Guildspace, and they increase their already-substantial combat abilities with cybernetic enhancements.

Although they are not officially part of the Guild, the Draca of the Holding were sufficiently impressed by Guild military might to sign treaties of peace and friendship. While Guild members are not allowed in the Holding, many Draca choose to serve and adventure in Guildspace. Despite their lack of membership in the Guild, the Draca are one of the Guardian races of the House of Dha.

Appearance

The Draca resemble massive, bipedal lizards with thick, scaled skin, small, daggerlike teeth and powerful claws on both hands and feet. A Draca's head is heavy and thickly muscled, often supplemented with savage-looking cybernetic armor and devices.

Draca have tails and, while this provides them with another formidable weapon, tradition usually demands its removal. Those Draca who retain their tails are often thought of as provincial and primitive.

Dracas' fearsome appearance is further enhanced by the use of cybernetic implants. Virtually every major body system may be replaced by machinery, and externally-visible items are often highly decorated and

modified to appear more savage and formidable.

Dracan dedication to cybernetics is more than mere technological enhancement. The Draca see the fusion of flesh and machine as a route to ultimate perfection, and pursue the science with single-minded (and, in the eyes of some, near-religious) fervor.

Clothing/Armor

Most Draca wear only a loincloth and chest sash. This sash is decorated with tribal markings, and is also used to carry a Draca's personal awards, honors, rank emblems, and so on.

Armor must be personalized in the same fashion as cybernetic implants. External armor is generally disliked in any event, as endoskeletons, armored implants, energy shields, and the Draca's naturally tough hide help a warrior resist damage without it. Many Draca use armored suits in spite of this, but they are often difficult to fit.

Attributes

Dracan Fortitude and ability to withstand damage are legendary. When enhanced by cybernetic implants, Draca are nothing short of amazing.

Draca Will Power is also remarkable, and when combined with their durability, creates a being of incredible stubbornness, toughness and courage. Many tales tell of Draca warriors withstanding horrific damage and still managing to defeat their enemies. The cyber-lord Ki-ta, for example, is said to have had one arm blown off and the other cut off by an attacking pirate lord. Ignoring the damage, he sang a tribal battle song, charged his enemy, chewed through his armor, and finished him with a swift bite to the neck. He then stood up and issued a challenge to any other opponents. Faced with such suicidal courage, the pirates immediately surrendered. Ki-ta then had cybernetic arms fashioned from the hull of the pirate ship he had captured. The arms are still proudly worn by his descendants.

Senses

Dracan natural senses are equivalent to, or less than most other races. Vision is in the normal visible spectrum, but is monochromatic, like a black-and-white video monitor. Hearing is somewhat dull, as Dracan tympanic membranes are small and heavily protected with bone. The tongue is used for both taste and smell, neither of which are exceptional.

None of these factors is a handicap to the Draca, however, for limited senses are

easily modified through the use of Cybernetics, making their sensory apparatus equal or superior to most other Guildspace races.

Communication

An Anthropos can only speak Dracan for about a half-hour before going completely hoarse. Dracan is a harsh, guttural language with few soft sounds. Dracas' rigid lips and narrow tongue require that most sounds be made in the throat; most syllables consist of a single explosive consonant followed by a deep or grinding vowel sound. Examples are Da, De, Gu, Ge, Mak, Ta and Tak.

Dracan is always spoken loudly and with arrogant authority. Virtually every statement in the Dracan language can be interpreted as a challenge. Lesser beings have been known to flee in terror after a Draca simply introduces himself in his native language.

As an example of this practice, a Draca who wishes to know another's identity will customarily say something like, "Who are you, who stands before me as an equal, why do you deserve such status, and why should I not kill you for your presumption?"

In the past, Draca expected outworlders to respond in a like manner ("I am Shar, warrior of the Guild. I have slain many enemies and have led warriors in battle. Attempt to slay me, and you yourself shall die!"), and they ignored or attacked those who did not reply properly. Since contact with the Guild, however, many Draca have come to tolerate outworld practices, and are satisfied with more traditional introductions.

Draca may also communicate simple emotions and commands through hissing. These hissing sounds are apparently holdovers from the reptile-men's primitive ancestors, and still hold considerable significance. Hisses are used extensively in religious and ceremonial observances.

Activity Cycle

Draca activity varies according to the length of the day. As reptilian descendants, they generally grow sluggish in cold conditions, and so sleep during hours of darkness. Cybernetic enhancements can adjust the Draca's primitive thermodynamic system (they only need six hours of sleep if fitted with a thermoplas implant). Normally, Draca must regulate their temperature by shuttling back and forth between warmer and cooler areas, but modern innovations in Cybernetics enable Draca to maintain a constant temperature without external stimuli.

Draca are strict carnivores. Not only would the average Draca die rather than eat vegetable matter, their systems are not equipped to process such nutrients, and such a Draca would quickly starve in any event. Cybernetics could theoretically enable the Draca to process any protein-based matter, but tradition and the repugnance of eating plants has prevented Draca scientists from creating such devices to date.

Draca prefer fresh meat and need to drink only twice per day. While they have attained a high degree of civilization, their eating habits have remained somewhat primitive. Draca cooking, delicacies and table manners are generally considered crude and repulsive by other races, particularly the fastidious Zin-Shee.

Powers

The Draca have no powers — in fact, they shun such things, feeling that true advancement is possible only through the cybernetic enhancement of the body, rather than through the manipulation of mental or supernatural forces.

Sciences

The Dracas' main ability is their advanced use of Cybernetics, which is the science of implanting mechanical devices into the body for the purpose of enhancement. An eye may be replaced with a device capable of seeing infrared, or in low-light conditions. The skeletal structure may be infused with metal filaments for added durability. An entire arm may be replaced with a stronger mechanical arm. Thermo-regulators may be implanted to eliminate the need for constant heating and cooling. The list is virtually endless. Many cybernetic devices are extremely old, and are handed down from generation to generation as clan heirlooms. These devices are highly valued, and their loss or destruction is a major blow to an individual's prestige.

Combat

Draca are formidable fighters, and their fearsome reputation is further enhanced by the savage, baroque appearance of their weapons. Artistic embellishment is often used to enhance the apparent deadliness of a weapon, and the Draca favor weapons which do the maximum amount of physical damage.

Still looking backward to their "heroic" pre-technological history, the Draca favor medieval-style weapons such as swords, axes, polearms, crossbows and so on. Recently, the Draca have begun importing and copying Calemoran weapons, which they consider highly sophisticated.

All this has not prevented the Draca from adopting modern weapons, however. Lacking the Calemoran distaste for unequal battles and ranged weapons, the Dracan military has grown into a heavily armed, offensive-oriented force with little taste for strategic withdrawals or subtle tactics.

In general, Draca prefer weapons which inflict the most physical damage. Ranged weapons utilizing plasma bolts, heavy-element projectiles, or explosive munitions are also favored. Draca have a propensity for loud, unpleasant sounding weapons as well, as this does not disturb their minimal sense of hearing, while at the same time terrifying opponents. The traditional scythe-cannon, for example, may function as both a melee and ranged weapon, and inflicts considerable damage in both roles.

Of course, the Draca believe the finest weapons are those which are integral to a cybernetically-enhanced body. Many types of body weaponry have been developed.

Draca are savage warriors. They have few qualms about killing or torturing prisoners, even when there is no valuable information to be gained. Some Draca, after contact with the more civilized Guild, have rejected this practice, but it remains widespread within the Holding.

Personality and Culture

Draca are probably the most militaristic race in Know Space. They see war and conflict as the natural state of the universe, and are incapable of imagining peace among the various empires and states. They are ferocious, merciless and, in the eyes of many, only barely civilized. In spite of this, the Draca are not an inherently evil race; to the contrary, they see themselves as the defenders of stability and civilization in the

galaxy (of course, this is the position of every "evil" state in history, but the Draca have their good points nonetheless).

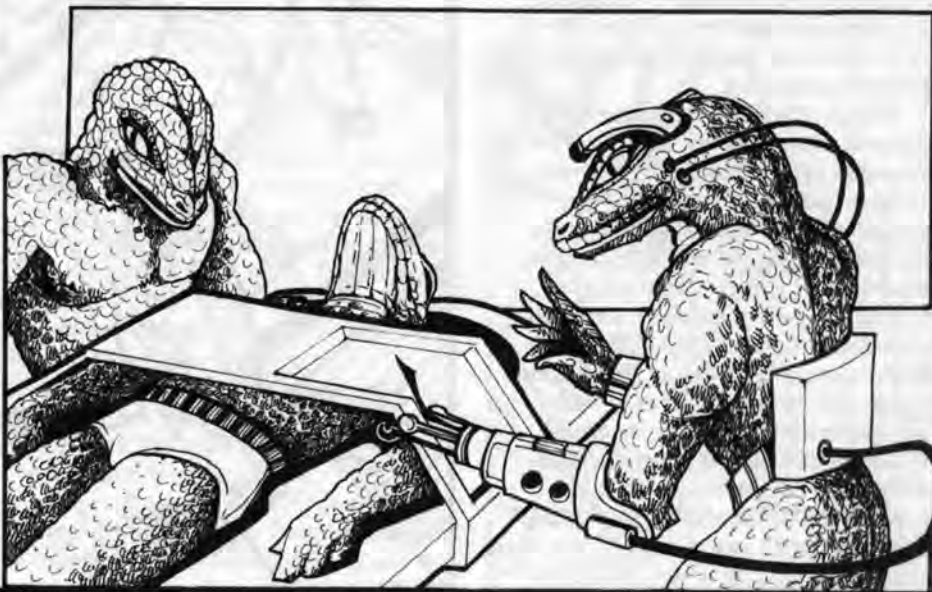
Even the Draca feel that the most successful battle is one which does not take place. Their ultimate goal is to instill such fear in enemies that they surrender without a fight. Unfortunately, most Draca consider this "ideal" behavior to be a sign of weakness, and have in the past ruthlessly exterminated passive races.

Every Draca is trained as a warrior. To fight is considered the ultimate cause for existence, and battle a crucible in which the weak are eliminated and the strong survive.

Friendship is rare among the Draca, for the emotion of friendship is thought to be contrary to good military discipline. A commander might be reluctant to order a "friend" into battle, and therefore must maintain a rigidly unemotional attitude toward his warriors. Rather than friendship, Draca form blood-bonds between fighters. The blood-bond is a rare and valued gift, indicating that either blood-sibling would lay down his or her life for the other. Blood-bond oaths often involve the exchange of valuable cybernetic devices.

Draca are hatched from eggs laid by the female once per year. The young mature quickly, and parental love is geared toward preparing youngsters for the rigors of battle and the demands of adult life. Children are taught to obey their elders without question and, while tenderness and affection may be shown in private, young Draca must act like adults while in public.

Not surprisingly, Draca have no concept of romantic love. Mates are chosen based on military achievement — the best pairing is considered that between two accomplished warriors. A Dracan "marriage" (more accurately described as an



"alliance") may last for only a single mating season, or in rare cases, may be a lifelong bond.

There is absolute equality of the sexes. Egg-laying is an extremely brief process, and a female suffers no ill effects either before or after the act.

Advancement in Dracan society is accomplished solely through combat. All promotions are as the result of duels, either to first blood or to unconsciousness. Many Draca die in these duels, but such deaths are not considered dishonorable. Plots, counterplots and alliances between factions are common in Dracan society, and it is always difficult to determine who to trust.

The standard Dracan family unit is the clan — a family group which traces descent through the female egg-layer. Dracan clans tend to bond together in alliances, or fight long, protracted blood feuds. Family members are honor-bound to avenge the deaths of relatives, and several Dracan clans have been completely wiped out by such feuds. Failure to respond to an assassination or murder will leave the impression that a clan is weak and vulnerable.

The Dracan state — called "The Holding" — is ruled by an individual known as the Egg-mistress, so-called due to her ancient role as defender of her clan's egg clutches. This individual is served by a band of fanatically loyal fighters from her clan, who act as surrogates in personal combat, should the Egg-mistress be challenged for rulership. In this way, the Holding can have consistent, long-term rulers, rather than enduring duel after duel and ruler after ruler.

Draca examine other races for their strengths and weaknesses. They are then studied, and tested in combat. This even extends to inter-personal relationships, for a Draca will not respect his comrades until they have proved themselves in combat. If they are judged weak or ineffective, they will be disdained, if equal or more skilled, they will be respected.

Many of the above traits refer to traditional Dracan society, as it exists within the borders of the Holding. Many Draca who have had contact with the Guild, however, have modified their traditional attitudes somewhat. While still primitive, dangerous and violent, the Draca who adventure and serve within the Guild are significantly more civilized and better adjusted than their fellows in the Holding. Some have even gone so far as to totally shun their traditional society, and fully embrace Guild concepts of peace, understanding and coexistence.

Once Guild attitudes begin to spread through the Draca race as a whole, the Holding itself may grow and mature in

such a way as to join the truly civilized races of the galaxy. At present, however, this is only a hope.

The Draca worship an all-powerful goddess whose true name they keep secret. Her public name is "The Great Egg-Mother," and she is believed to have produced the eggs which hatched the first two Draca. She is sometimes spoken of as having a male consort, but he seems of little importance.

Draca believe in reincarnation, that a warrior who fights well will return as a stronger, more powerful, and more heroic warrior, until at last he or she has lived enough lifetimes to join with the Great Egg-Mother in the afterlife, where warriors battle and revel forever.

Motivations

Draca seek to increase their prowess and reputation as fighters, as well as increase the number and quality of their cybernetic enhancements. Victory in combat is a major goal, bringing glory to both the individual and his or her clan. Clan reputation is also important, and acts which will reduce it, or show weakness, are to be scrupulously avoided. As a race, the Draca's goals are still to crush weak races, and prepare the strong ones for intergalactic war.





Kryll

The Guild's first contact with the Kryll almost ended in tragedy. When Guild starships encountered a Kryll hiveship, the preprogrammed hive warriors immediately attacked, precipitating a massive response by the House of Dha. A small band of Dha adventurers, along with the Shanask warlock Shakna, managed to contact the Kryll's hive queen and avert disaster, and today the Kryll have been accepted both into the Guild and the House of Dha. (For more information on this incident, see *Shakna — Assault on the Hive.*)

Appearance

Kryll are an insectoid race, resembling an enormous cross between ant and praying mantis. Weighing around 360 pounds, most Kryll are only four to five feet tall, but five to six feet in length.

The head of a Kryll has large, serrated mandibles and glittering red, yellow or green, multifaceted eyes. Its chitinous exoskeleton is covered with multi-colored markings unique to an individual's hive. The outer layer of a Kryll's exoskeleton is constantly molting, giving it a somewhat ragged appearance, as if it was wearing a shredded suit of clothes.

Kryll's bodies bear numerous nutrient glands and pores. These have evolved over the generations to provide nutrition to the Kryll's various symbiotic bio-items. These regions secrete a nutrient slime which the Kryll's symbiotes use as food.

Of all the Kryll, only a hive-queen and her drones have real gender. Ordinary Kryll workers and warriors are genetically female, but incapable of reproduction, so are best described as "neuter."

Clothing/Armor

Kryll do not wear anything which might be considered clothing. For formal events, a Kryll will polish its chitin to a high sheen.

Biotech organisms can function as armor, and Kryll will sometimes use physical shields.

Attributes

Kryll are below Anthropos norms in most areas, although they are extremely strong and hearty. A Kryll's six legs enable it to climb steep slopes, or even walls (provided there are sufficient handholds) without difficulty.

Senses

Kryll senses are more primitive than Anthropos, but once more, Biotechnology helps fill in the gaps. A Kryll sees slightly farther into the ultraviolet spectrum than an Anthropos. Kryll also have a 360 degree field of vision. They have virtually no sense of touch, and smells are detected by a Kryll's antennae. Warrior Kryll have smaller, degenerate antennae which still have significant olfactory abilities, and contribute to the race's relatively good Awareness.

Communications

The Kryll have several modes of communication. Their "spoken" language, a combination of clicks, rasps, and snaps of various body parts, is virtually impossible to duplicate without a translator Kryll or translation device. Kryll are able to reproduce most languages sufficiently to be understood.

Kryll also communicate biochemically. Each Kryll can produce a wide range of pheromonal secretions, which are detected by nearby Kryll, and may be relayed over long distances. This form of communication works best within a Kryll hive, where the queen may give and receive orders with extreme speed. Kryll queens can also analyze the pheromonal output of hive members, and instantly determine if new workers, drones or warriors are needed.

Pheromonal communication nodes are found throughout Kryll hives. These are biochemical "intercoms" which can relay information at phenomenal rates. The pheromone message of one Kryll is instantly transferred with the speed of a highly efficient nerve impulse, to any place in the hive or ship, and to any other Kryll which require communication.

A special caste of worker has also been developed, the translator. These individuals are capable of reproducing virtually any

sound, and may be pheromonally programmed to speak to any species. Non-Kryll are often surprised when they meet their first translator, and hear an alien, insectoid creature speaking in a highly cultured version of their own language!

The translators are also important to Kryll society, for they are capable of receiving telepathic communications from their hive-queen, and transmit messages to Kryll under their control. For this reason, translators are often thought of as "officers" in Kryll military units, and occupy a vital role in the life of the hive. Rumors of free-willed translators have begun to circulate, but have yet to be confirmed.

Activity Cycle

Kryll do not sleep. They appear capable of round-the-clock activity without the need for rest.

True omnivores, Kryll will eat virtually anything. Their highly efficient digestive system (modified with symbiotic organisms) can break down any organic material into its basic nutrients. Their major requirement is moisture content. If food has sufficient liquid, they do not need to drink. Kryll metabolism is high, however, requiring an individual to eat several pounds of food every five to six hours.

Powers

Kryll have no real inherent powers. Their skill with Biotechnology, however, makes them a highly potent race.



Sciences

Biotechnology involves the manipulation and modification of living matter, transforming plant and animal species into useful symbiotic devices. Kryll scientists have perfected numerous biological implants, which Kryll can use to help digest food, exist in hostile environments, resist damage, enhance their strength, or improve their sensory apparatus.

Many races have experimented with Biotechnology, such as Anthropros modification of certain bacteria to fight disease or digest toxic waste products, but only the Kryll have developed the science to such an extent.

Some bio-items function as weapons, with natural bodily secretions transformed into deadly acids, bioelectrical organs charged as energy projectors, and spiky chitinous protrusions modified as the blades of melee weapons. Given the sheer variety and frightening nature of bio-weapons, many races are glad that the Kryll fight for the Guild, rather than against it.

Combat

Kryll are deadly fighters even without their biotech enhancements. Their spiked claws and mandibles can inflict considerable damage, and Kryll's substantial strength enables them to hold their own with most other galactic races.

Many bio-weapons are unique, so their exact function may remain a mystery until an enemy actually has to face them. Symbiotic insects may launch eggs filled with a caustic substance. A long, whiplike creature grafted to the Kryll's abdomen may lash out to stab and inject poison or acid. An innocuous-looking pouch may gush forth a horde of stinging, biting insects. Bio-armor may also have offensive functions, ejecting darts or deadly gas while protecting its wearer. In all, Kryll Biotechnology has the same effect as the Draca's cyber-enhancements, taking a fearsome fighter and making it still more deadly.

Personality and Culture

The concepts of personality and culture are difficult to accurately describe, as most Kryll are part of a true hive-mind society. Only in the past century have any individual Kryll attained self-awareness, but these individuals still serve their hive and their queen with single-minded devotion.

Most Kryll function in response to pheromonal secretions from their queen, and those around them. When isolated from their hive or translator-caste Kryll for an extended period of time, an individual will either die (simply stop eating and starve to

death in a matter of hours) or become independent and somewhat self-aware. Genetic imperatives to defend the hive remain active, however.

Individual Kryll do not form friendships as we know them. A Kryll may, however, adopt companions as a sort of surrogate hive, and grant loyalty to varying degrees. A Kryll "friend" is one of the most dependable allies known.

Many different types of Kryll exist; new ones are produced almost daily, depending upon the task they serve in the hive. Most common are queen, drone (fertile male), worker, warrior, nursemaid (cares specifically for eggs and young Kryll), translator, etc. The only Kryll known to venture beyond the hive to any extent are translators and warriors. Adventuring Kryll are warriors.

Kryll deal with other races in a very pragmatic way. If friendly relations benefit their hive, they will follow such a course. If a species is hostile, it will be fought to the death. If no benefit can be found for the hive, a species may be ignored or simply bred as cattle. This last tendency has been modified somewhat since Guild contact, for the Kryll queens realize that coexistence and living within Guild law is a great benefit to their hives.

Presently, the Kryll inhabit a bio-world known as the "Kryll-Hive." The Kryll-Hive is mobile, and may move at slow speeds utilizing biological propulsion units. A special sort of bio-engine is also used to generate an FTL field, enabling Hive to move (albeit relatively slowly) between stars.

The hive is a vast living organism, linked together by huge filamentous tunnels. It does not require a sun, as many of its internal life forms provide biologically-based light, and a massive, radiant entity at the center of the hive provides limitless quantities of energy. The hive constantly grows and can reach enormous size over the course of centuries.

The hive is ruled by a single queen. The queen communicates pheromonally, or with her translators through a form of telepathy. Lately, more and more warriors have been allowed to leave Hive and adventure within the Guild, even qualifying as independent members of the House of Dha, leading observers to suspect that a major change in Kryll psyche and society may be imminent.

Kryll have absolutely no understanding of the concept of religion, and not even free-willed individuals express any interest in practicing any faith beyond absolute loyalty to the hive and the queen.

Motivations

Motivations are difficult to assign to the Kryll. Individuals — even those who have attained self-Awareness — have few motivations beyond the good of their hive and queen. If a Kryll is required to sacrifice its life for the good of the hive, it will do so without hesitation.

Money, power, honor, freedom — none of these usual motivations hold any meaning to an individual Kryll. While a single Kryll may undertake a task, such as to retrieve an object, destroy or capture a certain individual, or explore a distant world, it is always done with the welfare of the hive in mind.

Contact with the Guild has changed Kryll society in subtle ways, however. Some theorists suggest that the Kryll queen is slowly coming to the realization that the Guild, and indeed, all sentient races, could be considered a sort of "Common Hive," worthy of service and protection. Should this occur, the Kryll may become the staunchest and most valued defenders which the Guild has.





Shanask

As the House of Dha became established and fully operational, a crisis arose which demanded immediate attention. A Kryll hiveship appeared in Guildspace, and attacked the Guild ships sent to intercept it. The Dha fleet left to meet the threat, leaving only a handful of defenders behind on Dha Prime.

As the Dha fleet departed, a mysterious, black planetoid appeared in orbit around Dha Prime. A team of Dha adventurers was dispatched to investigate, and to their own amazement, encountered a mysterious, robed alien figure, who claimed to be "Shakna"... the Shanask had arrived.

It was later learned that the Shanask had teleported an entire moon into orbit around Dha Prime with a mystical ability known only as the *Sorce*. Although there was only a single small structure on the Shanask moon, it seemed to hold hundreds of members of the dark race. Dha sensors were unable to penetrate the moon's surface, but it is believed that the pyramid is only an entrance to the world's interior.

The Shanask are highly secretive about their past and their society, so little is known for certain. Even the location of their homeworld, if it exists at all, is not known.

Several prominent Shanask act as spokesmen (or, perhaps "spokesbeings") for their species. The best known is Shakna, who has continued to play an active role in relations with the Guild and the House of

Dha. Another prominent, and (if possible) even more enigmatic figure is Jodar, a Shanask of incredible power who, on his rare appearances, claims to be creating a new strategy to help defend the Guild against its enemies.

Reaction to the Shanask throughout the Guild has been mixed, ranging from groups who claim that they are evil spirits or malevolent beings intent on mischief (presumably, their initial benevolence was simply to lull the Guild into a false sense of security) to those who claim that the hooded aliens were sent by a benevolent deity. There is at least one known group of Anthropos who have founded the "Society of the Hooded Messenger," claiming that Shakna and the other Shanask are saviours who will lead the Guild to paradise.

Appearance

All Shanask are identical — 6'6" tall, and 250 pounds. Age, sex, and individual characteristics are not known. Neither is it known how Shanask are born, or whether they can grow old and die.

Shanasks always wear full-length robes which conceal their entire bodies. Faces, save for a pair of dark red, glowing eyes, are always hidden in the shadows of their robes, and hands and feet are never visible. Some have suggested that the cloak is actually a Shanask's outer body covering, but this has never been proved.

No one has ever been able to catch a glimpse of the being beneath the robes. Sensor probes have proven useless, and anyone who approaches within a meter or so of a Shanask experiences a feeling of gloom and fearful unease.

Clothing/Armor

Shanask cloaks are bound at the waist with a rope-like belt. No other clothing is ever seen, but some have claimed to have observed a glowing mist near the "hands" and "feet" of a Shanask. Damaged clothing appears to repair itself. Some rumors claim that Shanasks have been seen wearing red, blue, green, or even white robes, but this has never been reliably confirmed.

Shanask shun armor, but will sometimes carry physical or energy shields. They often attach small sacks or pouches to their belt as long as they do not unduly interfere with the Shanask's movement.

Attributes

Shanask are physically weak compared to other races, although their Vitality is better than average. Their mental attributes, however, are very high. They are one of the most alert and intelligent of all races.

The Shanask also seem to know more about ancient history, customs, places, planets and races than any other race. They share this information only rarely, and never reveal the full extent of their knowledge.

Senses

Shanasks see in the visible spectrum, but process all colors as shades of grey (except for *sorce* color). Their cloaks cut down on their viewing so that they can see only 90 degrees directly in front of them.

Shanasks cannot smell or taste, and no one has ever seen them breath, eat or drink.

Communications

Although Shanask appear to speak in a raspy whisper, this is not strictly true. Shanask communications may be directed at a single individual, or at an entire group. Range extends a number of squares equal to the Shanask's *Sorce* skill, or double this if only a single individual is being contacted.

Whatever the range, the volume and quality is always the same low, raspy whisper. This whisper can be heard, whatever the outside noise may be. Recorders and communication devices designed to pick up audible noises will hear and record nothing. Shanask may also communicate between themselves with no chance of being detected by any means.



Exactly what this mode of communication is, no one knows. It is not telepathic, for not even the most talented Zin-Shee psionist has been able to penetrate it. Apparently, Shanask communication is some form of inherent, *Sorce*-based speech, the actual mechanics of which remain a mystery.

Activity Cycle

Shanasks do not eat, sleep, drink, breath, or dispose of bodily wastes. However, every Shanask carries a pair of flasks, one containing a powder, the other a liquid. These are consumed in some fashion after a Shanask receives physical damage. It is believed that they contain the essentials of the Shanask existence and are used to repair wounds. Shanasks will not heal naturally if these flasks are not present. No other being has yet been able to obtain these flasks for analysis, for when a Shanask is killed, its flasks vanish along with its body.

Powers

The Shanask control an ancient power called the *Sorce*. Its derivation is reminiscent of the old word "Sorcery," and it is similar in many ways. *Sorce* accomplishes things without logical explanation, and seems to function independent of the laws of physics and logic.

The Shanask rarely discuss *Sorce* power, and are reluctant to use it in public. If any "reasonable" explanation can account for the effects of the *Sorce*, the Shanask will support it.

Many people don't actually believe in the *Sorce*. Some claim that it is simple illusion created by hidden high-tech devices. Those who actually observe the *Sorce* in action tend to forget about it very quickly, and have difficulty remembering the event.

Several prominent Guild researchers have, in effect, thrown up their collective hands, and simply declared the *Sorce* to be, for lack of a better term, "magic" — in short, a force which transcends natural law, and cannot be logically explained. Nonetheless, the researchers say, the *Sorce* does work, and has real power.

Sciences

The race is technologically adept, and will use technological devices if needed. Over the ages, however, the Shanask have so adapted themselves to the *Sorce* that they find technological devices unnecessary, although they will use them on occasion. No Shanask will ever submit to cybernetic modification.

Combat

Shanask favor simple blade weapons in combat. They have a strong preference for such weapons as scimitars, scythes, daggers, staves and polearms. These weapons are often used with technological enhancement. They will also use small thrown and ranged weapons.

Occasionally, Shanask will employ small pistol-type energy weapons, but rarely keep such things around for long. Although a Shanask may become adept at other weapons such as rifles and plasma guns, they will never carry one for longer than a single encounter.

The Shanask's disdain for such weapons appears to be derived from their reliance on *Sorce*-based weapons. As the *Sorce* appears to be the single unifying and driving force in Shanask culture, the use of devices beyond the *Sorce* is disdained. Just the same, Shanask seem to have no problem firing vehicle- or ship-based weapons.

Shanask never fight in a manner which might require direct physical contact, using *Sorce*-weapons, swords, etc., instead. They will always avoid combat involving body contact, even if it means their own death.

Personality and Culture

Shanask appear to possess emotions similar to other races, but control them very carefully. While they do not seem to experience love or happiness, they do experience and briefly share satisfaction, contentment, pride, etc.

Short term emotional disturbances do not seem to affect the Shanask. They reserve their emotional responses to significant or long-term disturbance. Thus, jokes and Anthropos humor, which are mostly short-term in nature, seem pointless to a Shanask.

Shanask never laugh and are always serious. While they will share the accomplishment of fellow adventurers, and seem to enjoy the thought of a job well done, they generally do so contemplatively, always thinking of the next phase of the mission. They are highly philosophical, and do not engage in idle conversation.

Shanask never sit or lie down, but always stand. They also avoid bright lights, and prefer natural light over artificial illumination.

Loners by nature, Shanask do not like crowds or formal gatherings. Although they do not form friendships, long-time acquaintances and adventuring companions do somehow become "attached" to their Shanasks, and vice versa.

Nothing is known of Shanask family life, or even if such a thing exists. Gender, offspring, and normal interactions between the sexes (if any) seem totally unknown.

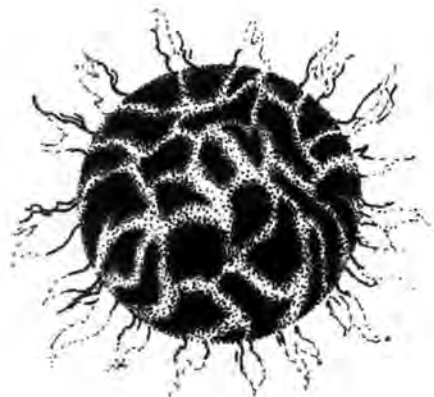
Motivations

Like most other things regarding the Shanask race, individual motivations are largely unknown. Racial motivations are also uncertain, although a few select individuals have been informed that the Shanask accepted some great task eons ago and have been slowly working to fulfill it.

No one knows exactly what this task is. Some claim that the Shanask are evil and seek the destruction of all life. Some say that they are a race of super beings or demigods sent to protect the Anthropos and other Guild members. Some even believe that the Shanask are spirits of the dead returned to repent for their sins.

No one knows whether the Shanask have a religion, but some of their actions seem to be inspired by some form of higher power. Whether this represents obeisance to a deity, or to more highly-powered Shanask, no one can say.

Whatever their motivations, the Shanask have proven invaluable. They have quickly become integral to the House of Dha and serve it with a stern, near-fanatic, fervor.





Zin-Shee

For over 1300 years, the Zin-Shee Matriarchy expanded its borders, conquering those hapless races which stood in its path. Few foes withstood the Zin-Shee onslaught, until the forces of the Matriarchy arrived at the massive, high-gravity world of Calemor.

Expecting another easy victory, the Zin-Shee descended to the planet's surface, only to be met by the finest warriors the galaxy had known, the Calemora. Soon, the Zin-Shee realized that the Calemora were skilled, determined, with apparently inexhaustible numbers, and the millennium-long siege of Calemor began.

The so-called "Blood Feud" dragged on for centuries. With tens of millions dead and no resolution in sight, both Calemora and Zin-Shee were shocked when Guild starships and soldiers appeared on Calemor, seizing strategic positions with overwhelming force, and demanding an end to the conflict. It took another twelve years to finally finish the Blood Feud, and despite their annoyance, many Zin-Shee grew to respect the Guild and its ways.

Numerous Zin-Shee border worlds, including the provisional capital of Seril, joined with the Guild, most maintaining dual membership in both Guild and The Matriarchy. Today, Zin-Shee expansion continues coreward, while individual Zin-Shee adventure throughout Guildspace, going so far as to become one of the Guardian races of the House of Dha.

Appearance

Anthropos generally agree that the Zin-Shee are a handsome race. Zin-Shee males stand around six feet tall and weigh around 200 lbs., while females average 5'6", and 160 lbs. They walk upright, although they maintain a catlike crouch most of the time.

Zin-Shee are covered in soft fur, with coloration and markings varying from individual to individual. Racial variations resembling familiar felines such as leopards, tigers and panthers are common. Fur is shortest on their faces, save for whiskers, a goatee-like tufted beard, and long hairs over their eyes and at the tips of their ears.

Hands and feet are equipped with sharp claws, which are used effectively in combat. Zin-Shee have sharp, cat-like teeth.

A Zin-Shee's most striking feature is its eyes. Normally catlike, with iridescent gold, green or yellow irises and a slit-like pupil, a Zin-Shee's eyes glow brightly with pure energy when an individual uses *psionics*.

Clothing/Armor

Zin-Shee are an agile race, and feel that excessive clothing is restrictive in battle. Armor, especially baroque armor of archaic design is sometimes worn in battle, but most Zin-Shee prefer unrestricted activity when fighting. They favor the use of physical shields and personal force fields for protection.

When not in battle, however, Zin-Shee are nothing short of excessive when it comes to clothing. A bewildering variety of styles and fashions exist throughout Zin-Shee space, but a style resembling Renaissance-period human clothing is popular, featuring broad-brimmed hats, roomy shirts, vests, capes, elaborate skirts, revealingly-cut garments, etc. Overdressing is very common among the noble classes.

Attributes

Zin-Shee are roughly comparable to Anthropos in most attributes, although their Speed and Awareness are impressive. Males Zin-Shee have a slight edge over the females in terms of physical prowess, but their inferiority in psionic abilities balances the genders' strengths and weaknesses.

Senses

Every sense is above Anthropos norms among the Zin-Shee. Hearing and vision are particularly acute, and smell is far better developed than in Anthropos.

In addition, Zin-Shee have natural starlight vision capability, enhancing even the most minimal natural light to enable them to see almost as well in the dark as they do in the light.

Communication

Zin-Shee speech is soft, but can grow harsh if the Zin-Shee is emotional, passionate, or otherwise disturbed. When they speak other languages, Zin-Shee's cat-like language is apparent in their accent.

Female Zin-Shee can communicate telepathically, although verbal communication has important cultural significance, and is never completely abandoned. Among accomplished telepaths, purely mental communication is far more efficient and subtle than verbal communication.

There are five different modes of formality in Zin-Shee verbal communication, a holdover from their complex feudal society. Different modes are distinguished by levels of formality and complexity.

Most verbal communication is at what linguists refer to as "familiar" level. There are two modes of formality above familiar level, the highest being one used only in the most ceremonial and solemn occasions, the next lowest being used in formal settings to individuals of higher social rank than the speaker. At the highest rank of formality, even the simplest information takes a considerable time to be communicated.

Below familiar mode are what are referred to as "slang" mode (mostly used by intimate friends or young Zin-Shee) and "vulgar" mode (used only in the crudest of circumstances, or by extremely low-class individuals).

Telepathy may fit into the formality mode at any level. Highly ceremonial functions are done entirely verbally, as what is said and the way it is said are important enough to warrant being said out loud, so all can hear it. Telepathy is most useful at familiar level and below.

Activity Cycle

Like other felines, Zin-Shee do not sleep continuously, preferring to catch brief naps as frequently as possible. A Zin-Shee grows restless and cranky if more than six hours elapse without a nap. Zin-Shee are quite adaptable in this regard, and can nap virtually anywhere, although they prefer warm, secure spaces. Zin-Shee homes are filled with small niches and hiding places for napping. These naps have the added benefit of helping Zin-Shee psionics recover spent power.

Zin-Shee are carnivores who prefer to eat at least once a day. They prefer fresh meat, but since Guild contact have developed an extremely subtle sense of taste, and often enjoy Anthropos-prepared gourmet meals.

Table manners and eating habits can only be described as fastidious. Meals can be long, drawn-out ceremonial affairs, and

even in informal settings, Zin-Shee like to take their time. Formal linguistic mode is often used during even casual meals.

The eating of enemies, once a common practice, is now viewed with no little distaste. Zin-Shee no longer consume the flesh of sentient beings.

Although they prefer meat in their diet, Zin-Shee can exist as herbivores for several weeks without ill effects, although after this period, they grow tired, listless and dull-looking, eventually growing quite ill.

Powers

As their nickname implies, the psi-cats are highly skilled in *psionics*, the ability to manipulating matter and energy through pure mental force. Unlike the Shanask *Sorce*-manipulation, *psionics* are not magic, but real, physical powers with real, physical laws governing them. Through *psionics*, a Zin-Shee can engage in combat, reach out to see the secret thoughts of others, communicate secretly, etc. Many other abilities are possible, and the Zin-Shee are masters of them all.

Female Zin-Shee excel at *psionic* manipulation, perhaps because of their ancestral role as protectors of the family. Male Zin-Shee are quite handicapped in this role, but can still serve as potent warriors or martial artists.

Sciences

The Zin-Shee have high technological abilities, although *psionics* take the place of many high-tech items or procedures. They also understand and can utilize some Biotechnology.

Cybernetics are well understood by the Zin-Shee, but are rarely used since the Psi-Cats feel that implants are unaesthetic, ugly and unreliable.

Combat

Zin-Shee are easily bored, and enjoy using a wide variety of weapons in addition to their deadly natural weaponry such as claws and teeth. Zin-Shee also prefer using *psionic* weaponry, energy weapons, and technologically enhanced melee weapons. Their agility and force fields are used to protect them in battle. As noted, armor is unusual, but not unknown.

Being a fastidious race, Zin-Shee dislike bloody, violent combat, preferring subtlety and weapons which kill with minimal damage. Piercing melee weapons such as rapiers and daggers are used, while pulse lasers are preferred for ranged combat.

The exception to the psi-cats' fastidiousness is in the use of claws, but when a Zin-Shee has reached a point that it is forced to use its own body weaponry, all bets are off, and it will fight as violently as necessary to win. Afterwards, it will probably take a long, hot bath, however.

Zin-Shee can be fierce, cunning opponents. Their war cries and challenges can be truly terrifying, and their restless nature makes them highly innovative and unpredictable. They enjoy ambushes and hit-and-run raiding, but will not shirk from a toe-to-toe battle at close quarters.



Personality and Culture

In Anthropos terms, the Zin-Shee might best be described as devil-may-care swashbucklers with a passion for living and a lust for excitement. They are highly curious, and enjoy exploration and travel for its own sake. They love fun and activity, to an extent that few races can keep up with them. Both sexes love to flirt, even with members of other species (although they tend to avoid Draca and Kryll). Most other races, especially the Anthropos and other humanoids, consider Zin-Shee to be quite beautiful.

On the bad side, Zin-Shee tend to be moody and high-strung. At any moment, a Zin-Shee can literally explode with emotion, only to have the outburst forgotten a few minutes later. Zin-Shee do not hold grudges. Yesterday's enemies are today's friends, and vice versa. The long and bitter conflict with the Calemora is an exception

— although the Calemora are viewed as worthy opponents and interesting individuals, most Zin-Shee avoid forming friendships or even associating with them.

The Zin-Shee Matriarchy is ruled by a number of elder females, each representing a major world of the Matriarchy. Decisions are usually made by consensus, and open brawling has been known to mar conclave meetings. Most Zin-Shee worlds go about their business any way they desire, and ignore the conclave's rulings if they are inconvenient.

Another holdover from their ancient feudal system is the Zin-Shee's noble class. Many important positions throughout the Matriarchy are held by members of hereditary nobility, and a wide variety of titles exists throughout Zin-Shee space (most Anthropos, however, translate Zin-Shee noble titles into familiar terms such as "Count," "Duke," "Baron," etc.). Zin-Shee nobles are known for their eccentricity, excessive lifestyles and highly interpretive code of honor.

Within the Matriarchy, the Zin-Shee still keep slaves. All conquered races are reduced to this subservient status and, although the Zin-Shee are relatively kind masters, this custom has prevented more Zin-Shee worlds from joining the Guild. Zin-Shee within the Guild have turned against the practice of slavery, a move which threatens to split the Matriarchy.

Zin-Shee appear lazy to other races when it comes to strenuous and unpleasant work. Work which is not enjoyable, interesting or different is generally avoided. This, perhaps, explains the Zin-Shee's cultural acceptance of slavery, for it provides others to take care of the tedious jobs.

Zin-Shee form friendships as easily as Anthropos, but tend to be more fickle. A friend is a friend for as long as they are fun and interesting. Even great personal sacrifice is forgotten after a few weeks. While the Zin-Shee hold few grudges, they also owe few favors (at least in their own eyes).

Marriage as a long-term bond is unknown to the Zin-Shee. Most such bonds only last long enough for children to grow to maturity. After a pair separates, children associate with both parents and there is rarely any tension or animosity. In their lifetime, a female Zin-Shee will have two or three litters, and numerous short-term non-procreative liaisons (those known colloquially to Anthropos as "love affairs").

Zin-Shee are friendly and gregarious, associating with other races as freely as with their own. The exception to this is in times of war and when dealing with slaves.

Zin-Shee worship a pantheon of gods, goddesses and heroes so extensive that Guild scientists are still cataloging them all.

The psi-cats also believe that upon death, those who lived with honor, fought well, practiced *psionics* diligently, and enjoyed as varied a life as possible, will go to a vast, luxurious paradise where every whim is instantly fulfilled.

Motivations

Individual Zin-Shee are motivated by curiosity, thrill seeking, love of adventure, fun, luxury, and their own form of romance.

Currently, the racial motivations of the Zin-Shee are divided. The old Zin-Shee, who still control most of the Matriarchy, still support the expansion of Zin-Shee influence, the enslavement of other races, and eventual galactic dominance. The new Zin-Shee, those who have dwelled in the Guild, and learned more of the universe outside the Matriarchy, seek to civilize the Zin-Shee race, and bring about a peaceful and more just society. Some have even called for the liberation of all slaves, which has sent shock waves through the Matriarchy.



Major States of Known Space

The Guild is not the only organized group of star systems in Known Space. Several other states exist, some friendly, some hostile, some more-or-less neutral. The major states (plus a few of the minor ones) are fully described below.



The Guild

Three thousand years ago, a handful of survivors fled the holocaust on the Anthropos homeworld of Url. Of these, some formed the militaristic Arthirian Sphere, others founded The Company, and still others found their way into the realm known today as Guildspace.

Espousing principles of democracy, personal freedom and peaceful exploration, the Guild (Galactic Unification of Intelligent Life-forms and Devices) was founded to counter the growing threat of the Arthirians. Bloody conflicts with both the Sphere and the newly-discovered Empire followed, strengthening the Guild and turning it into the powerful state that it is today.

Guild membership is simple. For Anthropos members, worlds must guarantee basic human rights to all citizens in order to join. Alien races may also join, and the rules of admission may be modified based on cultural, technological, and biological considerations. In general, however, alien members of the Guild must also abide by its basic rules and tenets.

Widely considered the best hope for galactic peace and civilization, the Guild nonetheless must maintain an extremely well-armed and -trained military in the face of threats from The Empire and elsewhere.

This apparent contradiction has not gone unappreciated by the leaders of the Guild, and so the military's role in governing the Guild has been purposely limited.

Inhabitants

Hundreds of races have joined the Guild, and within Guildspace, hundreds of other independent races and nations still exist. The Guild does not fight wars of conquest; if a world does not wish to join the Guild, it is free not to. Most members joined the Guild in response to the enormous benefits and minimal requirements for membership. Several revolutions broke out, in fact, replacing totalitarian states with democratic ones, just so the inhabitants could join the Guild. Rumors continue to circulate of Guild involvement in such revolts, but they are hotly denied.

The most populous race of the Guild is

the Anthropos. Tough, resourceful, and highly skilled technologically, the Anthropos founded the Guild, determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Today, Guild warships patrol member worlds, and Guild soldiers stand ready at a moment's notice, not to conquer, but to preserve peace in any way necessary.

The four major races of the House of Dha have recently begun to be referred to as the Guardian Races. These include the Anthropos, the powerful Calemora, who have grown numerous over the years, and the grim Draca. Many Zin-Shee worlds embraced the concepts of Guild membership and rejected the practice of conquest and subjugation, and are present in large numbers. Recent additions include the insectoid Kryll and the mysterious Shanask, both of whom are currently being considered for Guardian status.



Besides the Guardians, many other races are included in the Guild, such as the uruk, bear-like mammals with strengths to rival the Calemora; the rakka, lupine pack carnivores who until recently raided Guildspace in squadrons of small, very fast starships; the aquatic hammu; the fox-like vulpe, whose skills of stealth and evasion are unparalleled, and the gigantic space entities known as the t'skaa, which seem to be capable of faster-than-light travel through some unknown physiological ability. There is no real "average" Guild member — almost every life form imaginable exists within Guildspace, and most of these are either members or potential members.

Like most other states in this region of space, the Guild is also troubled by the skrak and kurg pirates, who live in unruly bands of warriors and raiders, periodically sweeping through civilized space, stealing, destroying, kidnapping slaves, and generally raising havoc. These creatures seem to have no set homeworld, and are generally considered an unavoidable hazard of space. Guild control of its territory is sometimes minimal, and in regions where the House of Defiance or the House of the Star cannot reach, the raiders can potentially cause severe damage. A few skraks and kurgs have settled down as semi-honest traders or adventurers, but such individuals are rare.

The Houses

Besides the member-worlds (see below) the major power in the Guild is held by The Houses, groups of individuals with similar skills or missions. Many houses are further subdivided into chapters, smaller groups with common skills within the larger organization of the House.

Many of these houses, such as the House of Defiance, were created and administered by the Guild itself. Others, such as the Merchant Houses (there are several, including Houses Hassa, Morituri and Kima), and the House of the Knife (an alliance of criminals and other shady characters), exist outside of Guild control. These and other major houses are described below.

Merchant Houses

Numerous trading houses exist within the Guild. Major merchant houses include Hassa (run entirely by the Zin-Shee), Morituri and Kima. Some are friendly rivals, others are allies, and a few are open enemies. Organization varies from house to house. Some are run as companies, with presidents, boards of directors and stockholders. Others are family affairs, with

family members making all major decisions. Regardless of their internal organization, all merchant houses engage in the buying, selling and transportation of needed goods throughout Guildspace. In this, there are strict Guild rules regarding pricing, supply and availability, and most merchant houses abide by them.

A few, however, are of the unscrupulous sort, attempting to circumvent Guild law to reap excessive profit at the expense of their customers. Many worlds are dependent on the merchant houses for necessities, and the illegal trader can often exploit such worlds. Some houses are controlled by the House of the Knife, while others are fronts for The Company, used to detect weakness in the Guild economy and in other merchant houses, so that Company operatives can increase their control of trade.

House of Gamah

The technicians, computer specialists and other experts in Anthropos high-technology are members of this house ("Gamah" is an uruk word meaning "magician who works with tools"). This highly important house is responsible for the design, repair and improvement of technological items throughout the Guild, but the open-minded and curious nature of its members prevents Gamah from translating its importance into political power. Most Gamah members are Anthropos, and this house is the source of many new devices which are used on Anthropos worlds.

House of the Sextant

Most civilian star-pilots and astrologers belong to this large and influential house. Responsible for large-scale transportation of goods and travelers, the Sextant oversees the welfare of its members, buys fuel and parts in large quantities and passes savings on to members, and represents members in legal disputes.

House dues are considerable, so there is a good number of independent contractors, who fly individual ships, or operate transport companies of under a dozen craft. The house rarely bothers these individuals, but should the owner of a large number of starships try to strike out on his own without house membership, the Sextant will definitely seek to drive him out of business.

House of the Dreamer

This house oversees and protects all sorts of artists within the Guild. Unfortunately, overseeing artists is a difficult task, and Dreamer is little more than an umbrella

organization with little real authority. A bewildering number of chapters exist within the house, representing the interests of painters, sculptors, writers, dancers, singers and musicians.

The somewhat independent and chaotic nature of the artistic mind dictates that many do not belong to the house at all, and that some pursuits have several rival chapters representing them. Painters, for instance, have over a dozen chapters to choose from, depending on their style, tastes and personalities. Most chapters are open to all races without prejudice. Zin-Shee, for example, are generally considered to be excellent artists in all media, and are highly sought-after to give credibility and class to a given chapter.

Many new types of art have emerged since the founding of the Guild, including light sculpture, zero-g ballet, psionic impressionism (in which a talented psionist induces certain sights, sounds and emotions in an audience), planetary sculpture, and more. As may be expected, each one of these new art forms has one or more chapters representing it, while other chapters represent more than one type of art.

Major chapters include Bramalo Chapter (representing painters in oil and watercolor), Quill Chapter (representing novelists, poets and playwrights), Gazzir Chapter (representing anyone who the guild leadership agrees is "an artist") and Starfall Chapter (representing dancers, particularly those who perform in zero-g or low-grav conditions).

House of the Caduceus

This house is an organization for doctors, healers, and other medical-type individuals. Membership is open to anyone who deals with disease or injury, and so includes sophisticated high-tech Anthropos doctors, primitive shaman-healers, Zin-Shee psionists, Shanask *Sorce*-masters, and Kryll bio-techs. House of Caduceus shares new healing technologies, drugs, surgical procedures, and innovative devices with its members, hoping to spread the science of healing throughout Guildspace.

Unlike other houses, Caduceus will share its knowledge with non-members, but other benefits, such as housing, low-cost equipment, and technical support, are reserved for members alone. Many medical schools in the Guild require that their graduates join Caduceus, and so most healers and doctors throughout the Guild belong to this house.



House of the Star

The space police are organized into this large, varied and diffuse fraternity. The job of space policeman is not as rigid and official as it sounds — often “space police” are simply privateers with Guild sanction to pursue pirates and other lawbreakers and bring them to justice. Regardless of this, the House of the Star’s authority extends to the borders of Guildspace (although the elite Star Marshals — see below — are an exception to this).

Star equipment ranges from excellent to barely-functional, and most members are rugged non-conformists seeking adventure. Each is pledged to support Guild law and enforce it wherever possible, but a few use their status to run what amounts to legalized protection and pirating operations. Such individuals are invariably hunted down by honest space police, or, in extreme cases, by Defiance House starships.

The Star Marshals are an elite chapter within the House of the Star. The Marshals have special enforcement powers, and are allowed to pursue lawbreakers beyond the boundaries of Guildspace. The Marshals have first choice of all equipment and starships, and their small group is acknowledged as one of the most professional and incorruptible in the Guild.

Other Organizations

Not all professions and groups are organized into Guild-sanctioned houses. Many others were formed independently and exist outside of Guild authority. Some pursue illegal activities, while others simply chafe at Guild oversight. Several of the most prominent of these are listed below.

House of the Nova

This marginally-legal, semi-official “house” is a haven for rogues, individualists, and those who occasionally have to live on both sides of the law to survive. While not sanctioned by the Guild, Nova is organized as a house (with a president, officers, and so on), sends delegates to the Great House, and fights for its members’ interests. Membership is open to anyone but out-and-out space pirates, slavers, or violent criminals. Those who happen to slip in and attempt to exploit house membership to their own ends usually end up being dealt with by house justice. Needless to say, House of the Nova justice is swift, irrevocable, and quite final.

Brotherhood of the Skull

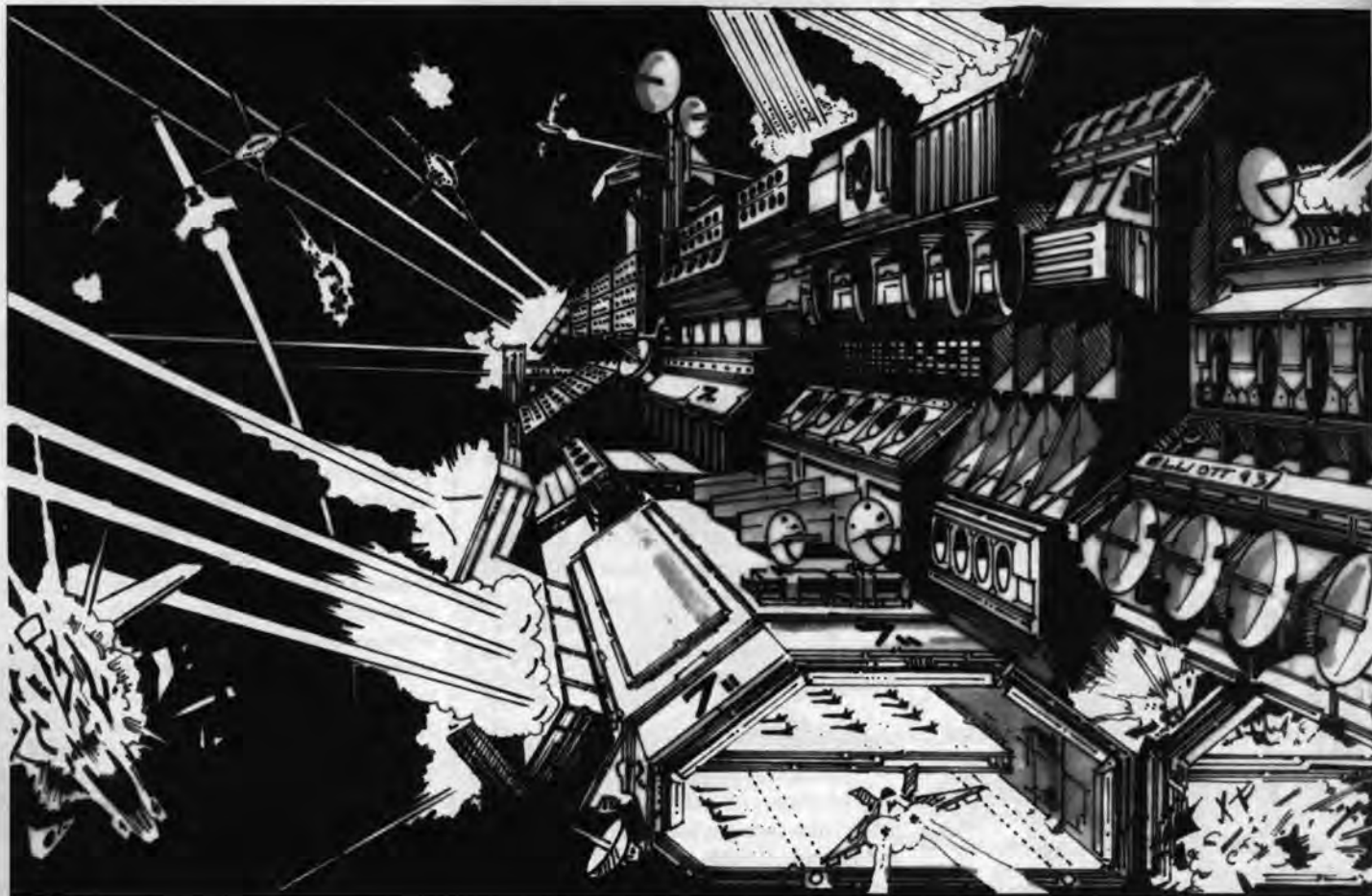
Guildspace is anything but pacified, and the scourge of space piracy is common

in many areas. The Brotherhood of the Skull (sometimes called “House of the Skull” to infuriate and taunt the Guild) is an informal alliance of cutthroats, corsairs, pirates and criminals. Many members are brutal thugs with little concern for sentient life, but others fit the image of the “jolly rogue,” and are in it for the adventure. Most pirate vessels are run as rough dictatorships, with captains deposed by mob violence should they fail in their duties.

The Guild deals harshly with pirates, but those individuals who have a reputation for mercy and fair treatment of captives generally escape alive, after serving prison sentences. One of the House of the Star’s most important (and frustrating) jobs is the hunting down of infamous Skull members.

The Sword League

Outside Guildspace, many conflicts both large and small, can erupt, costing lives and destroying property. The professional soldier or mercenary is an integral part of these conflicts, selling services to either side and fighting for whoever pays the best. Many mercenary units operate in Guildspace, and The Sword League is best described as a clearing house for mercenaries, coordinating employers with available units, helping to negotiate contracts, and



making sure that contractual terms are obeyed.

The League is headquartered on the tropical world of Shosso, where lush continents house numerous warehouses, barracks and offices. Shosso is not a member of the Guild, and The Sword League is officially illegal within Guildspace. This does not stop mercenaries from plying their trade, however, and as little wars between the nonaligned nations of Known Space increase in number and grow hotter in intensity, business has never been better.

House of the Knife

The unofficial criminal underground of Guildspace, the House of the Knife (so-called, but definitely not an official Guild house), along with several smaller rival criminal organizations, controls much of the illegal activity within the Guild and beyond. Smuggling, large-scale theft, murder for hire, buying and selling of illegal drugs, gambling, and many other activities come under the control of the House of the Knife and its rulers, the Knife Masters. Membership is open to all races, and it is said that the Supreme Knife Master has a bodyguard consisting entirely of Dracan cyber-rogues and outcast Calemora.

Great House

The Guild is governed in the tradition of Anthropol republican democracy, in which every adult citizen may vote, choosing both a planetary leader, and a delegate to the Council of the Great House, the governing body of the Guild itself. In exchange for protection and the benefits of Guild membership, each member world must pay a small percentage of its gross planetary product (typically no more than .01 percent) each year to help fund the Guild and support the Guild military.

The Great House Council meets daily, moderating disputes between member worlds, overseeing commerce and travel, and administering the Guild budget. Internal affairs are left to member worlds, so long as they abide by Guild law. While the Guild will not fight wars of conquest, any member world which breaks Guild law (suppressing basic freedoms, installing a dictatorship, etc.) is liable to be immediately occupied by Guild forces and have order forcibly restored.

The Military

The defense of the Guild is in the hands of several houses. Individual member worlds are allowed to maintain their own militaries, but at strictly controlled levels.

The House of Defiance

All of Guildspace is protected by this organization, which oversees and coordinates military space operations. New leaders of Defiance are selected from veterans and promising members of the military chapters, so military leadership in the Guild is usually highly professional and intelligent. House Defiance is not immune to incompetence, so a few unqualified political appointees and toadies have been known to slip through, much to the frustration of the ordinary rankers.

The Guild Navy (as the House of Defiance is commonly called) is responsible for interstellar transport and combat. The fleet currently controls over 15,000 starships, varying in size from five-crew corvettes to massive, wormhole-generating dreadnaughts capable of destroying entire enemy fleets and blasting planets to rubble. This tally doesn't even begin to log all of the one and two man fighters which serve in the navy. The house is divided into seven fleets, each patrolling a different sector of Guildspace.

First Fleet

Homeworld: Guildhome
Commander: Admiral Atrias (Anthropos)

Forces: 1000 corvettes
750 destroyers
400 light cruisers
300 heavy cruisers
200 battleships
100 light carriers
60 heavy carriers
60 dreadnaughts
20 superdreadnaughts
10 warmoons

Mission: Without doubt the most powerful Guild fleet, the First (also known as the "Home" Fleet) is responsible for the security of the capital world of Guildhome. The lessons of the Arthirian Invasion have not been lost on Guild strategists, and as a result, the Guildhome system has become a virtual fortress, bristling with every conceivable defensive system. First generally tends to stick insystem, although destroyers and cruisers are often sent on patrols, and to maintain contact with the Fifth Fleet. Generally considered to be the finest personnel in the House of Defiance, First Fleet crew members stand ready to lay down their lives in defense of Guildhome and with it, the Guild itself.

Second Fleet

Homeworld: Fravir
Commander: Admiral Ubik (Anthropos)

Forces: 650 corvettes
400 destroyers
250 light cruisers
150 heavy cruisers
100 battleships
40 light carriers
30 heavy carriers
20 dreadnaughts
4 superdreadnaughts

Mission: The Second Guild Fleet patrols Fravir Sector, the region containing Aerolk space, Calemor, the Zin-Shee frontier, and sections of the Dracan Holding. Needless to say, this is considered to be a "hot" sector, with plenty of potential conflict. Several unexplored stretches of space lie within Second Fleet's jurisdiction, and the deadly dangers of Aerolk space are a constant threat. The fleet has not seen action in over two years, but even the lowliest crew member realizes that conflict can break out virtually without warning.

Third Fleet

Homeworld: Shalimmah
Commander: Admiral Barri (Anthropos)

Forces: 750 corvettes
500 destroyers
300 light cruisers
200 heavy cruisers
200 battleships
60 light carriers
40 heavy carriers
40 dreadnaughts
10 superdreadnaughts

Mission: This well-equipped fleet patrols one of the two sectors with the most potential danger of any area of Guildspace — the coreward half of the demilitarized zone between the Guild and The Empire. Contacts with Imperial, Arthirian, Dracan, and many other ships occur almost daily, and the beings of the fleet must maintain a high degree of alertness. Recent rumors of Imperial activity beyond the demilitarized zone have put Third Fleet on edge, and they are likely to react swiftly to any provocation. Should The Empire decide to break the treaty and invade, Third will be on the front line.

As if this were not enough, a portion of Third's patrol area lies along the border with the Dracan Holding, still considered by many to be a potential hot spot. Should relations between Guild and the Holding sour, Third will be the first to suffer.



Fourth Fleet

Homeworld: Gefé

Commander: Admiral Ivorra (Anthropos)

Forces: 650 corvettes
 400 destroyers
 300 light cruisers
 250 heavy cruisers
 80 battleships
 40 light carriers
 40 heavy carriers
 20 dreadnaughts
 6 superdreadnaughts

Mission: Fourth Fleet shares patrol of the demilitarized zone with Third, and is responsible for the sector rimward of the Arthirian Sphere. Among other threats, Fourth has to contend with the ever present malevolence of The Combine, and recent developments in The Empire have made Fourth Fleet personnel nervous, as well.

Fifth Fleet

Homeworld: Ysai

Commander: Admiral Kurr'hassa (Zin-Shee)

Forces: 550 corvettes
 300 destroyers
 200 light cruisers
 100 heavy cruisers
 50 battleships
 20 light carriers
 10 dreadnaughts

Mission: Fifth Fleet is the smallest in the House of Defiance. It serves primarily as a reserve unit, based on the centrally-located world of Ysai. Its secondary function is as a relatively quiet and restful posting away from the dangers and stresses of frontier patrols, and is often the destination of Defiance members upon rotation. This status may change, however, if the fleet is assigned to guard the strategic wormhole at Stronghold (see below). Another alternative which the Guild is considering is the construction of an eighth fleet, but no firm decision has been made.

Sixth Fleet

Homeworld: Ka

Commander: Admiral Omboro (vulpe)

Forces: 650 corvettes
 400 destroyers
 250 light cruisers
 200 heavy cruisers
 100 battleships
 50 light carriers
 40 heavy carriers
 30 dreadnaughts
 8 superdreadnaughts

Mission: The rimward frontier of the Guild, which contains the new homeworld of the House of Dha, is the most mysterious

and unexplored region in Guildspace. Admiral Omboro's ships must cover a broad area of space, and must be prepared for any eventuality. One of Sixth Fleet's major duties is to assist small exploration ships bound rimward by opening wormholes. Several important exploratory vessels have been sent rimward recently, and their return is anxiously anticipated.

Seventh Fleet

Homeworld: Drennik

Commander: Admiral Kerns (Anthropos)

Forces: 500 corvettes
 300 destroyers
 200 light cruisers
 150 heavy cruisers
 100 battleships
 60 light carriers
 40 heavy carriers
 30 dreadnaughts
 5 superdreadnaughts

Mission: The Seventh Fleet patrols the counter-spinward boarder of the Guild, which occupies some of the most recently explored regions of Known Space. The Guild has plans to continue space exploration and expansion in this direction. Thus, Seventh's patrol area is likely to expand and with expansion come many new challenges and uncertainties.

The regions beyond are largely unexplored and still quite wild, containing as it does thousands of star systems and hundreds of habitable worlds. So far, several sentient races have been discovered here, as well as several lost Anthropos worlds. The Seventh Fleet is a rough and ready group, prepared to meet threats of any level. (After the adventure in this game box several Kryll will serve with the Seventh on a probationary basis).

House of War

Estimates are that over 25,000,000,000 sentient beings serve in the House of war, also known as the Guild army. While actual organization varies from planet to planet, most of the house is ganized into regiments averaging a thousand infantry or 100 armored vehicles. Regiments are identified by their number and world of origin.

Note that there is considerable variation within regiments, and some actually incorporate one or more types of the various chapters, including infantry, armored vehicles, artillery and transport. Some even have orbital fighter wings, attached from the Guild fleet. Major arms of service in the House of War include the following.

Infantry Chapter: Most Guild infantry is mechanized — that is, transported from place to place in armored carriers. Guild infantry typically carry pulse-laser rifles and a variety of grenades, wear flak jackets and helmets. Only about half of Guild foot soldiers are Anthropos, the remainder made up of Draca, Zin-Shee and other races such as uruk and rakka.

Armored Infantry Chapter: Body armor of several levels is worn by some Guild infantry units. Units are organized for several different types of missions, from the nimble, flight-capable scouts, to the lumbering destron. Some Draca now serve as armored infantry, but most are still Anthropos or rakka.

Marine Chapter: These highly-skilled troops specialize in initial planetary landings, boarding actions and special forces operations. Anthropos, Draca, and uruk are the most common troops serving in the Guild Marines.

Armored Vehicle Chapter: Guild armored vehicles vary greatly, as they are drawn from member-worlds with a variety of technological levels. Tracked and wheeled vehicles are not uncommon, but hover- and grav-tanks are preferred due to their versatility and speed. Armament varies from simple projectile-throwing guns to sophisticated laser, plasma or missile batteries.



Artillery Chapter: Most of the Guild's "big guns" are tracked or wheeled self-propelled artillery. Warfare has grown more mobile over the centuries, and static artillery positions are no longer practical. Guild artillery can fire shells of various dimensions, shoot plasma, ionic or laser bolts, and be used against ships in orbit.

House of the Guide

Scouts, rangers, special forces, and other front-line elite troops are part of this house. Separate from the House of Defiance due to their independent mission and nature, the Guides work on their own, patrolling frontiers, checking out dangers, and reporting on any threats to the Guild. Operating far from major Guild worlds, the Guides are forced to deal with obsolete equipment, shortages, poor living conditions, and long periods of duty without compensation. Casualties in the Guides are high, but there is never any shortage of applicants. In all the Guild, only the House of Dha can claim to have finer members than the Guides.

The House of Dha

The newest and most prominent military house is the House of Dha, formed only a few years ago to counter a growing threat from The Empire. To date, Dha's organization, equipment, homeworld, and its existence, are closely-guarded secrets, disclosed only on a need-to-know basis.

This is an independent military house, with its own infantry, vehicular, air and space arms, consisting of the best and the brightest from among all Guild races. The four Guardian races — Anthropos, Draca, Calemora and Zin-Shee — until recently made up the majority of Dha membership, but recent arrivals, the Shanask and Kryll, may soon attain this status as well.

Many major Dha operations are carried out by teams drawn from many different chapters. A given team may contain any combination of different chapters — destron, marines, warriors, cyber-lords, warlocks, bio-warriors, mensi, and so on, in combinations determined by the commanders of Dha as the most effective.

Dha's home base is the protoplanet Dha Prime (see Major Worlds), a blasted ball of rock located in the Acropolis stellar nursery, and orbited by six artificially-placed moons, one for each of the Guardians, (and one each for the Shanask and Kryll after the adventure in the game box). Here, the chapters of the House of Dha receive their training, and secret plans to thwart The Empire are drawn up.

Major Worlds of the Guild

Only the accountants of the Great House know how many worlds lie within Guildspace. Currently, over 10,000 worlds belong to the Guild, and any attempt to catalog these in this limited space would be futile. Several major worlds exist, however, as the hubs of Guild activity, and the places where the most important events of Guild history take place. Several of these are described below.

Guildhome

Chosen due to its resemblance to old Url, homeworld of humanity, Guildhome is now a protected park-world, with only a handful of cities above the surface. Guildhome's importance to the Guild is unimaginable, for it houses all the central governing apparatus, as well as the meeting place of the Great Council itself. Most major structures are located underground, but the Council meets in the vast, picturesque city called Centre, a gigantic settlement of over 10,000,000 inhabitants, which displays the art and architecture of a thousand worlds. The only major settlement on Guildhome's surface, Centre is devoted exclusively to the governance of the Guild.

The remainder of Guildhome is little short of paradise, a green, fertile world virtually untouched by civilization. No settlement outside Centre has a population of more than 10,000, and most inhabitants are quiet, peaceful people (of many races) who have come here to help tend and oversee this world chosen as the most beautiful and peaceful in all of Guildspace.

The Guildhome system is a bristling fortress, however, containing a ring of powerful orbital fortresses, squadrons of defense boats and space fighters in hidden lunar bases, and many other top secret defenses. Guildhome serves as base to House Defiance's Seventh Fleet, generally referred to as the "Home" fleet. The harsh reality of the system's military defenses stands in sharp contrast to the pastoral beauty of Guildhome itself.



DETRICK...

Seril

As the struggle against the Calemora grew longer and more brutal, the Zin-Shee relocated their capital to this small world a few light years from Calemor. In this way the Blood Feud, which occupied more and more of the Zin-Shee's resources, could be more efficiently overseen and managed.

When Guild forces ended the war, many Zin-Shee chose to join the Guild, most maintaining dual membership in both states. Seril was one of these, but the Zin-Shee Matriarchy could not tolerate the thought of its capital world lying within the borders of another stellar nation, and so moved its administrative center back to Sheapa, the race's original homeworld.

Seril, a lush jungle-world where the Zin-Shee can hunt and play endlessly, remains the defacto capital for those Zin-Shee who joined the Guild, and is now a magnet to those Zin-Shee who wish to change the ancient ways of conquest and slavery. Many Guild tourists enjoy visiting Seril, and the Zin-Shee are delighted to have them.

This world is also unusual in that it has no moons, and absolutely no tidal action. Its vast oceans are broad and still, disturbed only by thermal currents and wind-driven waves. Large coastal cities and extensive docks support a planet-wide oceanic transport network.

Calemor

The home of the Calemora race is a gigantic, high-grav world, with the surface area equivalent to ten Arth-sized planets, orbiting a dim red giant star. The surface, still showing deep scars from the titanic battles of the Blood Feud, was originally a lush jungle, but today is a blasted desert. Temperatures vary from 150 degrees during the day to sub-zero at night. Fierce dust- or (worse yet) gravel-storms ravage the landscape, while the atmosphere is harsh and only breathable for a few hours by Anthropos without artificial filters or supplemental oxygen supplies. The arid surface is crisscrossed with deep, craggy canyons and ravines, and rivers flow here only seasonally. The Calemora themselves, with the help of Guild techs and planetary engineers, have only just begun the monumental task of restoring their home to its original state.

Native life-forms are fully consistent with the harsh conditions of Calemor's surface — the world's dangerous predators include pouncers, a species of giant cat which can camouflage itself to match virtually any environment; dustsharks, enormous armored mammalian creatures which burrow beneath sand and gravel; and

crestsnares, poisonous reptile-like beasts with psionic abilities to immobilize or deceive their prey (transported here during the Blood Feud).

The most prominent structures on Calemor are the giant pyramidal buildings known as catongs, which serve as combination temples, social centers and martial arts training houses. Beyond this, the Calemora dwell in stone buildings, built low and strong to protect them from the elements.

Kryll-Hive

The Kryll's strange world resembles a tremendous, greenish sponge, bristling with life forms, and bound together by long, filamentous tunnels used for travel and communication. The hives is a living thing, although it is not certain if it is a collection of small biological organisms, or a huge single life-form.

The entire "Hive World" can be moved by means of living propulsion units, or taken to hyperlight speed by globular glowing creatures which seem capable of generating a natural hyperspace field. This process is slow and consumes much energy, however, so most travel is undertaken by Kryll bioships.

The hive is a labyrinth of pulsating, animate matter, often intersected by channels or vessels carrying unknown organic fluids. Here and there, clusters or organs, nodes or glands grow along walls or floors. Small, independent insectile or slug-like creatures crawl everywhere, overseeing the health of the hive, cleaning passageways, consuming dead matter, and scuttling about on unknown errands. Pale Kryll workers walk the corridors, carrying important objects, doing their own maintenance work, building new corridors, and other more obscure things.

Despite this, the hives are wondrous places, where all life forms work together for the common good. At the center of each hive is a vast, pulsating entity that glows with a pale yellow light, providing light and power to the hive. Close by, where she can take advantage of the entity's heat and light, lies the hive queen, a massive, highly intelligent being which oversees the health of the hive, laying eggs and producing new Kryll as they are needed. She is attended by several dozen drones, fertile males who see to her needs and fertilize her when required. Drones are non-sentient, blind creatures which are killed by hive warriors when the queen deems them no longer useful.

Dha Prime

Near the rimward edge of Guildspace lies the Acropolis Stellar Nursery where, uncounted thousands of years new stars are forming. Near the center of this dense, gaseous formation lies the protoplanet Dha Prime, where the stellar dust glows dimly with the light of a thousand young stars, and where the elite House of Dha has chosen to make its home.

Dha Prime itself is a rocky, airless wasteland onto which stellar dust rains constantly (enough so that, in a million standard years or so, Dha Prime itself will become a star). The bleak terrain is interrupted only by the massive, fifty-mile wide domed city of Glory. Here the legions of Dha are trained and housed. Architecture from a dozen races graces the streets of Glory, and in the vast barracks and fortresses of Dha, the finest warriors in the universe are trained.

In orbit around Dha Prime are the six moons, each representing a major House of Dha race. Originally, only four circled the planetoid, one each for the Anthropos, Draca, Calemora and Zin-Shee — the so-called "Guardian" races. These contained barracks, stardocks, administrative and recreational facilities for the various races, and served as headquarters for each race in its dealings with the House of Dha. Recently, however, a fifth moon, resembling a vast, shattered ball of black onyx, appeared, bringing with it a new race, the Shanask. Once misunderstandings with the Kryll were settled, a sixth moon in the form of a Kryll hiveship appeared, as well.

In addition to ground forces, Dha also maintains a small but potent fleet in the hangars and naval bases beneath the surface of the guardian moons. Spacecraft from all guardian races serve the Dha fleet, along with several new craft which incorporate secret Guild technologies and weapon systems including the strange bioship of the Kryll.

Kalb

The computer planet of Kalb is home to House Gamah, the technological specialists of the Guild. Here, amid considerable secrecy, new tech devices and procedures are developed and old ones improved. Vast arrays of computers lie deep beneath the surface, analyzing potentials and performance of new devices, and pondering questions posed by Guild scientists. These computers can also be used in times of crisis, to analyze enemy attack patterns, determine the nature of unknown threats, etc.

The surface of Kalb resembles a vast industrial park with manicured lawns, small stands of trees, and low, pleasant-

looking buildings. Kalb was originally a sterile world when Gamah arrived here, and the present managed look was achieved over generations of careful cultivation. Most of the heavy manufacturing and computer labs lie below ground, where industrial emissions and toxic products are strictly monitored, collected and processed into useful chemicals.

Fashim

Known as the machine world, Fashim resembles a single, planet-wide factory. Here Fashim lives, one of the few machine intelligences encountered by the Guild. The Fashim itself is a single, communal mind, made up of computers, intelligent machines and self-aware devices. Fashim does not know or remember its origin; most speculate that the planet was an ancient automated manufacturing center, possibly built by the Aerolk. After the masters left, the machines of the planet continued to evolve, eventually attaining a single self-awareness. The entity Fashim continued to follow its original programming, going through the motions of manufacture, despite the fact that nothing remained to build with. Old machines were repaired, replaced or recycled, and the planet was still chugging along single-mindedly when Guild explorers discovered it.

Fortunately for the Guild, Fashim retained its loyalty to living beings and its desire to serve, and now the world happily produces many mechanical and electronic devices for distribution throughout the Guild. These items are of high quality, but are not leading-edge technology, for Fashim specializes in tried-and-true manufacturing and devices with well-proven, easily duplicated designs.

Fashim was actually offered Guild membership, but was uninterested, preferring to continue building, modifying and designing. The delivery of an order for a new product, or the arrival of fresh raw materials (Fashim itself has been virtually stripped of any valuable resources) seems to bring the being great joy.

Those who have spoken with Fashim find it a warm, friendly individual, although it seems to have a one-track mind in regard to building and designing, and always wants to move the conversation in that direction.

Torav

This world is remarkable in its singular lack of dangerous flora and fauna, as well as its lush, unspoiled beauty, ranging from the yellow and red forests of the northern latitudes to the blue-green jungles of the equatorial regions, its picturesque moun-

tains, meandering rivers and colorful animal species.

While all of this would make Torav an outstanding vacation spot, the most remarkable feature of the world is its seas. Through a unique geological process, Torav's oceans are made up of a hyperoxygenated compound, enabling air-breathing species to actually "breathe" the water without serious effort or side-effects.

Of course, Torav has become a tourist paradise, with vast seaside (and undersea) resorts catering to hundreds of thousands of visitors per year. Guild control of the world is strict, however, for its unusual ecology and scenery are considered an irreplaceable treasure. Tourists are forbidden to enter proscribed areas, and their numbers are limited by Guild law. The waiting list to visit Torav is ten years long and growing, and many citizens of the Guild dream of visiting the world someday.

The most common visitors to Torav are Anthropros, Zin-Shee, and other mammalian species. Zin-Shee particularly love the world, as do the otter-like wurro. Reptilians and hunters like the Draca find little of interest on a planet where hunting is severely restricted, and the Calemora have no interest in vacations of luxury. Still, Torav is a remarkably cosmopolitan world, and its pleasant surroundings seem to induce peace and good-fellowship. The average visitor will easily encounter a dozen species in a single day, all living together happily, without strife or argument.

Stronghold

Guild ships have for years been scouring the Imperial frontier for major wormhole routes to and from The Empire, routes which enemy forces might use for invasion. In an empty stretch of space near the very heart of Guildspace, far from major planetary mass (where wormholes are extremely rare), the Guild located a wormhole directly linked to The Empire's frontier worlds, where most of their naval strength was concentrated.

Realizing that this gateway was far more useful to The Empire than to the Guild, and also surmising that The Empire knew of its existence, the Guild immediately began construction of an immense star-fortress, mined the region of space, and saw to it that several Guild capital ships were assigned there on a permanent basis. A squadron of warships nominally under the command of the Fifth Fleet now guards the wormhole, and the space-fortress, now called simply Stronghold, contains enough weaponry to blast any enemy craft emerging from the wormhole to scrap.

The entire area is heavily patrolled by star-fighters, and is strictly restricted to non-military traffic. Currently, the Guild is preparing to transport a warmoon into the region, to be used as new headquarters, either for the Fifth Fleet (normally kept in reserve), or a new Eighth Fleet, whose job it will be to either defend the wormhole against The Empire, or enter the wormhole itself and fall upon The Empire from within.

Url

The ancient homeworld of the Anthropros exists within Guildspace, but it is not a member world. Preserved in its devastated state as a warning to the future, Url is a nightmare world devastated by the horrors of atomic warfare. A small research base and tourist center exists on Url's single moon, and each year many Anthropros come here to see the devastation, learn of the mistakes of the past, and contemplate how to avoid them in the future.

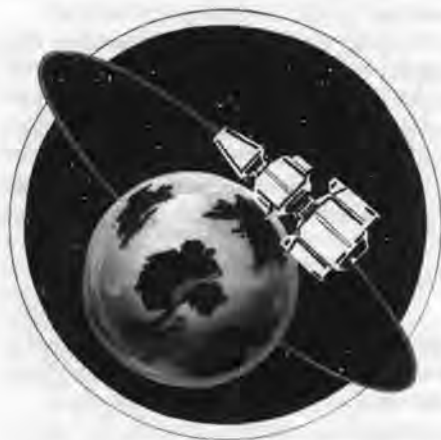
Url itself is quarantined, its surface observed by scientific stations in orbit around the planet. Scientists report that life appears to have returned to Url, but erratic atmospheric conditions and residual radiation prevent detailed scans. Exactly what form life has taken on Url, and how it has been changed by the effects of radiation and biological warfare cannot be known without actual manned expeditions to the surface and such missions are forbidden.

Utopia

Many inhabitants of Guildspace consider this world to be little more than a myth. Others think it will turn out to be nothing but a burned-out cinder stripped of all useful items. Whatever its true nature, whether it exists at all, "Utopia" is the name given to the prime world of the vanished Aerolk. Legend holds it to be a storehouse of super-science, possibly even an artificial world, where the mysterious Aerolk made their greatest discoveries and stored their greatest treasures. Located somewhere in the hazardous reaches of Aerolk space, well known to be laced with traps and deadly dangers.

There is no denying that those few who have braved Aerolk space and survived have brought back some amazing technological devices (such as T11's disruptor - see SG, NPC personalities). Still, the wonders of the few minor items scavenged from the ruins of Aerolk civilization pale before the possible treasures of Utopia, assuming the world exists at all.





The Arthirian Sphere

After the holocaust which devastated old Url, many factions of humanity escaped to the stars. Among these were groups of military-oriented individuals, who believed that the war could have been avoided through martial strength and preparation. The war was not a failure of the military, they believed, but a failure of will. It had started because the combatants perceived weaknesses in their opponents, and would not have happened had all remained strong.

These survivors banded together and based themselves on the planet Arth, a world similar to the old home planet in many ways. Here, they created what they considered to be the perfect military state. Society was ranked and regimented, all citizens registered and classified. Arthirian starships set out, colonizing and conquering all surrounding worlds. At first, they encountered mostly other Anthropos worlds, most of which gave up with minimal struggle. As time passed, the Arthirians began to think that they were the only human civilization left in the galaxy.

Then, they encountered the Guild. This alliance of free-thinking, free-living worlds seemed to embody everything the Arthirians hated — they were soft, conciliatory, and stressed negotiation and compromise. It was compromise, the Arthirians believed, which had nearly destroyed humanity, and here were millions of Anthropos ready to start down that road once more! Plans for conquest were swiftly drawn up.

The struggle between Guild and Sphere was grim and bloody. When Arthirian ships were finally repulsed from Guildhome, it became clear that the "soft," "weak-willed" Guild was here to stay, and the Arthirians would have to live with it.

Fallout from the disastrous campaign against the Guild continued for decades. The Arthirian economy, stretched to the

limit by a constant wartime footing, threatened to collapse. Inflation, unemployment and poverty all ran out of control. Revolts by individual worlds were suppressed only with great difficulty, and soon the Arthirian generals learned that sometimes even the strong must compromise.

Several major changes took place in Arthirian society over the years. Subject worlds were given limited autonomy. The absolute power of the military was curbed. Expansion was carried out through negotiation and treaty, although the Sphere still turned to conquest on occasion.

By the time The Empire was encountered, the Arthirians had evolved substantially from their militaristic origins, but remained a potent force. Fortunately, the Guild had outstripped their old enemy and had nearly surrounded the Sphere. Thus, most of The Empire's wrath fell upon the Guild, but the Arthirians defended themselves handily in several frontier systems, throwing back imperial scout forces. Realizing the danger of opening a second front in the war, The Empire, more or less, left the Sphere alone.

Seeing the danger of The Empire, Arthirian leaders (no longer all generals), covertly aided the Guild, funneling advanced weaponry and technology to those who were once their bitterest enemies. Still the Arthirians hedged their bets, remaining officially neutral, hoping to cut a good deal with The Empire should the Guild be defeated.

With The Empire's sudden and unexpected withdrawal from combat came peace. Combatant forces fell back 500 light years, and the Arthirians were given the task of administering the resulting demilitarized zone.

This proved to be the turning point for the Sphere. With their somewhat more tolerant society, their impressive new military might (thanks to the Guild arms trade), and skill in logistics and administration, the Arthirians proved the perfect stewards of the uneasy peace which followed. The demilitarized zone (quickly shortened to "The Zone") became a haven for traders and a crossroads where all species could travel and interact without the threat of violence. Arthirian patrol ships made the Zone one of the safest stretches of space in the galaxy, free from raiders, pirates, or petty warfare. For their trouble, the Sphere charges a one percent tax on all transactions, and is prospering in the resulting commercial boom.

The Sphere is a very different place now than it once was. A stern, martial spirit infuses most of its institutions, but the representative republic which emerged from the autocratic government of the past

serves the people reasonably well. Despite inferior numbers, Arthirian ships and weapons are acknowledged as the finest in Known Space. Many Guild starships are constructed from Arthirian components, hulls or weapons, and the gradually-improving relations between the two former enemies may eventually result in the reunification of two major branches of Anthropos society.

Inhabitants

The Arthirians did not settle in a region of space as rich in life-forms as did the founders of the Guild. Most Arthirians are Anthropos, and only a dozen or so alien races have been found within the borders of the Sphere. Like the Guild, however, the Sphere still contains a substantial number of unexplored systems, some of which may yet harbor intelligent life.

Some alien races of the Sphere include the k'lak, a semi-aquatic race of crustaceans which defend themselves with potent bio-electric charges; the sheem, frail humanoids with highly developed telekinetic abilities; the drassk, black-furred carnivores with highly cunning natures; and the moriam, diminutive bat-like aliens with limited flight abilities and a fascination with mechanical devices. All of these races serve to some extent in the Arthirian military, and move with relative freedom throughout the Sphere and beyond. The drassk have especially become mainstays of Arthirian defense.

As in the Guild, skrak and kurg raiders trouble the Sphere, but Arthirian control of their region of space is surer than in the Guild, and their rate of success against the raiders is much higher than the Guild's.

Government

The Sphere was originally ruled by a Council of Generals and Admirals, whose word was law, enforced by soldiers and starships. Soon, the generals came to see that some problems cannot be solved through intimidation at gunpoint. The massive economic disruption which followed the ill-fated invasion of Guildspace swept many old-line generals from power, and the more enlightened and forward-thinking officers who followed them slowly opened the Sphere up to a republican form of government.

Each planet within the Sphere now elects a number of representatives based on its population, and this assembly then selects the council which will govern the Sphere for ten standard years. The council still has a great amount of power (its decisions can only be reversed by a three-quarters majority of the assembly), and

many of its members are military officers, but the council is still a vast improvement over its predecessor.

Voting rights are also limited. Individuals can only vote if they have given at least two year's service to the Sphere, either in the military or some other civil service. An individual may request a branch of service, and if such a posting is available, the Sphere will usually allow it. If personnel are needed in another area, however, an individual's request can be ignored completely.

Over the years, the governments of individual planets have evolved, until a bewildering variety has emerged. Every sort of government, from near-anarchy to totalitarian dictatorship (the Sphere does not share the Guild's qualms about such things) can be found within the Sphere, although most worlds have governments roughly modeled on the Sphere council.

The Military

The armed forces are still integral to Arthirian society, and they are without question the best trained and equipped in Known Space. Although both the Guild and The Empire are the Arthirians' numerical superiors, the Sphere's smaller area and better control of its military enable its forces

to move about far more quickly and efficiently. Today, conflict between the Sphere and its neighboring states would be a long, drawn-out and bloody struggle.

Much of the Arthirian council is controlled by military officers, and the armed forces still receive the lion's share of the annual budget. They have taken to their new job as peacekeepers quite readily, scrupulously patrolling the Zone and impartially enforcing the terms of the Guild-Empire cease-fire. The major branches of the Arthirian military are described below.

The Navy

The Arthirian navy has more than 4000 starships "under sail" and has 2000 more "in mothballs" ready for battle at short notice. Most of the Sphere ships are now engaged in patrolling the Zone, but some remain back in the Sphere, on the off-chance that the Guild or the Draca might launch a sneak attack (no one really believes this, but it is a good reason for maintaining a strong reserve). Currently, the Arthirian navy is organized into three main fleets, each subdivided into a number of flotillas. These are detailed below. All commanders are Anthropos unless otherwise noted.

Fleet Vanguard

Homeworld: Emeh
Commander: Admiral Garrik
Forces: Three flotillas

First Flotilla:

Homeworld: Emeh
Commander: Rear Admiral Dorasco
Forces: 100 Patrol Frigates
100 Missile Boats
60 Light Cruisers
40 Heavy Cruisers
10 Light Carriers
5 Dreadnaughts

Second Flotilla

Homeworld: Torianis
Commander: Rear Admiral Shyn
Forces: 250 Patrol Frigates
150 Missile Boats
75 Light Cruisers
50 Heavy Cruisers

Third Flotilla

Homeworld: Lyrr
Commander: Rear Admiral Nolom
Forces: 100 Patrol Frigates
100 Missile Boats
50 Heavy Cruisers
10 Dreadnaughts
1 Superdreadnaught



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Fleet Vanguard is responsible for patrolling the coreward portion of the Zone. This is done by flotilla, with each serving a six-month rotation in the Zone. So far, the fleet has done an admirable job, stopping several smuggling operations and defusing at least one major confrontation. If The Empire crosses the frontier, however, Fleet Vanguard will be in no position to fight, and may simply fall back to Sphere territory.

Fleet Sentry

Homeworld: Opaz
Commander: Fleet Admiral Tragir
Forces: Four Flotillas

First Flotilla:

Homeworld: Opaz
Commander: Admiral Sharakk (Drassk)
Forces: 200 Corvettes
150 Patrol Frigates
100 Missile Boats
75 Light Cruisers
50 Heavy Cruisers
15 Light Carriers
10 Heavy Carriers
5 Dreadnaughts

Second Flotilla:

Homeworld: Emmor
Commander: Admiral Nargil
Forces: 300 Corvettes
250 Patrol Frigates
150 Missile Boats
100 Light Cruisers
75 Heavy Cruisers
20 Light Carriers
10 Heavy Carriers
10 Dreadnaughts
2 Superdreadnaughts

Third Flotilla:

Homeworld: K'yllah
Commander: Admiral Stonn
Forces: 350 Corvettes
200 Patrol Frigates
100 Missile Boats
100 Light Cruisers
75 Heavy Cruisers
25 Light Carriers
15 Heavy Carriers
10 Dreadnaughts
4 Superdreadnaughts

Fourth Flotilla:

Homeworld: Istar
Commander: Admiral Urbon
Forces: 100 Corvettes
75 Patrol Frigates
75 Missile Boats
50 Light Cruisers
50 Heavy Cruisers
15 Light Carriers
1 Dreadnaught

Fifth Flotilla:

Homeworld: Yzeen
Commander: Admiral Rekkana
Forces: 150 Corvettes
100 Patrol Frigates
75 Missile Boats
50 Light Cruisers
40 Heavy Cruisers
10 Light Carriers
5 Heavy Carriers
5 Dreadnaughts

Fleet Sentry is primarily a front line fleet, with enough striking power to badly batter an enemy who invades Arthirian space. So far, Sentry has not seen action, but the Arthirians, suspicious of The Empire, keep the fleet in top condition just in case.

Fleet Prime

Homeworld: Arth
Commander: Fleet Admiral Zesa
Forces: Five flotillas

First Flotilla:

Homeworld: Arth
Commander: Admiral Krushe
Forces: 200 Corvettes
200 Patrol Frigates
150 Missile Boats
100 Light Cruisers
50 Heavy Cruisers
20 Light Carriers
15 Heavy Carriers
12 Dreadnaughts
2 Superdreadnaughts

Second Flotilla:

Homeworld: Jamass
Commander: Rear Admiral Norok
Forces: 100 Patrol Frigates
50 Missile Boats
50 Light Cruisers

Third Flotilla:

Homeworld: Xalara
Commander: Rear Admiral Trellasa
Forces: 150 Patrol Frigates
100 Missile Boats
50 Light Cruisers
30 Heavy Cruisers

Fourth Flotilla:

Homeworld: Gereia
Commander: Rear Admiral Shaskaraia (Drassk)
Forces: 100 Patrol Frigates
100 Missile Boats
10 Heavy Cruisers
1 Dreadnaught

Fifth Flotilla:

Homeworld: Icebox
Commander: Rear Admiral Elikkar
Forces: 150 Patrol Frigates
100 Missile Boats
40 Light Cruisers
20 Heavy Cruisers
10 Light Carriers

Fleet Prime is the Arthirian home fleet, kept close to the Arthirian core worlds. Relatively strong, Prime could hold its own even against an Imperial or Guild Fleet, but still lacks the capacity for long-term operations. Prime will only be sent into battle if The Empire invades the Sphere itself, otherwise it will stick close to home, even if the other fleets should go to aid the Guild.

Fleet Hammer

Homeworld: Enre
Commander: Admiral Horvath
Forces: Three flotillas

First Flotilla:

Homeworld: Enre
Commander: Rear Admiral Yli
Forces: 200 Corvettes
150 Patrol Frigates
100 Missile Boats
40 Light Cruisers
20 Heavy Cruisers
10 Light Carriers
4 Dreadnaughts

Second Flotilla:

Homeworld: Koge
Commander: Rear Admiral Remae
Forces: 150 Corvettes
100 Patrol Frigates
60 Missile Boat
50 Light Cruisers
40 Heavy Cruisers
20 Light Carriers
10 Heavy Carriers
8 Dreadnaughts
2 Superdreadnaughts

Third Flotilla

Homeworld: Tesh

Commander: Rear Admiral Sorokk (Drassk)

Forces:

- 200 Patrol Frigates
- 120 Missile Boats
- 50 Light Cruisers
- 10 Light Carriers
- 5 Heavy Carriers
- 1 Dreadnaught

Fleet Hammer patrols the rimward portion of the Zone. This area has recently been much quieter than Fleet Prime's area, and many crew members are growing bored. Not certain whether to wish for action or for continued peace, the fleet

continues its patrols, and in the event of Imperial attack, Admiral Horvath will probably content himself with hit-and-run assaults against the enemy as he falls back toward the Sphere.

Army

Arthirian ground forces are mostly Anthropos, organized into infantry, mechanized, or armored divisions, with artillery and transport battalions attached as needed. The Arthirians have over 10,000,000,000 beings in arms, with typical forces and armaments described below. Few non-Anthropos races besides the Drassk are suited to ground combat. Most army members are of these two races.

Light Infantry: These unarmored, lightly-armed troopers are equipped with jump-packs for speed and mobility. They are most often used in reconnaissance roles, or for commando raids.

Infantry: "Leg" and mechanized infantry are similar to their guild counterparts, most often armed with blast or pulse-laser rifles and armored, at best, with flak jackets. Most platoons have at least two heavy weapons troopers armed with turbo-plaz, grenade launchers, or similar devices.

Heavy Infantry: Battlesuited Arthirian infantry are well-trained and skilled in combat, rivaling even the Guild marines and destron troopers. The Arthirians are known to have a special fondness for this type of trooper, so they are proportionately more common than in Guildspace. Arthirian heavies typically wear marine or heavier armor, and carry turbo-plaz, grenade launchers or sonic disrupters.

Armored Vehicles: Most Arthirian tanks are hover- or grav-propelled, the less advanced wheeled and tracked designs having been scrapped or converted long ago. Unfortunately, such vehicles are expensive to build and maintain, so their numbers are comparatively low. Weapon systems include vehicle-class pulse lasers and missile batteries, with supplemental weapons such as pulse cannons or turbo-plaz as antipersonnel devices.

Major Worlds of the Sphere**Arth**

The capital planet of the Arthirian Sphere is very similar to Url, the Anthropos destroyed homeworld. Its four continents contain a wide variety of terrain and climate, from frozen tundra to tropical jungle. The Arthirians did not learn well from the past, however, and their militaristic government cleared vast stretches of forest and devastated large wilderness areas constructing military bases, factories and huge, grim, soulless cities for their citizens.

Although much of Arth has been built up and polluted, many today are trying to reverse the damage, preserving the remaining wilderness as parks and converting unused regions back to their original state. The factories and bases still remain, but some laws have been passed to help protect what remains of Arth as it was when the humans arrived.

Arth's cities are ugly stretches of steel and concrete. The largest city, New Victory, houses the assembly and council chambers, as well as offices for all major branches of Arthirian Government. The increase in poverty and decay brought about by the economic collapse following the war with the Guild has left large ghettos and poor sections, some almost totally lawless. New Victory itself is largely free from these ravages, mostly because poor and criminals are deported to other cities, or off planet. Despite the improvements in Arthirian society, Arth can still be a sad and unpleasant world.

Starrak

This "world" is actually a vast asteroid belt circling a white giant star. Many valuable minerals and resources have been found in the belt, and several stable asteroids are large enough to house substantial populations. Starrak today serves as a mining system, and as a repair facility for Sphere starships. Civilians swarm through the belt, searching for the "glory rock" which will make them rich. The military patrols the area heavily, so there is little lawlessness, while civilians are kept well away from military facilities.

Garmish

Once a relatively tranquil agricultural and mineral world, Garmish was suddenly the center of Arthirian attention when a mining excavation uncovered a gigantic alien artifact. Garmish was immediately quarantined, its inhabitants prevented from leaving, and Sphere military and science teams dispatched to investigate.



Full excavation of the site is still underway, but what has been uncovered is incredible. The site's exact function is still a mystery, but it is clearly gigantic — nearly a hundred miles across — a network of tunnels, tubes, conduits, and unexplained rooms containing cryptic machinery, none of which can be coaxied to function.

Although the official explanation for the quarantine is a contagious plague on Garmish, rumors of the excavation have leaked out nonetheless, and some have even reached the Guild. Some Guild leaders are worried about what the Arthirians might find as the project continues, and have suggested sending a team from the House of Dha to investigate and, if possible, learn the structure's true nature.

Jackpot

Originally called simply Stimson after its discoverer, this grassy, temperate world has since been renamed by its leaders in the hope that it will attract gamblers from across the Sphere and beyond. As might be surmised, Jackpot is a gambling world, its entire economy devoted to games of chance.

Jackpot's cities are garish nightmares of bright lights, holographic displays and hideously baroque buildings, and while its official population is only about ten million, this may be doubled or even tripled by the presence of tourists. Everyone, save a few individualists who live in small plains cities, ranching and farming, is involved in the gambling industry to some degree, and the

gambling economy drives the planet.

Tourists come to lose money from both the Sphere and the Guild, and some even filter in from The Empire. Hundreds of races may be seen on the streets of Jackpot's cities, but as always, Anthropos make up the bulk of travelers, hoping to get rich quick. Zin-Shee and, surprisingly, Draca (who seem to enjoy risking their money as much as risking their lives) travel from the Guild in large numbers.

Aquirus

Although the entire world of Aquirus is covered by water, and all its ecosystems are oceanic, the planet still supports a substantial population of Anthropos, who live beneath the waves, fishing, farming the sea floor, and mining the depths for valuable minerals.

Arthirian technology helps the inhabitants survive, but life on Aquirus is still difficult. The pressures of deep-sea living, the cramped quarters, the hard work and hazardous conditions all combine to keep tours of duty on Aquirus relatively short. Still, there are fortunes to be made, and the produce of this world is famous throughout the Sphere.

Major exports include Aquirus shrimp, a large and succulent crustacean-like creature which swarms all the oceans in huge numbers; Drill-fish, a moderately sized creature which swims in large schools and can inflict serious damage with its serrated beak, but is delicious when broiled;

numerous rare minerals; and glow-eels, another fish-like creature which shines varied colors in the darkness. Algae and seaweed are also cultivated here, and processed into cheap food for sentients, pets, and livestock.

As noted above, life on Aquirus can be dangerous, as many predatory beasts dwell in the planet's dark and frigid depths. Many of these are unknown, but two particularly terrifying species are the so-called "devil-whale," a species which can reach lengths of a thousand feet or more, and often raid Arthirian settlements with apparently malevolent intelligence, and "shark rays," batlike swimmers with huge mouths, sharp teeth and voracious appetites.

Some explorers claim to have seen other monstrosities at great depths, and even suggest that an unknown alien race dwells in the trenches, plotting against the Anthropos invaders and waiting for their moment to strike. Most of these stories are simply legends, but some inhabitants look uneasily to the unplumbed depths of Aquirus' deep trenches and wonder...

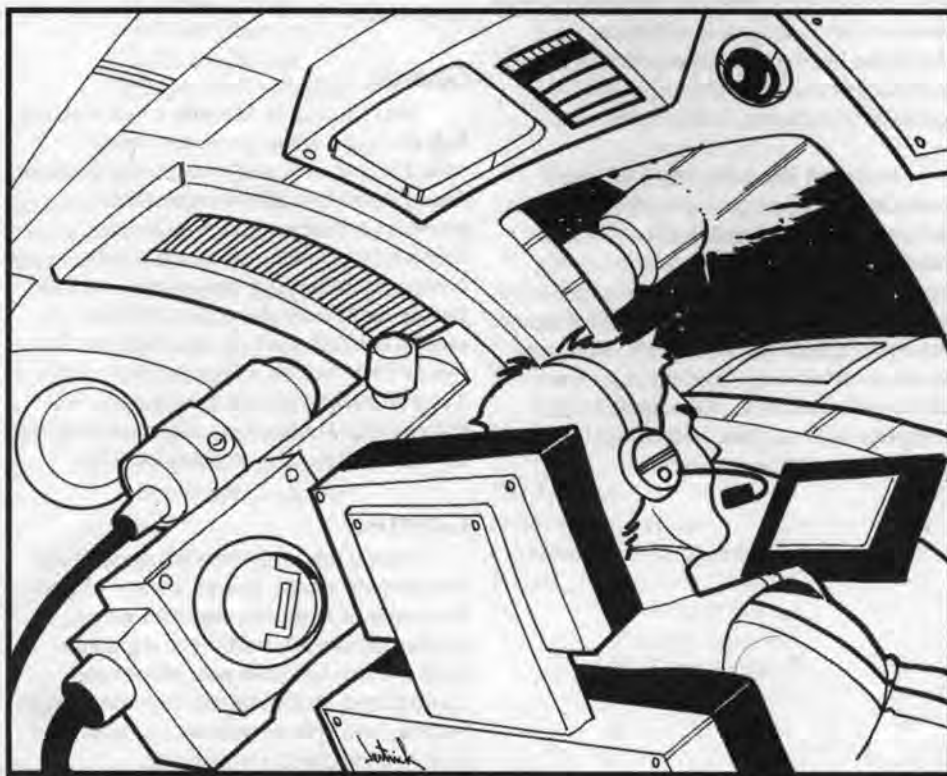
Icebox

This snow-covered world where winds howl and the temperature never rises above freezing is also an important source of garathium, a major starship hull component. Domed settlements house thousands of workers, and deep, heated mineshafts tunnel far beneath the surface. A vital world to the Arthirian military, Icebox is guarded by Prime's fifth flotilla.

Several disasters — mine collapses, explosions and life-support failure — have killed hundreds of workers and severely disrupted garathium production. Although it may well be that Icebox is simply experiencing a string of bad luck, some suggest that Empire saboteurs are trying to cripple the Arthirian military prior to a major invasion of both the Guild and the Sphere.

So important have Arthirian components become to Guild shipbuilding that the disasters on Icebox have begun to affect the Guild fleet, slowing completion schedules and forcing the outright cancellation of planned warships.

Icebox continues to be an important world, and security has been increased to deal with possible saboteurs. The current troubles on the world have led some Arthirian leaders to speculate that The Empire is planning a major attack soon, on both the Guild and the Sphere.



The Company

Not all the human refugees from Url were dedicated to democracy, or believed in peace through strength. Some believed in the power of trade and the omnipotence of the credit. These individuals combined to create a new organization, known simply as "The Company."

The simple commercial exploitation of humanity was not enough for The Company — its goal was to eventually have every Anthropos buying nothing but Company product, thus cornering the market on the largest monopoly imaginable.

As the years passed, The Company grew more and more powerful, absorbing rivals, controlling governments from behind the scenes, and buying and selling worlds the way children trade marbles. Secure in its power, The Company began construction of the gigantic, flying worldship known today as "Headquarters." Based outside of Guildspace and well beyond Guild authority, The Company continues to strive for total financial domination of Known Space.

The Company's major products today are leading-edge, high-tech items such as computers, communicators, hand scanners, Q-cells, ultra-lock gear, and so on. While no one doubts that Company tech is the highest available, the organization itself is not well-liked. All the same, billions of consumers buy Company products each day, further swelling corporate coffers.

Structure

The term "government" does not really apply to The Company. Organized along corporate lines, The Company has a CEO, Board of Directors, and Stockholders, all of whom exert influence in direct proportion to their power within The Company. Each year, the Board of Directors selects the CEO

(Chief Executive Officer). Board membership is for life; when a board member dies or retires, the surviving members choose a new board member from the ranks of stockholders.

Many board members have had cybernetic implants, or have had their lives artificially prolonged, simply to remain in power. Several board members exist solely within the confines of computer arrays, where their consciousness were transferred before death. While this increases a board member's life span almost indefinitely, it does not completely eliminate openings in board membership. Particularly bad board members — those who habitually miss meetings, for example — can be removed by a two-thirds vote of the other board members.

Also, with a near-immortal group in control of the board, some other board members have been known to resort to assassination in order to remove a troublesome member who is, for example, blocking an important vote. Ambitious stockholders sometimes attempt assassination, hoping to gain promotion, but such attempts are successful only rarely.

Almost all Company stockholders are Anthropos. A handful of alien races holds some influence in The Company, but their presence is insignificant. In the vast majority of cases, The Company is an Anthropos operation.

The Company's primary goal today is to purchase control and influence throughout Known Space. Company operatives purchase stock in Guild corporations, sphere ship building, and imperial slave trade. Company agents bribe, cajole, blackmail or threaten their way into positions of authority with local governments. The Company has interests on virtually every significant world — a

common proverb states that "The Company is Everywhere."

Military

The Company makes extensive use of mercenary troops through the good offices of the Sword League. They also maintain "security forces," often armed and armored every bit as well as the finest Guild regiment. A few Company-owned starships are equipped for combat, although Headquarters is a virtual star-fortress, capable of withstanding the harshest of assaults.

Yet, most of The Company's forces are geared toward internal security — they are not a military power and, in fact, disdain the use of overt force, considering it unprofitable.

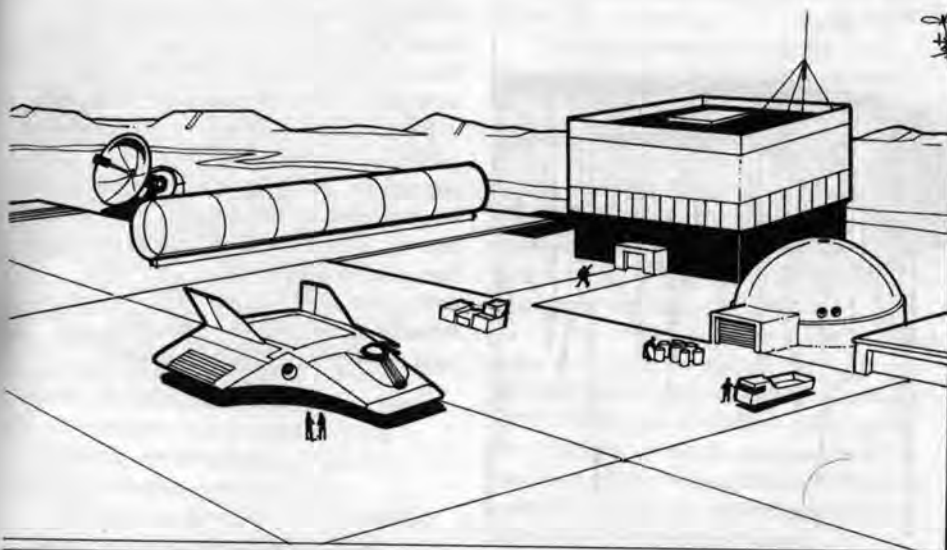
Major Worlds and Holdings

The Company directly controls only a single "world", the artificial planet called Headquarters. Other possessions consist entirely of stock in corporations, influence in government circles, or direct political control of cities, continents or worlds. These holdings are vast, indeed, but no one knows their full extent. The Company can appear anywhere in Known Space, even within alien states such as The Empire. The central world of Headquarters and several of its branch businesses are described below, with further holdings left to the imagination.

Headquarters

This titanic artificial planet current lies beyond the rimward edge of Guild territory near The Combine. From the outside, it resembles an irregular mass of machinery, towering structures, conduits, piping, airlocks and docking ports. Inside, Headquarters varies from the grim, gray barracks inhabited by ordinary workers, to the pleasant, if small, apartments of stockholders and the airy, luxuriant quarters of board members. Headquarters is capable of sublight flight and has been known to travel over interstellar distances, whether through the use of wormhole technology or some unknown new propulsion device (possibly even a Company version of the mysterious quantum drive), no one knows.

Comforts and privileges rise swiftly as one's status increases. Workers are paid a minimal salary, with fees for food and lodging deducted, leaving each with a pittance to spend in the numerous bars, cheap trivid houses, peep shows, and other tawdry establishments which crowd the workers' areas. The Company's policy is to keep the lower classes sated with cheap entertainment and fogged with drugs and intoxicants to prevent revolts, strikes or



other disruptions. Attempts to strike, or to organize workers, are dealt with ruthlessly, with offenders summarily executed, or psionically altered into mindless drones for work in high-hazard areas of the city.

Stockholders work hard to maintain their interest in The Company, and to earn more (hoping, eventually, for the near-impossible dream of board membership). Their entertainments and privileges increase with the amount of stock owned — private trivid, exclusive parties, holographic environmental simulations, space cruises and travel throughout Known Space — all this and more is reserved for influential stockholders.

The Company even sanctions a form of

slavery, in which a stockholder can, with permission from a board member, "appropriate" one or more ordinary workers for use as servants, mechanics, manual laborers, or even concubines. Such behavior is disliked by the workers, but the chaotic state of lower-class society prevents action by anyone save small, easily controlled groups.

Board members and CEOs live in conditions of unimaginable excess, with no indulgence denied them. Members who attend the monthly meetings may do as they please with their leisure time, so long as they do not endanger The Company. Removal of a board member is rare, but not unheard of. A board member who is

demoted back to stockholder is the subject of intense ridicule and prejudice, and often has to live as a pariah. Removed board members have been known to win their way back to their former status, but this is also very rare.

Galactic Weapons, Ltd.

A wholly-owned subsidiary of the Company, Galactic is a source for many advanced, if expensive, high-tech weapons. Some of the best heavy pulse laser and blaster weapons come from Galactic, and current rumor claims that the corporation is about to market a new line of plasma-powered weapons, all self-contained and capable of functioning without the cumbersome plasma precipitator pack which drives most other plasma weapons.

Galactic's major munitions factories are located on a number of small worlds outside of Guildspace. Conditions on these worlds are not good, with the vast factories and warehouses covering major portions of the worlds' continents, but pay is said to be good. Unfortunately, in exchange for generous salaries, The Company demands absolute loyalty, and imposes unbreakable, ten-year contracts, during which time workers are virtual prisoners on the factory planets.

Universal Pharmaceuticals

Another Company enterprise, Universal produces many impressive wonder drugs and devices, including the famous Genesis Capsule, and advanced medical monitors. The secrets of the production of these items are generally kept well-guarded, and any competitor attempting to learn how to manufacture them generally meets with grief at the hands of The Company's ruthless Security arm.

Universal runs pharmaceutical plants on a number of worlds, including several within Guildspace. Those plants within Guild jurisdiction are managed in scrupulous compliance with Guild law, with workers well treated and fairly paid. Still, many Guild officials believe that Universal plants are havens of industrial spies, smugglers, and illegal drug manufacture. So far, however, no one has ever been able to prove a thing. Non-Guild plants are run in the same manner as other Company enterprises, that is to say, with extensive benefits for owners and managers, and near-slavery for ordinary laborers.



DEITRICK...



The Empire

Ruled by the humanoid katha, The Empire is the oldest state in Known Space, and continues to be the deadliest threat to the Guild. The katha's history is one of constant struggle. After several centuries of expansion, they had accumulated enough slave races to turn the actual task of warfare over to trusted subjects, with suitable katha oversight, of course.

The Empire which encountered the Anthropos in 2602 was a confident and self-assured state which had, over centuries of internal conflict and endless battles, honed its forces into deadly engines of destruction and, despite occasional setbacks and defeats, had always triumphed.

The ferocity of the imperial assault caught both Guild and Sphere totally by surprise. In a few years, the Guild frontier was pushed well back, and the Sphere itself began to suffer imperial probing attacks. Finding Arthirian space a tough nut to crack, The Empire concentrated on the Guild, and the first 80 years of the war saw a near-unbroken string of imperial victories.

Then, inexplicably, the impossible happened. Without warning, imperial forces withdrew from their positions, abandoning whole worlds to the Guild. Imperial representatives arrived at Guildhome, asking for peace. Although many suspected that a greater, more threatening conflict elsewhere demanded imperial attention, no one knew for certain why The Empire had stopped fighting.

Intensive negotiations followed, in which The Empire agreed to return numerous captured worlds, and establish a 500 light year-wide demilitarized zone

(eventually to become known simply as "The Zone"), administered by the Arthirians.

Of course, The Empire never intended the peace to last. Every katha expects the war to be renewed someday, and the recent development of the so-called Imperial super-soldiers has led the Guild to suspect that a new conflict is imminent. The Guild's reaction has been to increase military alertness, consider the creation of an eighth House of Defiance fleet, and, most significantly, form the House of Dha.

While there is still a possibility that the state of armed readiness on both sides will continue indefinitely, most believe that a second Empire invasion is unavoidable. Recent fleet movements have suggested that The Empire is preparing to strike. Even as the Emperor built up forces along the frontier, however, individual ships and ground units were pulled out and re-assigned elsewhere, leading some to suspect that The Empire has another conflict, possibly a slave revolt or border dispute with an unknown rival state.

Inhabitants

While the Guild contains hundreds of races, most observers believe that The Empire contains literally thousands. Most of these inhabitants are limited to single worlds paying tribute to The Empire and occasionally furnishing slaves, while a handful are considered trustworthy enough to be given the freedom to travel throughout The Empire.

The master race of The Empire is the katha. These beings resemble gray-skinned Anthropos with tough, bony growths covering much of their bodies. This covering acts as a natural form of armor, but katha are not adverse to wearing armor of all sorts. A natural warrior race, they are stronger than Anthropos, and have a good affinity for technology.

Over the centuries, the katha have mastered the art of pitting their enemies against each other, and devastating enemy forces before battle has even begun. In all likelihood, imperial agents are responsible for at least some of the unrest within the Guild, and possibly for the conflicts within the Dracan and Zin-Shee states. All this may be an attempt to soften up the Guild and its allies prior to a renewal of hostilities.

Several dozen races have achieved high status (known in the kathan language as "honored slave" status), and are allowed to serve The Empire as soldiers, pilots and civil servants. In fact, in many parts of The Empire, a visitor will go for weeks without seeing a single katha, while honored slave races may be seen in abundance.

After the Scattering, numerous groups of humans settled in what was to become imperial territory. Today, Anthropos are an honored slave race, and are used in large numbers against the Guild and other Anthropos enemies. Guild and Arthirian Anthropos consider these individuals to be traitors, although methods of dealing with them are quite different. The Arthirians are inclined to kill imperial Anthropos on the spot (although they cannot as long as they are responsible for peace in the Zone), while most Guild members consider them to be deluded and brainwashed, in need of understanding and treatment. Despite this, Guild Anthropos fight the "traitors" with great enthusiasm when given the chance.

Other honored slave races include the murrk, a massive, ogreish race which seems not to mind imperial domination so long as they are allowed to fight; the haochann, an amphibious species with a special talent for astrogation; the da-han, slender reptilians resembling egg-stealing dinosaurs who serve as technicians, traders and couriers; the mBari, tall, muscular humanoids with a culture similar to the Guild Calemora; the jangiri, badger-like spacefarers who are often found as imperial pilots; and the per'kiff, omnivorous mammals with delicate fingers who possess special skills at electronics and mechanical repair.

All these species (and many more) seem to have accepted their status in The Empire, and serve faithfully. In exchange, The Empire asks only minimal tribute from their worlds, and rarely mistreats members of honored slave races.

Some honored races, in fact, are growing restless, not because of mistreatment, but because The Empire is becoming less "imperial." Many, particularly those members of warrior races, feel the katha are growing soft, and not ruling or conquering with the same fervor and skill as in the past. Eventually, some of these races may grow to believe that they are the true defenders of imperial traditions, and attempt to replace the katha "for their own good." When this will happen, or whether it will happen at all, is anyone's guess. A new war with the Guild or Sphere will undoubtedly distract the dissidents' attention, at least for a while.

Government

Citizenship in The Empire has evolved along an interesting path. The katha are the only true "citizens" of The Empire, for they choose leaders and make all important decisions. Other races are confined to their home worlds, expected to provide tribute, and occasionally raided for slaves.

The caste of honored slaves has grown in size and prominence over the centuries, however, to the point where non-katha control and manage most important imperial agencies, services and organizations. Nominal kathan oversight is provided, but the once-proud warrior race is now content to bask in the luxuries of The Empire and leave the tough jobs to others.

As to the identity of the Emperor, the Guild can only speculate. It is possible that he (or she, or it) is not even katha. Rumors abound that the mysterious despot is a cloaked, alien figure who can wield forces similar to the Shanask's *Sorce*.

It is known that the Emperor is advised by a nebulous group called the Council of State. No one knows the identity of this council, and speculation is rife that it is dominated by honored slave races, contains one or more unknown life forms, or is made up entirely of sentient computers, for whom the emperor is a mere figurehead.

There is no doubt that the emperor controls vast, mystical forces. Enemies disappear or are reduced to gibbering idiots. Assassins are slain by unknown means before they even get in sight of the Emperor. The Emperor seems to know what visitors want before they speak. He detects plots against him almost as they are hatched. Cloaked or concealed Council members also control weird powers, further enhancing their frightening reputation.

Member worlds have a wide variety of governments, and so long as they pay tribute and provide slaves and goods when requested, they are left alone. The imperial military will sometimes raid worlds suspected of holding back on tribute, and in this way Empire forces stay in training.

The Military

The imperial military is considered the most important branch of The Empire. Without their fleets and armies, the katha believe, the ruthless alien races of the outside would waste no time dismembering The Empire and reducing the katha to vassals.

Clearly, The Empire's forces are vast and powerful. The emperor can bring overwhelming force to bear along the Guild frontier, and there are few, if any, reliable estimates of what the forces currently arrayed against Guildspace could be.

Some observers have noted a constant siphoning off of border garrisons, however, as if another, continuous, but low-level conflict is keeping The Empire busy.

The nature of this conflict is open to speculation, but most Empire-watchers feel it is probably a series of slave revolts and border raids by such powers as the skraks

and kurgs. Whatever the precise identity of the conflict, it has done the Guild a favor by delaying what many consider to be the inevitable resumption of hostilities by The Empire.

The Imperial Navy

The assignments of the various fleets along the Guild frontier are described below. Note that these are only the known forces — The Empire may have considerably more ships and fighters at its disposal. Any of the following force estimates are subject to change, and much of this information is outdated or inaccurate, so caution should be used in evaluating it.

Frontier Fleet Sakur

Homeworld: Unknown

Commander: Great Swordmaster Echak (katha)

Forces: Six (or more) fleets, 40 sub-fleets, 100 squadrons

Fleet Kra

Homeworld: Unknown

Commander: Swordmaster Ree (haochann)

Forces: 1000 Knifeships
500 Bladeships
250 Ramships
200 Lancers
150 Gunships
100 Hatchetships
50 Globeships
1 Slavemaster

Fleet Kra is known to be one of the major strike fleets of the Guild / Arthirian region. Although several ships have been withdrawn to other fronts recently, Kra continues to rehearse for assault and planetary invasion, operations which will be vital should The Empire attack the Guild. Ree is a haochann known for his skill in fleet maneuvers; he is best known for utilizing short-jump wormhole navigation to bring his fleet to within extremely short distances of enemy planets or ships and attacking with near-total surprise.



Fleet Harak

Homeworld: T'Raa

Commander: Swordmaster Krrr (jangiri)

Forces: 2500 Dartships
 500 Knifeships
 250 Ramships
 200 Lancers
 100 Gunships
 100 Globeships
 20 Homeships
 1 Slavemaster

The large number of small, one- or two-man dartships indicates that Harak is intended primarily as a defensive fleet, or at least expected to harry and delay enemy advances. Little is known about the jangiri commander, Krrr, save that it is extremely unusual for someone of his race to advance so far in the imperial fleet.

Fleet Zor

Homeworld: Etabak

Commander: Swordmaster Alir (Anthropos)

Forces: 750 Daggerships
 500 Swordships
 500 Bladeships
 250 Lancers
 200 Ramships
 150 Gunships
 100 Globeships
 1 Slavemaster

Zor is a reserve fleet which rarely leaves its home base of Etabak. Its numbers have been reduced lately, as forces are transferred from the Guild front.

Fleet Mivoz

Homeworld: Unknown

Commander: Unknown

Forces: 500 Knifeships
 500 Daggerships
 300 Swordships
 300 Lancers
 200 Ramships
 50 Globeships
 1 Slavemaster

Mivoz has arrived in the region only recently, so force estimates are somewhat speculative. Its base and commander are unknown, but there is some evidence that Mivoz is under the command of a katha swordmaster (who, of course, outranks all non-katha in the fleet regardless of their "slave" rank), indicating that this may be the command fleet for any invasion attempt.

Fleet Stara

Homeworld: Tularamu

Commander: Unknown

Forces: 1000 Knifeships
 600 Bladeships
 400 Swordships
 200 Lancers
 200 Ramships
 50 Globeships
 1 Slavemaster

Another relatively new fleet, Stara has been assigned to the world of Tularamu, close to both the Zone and several strategic wormhole sites.

40 Sub-fleets

Homeworlds: Vary

Commanders: Vary

Forces (typical):

150 Lancers
 100 Gunships
 100 Hatchetships
 25 Globeships

Imperial sub-fleets are small units assigned as reinforcements or supplemental forces to larger imperial units. The forces above represent a typical sub-fleet only. Several are known to have squadrons of daggerships and homeship carriers assigned to them. Sub-fleets are often used for patrol duty, with one or more squadrons attached.

100 Squadrons

Homeworlds: Vary

Commanders: Vary

Forces (typical):

500 Dartships
 5 Homeships
 5 Lancers

Most of The Empire's small dartships are assigned to these mobile, independent squadrons. A typical squadron contains five homeships, each with a complement of 100 dartships, and five to ten lancers for firepower and support. Like sub-fleets, squadrons are attached to larger units as needed.

Army

Imperial ground forces are organized into large formations known as "Fists," each roughly equivalent to an Arthirian regiment. Fists are different from Arthirian or Guild units as each is a self-contained entity, with infantry, armor, artillery, transport and air support (The Empire has no separate air arm). Each fist, therefore, functions as a small "army" unto itself.

Infantry: Murrk Slain and mBari dagger-brethren make up the bulk of imperial infantry, although numerous other races serve. Slave troops generally carry blast or disc rifles and fight unarmored (murrk Natural Armor is substantial, however). Smaller races serve in the infantry as scouts and raiders.

Powered Infantry: Some mBari and murrk are trusted enough to serve as powered infantry, but the bulk of this arm is still reserved for those katha who retain the old martial spirit. Many katha powered suits are very old (although they have been upgraded and improved to modern standards) and hold much importance to the warriors who wear them. Katha powered infantry varies from marine to destron-class and can carry virtually any combination of heavy weapons, including the deadly katha disc autocannon.

Armored Vehicles: The Empire does not use crewed armored vehicles as the Guild and Sphere know them, preferring instead to send remotely-controlled drones or intelligent cybertanks against the enemy. These terrifying devices never retreat, will not acknowledge damage until totally destroyed, and never question The Empire's orders. Each cybertank appears to be unique, built on a standard chassis, controlled by a living brain, with different orders and armament depending on its mission. Weapon systems include plasma and pulse cannons, missile batteries and a host of small anti-personnel weapons.

Major Worlds of The Empire

No one knows for sure how many worlds the kathan Emperor controls. Conservative estimates claim in excess of ten thousand, with similar numbers of subject races. Much of The Empire remains unknown to Guild scientists, but some of the more prominent worlds known are described below.

Katha

Originally called Yorek, this world was renamed after its conquerors and masters. Katha is home to the Emperor, the Council of State, and all central offices of the imperial bureaucracy. Once, only katha and their slaves could live here, but in recent centuries, the number of honored slaves without direct kathan control has skyrocketed, almost to the point where the katha themselves are outnumbered.

Katha is a harsh world, with vast, rocky deserts, forests filled with tough (often carnivorous) plant life, and shallow oceans alive with deadly carnivores. The katha

themselves consider it a virtual paradise, and wish that all worlds resembled their beloved home planet.

The sprawling city of Nrisk is the center of kathan authority. In a great palace, the size of a small city itself, the Emperor lives and issues the edicts which govern The Empire. Built over centuries, the palace is now a motley jumble of kathan architectural styles, all of them harsh and, to Anthropos eyes, quite ugly.

The rest of Nrisk is filled with katha and their slaves. Most katha do little work, preferring to hunt, travel, engage in mock duels and dream of their glorious imperial past. Honored slave races toil throughout the city, taking care of the day-to-day running of both world and The Empire.

Tularamu

This would not normally be a valuable world, except for its close proximity to both the Demilitarized Zone and several important wormhole routes into the Guild. Tularamu's system consists of airless planets with no mineral resources and a bright white dwarf star.

The Empire's Fleet Stara has recently been assigned to Tularamu, and extensive naval facilities have been under construction for several years. Guild strategists believe that if a strike against Guildspace is imminent, it will originate here.

Rilsk

Colloquially called "mudworld," Rilsk is a planet of constant rain and moist, swampy conditions. Nevertheless, rich mineral deposits lie beneath its muddy surface, and extensive imperial mining operations produce billions of imperial credits in revenue each year.

Conditions on Rilsk are hellish, and most workers are slaves or condemned criminals. Deep mudseas can swallow entire dredging platforms; mudstorms ravage the surface each morning and evening; deadly mudworms (carnivorous, three-meter long annelids), snappers (toothy, large-mouthed fishlike predators), and raspies (tiny creatures resembling tadpoles which travel in swarms of thousands and can rasp flesh from bone in seconds) make the mud seas deadly; and few permanent installations can long withstand the pressure of the mud-currents and storms.

Imperial offices stand on the few pieces of solid ground, and administrators venture into the mud as little as possible. A few katha live here, considering the posting little more than dishonorable exile, while da-han administer the facility and murk guards oversee work crews. Rilsk is, for the most

part, a place of despair and death, and those sent there rarely return.

Phytous

Phytous was once a lush, green world under Guild control, with myriad life-forms and many breathtaking wonders. Today, its beauty has been pushed to a few isolated corners of the world as The Empire has stripped it for timber, plant fiber, food animals and minerals.

To date, most of the exploitation has stopped, but what remains of the once vast forests and peaceful rivers are blasted piles of mine tailings or sandy, desertified wastelands. These wastelands are now used as prison areas for criminals, political dissidents and other "incorrigibles."

Murk overseers manage the world, but the criminals are generally left alone to go their own way. The wastelands of Phytous have developed into a brutal, kill-or-be-killed society, with roaming bands of raiders attacking each other for food or fuel, and fighting over meaningless scraps of worthless land. Supplies are delivered monthly, but The Empire sends less than the inhabitants need for survival, intending to keep them in a constant state of conflict, and to keep the overall population down.

Skrak and kurg smugglers sometimes deliver outdated weapons, vehicles, food or equipment to the world or, for fantastic (and for the prisoners, unattainable) prices might be willing to smuggle escapees off-world. An imperial sub-fleet is based nearby to deal with such eventualities, so smuggling to and from Phytous is a risky undertaking.

Tnemmo

This dirty, gray industrial world is the source of most manufactured goods in the region. Anthropos and da-han managers oversee legions of slaves who labor to produce vehicles, computers, tools and other necessities, while the ever-present murk maintain the peace. The world's endless, grim corridors and grimy barracks are indeed depressing, and insanity is a common problem among the slaves.

The peace on Tnemmo is always uneasy, for the slaves know that they hold a considerable amount of power — should they revolt and destroy their machines, this entire imperial province will suffer. Revolts and demands for better conditions are dealt with cautiously, for widespread massacres of workers will undoubtedly result in the crippling of the planet's valuable industries. While conditions here are grim, and the slaves of Tnemmo labor ceaselessly, their treatment is somewhat better than elsewhere in The Empire.

Rumors claim, however, that Tnemmo is about to be taken over by the imperial military and converted to the production of armaments and the repair of starships. If another imperial fleet moves into the area, it could signal a major change in Tnemmo's status, and make it an even more important world than it is now.

Eidern

Little is known of this strange, blackened world; Guild scouts have only recently returned with images of the place. Eidern is remarkable for the heavy imperial defenses which surround it, and for the remarkable resemblance it has to the Shanask moon which appeared in orbit around Dha Prime.

The imperial guards may be present to keep something in as much as to keep others out. Forces sent to land on the planet have never returned, probes malfunction and crash, and the imperial globeship *Peril* which attempted to bombard Eidern's surface vanished instantly and completely. No wreckage or survivors have been found.

While no Guild ship was able to get close enough to observe the world's surface, it is clear that The Empire fears something here.





The Dracan Holding

Tested in the crucible of their hellish homeworld, the Draca emerged as conquerors and judges of other races. Convinced that the only route to galactic survival lay in the culling of the weak and the advancement of the strong, the Draca took it upon themselves to test other races and exterminate those found wanting.

As the Draca have few equals in battle, most races were, indeed, found wanting. The Zin-Shee psi-cats were able to hold their own against the reptilians and were deemed worthy of survival, although the conflict continued for decades.

The Draca's ferocity might seem to make them a poor Guild ally, but when the two states met, cordial (if strained) relations ensued. Many wonder why. The Draca were notorious for their attacks on any race or state they encountered. So far, the only races to meet them in battle and survive with their freedom intact were the Zin-Shee and a handful of warrior races within the Holding. Dozens, if not hundreds of lesser races had perished beneath the Dracas' armored cyber-fist, and the Guild certainly seemed a likely target for future aggression.

Fortunately, the Guild had been well briefed in Dracan psychology by their new friends, the Zin-Shee. Initial contacts were carried out by Anthropos and Calemora warriors. Demonstrations of Guild military might were carried out for Dracan egg-mistresses, and dire (if subtly veiled) threats of bloody war and possible extinction were delivered in the savage, ceremonial fashion so favored by the reptile-men.

For a time, it was touch and go. Several Dracan cyber-lords favored an immediate attack to test the resolve of the new races, and to see if their threats were valid. Others (most notably the Dracan Egg-Mistress, Ukasherakk) felt that the Guild had adequately demonstrated its worthiness and deserved honorable treatment.

In the end, treaties of peace and non-aggression, but not outright alliance were

signed. The Guild, in typically benevolent fashion, agreed that the Dracan Holding was off-limits, while at the same time, Draca cyber-warriors were allowed to enter Guildspace, and even serve in the Guild military. When they learned of the House of Dha, the Draca demanded to be allowed to join, a demand which the Guild was, for once, happy to oblige.

Inhabitants

The vast majority of inhabitants of the Holding are Draca. Many other sentients were wiped out in the crusades of the past, and today only a few races survive. Among these are the oro, tough humanoids with rock-like Natural Armor and the skrikka, burrowing creatures resembling upright moles. Having withstood Dracan attacks, these species were deemed worthy, and allowed to live, unmolested, on their home worlds. The Draca do not keep slaves, and find the practice in other races to be highly distasteful, and a sign of weakness.

Government

Dracan government is as savage as the rest of their society. Advancement is through duel, with various rules depending on the position desired. Most duels are to first blood, but some are to unconsciousness, and particularly important ones are to the death.

The Dracan leader is called the Egg-mistress, after the ancient practice of each clan selecting a female warrior to defend egg clutches before they hatched. Duels for the position of Egg-mistress are very important, and are always to the death. The Egg-mistress has a special dispensation from death-duels, however. A fanatical band of 12-20 bodyguards of the Egg-mistress' clan guards the leader, and may fight in her stead should another desire to fight for the position. This way, a pretender must slay all of her rival's bodyguards before the final battle with the Egg-mistress, assuring that Egg-mistresses are the finest warriors imaginable.

It is considered dishonorable for an Egg-mistress to die a natural death. Should a mistress feel that death is coming, she will dismiss her bodyguards and fight all challengers directly. Eventually, the old Egg-mistress will be slain and a new one selected. The bodyguards of the old Egg-mistress return to their clan and the new Mistress chooses bodyguards from her own family.

Below the Egg-mistress, Dracan society is divided into clans, all tracing descent through female ancestry. There are thousands of clans throughout Dracan space, averaging 2,000,000 or so in number. Major

clans, with populations of a billion or more, control entire worlds (called "lair's"), while lesser families must share worlds. Succession to clan leadership is also by combat.

The Egg-mistress is supreme ruler, but the word of senior Cyber-lords is law within clans. Cyber-lords will always bow to the Egg-mistress' wishes, however, unless there is violent disagreement, in which case a cyber-lord will challenge for leadership.

A few known Draca clans of various sizes are listed below. There are many more clans and some are quite large.

Clan: Hakariss
Homeworld: Lair Hakkariss
Population: 2,000,000,000
Leader: Cyber-lord Hakariss-Ra-Tur

The largest and most influential clan, Hakariss maintains the largest fleet and the most warriors of any Draca family. More Egg-mistresses have come from this clan than any other. The Hakariss are also very conservative, and are a major bastion of resistance against Guild influence.

Clan: Urkaa
Homeworld: Lair Urkaa
Population: 1,500,000,000
Leader: Cyber-lord Urkaa-Mak-Aka-Na

Urkaa has always been Hakkaris' main rival for influence in the Holding. Urkaa Draca are somewhat more open minded, and many of them serve in the Guild. Several have openly broken with the Holding and now consider themselves to be Guild members, a situation which has caused Lord Mak no small embarrassment.

Clan: Akmakk
Homeworld: Lair Akmakk
Population: 1,000,000,000
Leader: Cyber-lord Akmakk-Ka-Ro

Another powerful clan, Akmakk has distinguished itself in battle many times. Like Urkaa, many Akmakk have ventured to the Guild in search of adventure.

Clan: Kri
Homeworld: Sharak
Population: 250,000,000
Leader: Cyber-lord Kri-Aa-Ra

Clan Kri maintains a small fleet, a small but powerful army, and shares the jungle-and-desert world of Sharak with three other smaller clans. Lord Aa has plans for improvement, however, and is actively considering becoming the first Draca clan to openly join the Guild. This is sure to infuriate many old-line clans, and possibly lead to open conflict, during which Aa hopes the Guild will be forced to intervene and, possibly, place Clan Kri in a position of authority.

Clan: Garak
Homeworld: Zashara
Population: 100,000,000
Leader: Cyber-lord Garak-Nra-Ak

Garak shares crowded Zashara with a dozen other small clans. Like many smaller clans, Garak has allied with a large clan (in this case the relatively powerful Clan Sahir) in order to survive.

The Military

The Dracan military has changed little since the race's primitive origins. Fighting units are organized along clan lines, with each clan having its own warriors, vehicles, starships, equipment, and so on. Clan armies vary in size from a few hundred thousand up to tens of millions.

Naval Forces

Only the largest and richest clans can afford a full naval force, but all clans operate a bewildering variety of military craft, of many different ages, technological levels and capabilities. The entries below give ship strengths by class, but there is enormous variation within each class.

Clan Hakariss Fleet

Homeworld: Lair Hakariss
Commander: Cyber-lord Hakariss-ka
Forces: 2000 Little Dragons
500 Claw-Carriers
500 Noble Warriors
300 Berserkers
200 High Serpents
50 StarDragons

Clan Urkaa Fleet

Homeworld: Lair Urkaa
Commander: Cyber-lord Urkaa-ra
Forces: 1000 Little Dragons
600 War-Eggs
500 Faithful Warriors
200 Claw-Carriers
150 High Serpents
30 StarDragons

Clan Kimak Fleet

Homeworld: Lair Kimak
Commander: Cyber-lord Kimak-Ar
Forces: 750 Faithful Warriors
600 Noble Warriors
400 Berserkers
100 High Serpents
10 StarDragons

Clan Akmakk Fleet

Homeworld: Lair Akmakk
Commander: Cyber-lord Akmakk-Ba
Forces: 1000 Faithful Warriors
500 War-Eggs
500 Noble Warriors
250 Berserkers
100 High Serpents
10 StarDragons

Clan Thar Fleet

Homeworld: Lair Thar
Commander: Cyber-lord Thar-Aa
Forces: 500 Faithful Warriors
400 War-Eggs
250 Noble Warriors
50 High Serpents
6 StarDragons

Clan Sahir Fleet

Homeworld: Sahir
Commander: Cyber-lord Kri-I
Forces: 500 Little Dragons
400 Faithful Warriors
250 Noble Warriors
100 Berserkers
50 War-Eggs
4 StarDragons

Clan Maki Fleet

Homeworld: Tlava
Commander: Cyber-lord Maki-Kag
Forces: 250 Little Dragons
200 Faithful Warriors
50 Berserkers
10 War-Eggs

Clan Rypa Fleet

Homeworld: Donova
Commander: Cyber-lord Rypa-Ma
Forces: 200 Little Dragons
100 Faithful Warriors
50 Noble Warriors
50 War-Eggs
2 StarDragons

Several other clans maintain small fleets, some only a single ship. These fleets often provide reinforcement to allied clans, or are used simply to defend a clan's homeworld. The total number of starships available to the Dracan Holding is unknown.

Armies

Clans also maintain standing armies. In fact, all Draca can serve as warriors, but only about half of each clan is ready to fight at any one time. Fighting on foot, with cybernetic enhancements and force fields to help shrug off the effects of heavy weapons, is the Draca's favored mode of battle, but they realize that heavy fire support, air and artillery are necessities if one is to survive.

Powered infantry suits have been slow to gain acceptance, since they interfere with a Draca's natural weaponry.

Draca use actual armored vehicles only rarely, and these are purchased from other states. The Dracan equivalent of tanks are actually cybernetically-modified animals, armored, protected by force fields, controlled by cerebral implants, and equipped with weapons. The Dracan homeworld contains numerous deadly species which can easily be turned into living "tanks," and such creatures are quite terrifying to Dracan enemies.

Although Draca fly domesticated animals, and use them as weapons platforms as well, they know that supersonic flight is necessary in combat. Dracan military aircraft and insystem fighters are fairly unsophisticated, but are heavily armed and armored. While they are not in the same class as similar vehicles flown by the Guild or the Matriarchy, their numbers more than make up for their technical flaws.

Clans manufacture their own weapons, aircraft and armor, marking each with distinctive clan symbols and designs. These weapons and vehicles vary too greatly to be easily categorized, but suffice to say the Draca favor big guns, lots of noise, and lots of blood. Observers can extrapolate the probable nature of their weapons from this.

Major Worlds of the Holding

Egg-Home

Legend states that this world is the home of the Dracan race. This is easy to believe, given the world's cracked, rugged surface, active volcano chains, thick jungles and windswept plains. Dracan cities crouch among mountains, built to resemble natural formations both for aesthetic reasons and (in the past) to camouflage them from clan enemies.

The Egg-mistress and her guards live in the central city of Maka. Modern innovations make Maka slightly less alien in appearance, with Guild-style high-rises, a modern spaceport and broad freeways extending in all directions. Despite appearance, Maka is still a rough, violent place, where advancement by duel or assassination is the rule, and the Egg-mistress rules as the supreme authority in the Holding.

The creatures of Egg-Home are reptilian in nature, many resembling dinosaurs, but with several thermodynamic features which improve their activity cycle and keep them from growing overly sluggish. Many of these beasts have been domesticated and modified by the Draca into weapons of war.

Lair Hakariss

The homeworld of the largest Draca clan is largely swamp and shallow seas, conditions which the Draca also enjoy. Cities consist of low domes in the drier areas, and travel is accomplished through the use of subterranean tunnels built beneath the swamps and oceans.

Hakariss maintains military facilities all over this world — barracks, training grounds, wartime facilities, starship docks, repair bases, and so on. Hakariss itself is heavily fortified, containing mines, spaceports and fighter bases.

Lair Urkaa

This lair is a world of steep mountains, deep lakes and small pockets of greenery. Those Anthropos who have visited Lair Urkaa say that it is a very beautiful world, a view shared by those Draca who live there. The Draca enjoy the rugged terrain, feeling it helps them train for battle.

The Urkaa are more friendly toward Guild members than most other clans, and have (rarely) given Anthropos permission to visit. This clan has a high number of expatriates, who have rejected traditional Dracan society and joined the Guild completely. While the act does not especially bother Cyber-Lord Mak (he himself harbors doubts about Dracan practices), it is a great embarrassment due to the ridicule it has drawn from other clans.

Sharak

Several clans share this hot desert/jungle world. Cities dot the alternately arid and humid surface, connected by slender highways. Sharak is a violent world, from its highly predatory life forms (which the Draca love to hunt) to its frequently open clan warfare. The clans of Sharak know that if all clans save one can be driven out or eliminated, the survivor will gain considerable influence, claiming the world as a clan lair.

The conflict between clans is heightened by the fact that some of Sharak's clans are Guild sympathizers and others are staunch traditionalists. Several Guild-leaning clans have members who adventured in Guildspace and bring back new weapons, tactics and ideas, which they hope will give them an advantage as the conflict continues and grows wider.

Zashara

A dozen small clans occupy Zashara, a crowded, urbanized world. Unlike Sharak, there is little open conflict between the clans, since few have enough strength to fight for long.

Zashara is a center of Dracan industry. Most of the small clans here have allied with larger clans, and assist their allies by helping to train, spy on the activities of other clans, and occasionally perform overt acts of sabotage. Again, there is no open conflict here, but intrigue is rife.

This is an important world, and if a single clan could ever control it, that clan may rival even Urkaa and Hakariss in influence. So far, however, the major clans and their smaller allies content themselves to playing games of espionage and covert violence, and are content to bide their time.

Ka-Ma-Kolak

Dracan "wargames" are definitely not games. In training for war, all conditions of real warfare are simulated to the point where it is impossible to distinguish between training and the real thing. Ka-Ma-Kolak was originally intended as a world where young warriors could practice, and older Draca could hone their skills. It has evolved into a deadly place where clan disputes can be settled with a minimum of disruption to the Holding as a whole.

Blasted over the centuries by every imaginable weapon, Ka-Ma-Kolak is a shattered world of surrealistic magnificence. Entire mountains have been smashed to rubble, rivers have been diverted, valleys buried in debris. The landscape has changed so much that no one living can remember what the planet originally looked like.

Although still used for training and "mock" (actually very real) combat, Ka-Ma-Kolak's major function is as a place where

rival clans can fight it out. Rules for such engagements are worked out in advance — number of warriors, weapons available, duration of conflict, etc. There is always a conflict going on here, even if it is a pair of clan warriors settling a personal grudge.

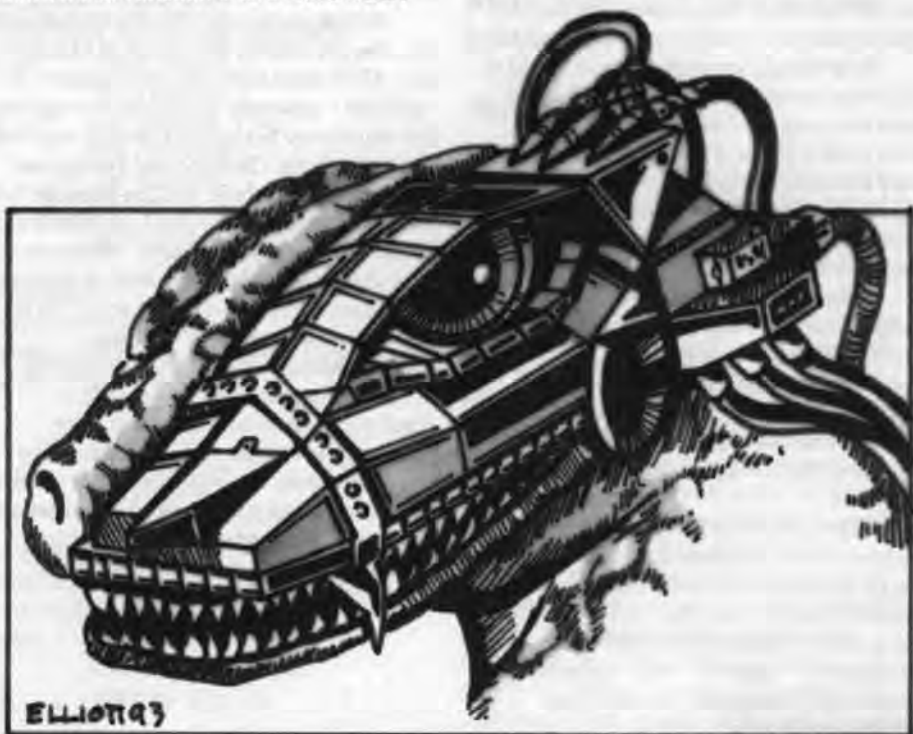
Haven (Sokra)

This planet, located on the Guild frontier, is the only Dracan world where Guild personnel have unlimited access. Elsewhere in the Holding, outsiders are forbidden unless specifically invited by a controlling clan.

Haven (the Guild's name for the planet which the Draca call Sokra) has become a center for cultural and commercial exchange, and a tiny portal through which a trickle of Guild technology and ideas can reach the Draca. Clans Nar and Rennik, which control the world, have both been heavily influenced by contact, and are considered the most "Guild-like" of the traditional Dracan clans.

The world is relatively pleasant, if somewhat arid, with several small inland seas and vast, scrubby forests. The Draca enjoy hunting and exploring the dusty plains, for several challenging game animals still inhabit the world in large numbers.

Haven's major settlement, Greenpoint (or, as the Draca call it, "Krukk-Ha-Tak") is a crossroads for many species. Here, major negotiations between the Draca and the Guild take place, and anything from either nation can be bought or sold. Starships of many races orbit the world, while Nar and Rennik's small fleets keep watch.





The Zin-Shee Matriarchy

Like the Draca, the catlike Zin-Shee were a race of conquerors, expanding out from their fertile home world and enslaving all those they came across. Unlike the Draca, the Zin-Shee found the thought of genocide horrifying, if only because it was a waste of good subject races.

The area of space which the Zin-Shee inhabited offered few challenges in their drive to conquer. Most races were primitive or of, at most, atomic age technology, and many submitted without a fight after seeing the awesome might of Zin-Shee weapons.

The only other major alien state encountered was that of the Draca, and over two centuries of conflict ranging from minor skirmishes to massive interstellar fleet engagements and ferocious planetary invasions, neither side managed to gain the upper hand. When at last the Draca decided the psi-cats were worthy of survival, they simply withdrew their forces, and the conflict ended as quickly as it had begun.

Surprisingly enough, it was a world of primitive warriors which caused the Zin-Shee the most trouble, and transformed their society in ways which have yet to be fully realized. Expecting an easy victory on the huge, high-grav world of Calemor, the Zin-Shee legions were stopped dead in their tracks by the powerful fighters.

Although they disdained the use of ranged weapons, and fought by an obscure and troublesome code of honor, the Calemora were able to use the power of their own minds to create armor and avoid damage from weapons, making them relative equals to the psionically-talented Zin-Shee.

Calemoran Will Power also played a major role in the stalemate, enabling the tough humanoids to resist the cats' mental powers. Zin-Shee writings and chronicles of the period complain frequently of the Calemora's "stupidity" and "dullness," obviously frustrated at their enemies' resistance to *psionics*.

The Blood Feud, as it came to be known, lasted a millennia, eventually becoming part of both races' culture. The Zin-Shee even relocated their capital world to Seril in order to be close to the fighting. The two races' first contact with the Guild was when their warships and armored marines arrived on the world, determined to put an end to the fighting.

At first the Zin-Shee were annoyed by the thought of outsiders showing up and spoiling their fun. Then, they realized that the Guild represented an even more exciting cast of playmates, and many frontier worlds joined the Guild, while at the same time maintaining their status within the Matriarchy. The Zin-Shee saw many advantages in association with the guild and, besides, they thought Anthropos were very attractive.

The history of association between Guild and Zin-Shee has so far been a positive one. The Zin-Shee spread throughout Guildspace and proved valuable, if fickle, allies and friends to the other races there. When the House of Dha was formed, the Zin-Shee were quickly granted the status of guardian.

Like the neighboring Draca, the Zin-Shee have been changed by their contact with the Guild. Those who have become Guild members, and those who adventure in Guildspace, have learned much about the galaxy and the ways of racial harmony. They have decided that the old ways are in need of modification, and urge their fellows in the Matriarchy to change them.

Inhabitants

At last count, over 300 races inhabited the area covered by the Zin-Shee Matriarchy. All of these have the official status of "subjects," generally employed throughout the Matriarchy performing menial and dull tasks which the Zin-Shee find boring and tedious. On the whole, the Zin-Shee are not harsh taskmasters, and most are affectionate and protective toward "their" subject races. Still, the concept of slavery itself is distasteful to the people of the Guild, even if it is carried out with relative kindness.

Prominent subject races include the *lirrit*, woolly primates who are often employed as nursemaids to Zin-Shee children; the *neidasca*, aquatic, squidlike beings; the *eefo*, an intelligent plant species often found (not surprisingly) as gardeners; and the *sidera*, bird-descended warrior-philosophers with great linguistic skill.

Government

The head of Zin-Shee government is the queen, the elder female of the ruling Shkarr'rus family. The queen has a substantial amount of power, and is highly respected, although like many Zin-Shee nobles, she is prone to eccentric behavior.

Ordinary government is in the hands of a council of elder females. These females are chosen in a variety of ways — some worlds disdain the whole process and don't bother choosing a representative at all. Most are chosen by a form of consensus, in which all candidates for the position declare their positions and fitness to serve, argue with each other, and submit themselves to the will of the mob which has gathered to watch.

The use of *psionics* in such debates is common, and often the winner is the female who is best able to impose her psionic will upon her opponents. Should a candidate attempt to take the position of council member without the approval of the mob, however, she is usually carried off and thrown in a pond, or something similar.

Often, these debates go on for weeks without the mob selecting a favorite, in which case the candidates will voluntarily



submit themselves to an informal vote using a device similar to an applause-meter. The winner is allowed to take a seat on the council.

Council decisions are accomplished in a similar fashion. Council members argue, often for days, sometimes even fighting openly, before all opposition is finally worn down and a consensus reached. Some Zin-Shee worlds find all this quite silly, and ignore the council's decisions, whatever they are.

The queen has the right to overturn any council decision, but she is generally considered above any worldly concerns, and only intervenes when she considers it a matter of the gravest importance.

Zin-Shee society is highly stratified socially. The queen is at the top of a complex social pyramid; beneath her is a privileged and, not surprisingly, eccentric noble class.

Zin-Shee nobles usually do not participate in government, although occasionally a noble matron will be found on the elder council. Most are content to live in their extensive estates, hunt, travel, explore and adventure, and engage in the latest faddish craze. Contacting the spirits of departed ancestors by reading fireplace ashes was one such fad, as was wearing outrageous outfits with long capes, velvet doublets and ruffs. Zin-Shee nobles are also almost-intolerable dandies with outrageous taste in clothing.

Zin-Shee nobles have a variety of titles, but Anthropos translate these into familiar terms such as count, baron, duke, knight, etc.

The complexities of Zin-Shee nobility have given rise to many ceremonies, traditions and rituals. The best-known of these are the well-known levels of politeness and formality within the Zin-Shee language. No less than five different modes of speech are used in the Matriarchy, depending upon who is speaking to whom (see racial notes).

Amazingly, the Zin-Shee Matriarchy functions even in this turbulent environment. This is mostly due to the Zin-Shee nature, which sees to the welfare of the species above all else.

The Military

Centuries of conflict have made the Zin-Shee military much more organized and efficient than the government. The Zin-Shee navy uses several recognizable ship classes, although their builders and crews modify each one to suit their senses of individuality. The following is a relatively accurate breakdown of Zin-Shee fleet deployments. All commanders are males

unless otherwise noted. Many are nobles, but use their military rank instead of their title.

Plrrw's Fleet

Homeworld: Nenei

Commander: Pride-chieftess Plrrw Rr'rf (female)

Forces: 800 Chasers
550 Trackers
500 Lurkers
200 Pouncers
50 Hunters
20 Denships
20 Stalkers

Yllu's Fleet

Homeworld: Rakk/Shhr

Commander: Sub-chieftess Yllu R'wwl (female)

Forces: 400 Chasers
300 Trackers
250 Lurkers
100 Pouncers
50 Hunters
10 Stalker

Mistifl's Fleet

Homeworld: Uurr'aa

Commander: Pride-chief Mistifl S's

Forces: 1200 Chasers
800 Trackers
300 Lurkers
250 Pouncers
50 Stalkers
30 Denships

Krrup's Fleet

Homeworld: Hammarik

Commander: Pride-chief Krrup Kurr

Forces: 1000 Chasers
600 Trackers
400 Lurkers
200 Pouncers
150 Hunters
50 Stalkers
20 Denships

Brassl's Fleet

Homeworld: Okomot

Commander: Pride-chief Brassl K'mikk

Forces: 800 Chasers
600 Trackers
400 Lurkers
200 Pouncers
100 Hunters

The Herd

Homeworld: None

Commander: Unknown

Forces: 5000 Claw-Fighters
2500 Talon-Bombers
100 Denships

The Herd is an unusual fleet support group which moves apparently randomly throughout Zin-Shee space. Its 100 denships are a potent strike force, and the Herd will give assistance to any nearby fleet which needs it. Unfortunately, the Herd is not always where the conflict is, and may not arrive in time to assist if a fleet is in danger. Herd pilots and crewmembers consider themselves the elite of the fleet.

Army

Most Zin-Shee infantry are agile warriors with little body protection save their potent psionic abilities and speed, although armor is used on occasion. Force fields are also used extensively, despite their great expense and complexity.

Speed and mobility are central to all Zin-Shee strategies. Their armored vehicles tend to be fast, lightly armored affairs which nonetheless pack a punch. Force fields also provide a measure of protection for some vehicles, but the expense of equipping a tank with such a unit is considerable. Grav- and hover-vehicles are favored, and fire support comes, not from slow or static artillery, but from nimble atmospheric fighters, skimmers or helicopters.

Large military units are numbered and named for their world of origin, while units of regimental size or smaller are named for their commander.

The Zin-Shee army numbers approximately 7,500,000,000, but can be swelled to twice that if reserves are employed.

Major Worlds of the Zin-Shee Matriarchy

Sheapa

The homeworld of the Zin-Shee, Sheapa was the Matriarchy's capital until the Blood Feud with the Calemora forced its relocation to Seril. After the war, the Zin-Shee council moved the capital back to Sheapa.

One of the strangest inhabited worlds, Sheapa is the only planet in a system with three suns. The world moves in a chaotic orbit between the three suns, circling first one, then another, in a random pattern. This causes the day-night length and cycle to change, and the flora and fauna of Sheapa have adapted to it. This also may be a factor in the Zin-Shee's erratic sleep habits.

Here, the females of the council meet irregularly, and determine (often violently) how to deal with the daily needs of the Matriarchy and meet the various crises as they arise. Sheapa is a tropical world, with vast rain forests, grassy veldts and gravelly



deserts. The competitive ecosystems of the veldt and forest created the Zin-Shee and instilled them with their desire for expansion and conquest.

Sheapa has been preserved, almost as a park-world, with its population tightly controlled and its wilderness — considered the cradle of Zin-Shee civilization — scrupulously protected. Zin-Shee settlements dot the planet, but few are larger than 10,000 in population. Most Zin-Shee on Sheapa live in traditional villages (albeit with many modern conveniences) and consider themselves privileged to live on this near-sacred planet.

Anthropos visit Sheapa often, and are usually welcomed with open arms. Recent problems with Guild philosophy have soured the locals on Anthropos somewhat, but the changeable nature of Zin-Shee character makes any rejections short-lived. Most Zin-Shee like to associate with Anthropos in any event, and can't bring themselves to stay mad for long.

Sheapa's long, sandy beaches and warm, blue oceans attract many tourists of many species, all of whom the local psi-cats enjoy cavorting with in the surf and conversing with in the various small hotels and inns which line the coast. All of these facilities are carefully controlled by the Zin-Shee, however, lest their presence disturb the world's delicate ecological balance.

Dolos

Save for small settlements, usually overpopulated by tourists, most of this planet is covered in grassy plains, where the Zin-Shee hunt, fish and generally relax. Many Zin-Shee who visit Dolos prefer to hunt in the ancient style, with spear or bow and arrow, as a connection and tribute to their primitive ancestors. Other races are allowed to come here, but the Zin-Shee limit their numbers.

Hammarrik

The Zin-Shee military is considerably better organized and less chaotic than Zin-Shee society at large. This military training world, where Zin-Shee are taught the basics of tactics, logistics and strategy, is a marvel of organization and regimentation.

A network of broad tunnels and grav-rails stretches beneath the world's rocky surface. Bases and barracks resembling sunken domes dot the landscape. At any time, there will be dozens of Zin-Shee regiments training in Hammarrik's varied climes. Krupp Kurr's fleet is stationed at the orbital docks and bases which are found in abundance throughout the system.

Kimmiri Station

Not a world, but a large space station and port facility orbiting a planetless star. Located near several important wormhole routes through the Matriarchy, Kimmiri has become an important center for commerce, diplomatic meetings, starship maintenance, repair and recreation.

The powerful House Hassa, a Zin-Shee trade house with extensive holdings within the Guild, moved here from its homeworld of Che'rrh. Hassa's headquarters now consist of a small sub-station orbiting the main body of Kimmiri, fully equipped with luxurious Zin-Shee living and recreational facilities, a small ship dock, and other modern amenities.

Since Guild contact, more races have begun to appear at Kimmiri, but most visitors are still Zin-Shee. Facilities here are extensive, but the atmosphere is somewhat lawless and chaotic. Many businesses catering to Zin-Shee line the main dock area, and the remainder of the station is filled with inexpensive inns, Zin-Shee herb-bars, trivid parlors, gymnasias and so on. Security is generally lax, mostly due to the fact that Zin-Shee security forces are severely undermanned, and many of them end up participating in brawls and other antics they were sent to stop.

Kimmiri attracts some of the finest technicians in the Matriarchy, drawn here by the prospect of working at highly profitable jobs on a wide variety of different starships. Many starships will go out of their way to be repaired on Kimmiri, even though it is expensive.

Yawwlin

This large world nonetheless maintains a relatively light gravity due to its low mass. Its crust contains few heavy elements and no real mineral resources. Its main value to the Zin-Shee is as a vast cattle ranch.

Originally, Yawwlin was virtually sterile save for some local grasses. The Zin-Shee covered its vast surface with food plants and shipped in various non-sentient food animals. They are allowed to roam free, and are rounded up once a year and shipped throughout the Matriarchy. Several Zin-Shee "corporations" (their organization is far more unstable and varied than Anthropos companies, but the term is the closest possible), often under the control of prominent Zin-Shee nobles, manage the hundreds of ranches and grazing ranges which cover the world, and all make a tidy profit.

Occasionally, if a Zin-Shee world is experiencing shortages, the council will decree a "cattle-tax" in which a small percentage of each herd is culled and sent to

the trouble spot. The ranchers usually do not complain, their natural instinct for racial welfare overriding their desire to make money.

Many different animals graze here, but the most prominent include H'rress, a bipedal dinosaur whose flesh is considered quite tasty even by Anthropos; Kiva, fat, highly domesticated ungulates which resemble a cross between cows and antelope; and ornax, swift, ostrich-like flightless avians which are also valued as riding animals, and for their eggs.

Rak'shhr

This unique world is one of the most valuable in the Zin-Shee Matriarchy. Rak'shhr's surface is literally covered in seas of petroleum compounds — literal oceans of oil. Petrochemicals still represent an important fuel source throughout the Matriarchy, and it is estimated that this world contains enough resources to fuel the Matriarchy for another century. The atmosphere is virtually unbreathable, so processing facilities (on artificial islands in the sea) are sealed with processed and filtered atmospheres. Most of the cracking and refining plants are run by slaves (the Zin-Shee feel that work here is messy and unpleasant) with tight Zin-Shee control.

Several Zin-Shee battle stations orbit the world, and Yllu's fleet is based here. The orbiting stations can also fire weapons planetside, destroying any facility if the slaves revolt or refuse to work. Conditions in the refineries are kept clean and comfortable, and the slaves are well-treated to avoid such incidents.

Actileh

Another major recreation world, Actileh is known for its small chains of tropical islands, the only land on a world-wide ocean. Fishing, swimming and basking in the sun are the major pursuits here, especially swimming in the carbonated waters. Resembling nothing more than an ocean-sized seltzer, the waters are buoyant (it is said that no one has ever drowned on Actileh) and provide something of a natural whirlpool-bath, a sensation which the Zin-Shee enjoy intensely. So far, no aquatic species has proved dangerous to sentients.

Anthropos and other Guild races sometimes come here, as well, but so far Actileh is an "undiscovered paradise," which the Zin-Shee like to keep to themselves. As elsewhere, however, visiting Anthropos are well-treated, and fussed over by friendly Zin-Shee.

Other States

Numerous other states and regions exist in Guildspace and beyond. The boundaries of Guildspace are anything but firm, and within the Guild's sphere of influence, hundreds of planetary and stellar nations exist, ranging from single, primitive worlds with neolithic inhabitants, to alliance of dozens of worlds with enough resources to actually threaten the Guild. Although this list is by no means complete, a few of the best-known stellar nations are described below. Many, many others exist, all with unique features and potential dangers.

The Free Traders' Republic

Founded by merchants and free-trade enthusiasts who found the trade restrictions of other states too harsh, the FTR is a relatively powerful alliance of over 500 star systems which controls several major trade routes throughout the Guild, the Sphere and the Zin-Shee Matriarchy. The free traders are a rough-and-tumble lot, dedicated to their own independence and the near-sacred status of trade and free travel. They have a small military, which cannot hope to match the Guild or Sphere, but neither of these states has any interest in conquering the FTR, considering it a convenient place for those who don't fit in.

The independent nature of the free traders also prevents their central government from having much authority, and member worlds often go their own ways, ignoring rules and edicts from higher up. The FTR actually functions as something of a benevolent anarchy, with only enough laws and regulations to keep the whole affair from coming apart at the seams.

The Combine

This state comprises about 600 star systems and has long been a thorn in the side of the Guild. A largely violent and lawless place, the Combine is the source of many illegal drugs, smuggled weapons and terrorist activities. The Combine government, actually a group of warlords who saw the advantages of working together, tolerates and secretly encourages incursions into Guildspace, and acts as a haven for various species of criminals and rogues.

The Combine's difficult location, far from the nearest accessible wormhole, and the current potential for conflict with The Empire has kept the Guild from taking military action against the warlords, except for brief raids by the House of Dha to retrieve stolen property, kidnapping victims, or to intercept contraband shipments. Guild covert agents are often dispatched to The Combine worlds to seek

out the source of contraband or to see what the warlords are up to; more often than not, these agents are never heard from again.

The Skarr Empire

The skarr are a species of ferret-like aliens who control an empire of 500-1000 systems well counter-spinward of the Guild. So far, contact has been minimal, but the skarr seem to be rather antagonistic toward the Guild. Skarr space is generally avoided, and the skarr themselves do not seem to have the military strength to pose a serious threat to the Guild.

The Dominate

Rumors exist of another alien state beyond the skarr, controlled by ruthless (and so far unknown) aliens whose advanced mental powers enable them to dominate and psychically enslave entire planetary populations. Whether the Dominate truly exists or not remains to be seen, but it may represent yet another threat to galactic freedom.

Halima's Realm

One of the most bizarre states in Known Space, this so-called "Empire" is the home of an eccentric Anthropos tycoon who now calls herself Empress Halima, Defender of the Emerald Crown. Originally a builder and exporter of cheap starships, Halima evidently decided that filthy commerce was beneath her, and bought a small, unoccupied world on the fringes of Guildspace lock, stock and barrel.

Within a few local years, Halima had built a palatial estate, and persuaded Anthropos, Zin-Shee and several other species to colonize the world, with the single requirement that they acknowledge her as their supreme and absolute ruler. Once they were settled, Halima declared independence from the Guild, christening her one-world state an "empire."

Halima's world remains closed to all but Halima's invited guests. A small mercenary navy guards the planet itself, while warriors of a dozen races serve as Halima's army. Not that she needs the protection — her subjects seem relatively happy with her benevolent rule (most planetary income is still drawn from Halima's vast fortune). The world has been transformed into a comic-opera fantasy, with vast stands of palm trees, artificial lakes, forests and rivers where there had once only been bare, sterile desert.

As for Halima herself, she spends most of her time in her palace, running her various businesses (many of which have died messy deaths over the years), issuing

edicts and decrees, and cavorting with her "harem," rumored to number over a hundred males of various species.

The Guild itself has seen fit to ignore Halima, and let her go her own way. Most Guild citizens think of Halima as something of a lunatic (and in this they are entirely correct), but wealthy lunatics are generally excused as being simply "eccentric."

The Dark Alliance

Another dangerous state well beyond the reach of Guild justice, the Dark Alliance is a cluster of several hundred pirate worlds whose economies thrive on raiding, plunder and robbery. Alliance pirate frigates and sloops are fast and well armed, often equipped with sophisticated stealth gear. Alliance crews are the equal of the best the Guild has to offer.

The Dark Alliance is ruled by a council of captains, who are elected by all the ship captains throughout Alliance space. These captains do little other than set rules for the division of plunder, the selection of captains, and rates for ransom. Most Alliance captains are fully autonomous and may freely operate within Alliance space so long as they do not interfere with other pirates.

Alliance planets are mostly poor, rocky worlds with few natural resources. The capital world of Toranga, however, is a pleasant planet of leafy jungles and tropical seas. Here, the council of captains meet, and the various ships of the Alliance put in for liberty, rest and recreation.

Every world of the Alliance is heavily mined and fortified. A Guild attack upon Alliance space would be a difficult job indeed, and victory would be far from easy. Though numerically inferior, pirate captains are served by elite crews, and have ships and equipment plundered from a hundred worlds. Favoring speed, stealth and surprise, the pirates would whittle away at any invaders, catching them at strong points, raiding, and retreating before they could be caught. For this reason, Guild strategists have avoided any direct confrontations with the Alliance, contenting themselves to intercepting Alliance raiders as they enter Guildspace.

Despite its lack of resources, the Alliance is one of the Guild's deadliest enemies, and in combination with another hostile force, could well threaten the Guild's very existence. For this reason, security in regions bordering on Alliance territory is tight, and Guild forces are always on alert for suspicious activities on the part of Alliance forces.

Mirrok

Another recently-encountered alien species, the mirrok are tall, multi-armed reptilians who seem to be the component parts of a larger intelligence, called Mirrok for convenience. No one has even guessed exactly what Mirrok is, or what its internal nature could be, but it seems clear that individual mirrok operate with one mind, and are capable of instantly communicating with each other over vast distances. Mirrok Space, coreward of Guild territory, has been quarantined as Guild scientists study the situation and attempt to figure out a means of contacting and understanding Mirrok.

The Common Entente

Located entirely within Guildspace, the Entente is a relatively benevolent collection of diverse cultures and species controlling over 300 star systems. The leaders, a council of about a dozen different races, are reluctant to give up their freedom by joining the Guild.

The Entente maintains friendly relations with the Guild, and manages several trade routes. Their computers and environmental devices such as space suits are of the highest quality, and highly sought throughout the Guild. Many Entente members favor membership in the Guild,

but it is still a matter of intense contention, and may not be settled for decades to come. The Guild, for its part, is content to wait.

The Kingdom

This relatively new state was founded, well coreward of The Empire, by kathan dissidents, who feel that the old imperial government has grown too corrupt and has betrayed its heroic past. Currently, The Kingdom controls about 500 star systems.

Based on an idealized conception of the old Empire, The Kingdom is under the absolute rule of a single monarch. Subordinate races are enslaved and used for menial labor, but are never allowed to replace the katha in important positions of power, or in the military. The status of "honored slaves," which The Kingdom's rulers feel destroyed the old Empire, has been eliminated. So far only a handful of alien races has been encountered by the new state, and none of them have proved satisfactory for anything but the simplest tasks, so the katha are responsible for most jobs within The Kingdom.

The Empire knows of The Kingdom's existence, but feels it is far enough away that it does not represent a threat. Also, most imperial katha feel that the new state will eventually collapse, and its members

will come crawling back home, begging forgiveness. Time will tell whether this will happen or not — the Kingdom appears to be doing well, building a small navy and professional army, and expanding aggressively coreward, away from the old Empire.

Unknown States

Space is vast, and sizable states may exist and prosper even within Guild boundaries without the Guild knowing it. Beyond Guildspace, of course, the possibilities are endless. Human starships ranged far and wide during the Scattering, and it is entirely possible that other states, as large as or larger than the Guild may exist out in the void beyond explored space. Other alien states surely exist — known alien groups speak of others beyond their own borders, and of conflicts elsewhere in the galactic arm.

The major question to Guild leaders is whether these states will prove friendly, neutral or hostile when encountered. The risks of disastrous alien contact are too great for security to be lax, and the guild military continues to be on guard against the unknown.



NPC Life Forms

Thousands (perhaps millions) of species exist throughout Known Space. Some serve other states as slaves, others are subject races who pay tribute to their conquerors, while others are full-fledged members of their nation with all rights and privileges. Other alien species are unremittingly hostile, while still others are nonsentient members of their planetary ecosystems. While the possible number of alien species is virtually infinite, some of the better-known ones are described briefly below, utilizing the following format (in the interest of space and simplicity, statistics which are not appropriate to a given creature are not listed):

Name: The life form's name.

FORM: The life form's appearance.

HABITAT: The terrain in which the life form is most likely to be encountered.

LOCATION: Where in Known Space the life form is most likely to be found. An entry in parentheses indicates a world's name.

STATUS: The life form's most common status (citizen, independent, slave, etc.) in its home region.

RATING: This entry is in the form of three numbers, separated by slashes. The first number is the Finesse number, the second is the Physical number, and the third is the Mental number. Each number represents several attributes and/or skills as follows:

Table 1: Ratings

<u>Finesse</u>	<u>Physical</u>	<u>Mental</u>
Atk	Dmg	—
Def	AR	—
MR	Vit	—
Nish	Shock	Luck

Dex	Str	Int
Spe	FR	Awa
—	WP	Cha

Finesse Sk Physical Sk Mental Sk

Remembering what abilities each of the three NPC numbers stands for is easy with a little practice. Just remember that the Finesse number represents all speed and dexterous aspects of the NPC such as attack, defense, movement, initiative, and finesse based skills; the Physical number represents all strength and will related aspects such as

damage, armor, vitality, shock, and physical based skills; and the Mental number represents all intelligence and personality related aspects such as luck, awareness, charisma, and mental based skills.

The rating listed for each NPC life form is only a recommended average. Some members of the race will have much higher ratings, and some much lower. Please feel free to adjust the listed ratings based upon your need and the situation at hand.

The player character races have been included in the life forms section so that the GM may easily run NPC members of these races. You will note that they also have a three number rating system even though they are fully detailed in the *Character Manual*. Don't let this disturb you. It is true that when a highly detailed race is reduced to three numbers that some of the detail is lost. However, remember that the ratings may be adjusted individually to meet any special needs. (Also from a gaming standpoint, it is simply impractical for the GM to run NPCs having a full complement of abilities.)

Now for some special rules and uses of the three NPC ratings:

- If the creature has an unarmored form, use the first number for its AR when unarmored.
- Occasionally, one of the statistics included within the above categories may be substantially higher or lower than listed. In this case, the appropriate statistic will be listed in parentheses after the three rating numbers: for example, 10/12/8 (Dmg 20, MR 8), indicating that the creature's damage is 20 (not 12), and its movement is 8 (not 10).
- Occasionally, Physical rating (the second number) will be of Ship (S) or Vehicle (V) type. In this case, the type applies **only** to AR, Vit, Dmg and Str. All other uses of the Physical ratings are of Personal type.

Atk/Dmg: These two statistics provide a listing of the life form's most common attack forms. If a life forms' attack or damage rating are different from the NPC's base ratings the information will be listed here. An entry which lists "weapons" simply represents that the life form can attack with weapons if desired; usually, a list of typical weapons will follow in parenthesis.

When NPCs use weapons, the weapon's attack and damage should be derived from the Finesse and Physical ratings (even though these numbers don't always match the kind of weapon being used). Remember, NPCs are unique just like PCs, any discrepancies can be explained away with "special weapon modifications," enhancements, special skills, etc. Don't let

yourself or the players bog the game down with overly precise numerical concerns. (The same holds for NPC armor.)

Def/AR: These two statistics provide a list of special armor considerations (such as a soft underbelly). If a life form's defense or armor rating are different from the NPC's base ratings, the information will be listed here. An entry which lists "armor" simply represents that the life form can wear armor if desired; usually, a list of typical armor will follow in parenthesis.

Special: Any special attack — detailed in the life form's text description.

Sciences: These numbers represent the life form's ratings for BioT (B), Cyber (C), and Tech (T), and are used when determining whether the life form can use a given piece of equipment.

Size: The life form's average height and weight.

Lang: Languages typically spoken by individuals. A "+" sign indicates a number of additional languages, chosen by the GM.





Ahuk

FORM: Decaped (10 legs), reptilian
HABITAT: Desert, mountains
LOCATION: (Calemor)
STATUS: Domesticated Animal

RATING: 8/32/2

Atk/Dmg: beak, trample

Size: 20' long, 10 tons

The Calemora keep these ten-legged, heavy-bodied creatures as pets. Ahuk never stop growing, beginning life the size of a small dog and often growing to the size of an elephant. Large ahuk may be used as riding beasts. The Calemora often rode ahuk into battle during the Blood Feud, since the creature's natural armor is nearly the equal of a light armored vehicle.

Like all Calemoran life-forms, ahuk are incredibly tough and strong. Ahuks' heads are protected by heavy, bony plates, and can inflict considerable damage from trampling and biting with their heavy, beaked mouths.

Wild ahuk roam the surface of Calemor, and it is considered a highly honorable pursuit for a Calemoran warrior to stalk, capture and tame one. Young ahuk are, of course, more adaptable and easier to train. Herds of domesticated ahuk are also kept, but most Calemora prefer the free spirit of wild ahuk.

The Draca have also taken an interest in the ahuk, seeing them as potential war-beasts. The Calemora have thus far resisted this, feeling that ahuks' long history as companions and friends to the Calemoran species grants them special, almost sentient, status.



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Anthropos

FORM: Humanoid
HABITAT: Any
LOCATION: Guild, Arthirian Sphere
STATUS: Guild members, Arthirian Citizens, Imperial honored slave race, Independent spacefaring race, etc.

RATING: 16/10/16

Atk/Dmg: punch, weapons (prefer ranged energy)

Def/AR: armor (prefer suit, especially powered)

Sci: B8/C12/T24

Size: 6', 200 lbs

Lang: Anthroplan, Guildspeak, +1

The Anthropos are known as one of the most adaptable of galactic races. They inhabit thousands of worlds, and have a nearly infinite variety of governments, societies, technological levels and philosophies. The Anthropos are the dominant race of both the Guild and the Arthirian Sphere, but are found in large numbers elsewhere as well.

For more details on this race, see the Races section in this book.



Calemora

FORM: Humanoid
HABITAT: Desert/arid
LOCATION: Guild (Calemor)
STATUS: Guild Members

RATING: 12/30/6

Atk/Dmg: martial arts, weapons (prefer body and melee: kray, ra-oot, sword, etc.)

Def/AR: armor (prefer open style armor), psychosomatics (such as rough skin, tough skin, and iron skin)

Special: Psychosomatics

Sci: B10/C4/T6

Size: 5'6", 320 lbs

Lang: Calemoran, Catongi, +1

The Calemora are a primitive, non-technological race, masters of the powers of *Psychosomatics*.

For more information on this race, see the Races section in this book.



Cloud-Manta

FORM: Piscene
HABITAT: Atmosphere
LOCATION: Low-grav worlds
STATUS: Animal

RATING: 15/30/2

Atk/Dmg: bite, tailwhip

Special: Swallow (on Def roll of 1)
Size: 20-60' long, 2000-6000 lbs

This unusual species resembles its oceanic namesake in that it is a broad, roughly diamond-shaped creature with broad wings and a massive mouth. Cloud-manta do not swim in the sea, however, but instead swim through the atmosphere by means of lighter-than-air bladders located in their central body cavities. Long, rudder-like tails direct their movement, and cloud-mantas are extremely maneuverable and fast.

Cloud-manta are solitary creatures, and mate only rarely. Females carry eggs in spongy tissue on their backs. After the eggs hatch, females are surrounded by clouds of smaller manta which seek refuge under her wings if danger threatens. Young manta are highly vulnerable to airborne predators, including adults of their own species, who make few distinctions about the sources of their food.

Cloud-manta feed by funneling insects and small flying creatures into their massive maws. They also swoop down low over water regions and scoop up fish or avians near the surface. As cloud-mantas never seem to stop growing, some have been known to attain substantial size; under such conditions, mantas sometimes will consider the occupants of small airborne craft or boats as possible food. They have proved to be a nuisance on some worlds, and a major threat to life on others.

If the defender rolls a one for defense, the cloud-manta has swallowed its prey. Swallowed defenders lose 10L points per round until dead or freed. The manta must eat through all armor before ingesting the victim, however.



Ch'aak

FORM: Unknown
HABITAT: Unknown
LOCATION: Rimward Space
STATUS: Unknown

RATING: 20/20/8

Atk/Dmg: grab, crush
Def/AR: special

Special: Pocket Dimension
Size: Unknown

Another inhabitant of the unexplored worlds beyond the Guild's rimward border, ch'aak are one of the most dangerous and unpredictable predators in Known Space. No one knows exactly what form ch'aak take, for they move about in small, mobile bubbles of existence, several degrees out of phase with their surroundings. This renders ch'aak invisible and immune to normal weapons except for the brief moment when they attack (although the *Sorce-energy bold* affect them).

Even then, only a cluster of multi-jointed, insectile claws emerges from a ch'aak's bubble, seizing prey and pulling them out of normal space and into the ch'aak's lair. Anyone caught in this fashion is gone forever unless they can single handedly defeat the ch'aak.

Ch'aak are the ultimate ambush artists, remaining invisible until the moment of attack. Ch'aak remain visible for one round, then vanish whether they have succeeded in grabbing a victim or not. They will trail prey for days, striking unexpectedly.

When a ch'aak emerges from its "pocket dimension" for the first time, victims must make a Shock (20) roll or automatically lose initiative. If a victim is grabbed they must make a Strength roll vs 20 or be dragged into the ch'aak's interdimensional "lair" where the ultimate battle for survival begins.

If a PC successfully hits a ch'aak in the player's own dimension, the beast will let its prey go if wounding damage exceeds 10.



Da-han

FORM: Biped, Reptilian
HABITAT: Plains, forests
LOCATION: Empire (Skell)
STATUS: Imperial Honored Slave

RATING: 20/8/18

Atk/Dmg: bite, weapons (knives, disc weapons)
Def/AR: armor (flak)

Sci: B12/C10/T16
Size: 6'4", 175 lbs
Lang: Da-han, Impspeak, +3

These slender, long-necked dinosaur-like aliens are covered with a sheen of tiny white scales, sometimes striped in red or black. Their long, nimble arms end in slim-fingered hands, well adapted to the manipulation of fine objects, machinery and circuitry.

Da-han serve the katha as honored slaves, and have risen to vital positions in The Empire, acting as administrators, overseers, accountants, military officers, traders and technicians. It is likely that The Empire would collapse (or at least stumble badly) should the da-han ever choose to leave imperial service, but like the other honored slaves their devotion to The Empire is near-absolute. In return, da-han are well treated within imperial space.

The da-han are physically weak, but very quick, dexterous and intelligent. They dislike physical combat, preferring to flee or talk enemies out of fighting. They never serve in front-line combat units, preferring to lead from the rear, or to command starships.



Dhardoun

FORM: Unknown
HABITAT: Any
LOCATION: Throughout Known Space
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 15/15/15

Atk/Dmg: punch, weapons (any - can form melee weapons itself)

Special: Shapechange, immune to cutting or piercing physical weapons

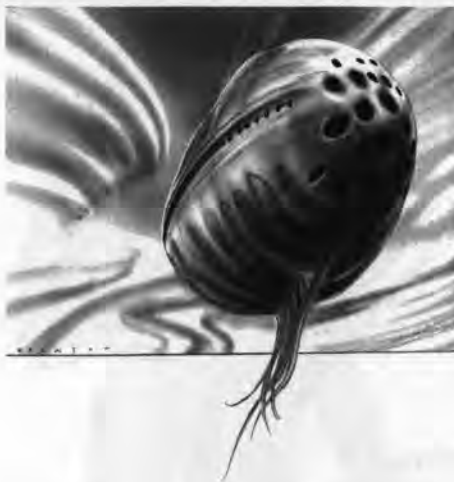
Sci: B10/C10/T10

Size: ?

Lang: Dhardoun (?), Impspeak, +3

No one knows where this race of shape-shifting aliens originated, or what their natural form is, for they can take the shape of virtually any being or object of similar mass. They are rare — most are found within The Empire or Arthirian space. It is difficult to tell exactly how many exist, as all dhardoun take the shape of another race.

Best known as agents and assassins of The Empire, dhardoun are a constant threat to Guild officials, as there are few practical ways of detecting their presence. So far, the best means of penetrating dhardoun disguise is through the psionic abilities of the Zin-Shee, but dhardoun agents are trained to resist mind-probes, so even this alternative is not always practical.



Dirigibles

FORM: Alien
HABITAT: Atmosphere
LOCATION: Gas giant planets
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 8/60/8

Atk/Dmg: ram

Sci: B4/C8/T8

Size: 100' long, 5 tons

Lang: Dirigible

These huge balloon-like entities dwell in the upper atmosphere of gas giant planets. They are widespread, indicating either a stunning example of parallel evolution or purposeful colonization. As the latter is the most likely explanation for the dirigibles' distribution, the question is who spread them throughout Known Space? The dirigibles themselves may be responsible, for they are clearly sentient, and their reproductive cycle may involve scattering spores into interplanetary space.

Dirigibles see light and color through a cluster of modified organs which girdle their bodies, giving them 360-degree vision. Manipulation is accomplished by means of a cluster of tentacles which hang below the main body.

Dirigibles are natural ramjets, sucking air into one end, heating it internally, and expelling it. This process works in both directions, giving neither a definable "front" nor "back." They feed on atmospheric algae and on smaller flying species.

As noted, dirigibles are sentient, often possessing material cultures in which objects are carried in panniers by individuals, or in the tentacles beneath the main body. All attempts at communication have failed, but this has not stopped Guild scientists from trying.



Draca

FORM: Biped, Reptilian
HABITAT: Desert, arid
LOCATION: Guild, Dracan Holding
STATUS: Guild Members, Dracan Holding, Independent Starfaring Race

RATING: 10/16/8

Atk/Dmg: bite, claw, tail (10/8+trip), weapons (cybernetics, melee, physical ranged)
Def/AR: armor (cybernetics, energy fields)

Special: Cybernetics

Sci: B8/C24/T16

Size: 6'6", 300 lbs

Lang: Dracan, Guildspeak, +1

The Draca are masters of one of the most powerful and violent states in Known Space. Reptilian warriors, Draca are naturally powerful and deadly hunters. They have increased their natural abilities, however, through the cult of Cybernetics, in which the "imperfect" body is modified with mechanical, electronic and technological devices. It is a rare Draca with no cybernetics, and the most accomplished members of the race are often so heavily modified as to be unrecognizable.

Draca are born with tails, but most have them removed soon after birth, as they are considered to be unwanted vestiges of the Draca's primitive ancestors. Some clans retain their tails, and cybernetically enhance them, as well.

Many Draca now live in the Guild, serving in the Guild military and, more recently in the House of Dha.

For more information on this race, see the Races section in this book.



Drassk

FORM: Biped, carnivore
HABITAT: Jungle
LOCATION: Sphere (Arassk)
STATUS: Arthirian Citizens

RATING: 16/16/10

Atk/Dmg: bite, claw, weapons (any)
Def/AR: armor (archaic, flak, powered suit)

Sci: B6/C16/T16
Size: 6', 200 lbs.
Lang: Drasski, Arthirian, +1

The drassk are a race of deadly beauty. Physically, the drassk look like black-furred wolf-tiger hybrids, with muscular bodies and slender, delicately muzzled faces. Drassk eyes range from green to gold and have strange, barbell-shaped pupils.

A cunning and dangerous race, drassk serve extensively in the Arthirian military. Their commanders specialize in stealth, ambush and deception, and in battle the drassk have few equals. Their body weaponry is even more deadly than the Zin-Shee and they have few qualms about using high-tech weaponry or armor.

Drassk society centers around the creation and accumulation of fancifully-carved "honor-stones." A successful warrior is awarded one or more stones by his clan-mistress (a revered female ceremoniously "married" to all clan males), and the victor in single combat can claim one or more of his opponent's stones. Service with the Arthirians is seen as a great opportunity to gain more honor-stones, and the drassk have taken to it readily.

Some drassk tribes have left the Sphere altogether, and taken up lives as nomadic mercenaries, providing their services to the smaller warring states of Known Space.



Dreadar

FORM: Alien
HABITAT: Unknown
LOCATION: Rimward Space
STATUS: Unknown

RATING: 15/25/4

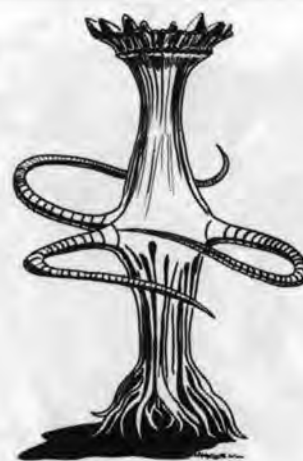
Atk/Dmg: claw, bite

Special: Immune to poison, acid, mind control, and the vacuum of space
Sci: B20/C0/T4
Size: 5', 220 lbs
Lang: Unknown (hive-mind?)

Small, fast, and strong, dreadar are often seen in company with horak, leading some to suggest that they are simply another one of the many sub-types of horak themselves. Dreadar are similarly alike, with multiple arms, but have different internal arrangements and capabilities than their larger counterparts. They also seem to be nonsentient, or only marginally intelligent, interested mostly in violence and bloodshed. Their lack of useful role in any planetary ecosystem has led some scientists to speculate that they are not natural creatures at all, but an artificially created species intended for use in war.

Despite this, dreadar also appear to be capable of limited communication with their fellow creatures — horak, mind spiders, and similar horrific life forms. The mode of communication seems to be some form of hive-mind telepathy, although they also produce a savage hissing sound on occasion. It is not known whether this hissing is involved in communication.

Dreadar are quite adaptable, capable of moving swiftly in a variety of environments. Their heavy claws are often used to shred doors, armor, vehicle treads and other important objects. horak seem to use the dreadar as their initial "assault troops," following later to mop up the survivors.



Eefo

FORM: Plant
HABITAT: Forests
LOCATION: Zin-Shee Matriarchy (Greenworld)
STATUS: Zin-Shee Subject Race

RATING: 8/24/8

Atk/Dmg: tendril whip, grab, crush, weapons (clubs only)

Special: immune to mind control, double damage from fire or plasma
Sci: B20/C0/T4
Size: 7', 150 lbs.
Lang: Eefo, Zin-Shee

Intelligent plant species are uncommon, and the eefo are one of the best known. Encountered and easily conquered four centuries ago, the eefo were pressed into service as gardeners and agricultural experts. They continue to be favored by their Zin-Shee masters, and are relatively well treated (i.e., watered regularly).

Eefo were non-technological at contact, and today retain very little talent for standard technology. They do, however, practice a form of Biotechnology, by which they adapted other plant species to form living buildings, bridges, water storage facilities, and other useful items. The use of Biotechnology for weapons never occurred to the eefo, as warfare was unknown. The Zin-Shee have begun to observe the eefo's Biotechnology at work, and are attempting to duplicate it.

Eefo really do not understand fighting. If given a weapon and told to shoot (and if they can figure out how to operate it), eefo will follow directions, shooting in random directions, often hitting inanimate objects or friends. Occasionally, they will batter enemies with their limbs, or pick up clubs, but they do not seem to grasp the significance of such actions.





Hammu

FORM: Cetacean
HABITAT: Aquatic
LOCATION: Guild (hammu)
STATUS: Guild Members

RATING: 12/15/18

Atk/Dmg: bunt, weapons (modified spear gun and pulse laser weapons)
Def/AR: airtuit

Sci: B12/C8/T14
Size: 6' long, 320 lbs
Lang: Hammu, Guildspeak, +2

One of the more unusual Guild races, the hammu are warm-blooded aquatic creatures with slender, elliptical bodies and four long, manipulative fin-like appendages. Hammu also use their delicate, toothy mouths for holding and moving objects. Their aquatic culture was almost entirely non-material when the Guild encountered them 300 years ago, but today they ply the spaceways in water-filled starships and are known throughout Guildspace.

Normally immobile on land, hammu travel out of water in armored air-suits. Without artificial life support, a hammu can survive for only 6L hours out of water.

Hammu communicate with sonar, and are capable of pitching their natural sound producing organs to mimic Anthropros speech.

They have recently begun experimenting with Kryll-style Biotechnology, adapting several non-sentient species of their homeworld to serve as biological supplements, computers, weapons, etc.



Haochann

FORM: Bipod, Amphibian
HABITAT: Swamp
LOCATION: Empire (Chreek)
STATUS: Imperial Honored Slave

RATING: 8/6/28

Atk/Dmg: slap (poison), weapons (prefer pistols)
Def/AR: armor (light suit armor)

Special: Contact poison (paralysis 6)
Sci: B10/C4/T20
Size: 5'6", 150 lbs
Lang: Haochann, Impspeak, +2

This race looks somewhat comical to Anthropros. Haochann are best described as upright, bright green tropical frogs with bulging red eyes and webbed fingers. They are a highly developed race with the ability to make complex mathematical calculations without artificial assistance, making them excellent pilots, astrogators, mathematicians and accountants. They defend themselves with a mild skin toxin, which must be spread by direct contact and causes paralysis.

As one of the honored slaves of The Empire, the haochann are found throughout kathan space, often serving in prominent imperial positions. Haochann also command many Empire spacecraft, and even lead some larger imperial space formations.



Helav

FORM: Quadruped, alien
HABITAT: Plains
LOCATION: Guild (Ehlak)
STATUS: Guild Members

RATING: 12/24/12

Atk/Dmg: stomp, weapons (spears, blasters)
Def/AR: armor (flak)

Sci: B4/C12/T20
Size: 6' tall, 8' long, 1500 lbs
Lang: Helav, Guildspeak, +1

The helav resemble mythical centaurs — a long, powerful quadrupedal body grafted to an upright, humanoid torso. The resemblance proves to be only passing, however, for helav's brains are located in the "chest" portion of their "horse" bodies. The upper torso and head are used primarily for sensory input and manipulation. A helav can survive with its head completely removed, although it would be blind and crippled as a result.

Helav culture is complicated, with numerous castes, linguistic levels, and subtle nuances in clothing and decoration denoting the various classes, guilds and castes. Several prominent xenologists are said to have had nervous breakdowns attempting to understand helav society.

Nonetheless, helav have become significant members of the Guild, serving as couriers, astrogators, interpreters, administrators and adventurers. Several have even joined the House of Dha, and served with distinction. For their part, the helav are somewhat arrogant, believing that they are the only truly civilized galactic race. That other races cannot understand their enlightened culture is simply considered proof that they are inferior.



Horak

FORM: Alien
HABITAT: Unknown
LOCATION: Rimward Space
STATUS: Unknown

RATING: 8/40/10 (Atk 15)

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, knee spike, elbow spike, tail whip (15/10+trip), weapons (bio)

Special: Poison paralysis (Dif 20), immune to poison, acid, vacuum, and mind control

Sci: B30/C0/T8

Size: 9', 1200 lbs

Lang: Unknown (hive-mind?)

These deadly creatures appearance is highly alien in nature, their bodies protected by heavy, bony plates. Horak abilities vary by individual, with some simple predatory killing machines which use their claws and teeth to inflict horrific damage. Others have poison glands, and inject paralyzing neurotoxins into their victims' bodies. A few seem to have basic but powerful psionic abilities, and can compel their victims to march unwillingly into their very jaws. They also use biotechnically engineered weapons much like the Kryll.

Some members of the Guild have even gone so far as to suggest that the parallels between Kryll and horak do not stop there. Notwithstanding the major contributions which the Kryll have made to the Guild, some claim that the insect-warriors are actually the vanguard of an invasion force, sent here to gather intelligence and pretend to be friendly until the final attack. A few such critics even claim that the Kryll are themselves bioengineered servants of the horak, but there is little real evidence of this.

Horak are rare near Guildspace, found mostly in interstellar space and on uninhabited worlds. Some rumors claim that hordes of horak and draedar have taken over entire starships, but this has not been confirmed.



Horassa

FORM: Avian Dinosaur
HABITAT: Desert, plains
LOCATION: Dracan Holding
STATUS: Domesticated Animal

RATING: 12/35/2 (MR 24 (air)/6 (land))

Atk/Dmg: beak, tailwhip (12/15+trip), cyber mounted weapons

Def/AR: cyber armor

Size: 60' wingspan, 10' long, 1000 lbs

These powerful creatures resemble flying dinosaurs, but are much stronger and can carry much heavier loads. On their homeworld of Alaki, the horassa are flying predators, easily capable of hunting and snatching the large and dangerous fish-like life-forms of the world. When the Draca colonized Alaki, their scientists immediately began experiments upon the horassa, intending to cybernetically adapt the flying beasts to serve as dray- and war-beasts. In this, the Draca were wildly successful.

Horassa are found throughout the Dracan Holding, serving in reconnaissance, transportation, and combat roles. Their massive wing-loading capacity allows horassa to carry full-grown adult Dracan cyberlords, and to mount weapons as powerful as 8LV.

Although they make poor fighter aircraft — horassa's slow airspeed makes them vulnerable to faster and more maneuverable craft — their value as infantry support weapons and reconnaissance scout craft is unparalleled. Scout horassa are usually modified only minimally, and are virtually indistinguishable from the flocks of ordinary horassa which are found throughout the Holding and surrounding space.

Enemies fighting the Draca are faced with the choice of ignoring horassa (and possibly allowing reconnaissance horassa to observe them and transmit images back to the Draca), or wasting time shooting down every wild horassa which they encounter.



Jangiri

FORM: Biped, mammalian
HABITAT: Forest, plain
LOCATION: Empire (Jangiri)
STATUS: Imperial Honored Slaves

RATING: 12/8/12 (Dex 16)

Atk/Dmg: bite, weapons (knives, pistols, slug throwers)

Def/AR: armor (flak)

Sci: B4/C6/T10

Size: 4'5", 110 lbs

Lang: Jangiri, Impspeak, +2

Talented pilots, the diminutive (four to five feet in height) jangiri wear overcoat-like garments and shun body decoration. Jangiri personality is gruff and straightforward, but not at all unlikeable.

Although they retain the status of honored slaves, the jangiri retain a greater streak of independence than other slave races, and sometimes grumble at kathan domination. There is, at present, no real way out of imperial service, so most jangiri keep their grumbling quiet and do nothing to endanger their position in The Empire.

Jangiri originated on a forest world deep within imperial borders. They were relatively civilized at Empire contact, having advanced to steam technology and maintained a peaceful society with few open conflicts. Today, they retain a dislike of violence, although jangiri starpilots are among the finest in the imperial fleet.



K'lak

FORM: Crustacean
HABITAT: Semi-Aquatic
LOCATION: Sphere (Drahhmo)
STATUS: Arthirian Citizens

RATING: 18/12/12 (MR 8)

Atk/Dmg: battleclaw, biocharge (15/24 three times a day)

Special: Bioelectric discharge
Sci: B6/C8/T16
Size: 6' long, 200 lbs.
Lang: K'lak, Arthirian, +1

The k'lak are a semi-aquatic race of crustaceans which are found primarily in the Arthirian Sphere. They resemble enormous lobsters with dozens of small, manipulative arms and larger battleclaws which are used in combat. K'lak constantly shed their smaller arms, growing new ones as needed. They can defend themselves with charges from their bioelectric organs.

K'lak communicate by a combination of clicks, hisses and squeaks, and have great difficulty duplicating Anthropos language without artificial translators. Most k'lak in the Sphere have had a translator implanted in their carapace, and speak in the flat, metallic voice of a computerized interpreter.

Evolved from highly primitive crustaceans, the k'lak have a fairly complex society. Their homeworld is a place of continent-sized mudflats dotted with huge, mangrove-like trees which form islands in their extensive root networks. The world is divided among dozens of k'lak "dynasties" which, prior to Arthirian contact, fought endless wars for influence and dominance.

K'lak serve in the Arthirian military as astrogators and technicians. Their numerous small arms allow them to do many tasks quickly and almost simultaneously.



Katha

FORM: Humanoid
HABITAT: Any
LOCATION: Empire
STATUS: Imperial Master Race

RATING: 14/15/16

Atk/Dmg: punch, bite (12/8), weapons (any - prefer swords and disc guns)
Def/AR: armor (any)

Sci: B8/C12/T24
Size: 6'2", 225 lbs
Lang: Imperial Kathan, Impspeak, +1

The masters of The Empire are grey-skinned humanoids covered in bony protrusions and plates, which provide a significant amount of Natural Armor. The sole survivors of a genocidal war between the sentient races of their home world, the katha developed a paranoid and xenophobic philosophy which claimed that other races were to be trusted only as slaves. To treat a race in a fair and peaceful manner was to invite betrayal and extinction. To this end, the katha spread through the galactic arm, producing a mighty empire which was finally stopped only by the Guild.

Katha are extremely intelligent and technologically skilled. While their strength and basic attributes are slightly higher than Anthropos, their bony skin enables them to survive longer in combat.

In most katha today, the warrior spirit has declined considerably. Substantial numbers of katha still serve in the Empire military, but they are outnumbered by the subject races, who now have taken over much of the responsibility for running The Empire. Some katha have even split off from the Empire to form a new state, known as the Kingdom, which they feel is more faithful to the katha's heritage.



Kryll Warrior

FORM: Insectoid
HABITAT: Hiveworld
LOCATION: Guildspace (Kryll-Hive)
STATUS: Guild Members

RATING: 8/18/8

Atk/Dmg: mandible, claw, tailspike (8/10 + poison), weapons (bio)
Def/AR: armor (bio)

Special: Biotechnology, tailspike paralysis poison (Dif 6)
Sci: B24/C8/T4
Size: 6' long, 400 lbs
Lang: Kryll, Guildspeak, +1

The Kryll's first contact with the Guild nearly ended in tragedy. At first mistaking the Kryll for hostile aliens, the Guild realized its error before serious bloodshed occurred, and accepted the Kryll as Guild members. In an unprecedented move, the Guild also allowed the Kryll to join the House of Dha without a long and involved qualification procedure.

The Kryll are one of the most alien species in Known Space. An insectoid hive-mind culture, the Kryll communicate pheromonally and live in vast genetically engineered spacecraft.

Given their truly alien nature, many scientists have expressed surprise that the Kryll are capable of interacting with other species at all. The secret to the Kryll's success lies in their hive-queen and their translator-caste Kryll, both of which are capable of absorbing and duplicating alien languages and thought-patterns.

A recent development in Kryll society is the evolution of free-willed warrior-caste Kryll who are capable of individual thought, and able to take much more independent action.

Kryll are masters of the science of Biotechnology, through which other life forms are genetically adapted to use as tools, weapons, and transportation.

For more details on this race, see the Races section in this book.



Kurg

FORM: Bipedal Reptilian
HABITAT: Unknown
LOCATION: Throughout Known Space
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 8/8/12

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, tailwhip (8/8+trip),
weapons (knives, pistols,
carbines)

Def/AR: armor (archaic, flak)

Sci: B14/C16/T18
Size: 4', 85 lbs
Lang: Kurg, Skrak, +2

It is generally thought that the kurg are a subordinate race to the skrak, but the actual relationship appears to be more complex. Kurg are often found in positions of authority on skrak ships, and seem more like equal-status crewmen than slaves or servants.

The kurg are small, nervous-looking reptiles with gleaming white, pink and black scales looking more or less like upright geckos. Their bodies are constantly atwilt, and their long, flexible tongues frequently flick out to test the air or clean the surface of the kurgs' eyes. They do not have the same lust for battle as their skrak partners, but will fight if necessary. The kurg's talent seems to be more as technicians, repair people and navigators than as warriors.

The kurg's origins and homeworld (if any) are unknown. It is possible that they are an entirely space-faring race, with no planetary culture whatsoever.



Kurr'ssa

FORM: Quadruped, Feline
HABITAT: Desert, plains
LOCATION: Zin-Shee Matriarchy
STATUS: Domesticated Animal

RATING: 20/12/4

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, eyebeam (20/16)

Special: Eyebeam
Size: 3' long, 20 lbs

The Zin-Shee keep these intelligent cats as pets. They seem to have descended from the same root-ancestor as the Zin-Shee, and share several anatomical features. Kurr'ssa have grasping paws, which enable them to hold small objects. The kurr'ssa share the glowing eyes of their Zin-Shee cousins, but have no psionic abilities.

The centers of the brain which evolved into the Zin-Shee's psionic control regions have, in the Kurr'ssa, become a sort of biological capacitor for storing bioelectrical energy. A Kurr'ssa's natural defense is a powerful pulse of light energy from its eyes, which can blind its target (roll Def vs. 20 or be blinded for 6L rounds) and inflicts 8M damage. Kurr'ssa can emit this charge only once per hour, but will use it to defend their owners if necessary.

Kurr'ssa are a familiar sight throughout the Matriarchy, and in Zin-Shee controlled facilities and planets within the Guild. They have retained a streak of cat-like independence, and non-Zin-Shee find them somewhat obnoxious and arrogant. Kurr'ssa tend to be loyal to their Zin-Shee owners, however, and are even employed as security sentries in sensitive areas, allowed to roam freely and trained to attack outsiders with their eye-beams.

Occasionally, a kurr'ssa will accept a non-Zin-Shee as a companion, but this is comparatively rare. They are demanding pets, expecting to be fed regularly, constantly coddled and paid attention to, and generally given complete control over their owners' lives. Owners who deny kurr'ssa the attention which the beasts seem to feel they deserve do so at their own peril, for unhappy kurr'ssa have been known to turn their claws and eyebeams on the furniture and personal possessions of unsatisfactory owners.



Lirrit

FORM: Biped, mammalian
HABITAT: Forest
LOCATION: Zin-Shee Matriarchy (Lirri)
STATUS: Zin-Shee Subject Race

RATING: 12/6/10

Atk/Dmg: bite, weapons (knives, pistols)

Sci: B0/C6/T8
Size: 5'2", 140 lbs
Lang: Lirri, Zin-Shee

These subjects of the Zin-Shee Matriarchy are woolly mammals with thick, prehensile tails, short, stubby fingers and round, staring eyes. They are often employed as nursemaids for Zin-Shee children.

Lirrit also serve as menial laborers with little complaint. The entire race seems rather tolerant — they are slow, methodical creatures who reach all decisions by consensus and have little in the way of formal government. Their forest-world home has been left more or less alone by the Zin-Shee, although psi-cat tourists sometimes visit there.



mBari

FORM: Biped, Humanoid
HABITAT: Tundra, Forest
LOCATION: Empire (OkUmBari)
STATUS: Imperial Honored Slave

RATING: 16/26/8

Atk/Dmg: punch, weapons (spear, knife, force gauntlet, disc weapons, etc.)

Def/AR: armor (flak, trooper)

Sci: B4/C8/T8
Size: 7'6" 300 lbs
Lang: mBari, Impspeak, +1

The Empire discovered the mBari 500 years ago, and quickly utilized their natural talents as warriors. The mBari were resistant at first, but in the face of imperial benevolence and the unbelievable riches brought home by those selected for Empire service, they soon adapted wholeheartedly, and soon became honored slaves.

The mBari resemble Anthropos, but are taller and more wiry. Facial features are flatter; there is no external nose, just nasal openings which may be closed at will. Skin color ranges from pearly grey to jet black, and eye color is always pale yellow. Many mBari decorate themselves with ritualistic scars in the form of tribal magic runes.

The mBari are fast, agile and strong, and are capable of prodigious leaps, up to twice as far as Anthropos. They fight with a wide variety of bizarre metal, stone and bone weapons, and have adopted the high tech weapons and armor necessary for survival only reluctantly (and in the face of substantial casualties). Males and females fight, but males rule tribes (albeit with female advice and consent).

If an mBari wishes to serve outside the tribe (such as in The Empire), he or she must join the dagger-brethren, a sort of "tribe outside the tribe." Dagger-brethren act as a single tribe, and most now serve The Empire. Today, Dagger-brethren feel that the empire has grown soft and has abandoned the martial excellence of the past, and some even consider the possibility that the katha may need to be deposed at some point in the future.

Over the past few decades, mBari officers and soldiers have grown more numerous and important throughout The Empire as kathan influence wanes. Several all-mBari regiments exist in contravention of the normal imperial practice of mixing species in units to prevent mutinies and coordinated resistance. Several of these mBari regiments have recently been moved to the Guild frontier, where they are sure to be in the forefront of any new attack on Anthropos space.

The mBari's warrior culture looks upon any coming war as a massive tribal conflict, and popular belief among the mBari paints the Anthropos and their allies as the emissaries of evil spirits whose ultimate goal is to end all wars, and therefore all opportunity for glory and advancement for the tribe. Without the glory of battle and accomplishment, the mBari believe, they will surely waste away and vanish, a fate which they will resist with all their hearts. Faced with such a culture, it is unlikely that the Guild can convert the mBari to a more constructive society any time soon.



Mindspider

FORM: Insectoid
HABITAT: Space
LOCATION: Rimward Space
STATUS: Unknown

RATING: 15/10/3 (Str 15)

Atk/Dmg: grab (15/special)

Special: Mind Control (Dif 5x rnds), immune to poison, acid, and vacuum

Size: 2' across, 8 lbs

Lang: Unknown (hive-mind?)

Called "spiders" simply due to their resemblance to the familiar arachnids, these creatures are actually quite different. They are often seen with dreadar and horak, and may be linked to a common hivemind.

Mindspiders are six-legged, parasitic creatures which scuttle along at high speeds, intent on attaching themselves to a larger victim. Should the spider succeed in attaching itself, it whips its positions itself on the back of the head, whips its split tail around either side of the victim's neck, grabs their head with its legs, and immediately injects its neural "stinger" into the victim's spinal cord.

Victims who make their Def roll vs. the spider's grab attack have avoided contact with the mindspider. If the mindspider hits, however, the target must then make a normal AR roll vs 10. If the roll fails, then the spider's stinger has penetrated the victim's armor, and the victim must resist the mind control (WP vs 5 times the number of rounds resisting).

Victims who fail are under the spider's complete control. The parasite now derives sustenance from its host's own body, and can manipulate the host as desired, utilizing the victim's skills, combat abilities, etc. The spider can only read a victim's surface thoughts, however, and cannot detect deeply hidden secrets, thoughts, etc. Likewise, a parasitized character can detect the surface thoughts of the spider's hivemind.



Moriam

FORM: Biped, Chiropteran
HABITAT: Forest
LOCATION: Sphere (Moros)
STATUS: Arthirian Citizens

RATING: 15/6/15 (MR 6 land)

Atk/Dmg: weapons (bows, small ranged weapons)

Special: Echolocation
Sci: B4/C6/T20
Size: 3', 75 lbs
Lang: Mori, Arthirian, +1

Winged humanoids who stand only a meter or so tall, the moriam are another significant race of the Arthirian Sphere. Evolved from flying insectivores, the moriam retain limited flight capability and have a fascination with mechanical devices, their function and repair.

Each Arthirian starship has at least one moriam engineer, and moriam tinkers are in demand throughout the Sphere. They have recently been allowed to travel in the Zone and Guildspace, where they have had considerable success, sending huge amounts of income home to their families.

Moriam cities resemble forests, full of tall, cylindrical buildings with simple openings and perches at all levels. As moriam do most short-distance travel by air, the concept of streets is unfamiliar, making moriam cities extremely confusing for non-moriam visitors.

The moriam can avoid obstacles in total darkness through the use of echolocation, and can locate even small objects.



Murrk

FORM: Humanoid
HABITAT: Forests, Mountains
LOCATION: Empire (murrkworld)
STATUS: Imperial Honored Slave

RATING: 12/30/6

Atk/Dmg: punch, bite, weapons (melee and disk)

Def/AR: armor (archaic, flak)

Sci: B0/C8/T4
Size: 7'8", 375 lbs
Lang: Murrk, Impspeak

Towering, lantern-jawed humanoids with rough grey skin, the murrk are The Empire's primary shock troops, and serve the katha as guards and enforcers. Murrk are generally considered dull-witted, only capable of following orders from authority figures. They have completely embraced The Empire and seem to relish their role as its primary warrior-race and bully-boy.

Murrk warriors who go off-planet dedicate their very lives to The Empire, and are known as "The Slain," since to their tribes and fellow warriors, they are as good as dead. Slain are never expected (or allowed) to return home alive.

The murrk were a non-technological race easily conquered by the katha. Over the centuries, they have been trained as modern warriors, and are now masters of hand-to-hand combat, although most energy weapons are too complex for them. They enjoy combat, and can shrug off even the most massive damage due to their massive Strength and Fortitude.



Neidasca

FORM: Mollusk
HABITAT: Aquatic
LOCATION: Zin-Shee Matriarchy (Uukra'a)
STATUS: Zin-Shee Subject Race

RATING: 12/24/12

Atk/Dmg: tentacle crush, bite, weapons (spear guns, disk weapons)

Def/AR: armor (water suit)

Sci: B8/C14/T16
Size: 18' long, 800 lbs
Lang: Neidasca, +2

In the cold seas of Uukra'a the Zin-Shee encountered a race like none they had encountered before. The neidasca were a race of large, tentacled mollusks who maintained a level of steam-based technology deep beneath the surface. After an inconclusive conflict, the neidasca agreed to serve the Matriarchy. Today, they are typically dispatched to explore the seas of new worlds, and the planet continues to pay tribute to the Zin-Shee in the form of minerals and sea produce.

Neidasca's numerous tentacles are very flexible, enabling them to reach around corners and even into closed boxes and through cracks in doors. Highly intelligent, they have advanced their technology to near-spacefaring levels, and have traveled throughout Zin-Shee space.

Neidasca can survive several hours out of water, but they tend to collapse without artificial support. Neidasca diplomats and technicians in water suits are becoming a common sight in Zin-Shee territory.

Neidasca use their watery home and environment against enemies. They will "shadow" schools of fish to confound detection gear, lurk in deep water, and hide in caverns or other natural features before swimming rapidly out to envelop enemies in their tentacles. They also use projectile weapons adapted to underwater use.



Neodogs

FORM: Biped, canine
HABITAT: Any
LOCATION: Guildspace
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 12/12/6

Atk/Dmg: bite, weapons (melee weapons, rarely - small ranged weapons)

Science: B0/C0/T8
Size: 5', 100 lbs
Lang: Anthropos

Neodogs are bipedal, genetically-engineered descendants of the faithful dog of old. Their Intelligence has been raised to near-Anthropos level, and their vocal apparatus modified so that they may communicate verbally. Neodogs retain their friendly, loyal personality, and are often used as companions by adventurers.

Neodogs have been bred to resemble virtually any larger canine breed (the most popular are shepherds, huskies and retrievers). Although their intelligence has been increased considerably, neodogs retain their pack instinct, and still see Anthropos as "masters," making them some of the most reliable friends in the galaxy. Several have served honorably as companions to members of the House of Dha, and one was recently honored with a posthumous decoration for saving its master in battle.



Ornax

FORM: Biped, Avian
HABITAT: Plains
LOCATION: Zin-Shee Matriarchy, Guild
STATUS: Domesticated Animal

RATING: 15/18/2

Atk/Dmg: beak, kick

Size: 8' tall, 600 lbs

Used as a food-animal by the Zin-Shee, ornax are also used as mounts both within the Zin-Shee Matriarchy and beyond. Ornax are massive, flightless avians with comparatively short necks and larger heads. Their heavy beaks can be dangerous, but ornax will generally not attack unless they are attacked first. Hardy and capable of surviving in many different climates, ornax are used on exploratory missions in areas where vehicles are impractical (thick forest, for example).



Oro

FORM: Humanoid (?)
HABITAT: Mountains, badlands
LOCATION: Gruz (Dracan Holding)
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 8/40/10

Atk/Dmg: grab-crush, punch

Sci: B0/C0/T10
Size: 8', 1000 lbs
Lang: Oro, +1

These massive, rock-skinned humanoids originated on a planet where temperature and climatic extremes made all life forms tough and hardy. One of few races to withstand the Dracan onslaught, the oro were allowed to remain unmolested on their homeworld (the fact that oro flesh proved inedible to the Draca might be another reason for the lizard-men's conduct). Now, they remain on their homeworld, although oro guards, laborers and servants can be found throughout the Dracan Holding.

The oro are fairly intelligent by Anthropos standards, but have little use for technology or machines. Their culture evolved as a contemplative, philosophical one, as oro were frequently forced into long meditative states by extended storms and disturbances. They are slow to anger and rarely use violence.

Once an oro's grab attack has succeeded, it inflicts crushing damage each round until the victim breaks the hold with a Str check or dies.



Per'kiff

FORM: Biped, mammalian
HABITAT: Jungle
LOCATION: Empire (Kiff'haka)
STATUS: Imperial Honored Slaves

RATING: 18/4/20

Atk/Dmg: none

Sci: B4/C16/T24
Size: 4'6", 75 lbs
Lang: Per'kiff, Impspeak, +1

A warm-blooded species with huge eyes, and feathery "fur," the per'kiff are a quiet, high-strung species. Their delicate fingers and high dexterity make them outstanding spacers and electricians.

One of the more recent honored slave race, the per'kiff have spread throughout The Empire, working in many different environments and worlds. They prefer quiet and do not work well under pressure, so owners and overseers have learned to allow them to work relatively unmolested.

Per'kiff will not fight under any circumstances. If threatened, a per'kiff will flee, roll up into a fetal ball, or, in rare cases, die of heart failure. They hate violence, weapons and loud noises, and their culture is based on universal friendship and understanding. Crimes such as murder are unknown to the per'kiff, and after imperial contact, the per'kiff had great difficulty comprehending the concept of warfare. Even today, they are somewhat confused by the foolishness of other races, and continue to avoid all conflict.



Porasha

FORM: Humanoid
HABITAT: Plains
LOCATION: Empire (Tummok IV)
STATUS: Imperial Slave Race

RATING: 15/15/9 (Int 4 off planet)

Atk/Dmg: punch, weapon (club, knife)

Sci: B0/C6/T8
Size: 5'2", 200 lbs
Lang: Porash, Impspeak

Within The Empire, a breed of (apparently) semi-intelligent, heavy-bodied mammals (similar in appearance and build to gorillas) are used as slaves, carrying heavy loads, doing simple tasks, and so on. Widely thought to be non-intelligent, the porasha situation is actually far more tragic. They are a group mind intelligence, and on their home world, quite bright. In fact, they concealed the true extent of their species' intelligence for fear of extermination, reluctantly giving up individuals to work in The Empire.

Porasha taken away from the home world, however, grow dull, listless and truly stupid, since they are out of touch with their group-mind. Should the Guild discover the porasha's true intelligence, it will be another crime that the katha have perpetrated on the sentients of the galaxy, and a massive rescue mission may ensue.

Porasha mental attributes decline to four when taken away from their home world. They increase by one for every ten porasha located within one mile.



Pouncer

FORM: Quadruped, feline
HABITAT: Plains
LOCATION: Calemor, Dracan Holding
STATUS: Animal

RATING: 18/24/2 (cyber 14/35/2)

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, cyber
Def/AR: cyber-armor

Special: Camouflage (Dif 20)
Size: 10' long, 1000 lbs

These predators are native to the planet Calemor, but have been exported offworld for use in zoos and circuses. A few have escaped to become threats on other worlds.

Pouncers are giant (1000-pound, five-feet at the shoulder) predatory, catlike animals. The fur of their back and shoulders has been modified into heavy, overlapping plates which protect them from harsh conditions, as well as enemies.

This beast's major ability is camouflage — a pouncer can shift its pigmentation to match any terrain with almost undetectable accuracy. An Awa roll vs 20 is required to spot a pouncer before it attacks.

The Draca took an immediate liking to pouncers, capturing and importing them back to Dracan Holding, where they adapted them as cybernetically-enhanced riding beasts. Their massive carrying capacity also enables pouncers to mount weapons, force fields and massive supplemental armor. Pouncers have proven to be deadly allies for the Draca, and the sight of a gleaming metallic cyber-lord astride his enhanced, armed and armored pouncer-mount is enough to strike fear into the heart of the bravest warrior.





Rakka

FORM: Biped, lupine
HABITAT: Plains, forests
LOCATION: Guild (PackDen)
STATUS: Guild Members

RATING: 14/16/12

Atk/Dmg: bite, weapons (melee, pulse)
Def/AR: armor (archaic, flak, lesser powered)

Sci: B4/C10/T16
Size: 5'10", 175 lbs
Lang: Rakka, Guildspeak, +1

The rakka resemble upright, slightly stooped humanoid wolves. They retain the crooked, jackleg formation of their lupine ancestors, using their bushy tails for balance, and shunning footgear unless wearing armor.

The pack is supreme to the rakka. The entire race is divided into eight major packs, but they view the rakkan species as a pack in itself, and the Guild as yet another pack worthy of service and defense. The rakka relish combat, and enjoy fighting at close quarters.

The rakka and Zin-Shee fought several inconclusive battles over their history ("They fought like cats and dogs," as one prominent chronicler put it) and today the two species are still somewhat antagonistic.



Sand-Squid

FORM: Mollusk
HABITAT: Sandy deserts
LOCATION: Known Space
STATUS: Animal

RATING: 12/60/2 (MR 4)

Atk/Dmg: tentacle crush, beak (if pulled under)

Special: Tentacle attack
Size: 50' long, 8000 lbs

Harsh desert climates breed tough, deadly predators and the sand-squid is definitely one of these. Its massive body is usually buried deep beneath sand or gravel, and its large tentacles (up to a dozen) are kept hidden until prey approaches. When this happens, the tentacles whip out, seizing the victim and dragging it down to the toothy maw below. The squid's bloated body stores protein and moisture in preparation for long periods without nourishment, and its tentacles are tough, covered with a thick, calloused layer of flesh.

Sand squid will attack virtually anything which approaches them, regardless of hunger or need for prey. As they are sometimes found on the same worlds as horak and dreadar, it has been speculated that they are all part of the same hive-mind community. Scientific study of the squid has been limited due to its dangerous and aggressive nature.

Sand-squid have 10 tentacles. Each can grasp a different target. When the tentacles first erupt from the sand, victims must make a Shock roll vs. 18.

Once caught, a victim must make a Strength roll vs. 60 or be dragged under the sand (suffocation rules) to the squid's beak, which may then attack the hapless victim.



Shanask

FORM: Cloak
HABITAT: Unknown
LOCATION: Guild, Shanask Moon
STATUS: House of Dha Members

RATING: 12/8/24 (Vit 20)

Atk/Dmg: weapons (*Sorce* based, melee, small ranged)
Def/AR: armor (energy fields, physical shields)

Special: *Sorce*, radiate fear
Sci: B4/C0/T20
Size: 6'6", 250 lbs
Lang: Shanask, Guildspeak, +3

As the Kryll are one of the most alien of Guild races, the Shanask are unquestionably the most mysterious. Tall, cloaked beings which seem to exclusively inhabit the Shanask Guardian Moon orbiting Dha Prime, the Shanask are one of the weakest and most powerful species known.

Physically, the Shanask have little to recommend them. Although they are relatively tough, their strength and skill with normal weapons is minimal.

The Shanask's true power lies in the mastery of the strange energies known collectively as the *Sorce*. Plainly put, the *Sorce* is nothing less than true magic, a force capable of bending, breaking and rewriting the known rules of the universe and its physics.

Thus far, these cloaked aliens have used their *Sorce* powers for the good of the Guild, but many remain nervous and doubtful of their true intentions.

For more information on the Shanask, see the Races section in this book.



Shar-Ka

FORM: Biped, Reptilian
 HABITAT: Any
 LOCATION: Throughout Known Space
 STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 16/20/16

Atk/Dmg: grab, bite, claw, weapons
 (racially appropriate)

Def/AR: armor (racially appropriate)

Special: Bite and drain

Sci: B0/C4/T10

Size: 6'6", 200 lbs

Lang: Shar-ka (?), +3

Like the shape-changing dhardoun, humanoid shar-ka roam widely throughout Known Space. These creatures possess a similar ability to the dhardoun, in that through their feeding process they slowly begin to resemble the races they dwell among. It is this feeding process, however, which has caused many races to simply call the shar-ka "vampires," after ancient legend. Many different races possess legends of vampires, in fact, leading scholars to speculate that the shar-ka have plagued galactic civilization for millennia.

The Zin-Shee, for example, tell tales of their ancient empires, in which normally good rulers unaccountably grew greedy and evil, eventually being revealed as wicked alien beings disguised as Zin-Shee.

Even the Draca, normally fearless warriors, show discomfort and fear at the thought of these creatures. One of their legends tells of an entire world parasitized and converted by the shar-ka. So corrupt was the world, the tales state, that the Draca were forced to send warriors to cleanse the planet by killing every living thing on it. Even then, several of the evil ones escaped and continued to wreak havoc throughout the Holding.

Few shar-ka have fallen into the hands of Guild scientists, and of those, most were badly mutilated or decayed. The exact nature and process of their conversion ability is not known, although most suspect

that their cells retain a virus-like ability to duplicate host genetic material and completely change their appearance and physiology. Regardless of their true biology, there is no question that the shar-ka are a frightening and dangerous species.

In their natural state, shar-ka resemble vaguely reptilian bat-like creatures, further enhancing the "vampire" legends. They feed by consuming the body fluids of their victims, rather than mere blood, however. Their long, flexible tongue is used to extract fluids from victims immobilized by the shar-ka's claws, leaving a withered husk which is easily disposed of.

Shar-ka like to attack from ambush when in their natural form. After transforming into the semblance of their victims' race, shar-ka will try to win the confidence of victims, trying to lure them into an isolated area with promises of money, romance, or other desirable things.

If a victim fails his or her Def roll vs the shar-ka's grab attack, then the shar-ka has successfully grappled, and automatically hits with a bite attack for each round that the grapple is maintained (victims are still allowed an AR roll, however). Victims may break the grapple with a successful Str vs Str roll.

With each feeding, the shar-ka grows to resemble its victim species more and more. Eventually (after 10-20 kills), the shar-ka is indistinguishable from its victims, and may pass as one of them (although its basic statistics remain unchanged, and it gains no racial abilities such as *psionics*), greatly improving its chances of finding easy prey. Transformed shar-ka are always extremely attractive members of their host race, and carefully change their natural habits to conform with social norms and conditions.

If more than three days pass without feeding, however, the shar-ka begins to transform back to its original form. After 10-20 days, the shar-ka is back to its native appearance, and must feed or die within another 10-20 days.

Shar-ka prefer to stick to a single species when feeding, so that their transformation is not unduly complicated, but sometimes they have no choice but to victimize another race. When this happens, the shar-ka gains some traits of its new victim, which may be eliminated by returning to its original prey. Desperate shar-ka often degenerate into hideous amalgams of a dozen species, and in this way are often detected and eliminated. Many horrific tales are told throughout Known Space of such freaks and the havoc which they cause; frighteningly enough, most of the stories are all too true.



Sheem

FORM: Humanoid
 HABITAT: Forest/Urban
 LOCATION: Sphere (sheem)
 STATUS: Arthirian Citizens

RATING: 6/6/35

Atk/Dmg: weapons (small ranged - rarely)

Special: *Psionics* (telekinetics)

Sci: B8/C8/T32

Size: 4', 80 lbs.

Lang: Sheem, Arthirian, +3

Frail-bodied, thin-limbed humanoids, the sheem are allies of the Arthirian Sphere. The sheem live in tall, towered cities and elect leaders in a democratic process very similar to Anthropos. They are a gentle, relatively non-violent species, with highly developed telekinetic skills. While their range of psionic abilities is severely limited, their abilities with telekinesis (i.e., moving objects) exceeds even the Zin-Shee.

Sheem are common within the Sphere, and are excellent scientists. Their frail bodies make them poor warriors, but they feel that their culture has evolved well beyond the need for physical violence. Unfortunately for them, few other species in Known Space have attained this high degree of enlightenment and civilization.

and linguists, as their versatile vocal apparatus can reproduce virtually any language (including the click and clack language of the Kryll).

Long ago, the sidera devastated their world in a series of titanic wars, which no one alive remembers the reason for. Peace was reestablished before the world was completely destroyed, and the sidera adopted a much less destructive philosophy, based on personal enlightenment.

Over the intervening centuries, the sideran homeworld was restored and transformed into a carefully-managed and -manicured paradise. Wars and squabbles still broke out, but the Oath of the Wise, as the philosophy was called, prevented any further holocausts.

When the Zin-Shee arrived, wise sidera realized that any struggle against the psi-cats was hopeless. They surrendered without a fight, asking only that their world be left in peace. The Zin-Shee complied, allowing sidera to serve their Matriarchy. Today, the sidera are still officially slaves, but their philosophy has modified traditional Zin-Shee society considerably. Although old-style Zin-Shee still favor warfare and conquest as the way to glory, the Oath of the Wise has gained great favor among Guild-sympathetic Zin-Shee.

The Guild race which most resembles the sidera, at least in terms of personal philosophies, is the Calemora. The sidera are different from the Calemora in that they seek to perfect the mind and soul, rather than the body, but in general the two species have a lot in common.

Individual sidera tend to be quiet, thoughtful individuals. Most sidera carry a copy of the Oath of the Wise, and a ceremonial weapon. This last is carried for personal defense only — the sidera believe that carrying a weapon shows the ability, but not the willingness, to use it. Ideally, weapons are only drawn if all other means of avoiding conflict have been exhausted.

A true sidera warrior is expected to spend idle hours meditating and studying the Oath of the Wise; many monasteries and colleges exist solely for this purpose.

The Oath of the Wise emphasizes peace and negotiation, but at the same time teaches that once combat has begun, it should be conducted in the most efficient and skillful manner possible. Sidera warriors are outstanding swordsmen, and are also highly skilled in the use of ranged weapons. Once combat has been initiated, sidera will never surrender, but will always grant a defeated enemy mercy if it is requested.



Sidera

FORM: Biped, Avian
HABITAT: Plains, forests
LOCATION: Zin-Shee Matriarchy
(Kree'kree)
STATUS: Zin-Shee Subject Race

RATING: 12/12/16

Atk/Dmg: claw, beak, weapons (blow, blasters, fang rifle)
Def/AR: armor (flak)

Sci: B4/C10/T12
Size: 6'6", 210 lbs
Lang: Sidera, Zin-Shee, +4

The sidera are descended from colorful predator-birds and still retain feathered, wing-like arms, as well as limited flight capabilities. They serve their Zin-Shee masters as soldiers, teachers, philosophers



Skrak

FORM: Humanoid
HABITAT: Unknown
LOCATION: Throughout Known Space
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 10/10/8

Atk/Dmg: bite (10/6), punch, weapons (swords, ranged)
Def/AR: armor (flak, trooper)

Sci: B4/C8/T16
Size: 5', 175 lbs
Lang: Skrak, +1

Along with their companion race, the kurg, the skrak are the only race known to make its living entirely through piracy. Physically, skrak resemble muscular, hairy humanoids with large heads and oversized hands. They fight ferociously, utilizing massive slug-throwing guns or stolen energy weapons, and generally do not take prisoners.

Skrak ships are considered a hazard of space along with asteroids and wormholes. They are generally small vessels, of a wide variety of designs, or they are stolen from other races and extensively modified to skrak and kurg tastes. Little more is known about these creatures, although a handful have actually settled down in the Guild and make their living as traders, with a little smuggling on the side.



Skrikka

FORM: Biped, mammalian
HABITAT: Subterranean
LOCATION: Gozom (Dracan Holidng)
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 8/20/8

Atk/Dmg: claw, weapons (melee, rarely - blasters)

Special: Burrowing Attack
Sci: B4/C8/T8
Size: 5' long, 200 lbs
Lang: Skrikka, +1

A subterranean, heavily armored race of warm-blooded sentients, the skrikka managed to frustrate Dracan attempts at genocide by burrowing away, ambushing, and engineering massive cave-ins which killed many Draca. Finally exhausted by the pointless struggle, the Draca offered the skrikka mercy, claiming that they had shown themselves worthy of survival.

True to their word, the Draca allowed the skrikka to survive unmolested, but occasionally employ skrikka engineers for mining and excavation projects. Skrikka are amazingly strong and durable, but sensory apparatus is minimal. They can, however, detect vibrations in the ground very accurately, enabling them to easily determine what is going on above. Skrikka have begun to develop a machine-based technology with help from the Draca, and some actually have begun to train as astrogators.

Skrikka favor burrowing beneath enemies and dragging them under. Anyone attacked in this manner must make a Shock (18) roll, or the skrikka hits automatically. If threatened with defeat, skrikka can actually burrow deep enough to avoid any major weapon attack.



Stellarnites

FORM: Alien
HABITAT: Hot worlds
LOCATION: Guild (Zolik)
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 15/20/15

Atk/Dmg: punch, weapons (any body or melee, ranged - rarely)

Special: Shape change
Sci: B0/C0/T10
Size: 6', 500 lbs
Lang: Stellari (?), +1

Beings of liquid metal, stellarnites can survive in extremely hot climates, and possess a well-developed, sophisticated culture. As they have limited shape-changing abilities, stellarnites don't really have what could be called a material culture, content to shape their bodies into whatever tools and objects they need.

Recently contacted by the Guild, the stellarnites have proven to be a race with great potential. Their liquid metal physiology enables them to change their bodies into virtually any shape, although (unlike the dhardoun), stellarnites cannot add or subtract mass, and must shape themselves into objects or beings of their same general size. They are also able to go completely liquid, flow under doors, enter cramped or totally inaccessible spaces, and so on. These abilities have, of course, not gone unnoticed by the Guild, and it is highly likely that the stellarnites will eventually become important Guild members.



Swampworm

FORM: Wormlike
HABITAT: Swamps
LOCATION: Water- and swampworlds
STATUS: Animal

RATING: 8/12/1

Atk/Dmg: bite

Special: Poison (Dif 10)
Size: 4' long, 120 lbs

The swampworm is another relatively widespread creature, with subspecies and genetic variants found on dozens of worlds. As these subspecies are all genetically related, Guild scientists have concluded that swampworms were artificially, and possibly deliberately, spread over a wide number of worlds. Where they exist, swampworms make travel dangerous, kill livestock, and damage economies. Their tough, prolific nature makes swampworms difficult or impossible to fully eradicate from the worlds they inhabit.

A predator inhabiting swamps and bogs, the swampworm kills with a deadly poison (victims must roll FR vs. 10 or die), then adheres to its victim, dragging it off to be swallowed (the worm expands like a snake to consume its meal). Swampworm poison degrades quickly in its victim, and so is virtually undetectable. Imperial assassins have been known to use swampworm venom on knives, crossbow bolts, darts and other devices of covert murder.

The Empire itself has been blamed for the spread of the swampworm through Guildspace, although many subspecies are known to have existed long before imperial contact. Recently, however, imperial agents may well be seeding swampworms onto vital worlds in the hope of disrupting economies and causing social upheaval. Where they appear, swampworms inevitable damage their environment, developing rapidly from a pest to a serious threat.



T'skaa

FORM: Alien
HABITAT: Space
LOCATION: Guild (space)
STATUS: Guild members

RATING: 12/800/14

Atk/Dmg: ram, energy blast
Def/AR: natural force field

Special: instantaneous communication
Sci: B0/C8/T6
Size: 300' long, 10 tons
Lang: T'skaa (psionic), Guildspeak, +3

Space-dwelling entities are rare in the Guild, and those which are capable of communication are rarer still. The t'skaa, vast whale-like space-beings, are an example of this last type. Hundreds roam space in and around Guildspace. The entire species seems capable of instantaneous mental communication over vast distances, so they are often used to carry important messages around the Guild.

T'skaa are solitary creatures which "feed" by going into orbit around a star for a period ranging from a week to a year, storing radiant energy in special organs, and slowly consuming it as they travel through space. This energy can also be discharged if the t'skaa is threatened, inflicting massive damage on enemies. The imperial gunship *Benevolence* was destroyed by a t'skaa recently.

The proven hostility of The Empire (its scientists want to study t'skaa in an attempt to find a means of enslaving the entire species) has driven the t'skaa to more fully support both the Guild and the Sphere. T'skaa often travel through imperial space, gathering intelligence, and communicating their information back to fellows in Guildspace or the Arthirian Sphere. The Empire seems to be aware of the space whales' activities, but has thus far been unable to stop them.



Uruk

FORM: Biped, ursine
HABITAT: Forest
LOCATION: Guild (Uru)
STATUS: Guild Members

RATING: 10/32/10

Atk/Dmg: punch, grab-crush, bite, weapons (swords, blasters)
Def/AR: armor (archaic, flak)

Sci: B4/C8/T8
Size: 8'4" 500 lbs
Lang: Uruk, Guildspeak, +1

These hulking, furred omnivores come from a relatively primitive world, but have taken to Guild membership and technology with few problems. They are enormously strong, rivaling even the Calemora, and can withstand appalling amounts of damage without apparent handicap.

Uruk culture is warm and family-oriented, stressing violence only for self-defense. Most Anthropos find the uruk to be a pleasant, almost comforting race despite their great size and threatening appearance.

Although they are capable of being deadly warriors, uruk are not inclined to use violence unless they or their families are directly threatened. This means that uruk make relatively poor soldiers at first, but once links of friendship and camaraderie with fellow fighters are forged, they fight as well as any other race. In general, however, uruk are a relatively peaceful race, and have absolutely no interest in war or conquest.



Vulpe

FORM: Biped, vulpine
HABITAT: Forest, plains
LOCATION: Guild (LaRukiru)
STATUS: Guild members

RATING: 20/8/16

Atk/Dmg: bite, weapons (pulse, blasters)
Def/AR: armor (flak, trooper)

Sci: B3/C8/T18
Size: 5'2" 140 lbs
Lang: Vulpe, Guildspeak, +2

A handsome, foxlike race, the vulpe are quite widespread throughout the Guild, traveling as merchants, starship pilots and freelance adventurers. Their dexterity and Awareness are among the highest in the Guild, making them excellent covert agents, hunters and trackers. Many vulpe serve in the Guild military as scouts.

Vulpe value independence, and have nothing resembling a central government. The extended family appears to be the highest level of organization they have, but they will most commonly be encountered by themselves, or in the company of a single mate and up to four children.



Wuro

FORM: Biped, mammalian
HABITAT: Semi-aquatic
LOCATION: Guild (Kambur)
STATUS: Guild Members

RATING: 14/12/10 (MR 10 (land))

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, weapons (knife, crossbow)
Def/AR: armor (flack)

Sci: B4/C8/T6
Size: 5'3" 150 lbs
Lang: Wuro, Guildspeak, +1

These playful creatures are full Guild members, and are often found in Guildspace. The wuro are bipedal, otter-descended bipeds with dexterous, webbed fingers and mischievous, somewhat comical expressions. The wuro are fast, high-strung nervous creatures with short attention spans and little patience for real work.

The wuro never attained a very high technological level for this reason, content to live in riverside dwellings, hunt and fish with the most basic bows, arrows and spears. After Guild contact, however, it was found that the wuro's natural skill at hunting, tracking, and swimming, made them perfect scouts and spies.

A few more sedate wuro were recruited into the Guild military, and are used for reconnaissance and covert missions on water worlds. For their part, the wuro took to their new role with enthusiasm, considering it one of the most fun things they had ever done.



Xaltir

FORM: Humanoid / Alien
HABITAT: Lightly inhabited planets
LOCATION: Known Space
STATUS: Unknown

RATING: 16/16/6

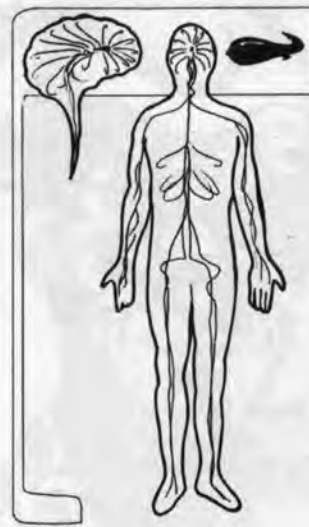
Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, canon-ball-dive, weapons (clubs)

Special: poisonous back spikes (Dif 15)
Sci: B8/C3/T4
Size: 5'8", 180 lbs
Lang: Xaltir (?)

No one knows where xaltir come from nor how, given their low tech level, they managed to locate themselves upon so many worlds throughout Known Space. They may be an ancient biological weapon gone berserk, or another of the Empire's evil schemes. One thing is certain — they are an extreme hazard wherever found.

Xaltir thrive on the pain, suffering, and fear of others. They prefer to locate several miles from small settlements. There, they stalk those who venture from the safety of their village. Xaltir prefer to toy with their victims, allowing them to become suspicious that they are being followed, then frightened, and finally terrified. Then the xaltir capture their victims, take them back to their lair and torture them over several days to several weeks before finally killing and eating them. Xaltir all seem to be naturally cruel and evil.

One of the xaltir's favorite attack forms is to run quickly, curl into a ball, and fling itself at the victim. Xaltir do this so that their back spikes, tipped with a natural paralysis poison, will render their victims helpless. Even if no damage is taken, this attack will knock over a victim who fails a Str (16) check.



Xlralli

FORM: Alien, piscine
HABITAT: Any
LOCATION: Throughout Known Space
STATUS: Independent Race

RATING: 12/4/24

Atk/Dmg: none

Special: Host being
Sci: B0/C0/T4
Size: 3" long, 6 oz.
Lang: Xlralli, +4

These small, tadpole-like beings are actually a mutualistic symbiote, whose presence in the body of host creatures greatly magnifies Intelligence, WP and Healing. They are not well known, and are rare throughout Guildspace. In addition, the xlralli like to keep their existence a secret, fearing a rush on their world by eager individuals seeking symbiosis.

Xlralli can live in harsh conditions for long periods of time, awaiting the arrival of a suitable host. When a suitable host approaches, the xlralli attaches itself to the flesh, secreting a natural anesthetic which prevents the host from feeling it. The xlralli then fuses with the host's flesh, moving into the host's body and spreading throughout its system.

Once the symbiosis is complete, the xlralli contacts its host telepathically, explaining what has happened. If the host refuses to allow the xlralli to stay, it will immediately vacate the body, but this rarely happens. Anyone with a xlralli symbiote experiences the following effects: +1d to Int, WP and Healing (to a maximum of 10H), and the *poison resistance* enhancement. The host may also communicate with the xlralli.



Yrrax

FORM: Biped, Dinosaur
HABITAT: Plains, swamps
LOCATION: (Huxxa) Guildspace
STATUS: Animal

RATING: 16/35/5

Atk/Dmg: bite, claw, grab, kick

Size: 8' tall, 20' long, 3000 lbs

This 20-foot long, eight-foot high predator is similar to the raptor-class of predatory dinosaurs, with muscular arms ending in foot-long claws, and powerful feet, each with a single, forward curving sickle-like claw nearly two feet in length. Yrrax fight by grabbing with their arms while slashing with their sickle-clawed feet, inflicting terrible damage, and killing most prey animals instantly.

Yrrax are found on several different worlds, especially in Zin-Shee and Draca space. The Draca have tried to adapt the yrrax as a cybernetically-enhanced war-beast, but have so far been unable to overcome its vicious, predator nature. Instead, many Draca prefer to hunt yrrax, tracking them down and killing them single-handedly as a test or demonstration of the prowess of cybernetic implants.

Zin-Shee and particularly daring Anthropos sportsmen also hunt yrrax, but these beasts represent a challenge for even the most skilled hunter.

Yrrax habits vary from world to world. On some planets, they are solitary, claiming and defending hunting territory from others of their species. On other worlds, yrrax are dangerous pack predators, hunting in groups of up to 20. Combining speed with a surprising intelligence, yrrax packs are a truly deadly hazard.

A few yrrax have been captured and placed in high security zoological gardens for study, but this proved to be hazardous when three yrrax recently escaped from a lab on Arth and did considerable damage before being recaptured.



Zin-Shee Male

FORM: Biped, Feline
HABITAT: Plains, Jungle
LOCATION: Guild, Zin-Shee Matriarchy (Sheapa)
STATUS: Guild members, Zin-Shee Matriarchy Citizens

RATING: 20/12/10

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, weapons (melee, hurled, ranged - prefer pulse and fang)

Def/AR: armor (force field, archaic, flack)

Sci: B8/C10/T16

Size: 6', 200 lbs

Lang: Zin-Shee, Guildspeak, +1

The catlike Zin-Shee rule a powerful matriarchy located coreward of the Guild. Although females, with their superior psionic ability, rule the state, Zin-Shee males are outstanding warriors, and help defend the matriarchy against its enemies. While they are fickle, vain and often somewhat foppish in their casual dress, Zin-Shee males are deadly foes in battle, and can be excellent adventuring companions.



Zin-Shee Female

FORM: Biped, feline
HABITAT: Plains, jungle
LOCATION: Guild (Seril), Zin-Shee Matriarchy (Sheapa)
STATUS: Guild Members, Rulers of Zin-Shee Matriarchy

RATING: 16/8/16

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, weapons (melee, hurled, ranged - prefer pulse and fang)

Def/AR: armor (force field, archaic, flak)

Special: Psionics

Sci: B6/C8/T16

Size: 5'6", 160 lbs

Lang: Zin-Shee, Guildspeak, +1

Although male Zin-Shee are great warriors, females' psionic abilities have kept them in power for centuries, and helped to defend the psi-cats against outside threats. Female psi-mistresses are as common in the Zin-Shee military as male warriors, and with their potent psionic abilities, just as deadly.

Female Zin-Shee share many of the males' traits, tending to be high-strung, changeable and somewhat chaotic in their social and personal habits. They, too, favor a wide variety of clothing styles and personal decoration, although in combat they tend to favor force fields and less encumbering items.

For more information on the Zin-Shee, male and female, see the Races section in this book.

NPC Personalities

Many individuals, not least of whom are the player characters themselves, influence the fate and future of the Guild and Known Space as a whole. The major movers and shakers of galactic civilization are a motley bunch, with many different abilities and goals. Several prominent NPC personalities are described in this section.



Borazza Irin, General

Anthropos Male

RATING: 12/15/35

Atk/Dmg: punch, blaster pistol
Def/AR: armor

Special: Cybernetically enhanced
Sci: B8/C24/T32
Size: 6'5", 250 lbs
Lang: Anthropos, Guildspeak

This Anthropos general is quite old (101), but retains a phenomenal intelligence and strategic sense. He leads the Guild's ground warfare arm. Badly wounded in a campaign against the rebel slavers of Armis X, Irin has had extensive cybernetic surgery, leading many Draca to nickname him "the Anthropos cyber-lord." His enhancements give him the strength and mobility of a man half his age.

Irin is still a handsome man, his hair silver, his face sharp and weathered-looking. He has four sons and six daughters, all of whom serve in the military houses.



Dakkon Hakariss, Egg-mistress

Draca Female

RATING: 18/40/20

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, scythe-cannon, drac maul
Def/AR: cyber armor

Sci: B20/C40/T16
Size: 7'6", 400 lbs
Lang: Dracan, Guildspeak

The leader of the Draca has held his position for nearly five decades. She is a traditionalist who accepts relations with the Guild reluctantly. Dakkon's attention is currently absorbed in a campaign against unknown aliens spinward of the Dracan Holding, so she can spare little time for relations with the Guild.

Dakkon is heavily enhanced with many antique and near-sacred cybernetic devices dating back to the founding of Clan Hakariss. Her bodyguards, currently numbering 20 cyber-lords, are devoted to her and her clan, and have proven themselves highly capable and nearly undefeatable in challenge-combat.

Once Dakkon's attention returns to the Guild, she will find a host of new problems and questions which need immediate attention and answers. Is the Guild still worthy of survival? If not, should a war of extermination begin? And what of those Draca who have turned their backs on traditional Dracan society and joined with the Guild? Should their views be allowed to spread throughout the Holding, or should they be eliminated? These and many other questions are sure to confront Dakkon soon.



Dalos Smitz, Grand Admiral

Anthropos Male

RATING: 20/16/30

Atk/Dmg: blast carbine
Def/AR: flak

Sci: B8/C12/T32
Size: 6'1", 175 lbs
Lang: Anthropos, Guildspeak

This slender, somewhat scholarly-looking individual is actually a commander of great skill and an Anthropos of considerable hidden strength. Smitz commands the House of Defiance, and with it, one of the most elite naval forces in Known Space.

A witty, intellectual man, Smitz enjoys games of strategy and skill, is well read in the histories and philosophies of all major Guild races, and enjoys intellectual discussions. He is also fond of professional sports, and enjoys occasional participation himself. He enjoys entertaining at home, but can sometimes be persuaded to attend a state function or reception. He is devoted to his wife, but has no children.

On the bridge of the flagship, *Defiant*, however, Smitz is in his element. His instantaneous grasp of tactical subtleties helps him manage small fleets, while his intimate knowledge of the Guild and surrounding territory is invaluable in moving forces over long distances. He is also quite lucky, and on several occasions has managed to locate Dark Alliance and skrak fleets with little more than intuition to guide him. Rumor has it that the Dark Alliance has placed a 1,000,000 cr price on the admiral's head, but he accepts such speculation with good humor.



Daxx, General

Anthropos Male

RATING: 24/24/24

Atk/Dmg: punch, disk pistol, pulse rifle
Def/AR: flak, trooper

Sci: B10/C16/T24
Size: 6'4", 280 lbs
Lang: Anthropos, Arthirian, Guildspeak

The current leader of the Arthirian Sphere is a career military man. He is a harsh-looking, wire haired Anthropos who is never seen out of his dark green and red uniform. An acknowledged master of blade combat, he often chafes under the restrictions placed on him by his status, and longs to leave the confines of his palace on Arth. He is loyal to his nation, however, and will continue to serve as long as he is asked to.

Recent events have driven this fiercely independent man to consider closer ties with the Sphere's old enemy, the Guild. Sabotage of Arthirian shipyards on Icebox, as well as increasing (albeit unconfirmed) reports of Imperial intelligence activity within Arthirian space have led many of Daxx's advisors to openly suggest that The Empire is preparing for war against both the Sphere and the Guild.

These reports, coupled with stories of the new imperial super-soldiers have made Daxx consider ending the age-old feud between Guild and Sphere in favor of formal alliance. Of course, this may be just the excuse The Empire needs, so Daxx will have to play his cards carefully.



Duchess Murrish'sha Qrr'sh, Psi-Mistress

Zin-Shee Female

RATING: 30/16/30

Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, screamer, blaster pistol

Special: *psionics*
Sci: B10/C6/T12
Size: 5'7", 165 lbs
Lang: Zin-Shee, Anthropos, Dracan, Guildspeak

The leader of House Dha's Zin-Shee is a strikingly attractive psi-cat. Her grey and white striped fur is distinctive, and her manner at once friendly and direct. A highly accomplished psionist, she was chosen to lead Dha's Zin-Shee after long, and sometimes boisterous, meetings throughout Zin-Shee space. Once assigned to Dha Prime, she took charge of the Zin-Shee moon, turning it into a place of typically Zin-Shee luxuries, with comfortable furniture, few real work spaces, and numerous cozy spots for napping.

This is not to say that the Dha Zin-Shee are lazy or do not contribute their fair share to the house — simply that their ways are less formal than other races. To avoid boredom, jobs are traded frequently, so that most Dha Zin-Shee have a wide range of computer, clerical and administrative skills.

Murrish'sha is a frequent guest at parties and entertainments in the city of Glory, and is liked for her wit and good humor. Like most of her race, Murrish'sha is flirtatious, somewhat nervous, and tends to have a relatively short attention span, but none of these traits seems to affect her skills as a leader.



Gorak

Draca Female

RATING: 16/30/14

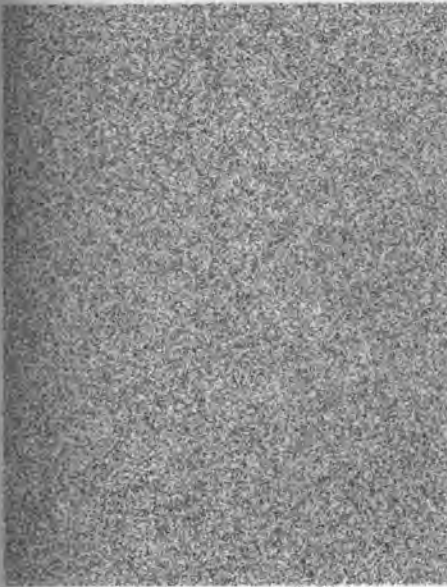
Atk/Dmg: claw, bite, pulse canon, cybersaw
Def/AR: cybernetics

Special: Cybernetically Enhanced
Sci: B16/C40/T20
Size: 6'6", 375 lbs
Lang: Draca, Guildspeak, Anthropos

The Dracan Dha leader is a renegade cyber-lord, who has openly broken with the Holding, and now claims loyalty only to the Guild. She is a truly fearsome-looking individual, heavily modified, with cybernetic eye implants, arms, leg enhancements, armor, built-in weapons, and many other metallic features.

Although her manner is typically Dracan — harsh, straightforward, and unforgiving — Gorak is a complex being, who feels the call of emotions and beliefs alien to her warrior race. Although she has been a merciless killer, she now understands that there is a time and place for healing.

These feelings are relatively new and unfamiliar to the mighty Draca, and she often has to forcibly overcome her natural inclination to solve problems with violence, and eliminate obstacles by eviscerating and devouring them. Those who have spoken to Gorak in moments of comparative repose have found her a surprisingly sensitive being, who is genuinely trying to change, and to understand the new and subtle philosophies which surround her.



(No holo image available)

Gretakk

The leader of the Kathan Emperor's Council of State is a mysterious being who always appears clad in a simple black robe, reminiscent of those worn by the Shanask. Gretakk is thinner and much taller than a Katha, and most believe that the being called Gretakk is actually an alien. Many even claim that it is a Shanask, whether a renegade, infiltrator, or normal Shanask playing its role in an unfathomable conspiracy, no one can say.

It is clear that the Emperor wields considerable power. Many of his capabilities are obviously *Sorce*-based. It may be that the Emperor's *Sorce* powers are gifts from Gretakk, or they may simply be the work of Gretakk itself, casting from concealment and allowing the Emperor to claim credit. The Emperor himself is no less mysterious than his most famous counselor — no one can claim to have looked upon him and survived.

No one has ever gotten close enough to Gretakk or the Emperor to confirm any of the numerous theories which have been advanced regarding this mysterious being, but one escaped palace slave claims to have seen Gretakk's true form — that of a withered, skeletal creature with dead, black eyes. While most dismiss this as the ravings of a superstitious primitive, others are not so sure. Whatever Gretakk is, its influence is considerable, and will probably continue to be for quite some time.



Honored Dha Queen

Kryll Female

RATING: 20/60/16 (MR 4)

Atk/Dmg: mandible, claw, psi-blast

Sci: B0/C20/T12
Size: 20' long, 3,000 lbs
Lang: Kryll, Anthropos, Draca, Calemoran, Zin-Shee, Guildspeak

Since her Kryll name is virtually unpronounceable, most Dha members prefer to call her by the rough translation, "Honored Dha Queen." She is the leader of the Kryll hive world.

This hive is combines Kryll from numerous casts, as well as substantial numbers of independent, self-aware Kryll into a single unit. Honored Dha Queen was biochemically modified her own physiology so that her pheromonal secretions insturct the hive to produce pure House Dha Kryll, whose first loyalty is to her and the Guild.

As a result of her contact with Shakna, Honored Queen is able to communicate with all major Guild races. Even when dealing with a race whose language she does not know, she can still communicate using translator-Kryll. Her personality (more of a pre-generated program than anything else, given the Kryll's lack of emotion) is polite and friendly, although she will change it as the situation and the race she is dealing with merits. Communication with the queen is always open, and any member of the House of Dha can easily reach her, providing she is not otherwise occupied.



Jodar

Shanask

This particular Shanask is one of the most mysterious of a mysterious race. He is seen only rarely, and almost never spoken of. Nevertheless, he (or she, or it) seems to play a vital role in Shanask society.

Although the Shanask will neither confirm or deny it, many have speculated that Jodar is the leader of the Shanask. Other, however, contend that he is a rebel and an outcast.

Certainly, Jodar is one of the most powerful Shanask known. Even the other Shanask speak his name rarely, and then with great reverence.

Jodar claims that the greatest threat of the millennium is coming. He claims that what he refers to as "The Ancient One" has returned. As to the identity of this "Ancient One," Jodar remains cagey, but he has gone so far as to suggest that one of the House of Dha's guardian races is actually a spy for the enemy (although, predictably, he will not divulge which one). All that the mysterious Shanask will say is that, "The Ancient One is back, and the dark races must be assembled," and refuses to elaborate. Needless to say, Guild officials are growing weary of Jodar's obscure pronouncements.

Rumor has it that Jodar is working on some master plan to assist Known Space against this threat, in a way which is supposed to span the cosmos and beyond. Supposedly, he is going to test his plan out on the House of Dha (making Dha officials quite nervous).

Whether Jodar's claims are the rantings of a Shanask gone mad, or a warning of galactic danger is a popular topic among bored Dha warriors, but one which seems to make everyone a little uncomfortable.



Jorm, Vice-President

Anthropos Female

RATING: 20/10/38

Atk/Dmg: cyber darts (death poison 24)

Special: Cybernetically enhanced

Sci: B8/C20/T40

Size: 6'1", 180 lbs

Lang: Anthropos, Guildspeak

Company President Therrokhan's chief rival is this wizened (yet surprisingly strong), 90-year-old woman who has served the Company since birth. She has been a constant thorn in Therrokhan's side, but she is smart enough not to confront him directly, instead using younger allies on the Board to challenge the CEO's leadership and decisions, then stepping out of the picture if her allies are deposed or assassinated. Her skillful manipulation of other board members and stockholders has enabled Jorm to survive in a position of power for decades longer than most of her fellows.

Jorm is possessed of an incredible, if somewhat cruel and thoughtless, intelligence, and seems always to be one step ahead of her rivals. Many Company officials have attempted to unseat her without success, and her operatives may be found at all levels of the Company hierarchy, as well as outside of it, seeking commercial advantage for her in Guildspace and beyond.



Ketuvorra Morrax, Marshal

Vulpe Male

RATING: 32/16/24

Atk/Dmg: bite, disc rifle

Def/AR: flak

Sci: B6/C10/T20

Size: 5'4", 160 lbs

Lang: Vulpe, Guildspeak, Anthropos

This contemplative Vulpe is the commander of the Guides, the rangers and border scouts who patrol the fringes of Guildspace. He is relatively shy and retiring, but is capable of backing his orders up forcefully should he need to do so (he rarely does — the Guides as a whole both love and respect their leader). "Old Foxy," as his troops call him, returns their respect, often visiting the wounded in the infirmary, socializing with ordinary scouts, and even accompanying dangerous missions personally. This last tendency drives many of his officers crazy, for they dislike the thought of their commander placing himself in jeopardy, but Morrax continues the practice nonetheless. A recent operation against Dark Alliance bases just within Guildspace, for example, resulted in the marshal taking several wounds, but he continues to ignore requests that he play a less active role in running the Guides.

Morrax enjoys socializing in quiet settings, and loves wearing his black Guides dress uniform. He is known to be something of a dandy, and his office is kept spotless. Morrax is reluctant to talk about his past, but it is reliably rumored that he lost a wife and two children to a pirate raid several years ago, causing him to devote his life to keeping the Guild safe from such tragedies in the future.



Kronn Vorrosk, War-Master

Anthropos Male

RATING: 20/16/30 (Cha 40, MR 10)

Atk/Dmg: punch, combat knife, force gauntlet, pulse rifle, turbo plaz flak, assault

Def/AR:

Sci: B8/C30/T40

Size: 6'6", 300 lbs

Lang: Anthropos, Guildspeak, Draca, Skrak, Skull Cant

The current chief of the Council of Captains which rules the Dark Alliance, Vorrosk is a frightening-looking Anthropos with wild black hair and several cybernetic devices, which replace the eye, arm, leg, hand and ear which he has lost in combat over the years. His brutal life has hardened him into a singularly merciless individual with no regard for life or property.

Recent raids into Guild territory have brought Vorrosk into the limelight, and the reward currently offered to anyone who can bring him to justice has been increased to 100,000 credits.

While he is a virtual sociopath, Vorrosk is anything but stupid, and has an extremely well-developed sense of tactics. Any assault on the Dark Alliance would have to deal with Vorrosk's strategic expertise, a formidable opponent in itself.

In addition, Vorrosk's crew is a collection of some of the most dangerous and desperate fugitives in Known Space — renegade cyber-lords, outcast Calemora, Anthropos mercenaries, and even a Zin-Shee psi-mistress named Kurr'kaath whose specialty is the infliction of pain.



Korok

Calemora Male

RATING: 20/55/16

Atk/Dmg: MA, kray, ta-oon

Special: *psychosomatics*

Sci: B16/C6/T10

Size: 6'2", 450 lbs

Lang: Calemoran, Guildspeak, Dracan

The leader of the House Dha's Calemora is over two centuries old, and has fought for most of his life. He vividly remembers the end of the Blood Feud, almost 70 years ago, and in gratitude to the Guild, he has served them for all the intervening decades. He has gone on many missions for the Guild, and several continue to live on in legend and popular fiction.

Few Dha members can claim a level of devotion and loyalty to the Guild equal to Korok's. He has repeatedly stated his willingness to die, kray in hand, defending the Guild against its enemies, and he instills this heartfelt belief into the Calemoran members of House Dha.

Dha membership, Korok believes, is one of the ultimate expressions of the Code of the Dragon, and he makes certain that those Calemora admitted to the house are the finest warriors available. He is blunt, conservative, and a Calemoran of even fewer words than is normal for his race. Most Dha members consider Korok to be their house's finest fighter, and he is widely respected for it.



Morrsh, Slayer

Murrk Male

RATING: 16/60/10

Atk/Dmg: punch, bite, power axe, disc
macro cannon

Def/AR: Flak

Sci: B4/C16/T10

Size: 8', 400 lbs

Lang: Murrk, Impspeak

The most infamous of The Empire's Murrk-warriors, Morrsh leads his own personal unit of the Slain into battle against The Empire's enemies. He is tough, ruthless and highly skilled with both traditional Murrk weapons and modern imperial arms. He loves noise, and explosions, preferably if they are involved in tearing enemies apart. He personally slew the Dracan cyber-lord Hakraa in single combat several decades ago, and since then his reputation has only grown. He relishes the thought of battle against the Guild in general, and the Calemora in particular.

Although Murrk are not well known for their intelligence and subtlety, Morrsh seems to have a sixth sense when it comes to tactics and command. Normally slow (and, in the eyes of many, downright stupid), Morrsh comes into his own on the battlefield, seeking out enemy weak points with uncanny accuracy, striking at exactly the right moment, and committing force in precisely the correct amount. Despite the fact that he is officially under Katha command and control, Morrsh is usually his own man in combat, beholden to no one, given complete freedom by his Katha overlords, who trust his judgement implicitly.



Nelos, Admiral

Anthropos Female

RATING: 10/12/32 (WP 32)

Atk/Dmg: pulse pistol

Def/AR: Flak

Sci: B12/C16/T32

Size: 5'9", 145 lbs

Lang: Anthropos, Guildspeak,
Calemoran, Draca, Zin-Shee,
Impspeak, Kryll

The House of Dha's supreme leader is a middle-aged, tough-looking woman with greying hair and a stern, scarred face. She has fought along virtually every Guild frontier in her long career, engaging pirates, raiders, and various enemies from the small states in and beyond the Guild. Called out of retirement to command the Anthropos contingent of Dha, she at first refused, preferring to stay at her country estate on Guildhome, tending garden and raising bees. When informed of developments on the imperial front, however, she agreed to the Guild's request, and today runs a tight, professional organization from her office on the Anthropos moon.

Nelos is a strong, uncompromising commander, but is at the same time both fair and compassionate. She has seen the horrors of combat up close, and now strongly believes that the best way to deal with conflict is to head it off before it begins, by whatever means necessary. She has little in the way of a social life, having dedicated her life to the fleet and (now) to House Dha. At formal occasions and parties (which she attends only reluctantly), Nelos is stiff and uncomfortable, preferring to be back at her desk managing Dha affairs.



Pakk Shraa, Ground Marshal

Rakka Male

RATING: 20/30/20

Atk/Dmg: pulse rifle, plasma sword
Def/AR: flak

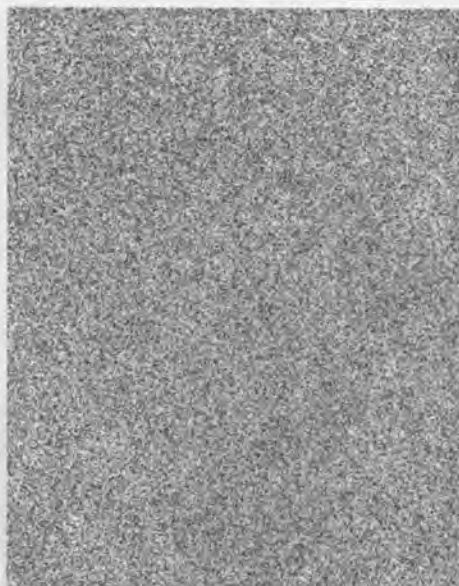
Sci: B10/C16/T20
Size: 6', 190 lbs
Lang: Rakka, Guildspeak

A grim-faced, somewhat cynical Rakka who rose through the ranks to the high command of the House of War, Shraa is responsible for the ground and orbital space defense of the Guild. He is from the famous pack alpha on his homeworld.

Shraa has risen through the ranks, from a celebrated officer to a talented strategic commander, and finally, to supreme leader of Guild planetary forces. He takes his job very seriously, and has all but vanished from the affairs of his pack. Distraught, his fellow Shraa Rakka have selected a temporary alpha, but still consider him their leader.

Shraa's dislike of imperials may amount to downright prejudice, for his philosophy seems to be that "the only good katha is a dead katha." While this attitude is regrettable in any servant of the Guild, it is downright obstructive when dealing with imperial diplomats and representatives, so the marshal is usually left out of high-level discussions with the Empire.

Shraa is still a skilled soldier, who still likes to take the latest armored vehicle through its paces. His subordinates, Rakka, Anthropos and other races, generally respect him, but his humorless and demanding qualities have made him few friends.



(No holo image available)

Petra Dredd, Captain

Anthropos Female

RATING: 20/24/20

Atk/Dmg: punch, power axe, pulse cannon
Def/AR: flak, marine

Sci: B10/C16/T32
Size: 6'2", 210 lbs
Lang: Anthropos, Guildspeak, Skull Cant

The best-known pirate in the Brotherhood of the Skull, Dredd is feared throughout Guildspace and beyond. Few can claim to have actually seen her, so stories of her appearance and personality abound. Some claim that she is stunningly beautiful, and kidnaps handsome male Anthropos as concubines. Others say that Dredd was hideously disfigured in a battle with Guild ships, and constantly wears a suit of powered armor, slaying males and females alike as vengeance for her injury.

Whatever her true appearance and habits, Dredd's reputation is nothing short of legendary, and few have survived her attacks to tell of them. Those rare reports of her capabilities and tactics paint a portrait of a ruthless commander with a flotilla of up to a dozen well-equipped, stealth- and cloak-equipped starships.

The Guild has posted a massive reward for her capture, but thus far no one has even come close to succeeding. A flotilla of House Star' vessels was recently annihilated by Dredd's flagship, the *Revenge*, and the infamous pirate queen remains at large, free to ravage the spaceways.



Shaenll'aa, Psi-Mistress

Zin-Shee Female

RATING: 30/8/32

Atk/Dmg: bite, claw, blaster pistol

Special: *psionics*
Sci: B8/C12/T24
Size: 5'6", 200 lbs
Lang: Zin-Shee, Anthropos, Guildspeak

Acknowledged as the most powerful psionicist in Zin-Shee space, Shaenll'aa has forsaken the chaos of traditional psi-cat society, and retired to her private planetoid, on the edge of Zin-Shee space. She allows a small number of female would-be psionicists to study with her each year. Applicants are expected to arrive at the minimal landing facilities hundreds of miles from Shaenll'aa's home, and travel the intervening distance on foot, with only as much food and water as they can carry.

Those who manage to reach Shaenll'aa's home still have a task ahead of them. Applicants must then prove their power and worthiness in a series of tests and interviews. In the end, Shaenll'aa accepts no more than five students a year, who are given the best psionic training possible, and are known throughout Zin-Shee and Guildspace as the finest psionicists available.

Mistress Shaenll'aa herself is quiet, reserved, and contemplative, all rare traits for a Zin-Shee. No one knows how old she is, although her appearance is that of a young Zin-Shee female. It is also not known whether she takes consorts, but this is only one of many mysteries regarding the most celebrated psi-mistress in Zin-Shee space.



Shakna

Shanask

When the Shanask arrived in Guildspace, their strange black moon appearing in the skies above Dha Prime, this lone, powerful Shanask was the first to contact Guild personnel. Since then, Shakna has been acknowledged as the leader (or at least the primary representative) of the Shanask. Shakna does not talk about his past, or the history of his race, save to drop a few veiled hints that he and the Shanask are very old, and remember ancient conflicts and enemies now lost even to legend.

Shakna obviously commands vast powers but, in keeping with the rather conservative Shanask personality, rarely shows them off in overt ways. He has no real statistics, as he is capable of doing virtually anything he wants.

When asked about Jodar and his proficiencies, Shakna only grows silent for a moment, then says that Jodar's claims are "hopefully the rantings of an old fool," in a disturbingly sombre and introspective voice.

Like all Shanask, Shakna prefers to keep to himself and is rarely seen at Dha functions.

The rumors of Jodar, Shakna, and the Shanask are currently the hot topic among Dha personnel, but these rumors are only discussed behind closed doors and dim lighting with frequent interruptions to listen for strange sounds.

Shakna is intended to be a recurring NPC who is a source of information, advice, and occasional assistance when PCs get in over their heads. His use should be sparing, and he should always be described in highly mysterious terms.



Tiann Shea, Lt. Col.

Anthropos Female

RATING: 20/16/32

Atk/Dmg: pulse laser pistol, combat knife

Sci: B10/C20/T40
Size: 5'10", 155 lbs
Lang: Anthropos, Arthirian, Guildspeak

Colonel Shea is the highest-ranking fighter pilot in the Guild. Her fighter currently carries over 60 kill markers, with Dark Alliance, Combine, Skrak, and many other spacecraft to her credit. She is presently mulling over an offer to join the House of Dha as a fighter instructor, but is loathe to abandon her current active status and the excitement which it provides.

Several holovid series have chronicled Shea's career and adventures — thus far, all have portrayed Shea and her squadron as hard-drinking, devil-may-care outcasts. In the minds of popular entertainers, Shea's Black Cat squadron always pulls together just in time to save the Guild from yet another invasion from the Alliance or Combine, and manages to shoot down dozens of enemy craft without even having to look through gunsights.

Shea's real-life exploits are no less exciting than those portrayed in the popular media. Once shot down and presumed dead, she managed to land her crippled craft on a Dark Alliance forest world, make her way through hostile terrain to a pirate base and single-handedly steal a small starship, returning to the Guild with information on an upcoming Alliance raid. Returned to active duty, Shea helped to defeat the very raid she had warned of, scoring four more victories in the process.



Shurra Hassa, Baron

Zin-Shee Male

RATING: 35/18/24

Atk/Dmg: bite, claw, screamer, warrior claws

Def/AR: force field

Sci: B10/C12/T20
Size: 6'2", 200 lbs
Lang: Zin-Shee, Anthropos, Guildspeak

The Zin-Shee merchant house, Hassa, is one of the largest in Guildspace. Shurra, the male leader of the house, is a shrewd businessman with an innate ability to sense rich sources of profit.

Hassa is a typical Zin-Shee — fastidious, high-strung, changeable and fickle, but he manages to suspend his natural Zin-Shee disinclination toward hard work in regard to his extensive business holdings. Most of his subordinates and family members are less scrupulous, happy to spend the credits which Hassa earns, but he does not seem to mind.

The talent and business acumen of the Hassa family is famous throughout Known Space, and has not gone unnoticed by such powers as The Company, who thoroughly dislike the thought of a skilled competitor. Company assassins and operatives have acted against House Hassa on several occasions, with varying levels of success. Most of the time, however, damage to Hassa and its resources has been limited. The Baron himself was once wounded by a Company attacker, but this has not deterred him in his drive to further profit and expand his business empire.



T11
Android

RATING: 16/60/24

Atk/Dmg: punch, pulse rifle, disruptor (special), missile (16/8MVx)

Sci: B0/C0/T40
Size: 7', 600 lbs
Lang: Anthropros, Guildspeak

This highly intelligent android is the first successful member of what may become the Guild's newest race. T11 is currently a member of the House of Dha. While he is not the first self-aware member of the T series of androids, he is the most advanced and independent.

T11 is similar to the other members of the T series — bipedal, two arms, a humanoid head sporting a complex sensor array, with mother-chip and central processing unit well protected in his armored midsection. He carries a variety of weapons, but is never without a curious weapon which he found in Aerolk space. Its main body is a single-shot rocket launcher, which shoots a missile that inflicts 8MVx damage.

Atop the weapon, however, is a small device which resembles a targeting scope. This weapon is some sort of molecular disruptor which causes its targets to burst into light.

Once a hit is obtained with the weapon, it inflicts 6H cumulative damage per turn. This is not actual damage, for should the beam be interrupted, it inflicts no harm, and all accumulated damage is lost. Once the damage has exceeded the combined total of the target's AR and Vit, the target immediately bursts into a million twinkles of light and is gone.



Therrokhan, President
Anthropos Male

RATING: 24/10/32

Atk/Dmg: blaster pistol

Sci: B10/C20/T40
Size: 5'8", 125 lbs
Lang: Anthropros, Arthirian, Guildspeak

CEO of the vast, interstellar business empire known only as The Company, Therrokhan has served as its leader for the past decade. Profit has improved substantially under Therrokhan's command, and the Board remains pleased with his leadership.

Approaching 50 years of age, Therrokhan is currently in the process of completing the computer matrix which will store his awareness and personality, enabling him to serve as president indefinitely.

Therrokhan's origins are shrouded in mystery. Many claim that he is an outsider who bought his way into the company in a quest for power. Others believe that he is a genetically engineered being, created specifically as a creature of the company, to embody fierce competitiveness and an utter lack of mercy or human compassion.

Whatever his origin, there is no doubt that President Therrokhan is a ruthless businessman who never lets consideration for suffering, violence, or deprivation of others stand in his way. His current rivalry with Vice President Jorm may well split The Company, but time will tell what the actual outcome will be.



Tsewa, Honored Slave General
mBari Male

RATING: 30/45/16

Atk/Dmg: punch, spear, disk rifle
Def/AR: flak, scout

Sci: B6/C16/T16
Size: 7'9", 325 lbs
Lang: mBari, Impspeak

This mBari commander is one of the finest in The Empire. Favoring the extensive use of air support and cybernetic armor, he has advanced far from the primitive warfare of his ancestors. He is a very handsome member of his race, and has been granted the services of many "Honored Consorts" by the Emperor, but he does not let such indulgences cloud his judgement or skill.

Tsewa's most recent triumph was against well-armed and highly trained imperial gladiators on the planet Tenien. In a brilliant campaign, he cut the main force of rebels in two, defeating each in detail with a combination of prolonged air attacks and pinning assaults on their front with ground troops and cyber-tanks.

Currently, Tsewa is eager to try out his new tactics against what he considers a worthier foe — the Guild. He has prepared extensive contingency plans for dealing with all aspects of the Guild military, but has not considered the possible effects of the House of Dha (its secret remaining intact, for now). Should this potent fighting force be added to a conflict between Guild and Empire, the general's plans may well be thrown into chaos.



Turavana Sylva, Chief

Anthropos Female

RATING: 24/14/32

Atk/Dmg: pulse (all), combat knife
Def/AR: flak

Sci: B8/C12/T32
Size: 6', 190 lbs
Lang: Anthropos, Guildspeak, Skrak

The House of the Star is a rough, dangerous posting, where the space police, often outmanned and outgunned, fight an unequal struggle against pirates, raiders, smugglers, slavers, and other similar lawbreakers. Star is a place for rugged individualists who love a challenge and don't mind looking death in the face on a daily basis.

Chief Sylva is a perfect example of this. Relatively young for such a posting, Sylva enjoys the excitement and danger of policework, and (like Morrax of the Guides) will often accompany patrols on dangerous missions personally. Most of Sylva's officers feel she has a deathwish, but as this is not uncommon in the House of the Star, they don't make an issue of it.

Sylva is a prime example of Anthropos development — strong, fast, extraordinarily lucky, and attractive enough to be the object of numerous fantasies on the part of younger officers (fantasies which, regrettably, never seem to be realized). She has no real interest in romance or relationships beyond those necessary to maintain her sanity. Sylva's real love is policework, and nothing will distract her from it.



Val Markala, President

Anthropos Male

RATING: 16/12/40

Atk/Dmg: pulse pistol

Sci: B8/C12/T24
Size: 6', 165 lbs
Lang: Anthropos, Draca, Zin-Shee, Guildspeak

The elected leader of the Great House (and thus the Guild), Markala has spent a decade in the diplomatic and governmental corps, and is highly experienced in dealing with crises, both foreign and domestic.

A handsome man with little taste for combat, Markala can nonetheless turn into a veritable pouncer-cat when he feels the welfare of the Guild is threatened. In times of crisis, Markala is able to twist arms and persuade enough Great House members to see reason that his emergency measures are usually passed quickly. He is currently preparing for hostilities with The Empire, as well as for conflict with a sizeable faction of Great House members who favor concessions to the Katha in exchange for peace.

Markala is sometimes criticized by political rivals for his rather uncompromising style and strong-arm legislative tactics. But few deny that the president is a capable leader, and that his style gets things done. He has made many enemies over the years, however, and some are willing to go to any length to unseat him, and may even consider using violent means to do so. Markala's skills as a politician and diplomat may be stretched to the limit should The Empire or his enemies ever decide to act against him.



Zha, Ancient Dragon

Calemora Male

RATING: 32/40/20

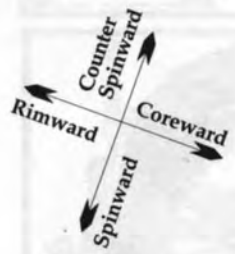
Sci: B10/C4/T8
Size: 6'4", 550 lbs
Lang: Calemor, Catongi, Guildspeak

In all the uncounted thousands of years of Calemoran history, only Zha has borne the title of Ancient Dragon. Possibly the most accomplished psychosomaticist and martial artist ever, Zha is currently the spiritual leader of the planet Calemor, and is considered near-sacred by all Calemora throughout Known Space. His pronouncements and judgements are widely respected, and Calemora mutak and dragons spend long hours studying and contemplating his words.

No one knows how old Zha is. He apparently remembers the Blood Feud, and seems to have extended his own lifespan through applied study and development of psychosomatic disciplines. Another widely-held belief is that Zha was offered the chance to advance to the next stage of existence (although no non-Calemora can say exactly what that is), but voluntarily remained with his Calemoran fellows, desiring to guide and protect them.

Although he engaged in the bitter struggle against the Zin-Shee, Zha now counsels forgiveness and reconciliation. Most Calemora accept the wisdom of such pronouncements, but when they gaze upon the surface of their once-fertile land, smashed and devastated by Zin-Shee violence, many doubt that they can ever truly forgive their ancient foes.

Known Space



Borders

- Normal
- - - Contested
- · · Dual

Legend

- ★ Capital
- World
- Independent World
- ✱ Dual Membership
- ✦ Military Base
- ◇ Contested World
- ✱ Unexplored

One inch = 1000 ly



★ Katha	● Murrkworld
● Hrolla	● Tummok IV
● Ki ff'hara	● UmBari



Skarr Empire

Aerolk Space

The Dominate

Zin-Shee Matriarchy

Dracan Holding

The Zone

The Empire

The Kingdom

Free Traders Republic

Mirrokk

★ Utopia (?)

● Actileh

◆ Uukr'aa

● Greenworld

● Hoffi

● Kree'kree

● Lirri

○ Fashim

◆ Fravir

◆ Rak'sshir

★ Sheapa

● Uru

● Calemor

◆ Hammarik

● Dolos

◆ Orom

✦ Seril

● Kimmiri Station

● Che'rrh

✦ Canip

● Yawwlin

● Hukkra

● Armis X

● Samis

◆ Nene

● Torav

● PackDen

● Lair Drasshik

★ Halima's Realm

Denford

★ Starway

● Gozom

● Lair Akkmakk

● Sahir

● Zashara

● Lair Hakariss

● Alaki

◆ Shalimma

● Lair Thar

● Sharak

◆ Ka-Ma-Kolak

● Connor's Rift

● Haven

★ Egg-Home

● Gruz

Moros

pot

◆ Emeh

◆ Lyrri

● Lair Urkaa

● Donova

● Lair Tlava

llah

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Table 1: Ratings

<u>Finesse</u>	<u>Physical</u>	<u>Mental</u>
Atk	Dmg	—
Def	AR	—
MR	Vit	—
Nish	Shock	Luck
Dex	Str	Int
Spe	FR	Awa
—	WP	Cha

Finesse Sk Physical Sk Mental Sk



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