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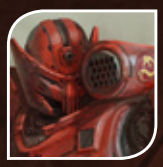


Ben H. Rome

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The True Path is the Way of the Dragon









For almost a millennium, the symbol of the Dragon has struck fear into the rest of the Inner Sphere. The fearless dedication of its warriors, the devotion of its people, and the awesome ambitions of its Coordinator: House Kurita has been more reviled than any other power. Yet a new leader has arisen in the last decades, bringing about a host of reforms and reigning in the realm's most rapacious desires. Such rebirth comes at a price, as various shadowy influencers fix their eyes on reigniting the Dragon's glorious past. Only time will tell which path the Dragon will follow….

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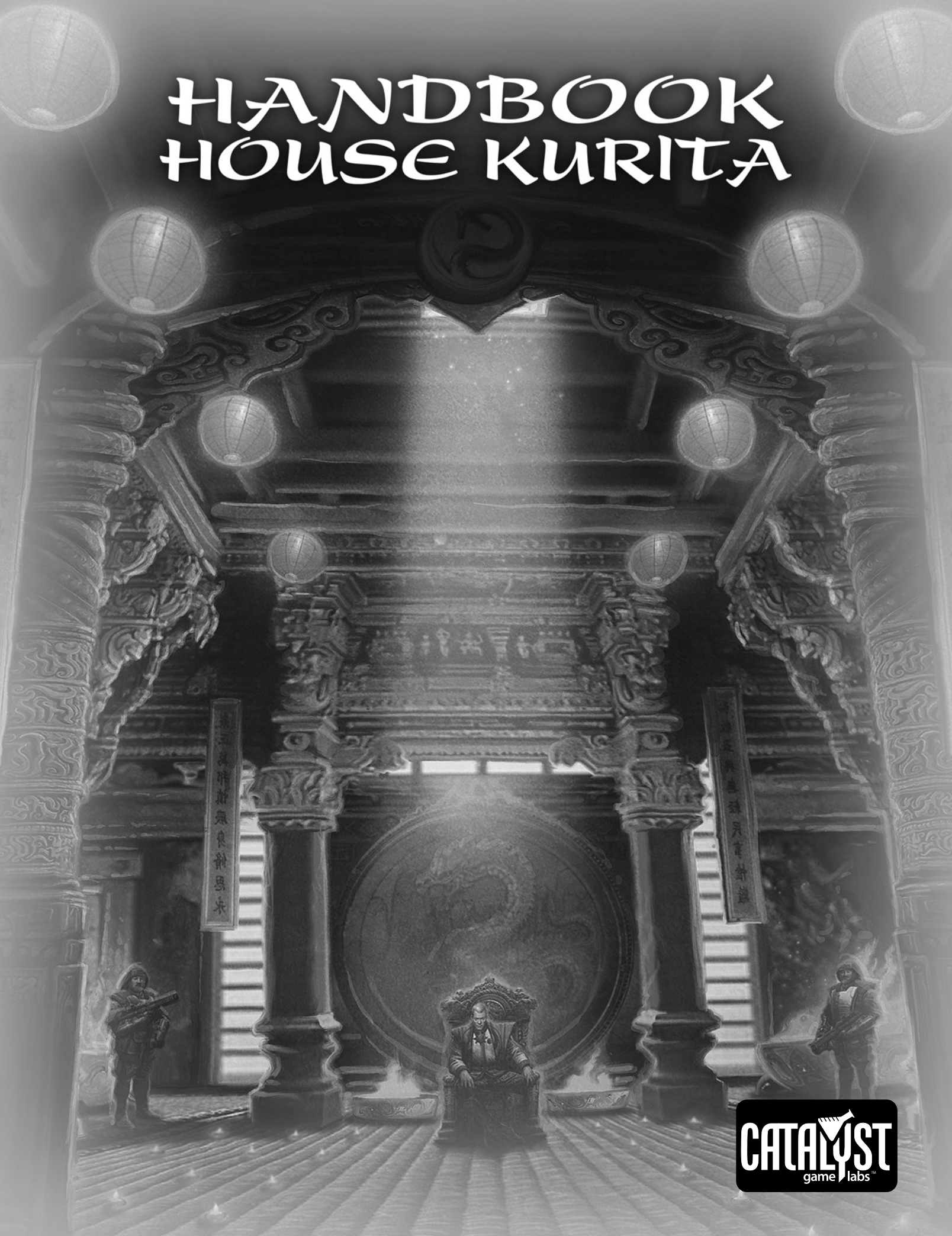
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HANDBOOK HOUSE KURITA



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Special Thanks
Finally. You have in your hands the long-awaited finale of the House Handbook series - and we certainlly saved the best for last. Over nine years in the making (the first draft outline was done in 2006), this Handbook is as much a work of art as it is a testimony to patience and determination.

Ben would like to thank Randall and Catalyst for giving him the trust to add color and tone to the most intriguing Battletech faction. He also thanks his wife Rianne, who labored to learn the entire Kurita geneaology for the sake of her husband's sanity (and continued forgetfulness). And a special thanks is given to "Neko_ Bijin," who not only loaned the author his only copy of the original House Kurita sourcebook, but also a few additional materials for cultural research. And to all the Davion and Steiner fans out there: now you can finally know your enemy. *Kondoragon no chikarani goubukusuru kanou sei ga ari masu.*

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EIGHTH DIERON REGULARS COMMAND POST
TOPEKA BAY, LUZERNE
PESHT MILITARY DISTRICT, DRACONIS COMBINE
22 OCTOBER 3067

The sun rose for the second time that day, and *Chu-i* Alexander Takanashi suppressed a yawn as best he could while taking dinner in the mess hall. Already three months on this planet and he still hadn't gotten used to Luzerne's rotational period of nine hours and change, which was far different than Proserpina. The rest of the Eighth Dieron Infantry had been stationed here since the end of the Combine-Dominion War and already had plenty of time to retrain their biorhythms to the rapidly changing night and day, but Zander was new. His body didn't bounce back quite like those of soldiers who'd seen combat from one side of the Draconis Combine to another.

On top of that, though he was fresh from the University of Proserpina's class of '66, his own company still didn't entirely trust him on account of him never having seen real combat. All of his *gunso* and *shujin* thought him weak and untried, and they never bothered to disguise how they felt about him.

No, yawning in public wouldn't do at all, no matter how tired he felt. Zander was a soldier of the Dragon, and to yawn, even if no one was watching, was to relax in his duties. Instead he politely covered his mouth and worked his jaw from side to side to relieve some of his fatigue.

With a dollop of cold potatoes sitting on his fork, Zander stared down the dull red of Luzerne's sun through the mess hall window. The blood-red glow taunted him. *It's okay to give in*, it seemed to say. *Think about the Lyrans or the Davions. I'll bet they get more than enough sleep,* ne*?*

But the Lyrans are fat and the Davions are lazy, Zander replied, fighting to keep his eyes open. *I am a soldier of the Dragon. I* will *beat you, even if it takes me years.*

At least he probably got more sleep than the Clanners did. Maybe that was why they were so irritable and belligerent.

Zander shoved the forkful into his mouth right as *Gunso* Ezra Boseman strode into the mess, arms laden with packages.

"Mail call!" Bozeman shouted.

Zander immediately perked up. Would today be the day?

The *gunso* rattled off about a dozen other names before yelling "Takanashi, Alexander!"

Seconds later Bozeman thrust an envelope into Zander's outstretched hand. Without even reading who the sender was, Zander tore open the ComStar-embossed seal and pulled out a sheet of paper. No longer focusing on how tired he was, he began to read over the printed Japanese characters with abandon.

Dearest Zander-*chan*,

Omedetou!

Today at 0719 hours, your wife welcomed a beautiful baby boy into the world. He is 3.79 kg and 30.5 cm, a strong and healthy new soldier for the Dragon. The delivery was difficult, but your wife is in good spirits and is looking forward to your eventual return on furlough. In her stubbornness, however, she has decided you should name the child rather than herself. I am certain she will send you her own missive once she is more ambulatory.

I pray this finds you well, and I continue to pray to the *kami* for your safe return home.

In the Dragon's Service,
Oba Haruka

Ten days ago, the HPG message was dated. 12 October. His son's birthday. His *son*.

Inside the envelope he saw another article. A small, stiffer piece of paper slid out. It was a photograph of a tiny, reddened face, with thick head of dark hair, newborn eyes barely cracked open. The face looked so much like his wife Shizuka that a laugh of surprise almost escaped him.

His *son*. Zander felt moisture bead at the corner of his eyes. Then he realized Bozeman, Tanaka, and Miller—each one a *gunso* in his company—were still watching him. He couldn't show them his vulnerability even on such a momentous occasion, especially not after carefully crafting his façade of stoic toughness. They all looked to him for strength—whether they liked him or not was irrelevant—and so strength he would give them. Instead of giving in to his joy, Zander scratched the corner of his eye as though trying to brush away a detached eyelash.

Pushing his tray aside, he set the image of his son before him and studied it. *What to name you?* he asked the confused face. He saw no inherent name in the baby's face, but the task of naming fell to him.

Perhaps it was time to consult a deeper well of knowledge than his own. From his uniform pocket he pulled three silver, one-*ryu* coins, each with a small, circular hole through it.


David White

Show me my son's strengths, he beseeched the coins while searing his son's face into his memory.

He spun all three coins on the tabletop and waited for them to clatter to a stop. One head and two tails formed the first unbroken line in his *I Ching* hexagram. He spun the coins a total of five more times, until he had six lines—unbroken then broken, repeating another two times. The first trigram symbolized "fire"; the second trigram symbolized "water." Together they represented Hexagram Sixty-Three, "After Completion."

Zander stared at the worn coins for several moments. What did this mean? His son had just been born. How could the child already be "completed"? Had he asked the wrong question?

The raid siren went off, wrenching Zander from his thoughts. Training and instinct kicked in. Instantly he was on his feet, scooping up the coins, letter, and photograph into his pocket before looking to his *gunso*.

"Is this a drill, *Chu-i*?" Bozeman said as they rushed out of the mess hall.

The roar of a passing aerospace fighter shook the whole building. Zander caught sight of the low-flying fighter through the window. He didn't recognize the colors, but that was immaterial.

It wasn't one of theirs.

INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT, NEAR UNITY CITY
LUTHIEN
PESHT MILITARY DISTRICT, DRACONIS COMBINE
22 OCTOBER 3067

Cold, dirty rain pelted Shin Yodama's face as he pulled his sodden coat tighter around his shoulders and wandered through the alley. Though midday, not even Luthien's sun was strong enough to penetrate the thick carpet of smog and rainclouds hovering overhead. The clouds mirrored his mood. His mission was complete, but still the recall order had not come through.

Would it ever come through? Had he been forgotten here on the streets, living with all of the gutter trash the Combine had to offer? Had the silk-robed nobles of the Imperial Court marked him as untouchable? Tainted? As if in response to his plea, he passed a pair of Unproductives, both swaddled in filthy rags, with sacks of everything they owned being shielded from the rain as best they could. Both looked stricken with some kind of sickness and were missing teeth. If either survived the week, Shin would be surprised.

No, he reminded himself for the thousandth time, gritting his teeth in anger at himself. *Taro. My name is Taro Toguchi.*

Until the recall order came, he would forever be Taro Toguchi, a yakuza *teppodama*—not Shin Yodama, *tai-sa* of the vaunted Izanagi Warriors regiment. To be anyone else for even a moment would invite certain doom. The *Ryuu-gumi* yakuza had spies everywhere, and if anything got back to the *Kokuryu-kai*—the Black Dragon Society—Shin could risk endangering the whole Combine. No matter how cold he was, how weary he was—how much he so desperately *needed* to scratch the dull itch at the end of the pinky he'd severed in *yubitsume* fashion to blend in with the *Ryuu-gumi*—he couldn't.

For the sake of national security, he could not scratch the itch.

Ah, the things we do for loyalty…

Every night he dreamed of coming back into the light, where his stiff, scratchy DCMS uniform would provide him so much freedom, where the Palace surgeons could reattach the severed tip of his pinky he still kept in a preservation sleeve at his safehouse. To be *whole* again…

But you are *already whole*, he told himself. *No matter how many fingers you must cut off, you remain whole in your service to the Dragon.*

Passing the Unproductives, Shin headed further down the trash-filled alley—organic trash, paper trash, human trash. One of the pale-faced, bedraggled pieces of human trash, barely standing on two shivering legs, didn't watch where he—or she? Shin couldn't tell—was going and staggered right into him. The stink of *sake* laced the man's breath. Shin whirled and, in perfect Taro Toguchi style, unsheathed his concealed *tantō*. Wet from the rain, the small blade flashed and glistened in the buzzing street light nearby.

"Don't touch me, *filth*," he growled.

The beggar bowed as low as humanly possible, eyes contrite with fear. "*Gomen*, yakuza-*san*," his wracked voice said, coughing. "*Gomen nasai*."

Shin gave a start—how had this *trash* known he was yakuza?—until he realized his knife stance had pulled back his coat sleeve far enough to expose the serpent tattoo snaking down his forearm. Instead of striking out with his blade, Shin shoved the Unproductive, hard. The beggar fell back, hitting the nearby building with a grunt.

"Watch where you're walking, *bakayaro*," Shin said. He spat on the ground to show his—*Taro's*—contempt, the spittle all but lost in the Luthien rain.

Shin deplored Unproductives, especially those that were truly unproductive, but even he knew they, like everyone under the Coordinator's benevolence, served a place in the Combine's order. Despite the name, Shin believed that without this lowest rung of Draconian society, the Combine would fall apart at the seams. It would—

He felt a small lump in his coat pocket that wasn't there before.

Kuso, Shin thought, remembering his last information exchange with an underground contact. *They're really good.* But he didn't dare look back at the "Unproductive" or call attention to his discovery in any way. Even those pair of beggars he'd passed further down the alley could be informants.

Appearances, as Shin had so intimately learned since severing the first knuckle of his pinky, could be very misleading.

Shin casually ducked out of the alley at his first convenience. Before stepping into the streetlight, he saw in his peripheral vision that one of the two sitting Unproductives was gone.

"*Shimatta,"* he cursed under his breath. He'd been made.

Shin hurried toward the street, where he could attempt to hide in plain sight. Out on the street corner across the crowded thoroughfare, a riot-gun-toting Friendly Persuader in his red-striped police garb observed the crush of foot traffic for anything

out of the ordinary. If Shin could somehow get near the Persuader and shake this tail …

He flinched upon feeling something small and hard poke against his spine through his coat's drenched fabric—the cold, unmistakable outline of a gun barrel.

"*Konnichi wa*, Toguchi-*san*," a voice whispered from behind him. "You have … very interesting friends."

UNITY PALACE
LUTHIEN
PESHT MILITARY DISTRICT, DRACONIS COMBINE
22 OCTOBER 3067

Wearing a red silk kimono slashed with yellow, Coordinator Theodore Kurita stood proud and tall on the covered balcony looking out into the Palace gardens. The dark rainclouds settling over Luthien should have dampened his spirits, but instead they buoyed him. Even in the rain, the gardens brought him a small measure of peace and beauty. The azaleas, wood poppies, magnolias, and Luthien sunflowers spoke to him in a way other things could not. Their color—the reds and pinks and yellows—shone through the darkest of rains, and not even the heaviest downpour could crush these springy flowers and shrubs into the ground. Instead, the dirty rain strengthened the blossoms; they would shine with even richer color once the clouds passed.

As the azaleas are, Theodore thought, *so must I be.*

For the good of the realm, he needed to be a spot of color amidst the dreary and tumultuous times he saw ahead of him. Soon he would take a JumpShip command circuit to the Star League's Fourth Whitting Conference on Tharkad, but he would not leave the Combine before knowing his realm would be safe during his absence. In a sense, he *was* the Combine, and the Combine was him. As the Heir-Designate long ago, that thought made little sense to him, but upon his father's death, the idea became both comfort and terror all at once. An entire nation looking to his counsel. As they supported him, he supported them. But now, a black weed was growing in his garden, and he needed to find its root and pluck it before it choked out all of the wondrous flowers of the Draconis Combine.

Hands clasped behind his back, Theodore breathed in the scent of ozone and spent rain. *How to go about this?* he asked himself. *I must tread carefully.*

The soft scrape of the *shōji* screen behind him told him he had a visitor. That his Otomo guards hiding in the wings did not immediately pounce meant the visitor was not a threat to him. "*Sumimasen*, Kurita-*sama*," the quiet, deferential voice said. "She is here."

His attendant did not need to mention who "she" was. "*Domo*," Theodore said, without looking at the man. "Have her escorted to my personal garden. I will meet with her there."

With a scrape, the *shōji* panel slid closed.

Be like the azalea, he thought.

The leisurely walk to his own personal garden on the Palace grounds did not take long, but he knew the attendant was purposely delaying his guest to ensure he arrived at the meeting location first. He passed his father's garden along the way, stopping for a moment to consider the legacy of Takashi Kurita. Palace nobles still maintained the garden exactly as it had been when Takashi was still alive, but despite the same flowers, shrubs, and trees growing there, Takashi's own strong hand was missing from its cultivation. Even the day after Takashi died, the change was stark.

How long before my own garden takes upon this same lifelessness? he wondered.

The layout of Theodore's own garden was vastly different from his father's. Where Takashi had preferred rock gardens and flowering trees, Theodore valued vast arrays of flowers from across the Combine, bridges spanning ponds of native Luthien carp, and countless *bonsai*. Due to the rain, the small, clay-potted trees had been moved beneath a tarp-covered area to prevent overwatering.

Theodore walked through the collection of *bonsai* and chose a very particular tree, a gnarled evergreen with blue frosted needles. With deepest reverence, he carried the pot to his covered work area and set the tree down on a pedestal that would allow him to see the tree's shape from all angles.

Not long after sitting down on a stool to work, he heard her quiet footsteps over the rain but did not immediately turn to acknowledge her. *Be as the azalea*. Instead, he lifted a pair of shears and studied the small tree with intent.

"*Konnichi wa*, Yamiro-*san*," he said. "Thank you for coming on such short notice."

Snip went the bonsai shears on a small bit of twiggy backbudding.

The whisper of silk brushing silk told him she bowed deeply. "It is no matter, *tono*. I live to serve the Dragon."

Snip.

"Do you, Abbess?" Theodore turned to regard her with a kind eye.

Abbess Tomade Yamiro of the Order of the Five Pillars greeted his expression with affection. A powdered white face, crimson-painted lips, and raven-black wig done up in a bun hid her true age. An exquisite, gold-silk kimono and black-lacquered *geta* sandals hid her physical prowess. Everything about her was a carefully formed fabrication—a necessary precaution for the leader of an intelligence agency. He did not doubt she wore form-fitting body armor beneath her robe and had possibly managed to sneak some nonconventional weapon past his Otomo.

Not that she would try anything, not with two Otomo standing at attention just beyond her field of vision.

"In these trying times," he said, "I find it a comfort to hear such words."

Snip.

"What can the Order do for you, Lord Kurita?"

To mask his trepidation, he turned back to the *bonsai*. "I have just been given some solid leads to pursue in investigating the *Kokuryu-kai* hidden within our midst." This much was true: undercover operations by his cousin Isoroku Kurita and Shin Yodama had both uncovered some very disturbing information regard-

ing the Black Dragon Society. However, information was power, and Theodore was not about to relinquish that power just yet. "I would like your agents to look into them."

Silk whispered. "*Hai*. It would be my pleasure."

Snip.

Theodore lowered the shears and faced her. "Tell me, Yamiro-*san*. What do you think of this *bonsai*?"

"It is … a work in progress, *tono*. The branches still require some training."

Theodore laughed politely. "No *bonsai* is ever truly finished. What if I told you this particular blue star juniper was first cultivated and trained by my ancestor Minoru Kurita? This particular *bonsai* has survived the fall of the Star League, four Succession Wars, and the Clan Invasion. I wonder, will the *Kokuryu-kai* be the death of it?"

"My apologies, Lord Kurita," Tomade said, bowing low. "I meant no disrespect. I merely stated the truth of my perceptions."

He laughed again. "You may see this tree as untrained, my dear Abbess, but it has far more to teach the both of us than we could ever learn in our respective lifetimes. Bear that in mind as we progress forward."

"*Hai, tono.*"

Knowing the Palace gardens were free of cameras or other recording devices, Theodore gave the abbess a short list of names. Some real, some false. He needed to see where this path would lead.

The abbess bowed low. "My adepts and illuminati will find what we can, Lord Kurita."

"*Domo arigatou gozaimasu*," he said, suppressing a smile. "I know you will."

TACOMA VALLEY
LUZERNE
PESHT MILITARY DISTRICT, DRACONIS COMBINE
22 OCTOBER 3067

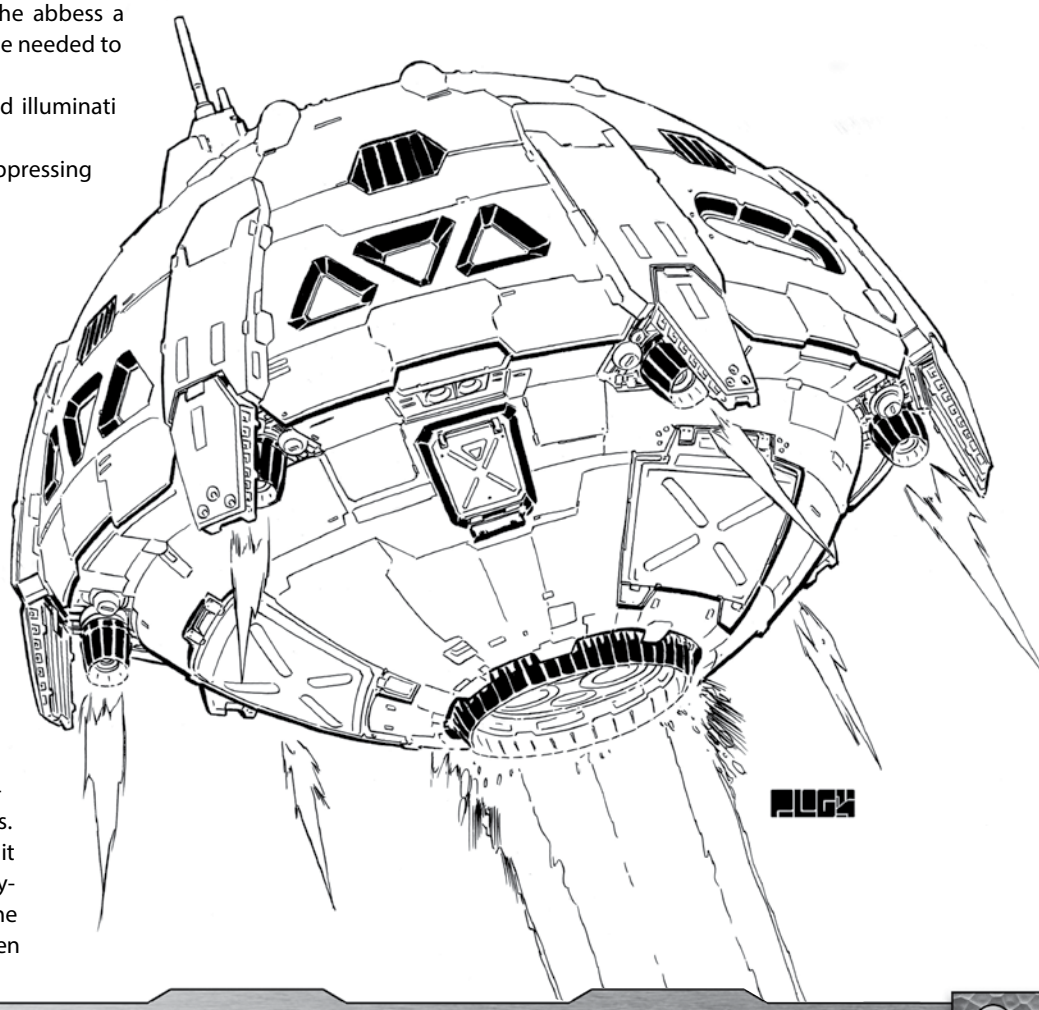
In full field kit, Zander peered through binoculars across the wide valley. According to comm chatter on his helmet radio, any moment now 'Mechs from the Ghost Bears' 357th Assault Cluster might spill out into the yellow grasses on the horizon. The Bears hadn't stated their intentions—at least as far as the higher-ups told low-ranking *chu-i* like Zander—but based on his book knowledge, Zander believed they were here to claim raw materials. The Clanners hadn't come in force, and it was clear to him they didn't plan on staying. Still, everything and everyone on the whole planet belonged to the Dragon, even Zander. Whether the Bears intended to steal a planet or even a single grain of rice, his duty was to stand fast and take no prisoners.

Such was the calling of the samurai and the tenets of *bushido*, the Path of the Warrior.

The Eighth Infantry's CO, *Chu-sa* Ursula Loerring, passed down the command chain that the Bears' target had yet to be identified. Based on their LZ, they could hit any number of mining complexes, which meant the Eight Dieron Regulars and its attached conventional forces had to be ready for anything. *Tai-sa* Simms had ordered the 111th Dieron Heavy Armor's tanks and the Eighth Dieron Infantry placed in strategic chokepoints at all the possible places the Bears would strike, with aerospace performing aerial recon. In theory the conventional troops could attempt to hold off or trap the enemy until the Regulars' 'Mechs could come put out the fire. Just a ways south of Zander's spot, armor from the 111th's *Niban* Battalion was positioned in defilade in anticipation of an assault.

After inspecting *Ichiban* Platoon, *Gunso* Bozeman wandered up beside him. "Anything yet, *Chu-i*?"

"*Nanimo nai*," Zander replied, shaking his head.



"I'll bet you twenty *ryu* they won't even come here. Mining Complex Five is a much sweeter target. Plus, they're probably scared of us, *ne*?"

Zander chuckled. "I think they're just scared of *you*, *Gunso*. Your face could frighten just about anyone. Come to think of it, make sure you stay away from my son. I don't want you giving him nightmares."

Just thinking about his son conjured a mental image of the photo his *oba* had sent. He'd tucked it safely in his footlocker back at the barracks, for fear that it might get damaged in the fighting.

"Speaking of the kid," Bozeman said, "he got a name yet?"

"*Iie*. Nothing speaks to me."

Zander thought of spinning the coins again, but consulting the *I Ching* twice about the same thing was discouraged. He already had his answer; he just needed to figure out what it meant.

His headset mic clicked on with a crackle. "Be advised: elements of the 357th last seen approaching your position."

Just as the connection cut, Zander felt the ground beneath him shake. His heartbeat stopped for a moment.

'Mechs.

He lifted the binoculars to his eyes. A familiar shape focused into view: the distinct silhouette of a *Vulture* OmniMech, painted in slate gray, with white, star-like dots and pale blue trim. Zander recognized it from stills, but to see one in the flesh brought goosebumps beneath his uniform. A blocky *Thor* and another *Vulture* joined the first.

"Bozeman!" he shouted, using his deep, command voice. "Take positions!"

"*Ryokai!*" The *gunso* ran down the line, yelling at the men to form up and take cover.

Zander called in the sighting just as the 111th started opening up on the Ghost Bear 'Mechs. Long-range missile flights hissed. Deafening *crump*s from large-bore autocannon filled the valley.

"Hold your position, Takanashi" came the eventual, partially strangled reply from command. "*Sanban* Battalion is en route. ETA, twelve minutes."

"*Wakarimasu*," he acknowledged.

Zander passed the orders along and readied his own laser rifle. Each time the ground shook, either from 'Mech movements or explosions, he thought of his wife, of his nameless, newborn son.

The hexagram "After Completion" … What did it mean?

The lead *Vulture* landed salvo after salvo onto the 111th, but Zander realized it intended to run right through his own position. His company would either have to stand firm and be crushed or step aside and take advantage of the maneuver. But how? The Clanner had only suffered minor armor damage so far, and the Eighth Regulars were still too far away to offer heavier support. The 111th was faltering and in danger of falling back. If the *Vulture* made it past his men, not even the Regulars' arrival would matter.

After Completion, he thought.

And then it came to him. From *The Art of War:* "A victorious warrior wins first and then goes to war." The victory was already complete. Now he just had to win it.

He studied the incoming 'Mech looming large in his field of view. Its massive feet were not changing course, and he noticed a few bits of metal flaking off its right knee. Armor damage—If he and his men could plant an anti-'Mech charge there …

"*Niban* and *Sanban* Platoons!" he shouted into his radio. "Take up flanking position! *Ichiban*, follow my lead!"

A chorus of *ryokai*s responded. Zander unhooked his grapple launcher and his men followed. This close, the *Vulture*'s footfalls sent quakes beneath his boots and rattled his insides. The whine of large-bore lasers pierced his eardrums.

It was a glorious moment. A moment preceding victory.

Katsu, Zander thought. Victory, the completion of a successful battle. *That is a good name.*

No matter the outcome, his son would always be his truest victory.

He raised his grapple launcher and aimed at the towering behemoth as the shadow of the 'Mech's *y*-shaped foot spilled over him.

"Now!" he screamed to his platoon. "For the glory of the Dragon!"

The shadow descended.

INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT, NEAR UNITY CITY
LUTHIEN
PESHT MILITARY DISTRICT, DRACONIS COMBINE
22 OCTOBER 3067

Shin's ingrained training in countless martial arts could easily flip his assailant onto his back or wrench away the pistol and turn it on its owner, but Taro Toguchi—lowly yakuza *teppodama* that he was—had no such skills. Regardless of the situation, Shin had to maintain the pretense for as long as he could. On the slim chance this was merely a gross misunderstanding, he had to keep up appearances for as long as possible, even if it meant going to his grave wearing yakuza rags instead of his DCMS uniform.

"Can I help you?" Shin said without looking back at the thug.

"Empty your pockets."

"If you're meaning to rob me," Shin said, "you should know I have but three *ryu* to my name."

"Spare me the lies, Toguchi. You are a traitor to the *Ryuu-gumi*, and I will gain great glory in exposing your treachery."

Shin slowly turned around to face his abductor and made sure the gun barrel pressed against his flat stomach. "Do you know who I am?" *I am Shin Yodama!* he wanted to scream. *With but a word I could have you flayed and sentenced to a slow and torturous death in an ISF prison buried so deep you will never see the light of day again.* "When the *oyabun* hears about this …"

The man hesitated. That was all the time Shin needed. Whirling, he kicked the thug's legs out from under him. A report

and muzzle flash deafened him as the man went down hard. Shin turned to run but only staggered a few paces toward the alley before collapsing to his knees. Grabbing his side, his hand came away wet with blood—dirty rain washing the crimson away into the gutters. Spots danced in front of his eyes.

A shrill whistle sounded from the street—the Friendly Persuader responding to the gunshot.

Grunting in pain, Shin shambled away from the scene. If the Persuader caught him, he had no way to verify his identity. And the thug …

Shin stumbled against the nearest building and waited just inside the alley, where the buzzing streetlight cast long shadows. Biting back the pain, he waited until a silhouette dropped into view. His *tantō* flashed and buried into the thug's neck for a split second before withdrawing. The thug wilted in a crimson spray.

The Persuader's insistent whistle grew louder, his splashing footsteps approaching closer. There was nowhere in the alley for Shin to hide. He would be caught and exposed, and all of his infiltration would be for nothing. In desperation he snatched up the thug's pistol and ducked out of the alley. The striped red-and-white uniform barreled toward him with riot gun to the ready.

Dozo gomen nasai, Shin said to the Persuader. Please forgive me.

He pulled the trigger.

The Persuader dropped. Another sacrifice in the name of national security.

Shin fought back the spots flashing in his vision. His wound was probably not life threatening, but he was losing blood, and he had to get rid of the evidence fast, before he could seek medical attention or learn what these men had died for. He winced upon stooping to drag the Persuader's corpse into the alley.

The things I do for the glory of the Dragon, he thought.

UNITY PALACE
LUTHIEN
PESHT MILITARY DISTRICT, DRACONIS COMBINE
22 OCTOBER 3067

In complete silence, Theodore Kurita entered the Black Room, the Palace's most secret and secure location. Five uniformed figures were already in attendance. Per tradition he kept them waiting as a reminder they were there at his pleasure, not the other way around.

Members of the DCMS High Command were seated around the long table: Theodore's cousin Isoroku, Warlord of the Dieron Military District; Kiyomori Minamoto, Warlord of Pesht; *Tai-shu* Boris Petroff, of the Benjamin District; *Tai-shu* Li Tok Do, of Galedon; and Internal Security Force Director Ninyu Kerai-Indrahar.

Theodore took his seat at the head of the table. He met the gaze of each one present, although he purposely lingered on a few particular candidates. It was always good to play the *tai-shu* against each other, make him think he played favorites, but he did not. More tradition. Only this time, he did so with a specific purpose in mind.

"The time has come for something to be done," he said without preamble. "My wishes are thus:

Pluck the blackened weed
Parading in our garden
Before winter comes

"You speak of the *Kokuryu-kai*, Kurita-*sama*?" *Tai-shu* Minamoto asked. The look on his mustached face said he did not truly expect an answer.

The haiku should be enough. It was always enough. The Coordinator made his wishes known, and his Warlords interpreted them appropriately.

Theodore ignored the *tai-shu*'s question. "I have met with Abbess Yamiro and provided her a list of names that have recently come into the Dragon's possession."

He waited a moment to let that sink in, gauging the reactions across the assembly. No one so much as blinked or swallowed.

"The Dragon has given her full latitude to investigate these names," he continued.

Again he studied them. No reactions whatsoever. Could it be that the list was wrong or forged, that no Black Dragon sympathizers resided amongst his immediate council?

No, he reminded himself. Only a fool would lower his guard when the fate of an entire nation was at stake.

"Cousin," Isoroku said, "we will offer her our full cooperation, if the Dragon deems it necessary."

Theodore nodded. "As you know, I am to depart for Tharkad soon. Put your people in place, but there are to be no movements while I am away, *wakarimasu ka*? The scalpel cannot treat the patient if the physician is in a different room."

Then he sat back and silently observed the Warlords planning for his absence. He saw nothing resembling betrayal in any of their faces, but no matter. The seed had been planted. All that remained was to see what would grow.

After a time, he dismissed them and returned to his thoughts. Alone, he activated a holomap of the Inner Sphere. Above the table, thousands of populated star systems sprang to life. The wedge of the Draconis Combine glowed with crimson vigor. His realm was meant to rule all of the stars, but the Clans' conquest and Davion predation had reduced his realm to the second smallest of the Great Houses. Would the Combine survive another hundred years? Fifty? Five?

He had taken a risk by confronting the abbess and his Warlords, but these were risks he had to take, all for the good of the nation. If the Combine was to survive, wars would need to be fought, heroes would need to die, and good people would need to be sacrificed.

All for the glory of the Dragon.

INTRODUCTION

Honored Dragon:

Herein lies the efforts of half a decade's work by your devoted servant. Pursuant to your Directive 82-1, my assistant Jose Maestas and I have worked tirelessly to craft this comprehensive and unabashed view of the Kuritan realm.

In part, we strive to provide the Court an updated look at our history, culture, and perspectives. This work also provides a view into the Dragon's inner workings: how we work, live, fight, breathe, and survive. While such information is already an integral part of any Draconian citizen's educational upbringing, this tome is meant to bring provide a full accounting of the realm to the Imperial Court. From this document, the Dragon can choose what to share with the current signatories of the Second Star League, in order to deal fairly with us.

Throughout this process, we have stretched our resources to academies and other institutions outside the Dragon's influence. Glaring errors and outright fabrications have been discovered; we have done what we can to address and correct such inconsistencies. Most egregious is the blatant plagiarism by ComStar in their own internal diplomatic volumes; they have stolen, misattributed, edited, and even outright lied in using publications and materials that were readily available to them in every nation of the Sphere. We have, as best we could, included the original documents and attributions in the various appendices located throughout this work.

As defined by your directive, I have provided a critical eye where necessary, to best show areas where the Dragon continues to build its strength. I have also put into place the proper titles and ranks as introduced by Coordinator Theodore during his time as *gunji-no-kanrei*. Only in reference works originating outside of the Combine or in transcripts have the old ranks remained in place.

My deepest hope is that this comprehensive work pleases the Dragon.

—Megumi Kaneda II, Chief Historian Emeritus and Archivist, Luthien University

ADDENDUM: I would be remiss if I did not mention the honorable efforts of my father, Megumi Kaneda. Much of the information found within this work is a direct result of his tireless efforts in chronicling the illustrious heritage of the Kuritas from Shiro through Takashi. In his ninety years of service with the Imperial Court, he has singlehandedly maintained the most complete historical archive of your beloved family. I am humbled to dedicate this work to his memory, as he passed from the Dragon's service on 27 November 3066.



ADDENDUM II: On 10 August 3067, the honorable Megumi Kaneda was posthumously awarded a Dieron teak Honor Tree, which has been placed in the Kaneda gardens outside Imperial City. The Dragon is honored by the dedication of its citizenry.

— Coordinator Theodore Kurita


FOR FREEDOM, FOR PEACE

FATHER OF THE DRAGON

Founded in 2319 by Shiro Kurita, the Draconis Combine was forged from a bloody mix of statesmanship, treachery, and military conquest. Shiro took the essence of a small city-state on a backwater planet and forged one of the most unusual and feared stellar nations in existence. The Combine's tenacity and longevity are a testimony to the man who formed the Dragon from nothing.

THE OZAWA CLAN

After the Outer Reaches Rebellion ended in 2238, almost every colony world found itself on its own, forced to depend solely on the resources of its own system and limited interstellar trade. Formal political, economic, or military alliances between worlds did not exist until the formation of the Free Worlds League, the first legitimate interstellar mutual defense treaty, in 2271. In the meantime, colonists fended for themselves, did not make trouble, and hoped no one else would, either.

The only frequent contact between worlds came as a few shipping and mercantile associations gradually evolved from smaller corporations that had acquired K-F drive ships. These associations were loosely organized coalitions of merchant brokers and starship crews that provided semi-regular passenger traffic, small-scale cargo transport, speculative trading in both luxuries and necessities, and information of the most unofficial sort. Even at their height during the second half of the twenty-third century, fewer than a dozen of these co-ops existed, mostly due to JumpShip availability. At this time of colonization most vessels were transporting Terran colonists under Alliance control, limiting the number of ships on hand for other commercial uses.



As the vast reaches of space became available for settlement over the years, each association carved out its own territory of dominant influence and amicably left the others to do the same. Occasionally, a conflict would take place on a world where two territories overlapped, but bloodshed was rare. In most cases, one side would withdraw peacefully, or the two groups might even consent to share the cargo or profits.

For the most part, these associations were valuable for disseminating goods and information (including rumors) that would otherwise have been impossible to obtain. The merchants generally charged respectable fees but carefully avoided excessive price gouging. After all, they wanted to be able to return and sell again.

Such was the policy of the Ozawa Mercantile Association, a typical example of such loosely organized coalitions. This particular co-op served the coreward-spinward quadrant of the Inner Sphere, including the worlds of New Samarkand and Galedon V. As the name implies, the Ozawa clan led the association, owning several ships outright and leasing a handful of others.

Though not outrageously wealthy, the Ozawas had done well enough for themselves at a time when many colonists were barely able to scratch out a meager living. They were not subtle about their wealth, and this rubbed off on their merchants, whose professional politeness was always tinged with arrogance. On more than one planet, their customers would have been happier trading with someone else, but the Ozawas had a virtual monopoly in their territory. Underlying resentment toward the Ozawa family would eventually set the stage for the spread of Shiro Kurita's dominance.

—*The Ozawa Threat Realized;* Pesht University, 2743

Raised in a military and social tradition dating back more than six centuries, Shiro's life embodied the "way of the warrior." Through the forcefulness of his personality, he rose to the leadership of New Samarkand and then united a group of petty kings and warlords into the Alliance of Galedon. Initially created to oppose the Ozawa Mercantile Association, the Alliance of Galedon was merely the starting point for Shiro's military and political conquest of dozens of systems. By 2319, Shiro Kurita controlled a narrow strip of planets stretching from the region of space near Terra to the largely unexplored Draconis Rift. Shiro rechristened his realm the Draconis Combine.

Shiro's legacy continues to this day and, quite probably, for all time. The essence of the First Coordinator can be seen in the devotion of the Combine's armed forces to the way of the warrior and in the belief that all citizens first serve the Dragon through the Coordinator's quest to rule the Inner Sphere. The Combine's blend of an all-pervasive military tradition and a dogged self-reliance—oft mistaken for extreme xenophobia—explains in part the aggressive posture of past and present Kurita leaders.

The greatest legacy of Shiro Kurita is the Kurita family dynasty. The Combine could not have summoned such single-minded devotion from its people without Kurita leadership.

More than any other Great House, the history of the Combine is a story of recurring themes. The names may change, the tactics and organization may shift, but the heart of the Combine—the Kurita dynasty—continues to shape and define this greatest of interstellar nations.

FOUNDATION OF HATE

New Samarkand, one of the most heavily populated colony worlds from the Age of Colonization, contained a half-dozen city-states ruled by several feudal lords. Each lord maintained a small army and claimed authority over the entire planet. With no one holding clear control over the system, New Samarkand was rife with intrigue, subtle threats, and displays of military might that made planetary politics both interesting and hazardous. Shiro Kurita was born into this environment in 2270.

Shiro showed a keen interest in politics at an early age. His younger brother Urizen, born in 2273, followed his example. Urizen soon proved to be less adept at politics, instead showing aptitude in the arts of war. The two brothers quickly rose to power within their city-state Yamashiro. Shiro showed great skill at ritual dueling, political extortion, and cunning; in 2294, he declared himself lord of Yamashiro. Urizen attained the rank of captain in the Yamashiro Guard.

Before a year passed, Shiro discredited all of his political rivals. Through threats of violence and the mysterious deaths of three of his more outspoken opponents, Shiro claimed control over all of New Samarkand. In 2296, the "First Citizen" contacted other nearby worlds while Urizen molded the various private armies of New Samarkand into a singular entity directly under his command.

At this time, the demand for JumpShips had begun to decrease, making K-F drive ships more readily available to individual worlds or private groups. Shiro believed he needed to gain enough vessels to transport his armies to war. Additionally, more starfaring ves-

sels would decrease New Samarkand's dependence on the Ozawa Mercantile Association and their kind. The First Citizen despised the Ozawa family and their trading alliance, partially due to jealousy over their amassed wealth, their passive methods of acquiring it, and the way they flaunted that wealth. Shiro used his hatred for the OWA as a political weapon for rallying nearby worlds to his cause.

ALLIANCE OF GALEDON

Galedon V was a major colony by the time Shiro Kurita reached out to the system in the early twenty-fourth century. The planet's sizeable population sat on vast mineral resources and uncontaminated water, making Galedon V extremely valuable. The citizens of Galedon were enormously proud of their wealthy colony.

Despite its successes, Galedon still had problems with the OMA. Although the Ozawas maintained several large facilities onworld that provided many benefits, they also made substantial trade profit. On occasion, those profits came at the expense of Galedon's economy, fueling the ire of the planet's finance minister.

Shiro made it known to the Galedonian government that he, too, bore a grudge against the OMA. To the Galedonians, Shiro appeared as a forceful, dynamic leader that shared their bitterness towards the Ozawas. The First Citizen, however, simply wanted Galedon V as a psychological and strategic springboard for further offensives. Shiro easily manipulated Nathaniel Imura, Governor of Galedon, into pooling the technological and military resources of both worlds. Once Galedon's Colonial Board agreed, they inquired as to who would lead the combined forces. Shiro humbly offered his services to lead the "Alliance of Galedon." His manipulation of the Board through flattery won him their enthusiastic support.

The new director of the Alliance of Galedon then traveled to Dnepropetrovsk and Sverdlovsk to offer them membership. Dnepropetrovsk quickly accepted Shiro's offer; Sverdlovsk remained noncommittal. The military forces from the Alliance's new members relocated to New Samarkand and received intensive training and additional funding from Urizen Kurita.

As more and more worlds joined the fledgling Alliance—thanks in large part to Shiro's abilities as a statesman and orator—the OMA retaliated. By raising transport fees on the Alliance worlds, the OMA proved they were out to punish Shiro's nation through economic and commercial pressure. The attempt played into Shiro's hands, establishing the OMA as the villain.

Armed Galedonian ships began boarding unarmed Ozawan merchant vessels and confiscating cargoes. In support of the cause, a large percentage of each cargo went directly to financing further operations, a segment of the plan carefully hidden from civilians. The Colonial Board was aware of the action, however, and privately approved of Shiro's actions, though they maintained a façade of ignorance publicly. For some time this method of raising funds worked; by the time the OMA caught on, the Alliance of Galedon was operating its own government-controlled merchant fleet—conveniently armed and well-escorted.

The Ozawa response was predictable. Hastily equipped with weapons, the OMA vigorously defended itself from Alliance predation. Shiro's board-and-seize missions turned into running gun battles. The OMA also fought back with an effective media campaign and aggressive rate reductions, both of which somewhat improved the organization's public image. The exposure also shed some light on Kurita's less-than-savory tactics, fueling the more unpatriotic segments of the Alliance population who viewed Shiro more as a political strongman than savvy leader.

The Galedon Colonial Board and Governor Imura vigorously defended Kurita as an ally and friend. Even with their stalwart support, Shiro's popularity began to slip. Kurita, unwilling to let the situation fall from his control, resorted to a more direct response. In November 2303, every known OMA office and support facility came under attack including several complexes on Galedon V. The Alliance was as surprised as the OMA at the level of terroristic violence.

MOVING PAPER MOUNTAINS

The ruling body of Galedon since the colony's founding in 2282, the Colonial Board controlled the planet without question. Made up of eight voting members and twelve non-voting members, the board controlled all aspects of Galedonian life. The board met once a month in New New Delhi, hearing proposals and ruling on various decisions, such as farm quotas and terraforming projects. The twenty board members had a staff of ten to twenty advisors who sorted and organized proposals and other research.

By the time of Shiro Kurita's proposal for an alliance, the Colonial Board's bureaucracy had slowed the planetary economy to a crawl. Local merchants commonly faced a wait of six months to a year for intercontinental export permit requests to clear, forcing many to gamble on the local futures markets. The Ozawa Mercantile Association had a large number of advocates operating through the various staff members, using bribes and other means to get OMA proposals and permits ahead of local merchants. That OMA agents received preferential treatment did nothing to endear them to the Galedonians.

Kurita's creation of the Alliance of Galedon made a small splash within the massive bureaucracy. The Colonial Board created a new position, that of director, and gave that seat the ninth vote on the committee. The director was granted full authority to enact planetary measures, though these could be vetoed by a majority vote. Kurita used the director's power sparingly in the beginning, using it to institute a draft for the Alliance's militia and to create specific trade contracts between New Samarkand and Galedon. Otherwise, it was business as usual for the monolithic government machine.

Only after the OMA began to lose ships—and their power base—were changes noticeable. The loss of OMA agents opened up the logjam and uncovered several corrupt board and staff members. Local law enforcement, operating under the power of the Alliance director, detained the criminals and ultimately ordered their execution. The swift sequence of arrest, trial, conviction, and execution galvanized the rest of the Colonial Board and ensured the new council members were of more honorable character. Director Kurita recommended many personally.

By the time Shiro invaded Sverdlovsk in 2303, the majority of the Colonial Board were in Kurita's thrall. Through personal favor, political blackmail, or other means, the director ruled the Alliance—and the planet of Galedon—with little fear of opposition or division.

—*Power of Personality: Shiro Kurita and the Alliance*; New Samarkand Print, 2876



By December 2303, detachments of heavily armed soldiers from New Samarkand, supported by small numbers of newly indoctrinated Galedonians, began to move across the "neutral" planet Sverdlovsk. At the same time, squadrons of atmospheric aircraft flew support missions against mobs of unarmed—but potentially dangerous—civilians. The first full-scale interstellar military operation ever run in the Inner Sphere had begun.

DYNASTY RISING

The invasion of Sverdlovsk required nearly all of Shiro's military force, including the majority of his JumpShip fleet. Later historians indicate that roughly four troop divisions—50,000 officers and men—landed in the major cities. Opposing them was a paltry force made up of civilian peacekeepers and emergency personnel. Sverdlovsk had no organized militia and, never expecting an interstellar invasion, was completely caught off guard by the appearance of several thousand armed combatants. Within weeks, the planetary officials had signed a treaty of complete cooperation with Director Shiro.

The new conqueror of Sverdlovsk visited several regions of his new domain, meeting with the natives during closely guarded encounters. At each venue, Shiro claimed to have as many more soldiers available for each world that defied him. The speeches were transmitted to relay stations and courier DropShips so his offworld neighbors would take heed. Shiro believed the lightning-quick capture of the planet using such overwhelming force would intimidate the other planetary leaders and cause them to capitulate quickly. In reality, Shiro had no other force at his disposal; anyone calling his bluff would shatter Kurita's illusion.

No one dared, however. Shiro Kurita was the first leader in the quadrant to equip, train, deploy, and mobilize an entire invasion force. With many planets still in the colonial stage—just trying to survive—warding off an interstellar invasion was nearly impossible. Though a handful of worlds refused to cooperate, most quickly agreed to sign treaties of cooperation with the Alliance of Galedon.

Shiro's manipulation of these worlds was masterful. Through politics and intimidation he slowly and meticulously annexed one planet after another—inhabited or not. Through this method, he kept the other worlds in the dark concerning his true purpose: building an interstellar empire. Such naked aggression, which Shiro's brother Urizen heavily advocated, would keep the colonies from unifying against him.

Part of each world's agreement was to send a certain percentage of its citizenry to New Samarkand for indoctrination and military training. Early on, the planet Kirei Na Niwa fell short of its quota by fewer than twenty people. Within three months, the world lost twice as many as were drafted through mass executions orchestrated by Shiro and carried out by Urizen. No world ever missed its quota again.

MACEDONIAN POLITICS

With his raw display of power and dropping all pretense of subservient politics—at least among the Alliance—Shiro Kurita began to envelop nearby systems. Using a combination of political genius and strategic insight, he conquered, besieged, or persuaded his neighbors to join the growing Alliance. Kurita's stature grew as he personally joined his forces in numerous battles, often shoulder-to-shoulder with his brother Urizen.

By 2309, Kurita assumed sole control of the Alliance of Galedon. The body of advisors—made up of the planetary leaders of the allied and conquered worlds—were tolerated as a pretext of leadership cooperation, though Shiro rarely consulted with them. As far as the director was concerned, he embodied the Alliance and his word was law. Though the Alliance controlled seven significantly populated worlds and nearly a dozen others, Shiro wanted more.

Using the Alliance as a front, the director conducted a year-long tour of several major colony worlds, including Dieron, Junction, Benjamin, Worrell, Luthien, and Pesht. The leaders of these worlds also controlled several of their neighboring systems. None of them trusted each other, constantly wary of deceit and treachery from their peers and underlings. The environment was ripe for a political strategist like Shiro. Only Dieron resisted Shiro's aggressive diplomatic efforts: the planetary leadership was more enamored with the Terran Hegemony's promises of strength and security.

Such self-styled planetary nobles were no match for Kurita's political acumen. Long before embarking on his tour, Shiro obtained as much intelligence as possible on each of the planetary leaders he was to meet. Spies and informants also met the director upon his arrival, providing last-minute information. As each king, duke, and warlord received him, Shiro showed documents allegedly proving a nearby rival had intentions of invading and taking over his territories.

With humble modesty, Shiro would then reluctantly offer to mediate the dispute as a disinterested, neutral party. To each, he would also suggest an alternative: join the Alliance of Galedon and unite the planet's resources with Kurita's. Such an action would give the leader nothing more to fear from his supposedly aggressive neighbors. Kurita would reassure the leader that the Alliance was far enough away to be uninterested in conquest. Alliance forces were close enough, however, to provide direct support or meet an attack on a second front, if necessary. The leader would need to agree immediately, as Shiro could not guarantee protection.

Used in subtle variations with each leader, this ploy succeeded on more than a dozen occasions and never failed. When Shiro returned to New Samarkand in 2310, the Alliance of Galedon encompassed more than thirty inhabited worlds, several rich in various resources, and all providing men and materiel to swell the ranks of the Alliance's army.

THE RISE OF THE DRAGON

The director of the Alliance knew that all of his political maneuvers would be for naught if the Alliance military could not defend his gains. Fortunately for Shiro, his brother Urizen was more than up to the task in training and preparing the Alliance's army. His dedication, competence, and enthusiasm were needed just over a year later.

In June 2311, a dispute broke out between Dieron and nearby Altair. Duke Armitage Brody, ruler of Dieron, promised swift action in response to some imagined insult. Threatening to call on his "distant but trusted ally," Shiro Kurita, he soon discovered that Shiro had also promised Altairian King Hugh Norman the same protection. The two worlds, disgusted with Kurita's attempts to play both systems against themselves, founded the short-lived Dieron Federation to resist Alliance encroachment. Nevertheless, both were soon briefly absorbed into Alliance before being "liberated" by the nascent Terran Hegemony.

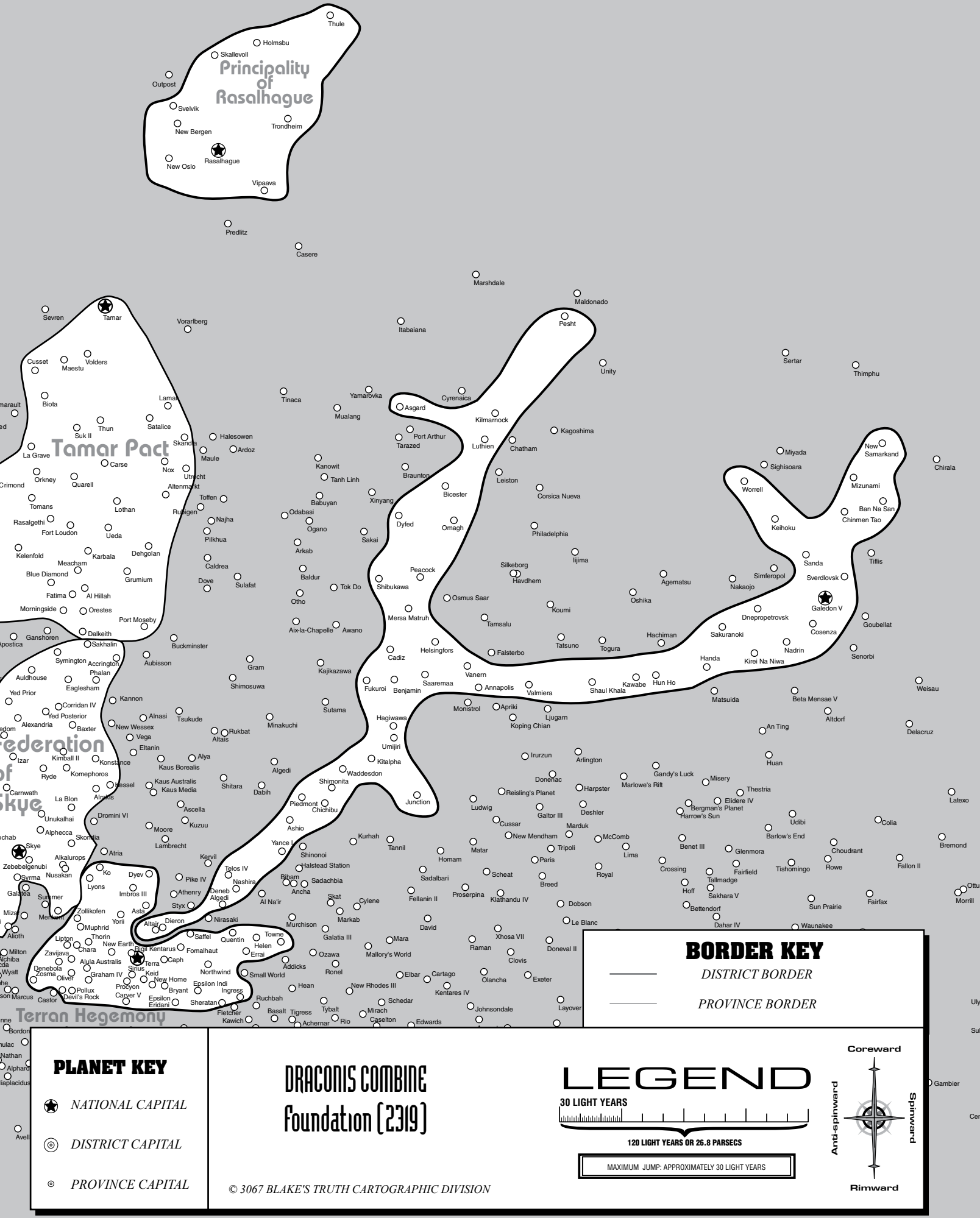
Few nobles within the Alliance were outraged at the deception. Others simply accepted the ruse for what it was and continued to honor and accept the Alliance of Galedon as an official ruling body and ally. Resistance to Kurita's authority was strongest on Benjamin and Asgard. The local leaders of these two worlds felt manipulated and betrayed. Instead of focusing their aggressions on their neighbors—as was the norm—they transferred their hostility to Shiro Kurita. Most of their rhetoric they transmitted in a fusillade of angry and hostile communications, detailing their resentment in explicit detail.

The result was a meeting later known as the Council of One in late 2311. Shiro Kurita cordially invited every known lord in the coreward-spinward quadrant to attend. More than a thousand leaders, dignitaries, representatives, and political leeches accepted. Kurita made an impassioned speech condoning cooperation between worlds for the betterment of all. As Shiro spoke, Urizen surrounded the meeting hall with two companies of his best troops. After the speech, a vote was taken. Those who voted for Shiro's measure returned home safely. Those who opposed were taken away for further discussion and their next of kin was notified.

Soon after, the Alliance's fleet and army invaded Benjamin, Telos IV, and Asgard; the Alliance fleet had moved into position even as the Council of One began. Though none of the three systems mustered any sort of standing army, their populations were stalwart in defending their misguided independence. Peace came after several months of guerilla tactics and liberal use of every conventional weapon available to the Alliance. Benjamin folded in less than a month; Telos IV surrendered in April, and Asgard finally succumbed in August 2312.

The Alliance invasion began seven years of sporadic rebellion and suppression. Many worlds saw the violence as something to be avoided. Others quickly joined the Kurita forces, impressed with their success in military conquest. A few viewed the Alliance's actions as a rallying cry for armed resistance to Kurita's growing power. A small handful of worlds asserted their independence—until the battle-hardened forces under Urizen's command arrived to decimate their homes and factories. Many systems, completely unprepared for full-scale warfare, fielded only half-trained police and scattered, under-armed militia in defense.

After 2317, more and more planetary leaders—survivors of the Council of One and subsequent invasions or their successors—swore oaths of allegiance to Shiro Kurita. By November


Principality of Rasalhague
Tamar Pact
Federation of Skye
Terran Hegemony
Thule
Holmsbu
Skallevoll
Outpost
Svelvik
New Bergen
Trondheim
Rasalhague
New Oslo
Vipaava
Predlitz
Casere
Marshdale
Maldonado
Pesht
Sevren
Tamar
Vorarlberg
Itabaiana
Unity
Sertar
Thimphu
Cusset
Maestu
Volders
Tinaca
Yamarovka
Cyrenaica
Asgard
Mualang
Kilmarnock
Biota
Lamar
Satalice
Thun
Suk II
La Grave
Skandia
Halesowen
Ardoz
Maule
Carse
Nox
Utrecht
Altenmarkt
Orkney
Quarell
Crimond
Tomans
Lothan
Rubigen
Toffen
Najha
Pilkhua
Fort Loudon
Ueda
Rasalgethi
Kelenfold
Karbala
Dehgolan
Meacham
Blue Diamond
Grumium
Fatima
Al Hillah
Morningside
Orestes
Port Moseby
Dalkeith
Ganshoren
Sakhalin
Buckminster
Symington
Accrington
Aubisson
Auldhouse
Phalan
Eaglesham
Shimosuwa
Gram
Yed Prior
Corridan IV
Yed Posterior
Alexandria
Baxter
Kannon
Alnasi
Tsukude
New Wessex
Vega
Eltanin
Rukbat
Altais
Minakuchi
Sutama
Kajikazawa
Izar
Kimball II
Konstance
Alya
Kaus Borealis
Algedi
Ryde
Komephoros
Carnwath
La Blon
Unukalhai
Alphecca
Skornia
Skye
Alkalurops
Zebebelgenubi
Nusakan
Syrma
Ko
Dyev
Lyons
Pike IV
Nashira
Ancha
Sadachbia
Biham
Piedmont
Chichibu
Waddesdon
Shimonita
Kitalpha
Junction
Hagiwawa
Umijiri
Monistrol
Apriki
Ljugarn
Koping Chian
Annapolis
Valmiera
Saaremaa
Benjamin
Fukuroi
Vanern
Cadiz
Helsingfors
Falsterbo
Tatsuno
Togura
Hachiman
Shaul Khala
Kawabe
Hun Ho
Matsuida
Beta Mensae V
Altdorf
An Ting
Delacruz
Weisau
Handa
Kirei Na Niwa
Nadrin
Senorbi
Sakuranoki
Cosenza
Goubellat
Dnepropetrovsk
Galedon V
Sverdlovsk
Simferopol
Nakaojo
Sanda
Tiflis
Agematsu
Oshika
Koumi
Tamsalu
Mersa Matruh
Osmus Saar
Shibukawa
Peacock
Silkeborg
Havdhem
Iijima
Philadelphia
Omagh
Dyfed
Sakai
Arkab
Baldur
Tok Do
Otho
Aix-la-Chapelle
Awano
Caldrea
Dove
Sulafat
Odabasi
Ogano
Babuyan
Xinyang
Tanh Linh
Kanowit
Braunton
Bicester
Leiston
Corsica Nueva
Port Arthur
Tarazed
Luthien
Chatham
Kagoshima
Miyada
Sighisoara
Worrell
Keihoku
New Samarkand
Chirala
Mizunami
Ban Na San
Chinmen Tao
Irurzun
Arlington
Huan
Donenac
Harpster
Marlowe's Rift
Gandy's Luck
Misery
Thestria
Elidere IV
Bergman's Planet
Harrow's Sun
Reisling's Planet
Galtor III
Deshler
Ludwig
Cussar
Marduk
New Mendham
McComb
Udibi
Barlow's End
Colia
Latexo
Bremond
Benet III
Glenmora
Choudrant
Rowe
Tishomingo
Fallon II
Crossing
Fairfield
Tallmadge
Sakhara V
Hoff
Bettendorf
Sun Prairie
Fairfax
Morrill
Ottu
Dahar IV
Waunakee
Le Blanc
Dobson
Tripoli
Lima
Paris
Royal
Breed
Scheat
Sadalbari
Homam
Matar
Tannil
Kurhah
Yance I
Shinonoi
Halstead Station
Telos IV
Kervil
Nirasaki
Dieron
Altair
Asta
Styx
Athenry
Deneb Algedi
Al Na'ir
Skat
Cylene
Markab
Murchison
Galatia III
Mara
Mallory's World
Ozawa
Addicks
Ronel
Small World
Elbar
Cartago
Olancha
Exeter
Kentares IV
New Rhodes III
Hean
Ruchbah
Basalt
Tigress
Tybalt
Achernar
Rio
Mirach
Caselton
Edwards
Schedar
Sheratan
Fletcher
Kawich
Johnsondale
Layover
Fellanin II
Proserpina
Klathandu IV
Xhosa VII
Raman
Doneval II
Clovis
Ingress
Epsilon Indi
Bryant
New Home
Keid
Caph
Terra
Sirius
Rigil Kentarus
Fomalhaut
Errai
Helen
Quentin
Saffel
Towne
Northwind
Zavijava
Chara
New Earth
Lipton
Thorin
Muphrid
Zollikofen
Yorii
Merkent
Summer
Imbros III
Galatea
Skye
Alioth
Milton
Alchiba
Wyatt
Denebola
Zosma
Oliver
Alula Australis
Graham IV
Procyon
Carver V
Pollux
Devil's Rock
Castor
Marcus
Epsilon Eridani
Vipaava
Predlitz
Casere
Marshdale
Maldonado
Pesht
Sertar
Thimphu
Unity
Tinaca
Yamarovka
Cyrenaica
Asgard
Mualang
Kilmarnock
Kagoshima
Port Arthur
Tarazed
Luthien
Chatham
Leiston
Corsica Nueva
Bicester
Braunton
Kanowit
Tanh Linh
Xinyang
Babuyan
Odabasi
Ogano
Sakai
Dyfed
Omagh
Philadelphia
Peacock
Shibukawa
Osmus Saar
Mersa Matruh
Tamsalu
Koumi
Oshika
Agematsu
Silkeborg
Havdhem
Iijima
Simferopol
Nakaojo
Sanda
Tiflis
Sverdlovsk
Galedon V
Dnepropetrovsk
Sakuranoki
Cosenza
Goubellat
Hachiman
Tatsuno
Togura
Helsingfors
Falsterbo
Cadiz
Vanern
Handa
Kirei Na Niwa
Nadrin
Senorbi
Matsuida
Beta Mensae V
Altdorf
An Ting
Delacruz
Weisau
Monistrol
Apriki
Ljugarn
Koping Chian
Annapolis
Valmiera
Saaremaa
Benjamin
Fukuroi
Hagiwawa
Umijiri
Kitalpha
Junction
Waddesdon
Shimonita
Irurzun
Arlington
Huan
Donenac
Harpster
Marlowe's Rift
Gandy's Luck
Misery
Thestria
Elidere IV
Bergman's Planet
Harrow's Sun
Reisling's Planet
Galtor III
Deshler
Ludwig
Cussar
Marduk
New Mendham
McComb
Udibi
Barlow's End
Colia
Latexo
Bremond
Benet III
Glenmora
Choudrant
Rowe
Tishomingo
Fallon II
Crossing
Fairfield
Tallmadge
Sakhara V
Hoff
Bettendorf
Sun Prairie
Fairfax
Morrill
Ottu
Dahar IV
Waunakee
Le Blanc
Dobson
Tripoli
Lima
Paris
Royal
Breed
Scheat
Sadalbari
Homam
Matar
Tannil
Kurhah
Yance I
Shinonoi
Halstead Station
Telos IV
Kervil
Nirasaki
Dieron
Altair
Asta
Styx
Athenry
Deneb Algedi
Al Na'ir
Skat
Cylene
Markab
Murchison
Galatia III
Mara
Mallory's World
Ozawa
Addicks
Ronel
Small World
Elbar
Cartago
Olancha
Exeter
Kentares IV
New Rhodes III
Hean
Ruchbah
Basalt
Tigress
Tybalt
Achernar
Rio
Mirach
Caselton
Edwards
Schedar
Sheratan
Fletcher
Kawich
Johnsondale
Layover
Fellanin II
Proserpina
Klathandu IV
Xhosa VII
Raman
Doneval II
Clovis
Ingress
Epsilon Indi
Bryant
New Home
Keid
Caph
Terra
Sirius
Rigil Kentarus
Fomalhaut
Errai
Helen
Quentin
Saffel
Towne
Northwind
Zavijava
Chara
New Earth
Lipton
Thorin
Muphrid
Zollikofen
Yorii
Merkent
Summer
Imbros III
Galatea
Skye
Alioth
Milton
Alchiba
Wyatt
Denebola
Zosma
Oliver
Alula Australis
Graham IV
Procyon
Carver V
Pollux
Devil's Rock
Castor
Marcus
Epsilon Eridani
BORDER KEY
DISTRICT BORDER
PROVINCE BORDER
PLANET KEY
NATIONAL CAPITAL
DISTRICT CAPITAL
PROVINCE CAPITAL
DRACONIS COMBINE
Foundation (2319)
LEGEND
30 LIGHT YEARS
120 LIGHT YEARS OR 26.8 PARSECS
MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS
Coreward
Anti-spinward
Spinward
Rimward
© 3067 BLAKE'S TRUTH CARTOGRAPHIC DIVISION

2319, Shiro Kurita achieved his objective of controlling a narrow empire of planets from Terra to the Draconis Rift. A single spur of controlled worlds branched off in the spinward direction, reaching as far as New Samarkand. Only the Rift limited Shiro's growth outward. The partially explored region of space contained very few habitable worlds.

His immediate goals of conquest complete, Shiro cast off the trappings of the Alliance, looking to formalize his nation with a new identity. The formation of the Draconis Combine was announced to its member worlds and neighbors in 2319, with Coordinator Shiro Kurita at its head.

DRAGON RAMPANT

[EDITOR'S NOTE: *While the ComStar treatment of our history that is in vogue with other Great House intelligence services is troubling, their butchery of Shiro's own writings is especially infuriating. I have included the text of the actual letter that the University of Pesht holds in its current collection of our illustrious history.* —MK]

Dear *Musuko:*

You are fourteen years old now, and a man. Though I am still well and fit to lead, you will serve the Kurita line in the event of my demise. You are also old enough to learn some things that I could not tell Tenno-the-boy.

Our forces have paid the price in blood, valor, and high honor to help me create a domain, a kingdom, a dynasty. I charge you, my son, with its protection after my death, on whatever day that may come. I am the Coordinator of the Draconis Combine. My brother Urizen is the Warlord. But you are its future, and your children and their children. Remember this.

I have chosen the dragon as our standard and our symbol, reflecting many facets of our existence. We must never forget the ancient Terran heritage of our line, with its samurai greatness. I remind you, too, that the dragon is feared and respected for its strength, cunning, and willingness to destroy for the sake of its own power. Always keep the virtues of the dragon in mind, and use them to defeat your opponents.

You may recall that I have spoken much about the treacherous Ozawas and their wealthy merchant fleets. You may now know that the Ozawas no longer concern me. Having met our forces, they were forced to concede defeat after many losses. We, not they, are now the power with whom all in our quadrant must reckon. The Ozawa Mercantile Association must now abide by our rules. Give them no thought or care. A debt nearly four centuries old has been paid in full. From now on, we have the advantage and shall press it whenever we choose. If one wishes to show who is master and who is the vanquished, it is better to inflict a lingering pain upon an enemy than a quick death.

Always preserve the dragon, and its magic will keep you strong.

—excerpt from a letter written by Shiro Kurita to his son Tenno, 2325; on display at the University of Pesht Archives

Stellar Rivalries

As Shiro was putting the finishing touches on his sprawling empire, the Terran Alliance collapsed. Fleet Admiral James McKenna stepped into the power vacuum and formed the Terran Hegemony in 2314. McKenna's rise to power and acquisition of former Alliance worlds was markedly different from the more stringent methods employed by Shiro Kurita. The Hegemony promoted technological improvement and mutual defense of its member worlds and signed many worlds into its fold as Kurita declared his leadership and the power of the Draconis Combine. That Dieron and Altair were two of the worlds that joined McKenna's alliance infuriated Shiro.

The surprising success of McKenna's newly formed Hegemony led to a major change in Kurita's growth policy, though he would never admit as such. Though Shiro first intended to expand his domain in the direction of Terra, a number of planets he coveted were already siding with the Hegemony. The Draconis Rift proved an even more tenacious obstacle, leaving the Combine only three directions in which to grow: toward the Federated Suns of House Davion, toward the regions controlled by the Federation of Skye and the Tamar Pact, or toward the loosely knit Principality of Rasalhague.

In 2320, the Coordinator made a conservative but wise decision. Instead of thrusting into a neighboring empire, Shiro proceeded to choose worlds that were within easy striking distance of his own. At the time of its establishment, the Combine looked on a stellar map like a scattered collection of islands in a huge archipelago. Kurita did not yet control every stellar island in his chain. Through slow and consistent expansion policy, the Coordinator planned to take most of the remaining independent worlds that existed within the gaps between now-loyal planets. During this period, the Coordinator's brilliance in military strategy shone bright.

Individual target worlds went through the gradual process of isolation, subjugation, and consolidation as their respective leaders were coerced into joining the Draconis Combine. By the late 2320s, even the Coordinator's enemies and detractors—of which there were few, thanks to Urizen—grudgingly admired his methods. Realizing his new empire needed a cause to preserve and strengthen its unity, Kurita chose to move against the Principality of Rasalhague in 2330.

Director-General James McKenna extended an offer to the Combine in 2325 to join the Terran Hegemony; Shiro rebuffed the request. Incensed that the Hegemony leader had suborned a few of the systems Shiro had spent immeasurable time politicking, the Coordinator refused to communicate with the Hegemony until after McKenna's death in 2340. With Michael Cameron's succession to the leadership of the Hegemony, Shiro signed a limited trade pact with the rival nation. Kurita openly stated his hope that Cameron would be satisfied with the limited agreement and not seek anything more. The trade pact opened up opportunities for economic exchanges and underwrote much of the Combine's expanding industrial base. Secretly, Shiro reaffirmed to his brother and son, Tenno, his vow that one day he or his descendants would rule all of space.

EXPANSION OF THE DRAGON'S COIL

After consolidating the worlds in and near the Combine, Shiro looked towards his neighbors for continued expansion of the Combine's influence. Though the Federated Suns controlled a number of attractive worlds, Kurita felt that the Davion sphere would be too distant for an easily won campaign. In 2330, the Combine did not share a common border with the Suns.

WE, RASALHAGUE

We Rasalhagians were a noble collection of proud peoples. We asked little, except to be left to our own destiny and devices. Though life was hard on the new and often forbidding worlds during colonization, we managed. It was no harder for us on those strange new planets than for our own ancestors of a millennium before. The freedom to live or die—by our own choice, not the choice of our government—that is all we sought.

During the exodus, many of us left our homeworld, never to return. With heavy hearts and a deep sense of regret, thousands of colonists ventured from the Federal Democratic Republics of Sweden, Finland, and Norway. It seemed that our ancestors saw the shape of things to come and decided to abandon Terra even before the main wave of emigration had begun.

Our reasons for leaving were as much geopolitical as they were economic. We did not truly want to go, but conditions forced our departure. Our nations had suffered extensively as a result of the Second Russian Civil War in the early twenty-first century. The hordes of displaced civilians fleeing across the border from their destroyed Soviet homes created severe economic dislocation and near-anarchy in our homelands. As late as the mid-twenty-third century, nearly 150 years later, these once-prosperous nations were still paying the exorbitant social and financial costs of rebuilding the splintered Soviet states. The assessments, assigned by the Terran Parliament and cruelly enforced by Alliance authorities, ensured the economic and psychological bankruptcy of our once proud lands.

When our chance came, we chose to flee. At that time, the unexplored planet of Rasalhague was about as far away from Terra as anyone could imagine. Thus, it was the perfect refuge for a people who had developed a deep and lasting resentment for oppressive, impersonal bureaucracies supported by a strong military. The Terran government seemed bent on depriving our people of their dignity and their means of survival. Thus, we found our sanctuary in Rasalhague and other nearby worlds. Here we looked forward to autonomy and as much physical distance as possible from the authority of Terra.

The worlds settled in this region during this time were organized into a loose structure of clan-oriented families. Family heads took responsibility for their own people and annually elected a single head for each planet, known as a *varldherre*, or world-lord. In turn, each world-lord paid lip service to the Prince of Rasalhague, elected once every ten years. We were loyal to our prince but not fanatical.

The prince, often referred to affectionately as the "High Chieftain," was nominally responsible for the safety and well-being of every Rasalhagian. In practical terms, though, this protection amounted to little more than verbal agreement to a mutual defense pact. For all intents, every family was on its own and would live or die by its wits and the resources at hand.

Aside from petty family in-fighting and inevitable minor disagreements in planetary politics, we minded our own business. Surviving, we found, was a difficult chore. It became a standard political joke for commentators to add that "the Principality of Rasalhague was generally conspicuous by its absence." As a rule, our citizens showed little interest in interstellar politics, other newly formed governments, or the activities of Terra.

In fact, we might have kept entirely to ourselves until population pressure built up to the point that we needed to expand our vision and our territories (not necessarily in that order). If we had been left to our own ways, this expansion might have taken several centuries. Unfortunately, our independence would be forever crushed in 2330 by the heavy boots of the armies of the Draconis Combine.

—*The Dragon's Claw: A History of Rasalhague*; Tamar Interstellar Press, 2561

The Protectorate of Donegal, the Tamar Pact, and the Federation of Skye were in the midst of discussions to unite their three territories. Instead of directly attacking any of the three before the group had officially joined together, the Coordinator made one of his very few strategic errors. In hindsight, if Shiro had attacked the Tamar Pact during this time before it could form the Lyran Commonwealth, House Steiner would likely never have come to power.

THEORIES

Several theories exist as to why the Coordinator waved off an assault on the Tamar Pact, though only two may be close to the truth. Rumors of secret envoys from the Tamar Pact visiting New Samarkand in 2329 briefly swirled through the nobility. While an unmarked trade vessel did visit the world at that time, there was no record of any visits to the Coordinator's residence or the diplomatic halls. Curiously, there was a brief uptick in technological research shortly afterwards. Many historians theorize that the Tamar Pact had exchanged newly acquired (or stolen) Hegemony technology for a limited non-aggression period, carried out under the cover of a standard mercantile visit.

The more favored theory—at least by Combine citizens centuries later—is that Warlord Urizen suffered a personal challenge to his honor by a Rasalhagian noble during one of Shiro's system tours in the early 2300s. No concrete details exist about any such encounter or of a possible visit during that time frame. The theory holds little evidence, but the thought of Urizen convincing his brother to authorize a war simply to assuage his honor fits the Combine citizen's more romantic view of the First Coordinator and his family.

—*Hindsight History: An Armchair View of the Inner Sphere*; Geneva University Press, 3002

The Coordinator sent his brother Urizen to the Principality of Rasalhague in 2330. During the first three years of the campaign, the Combine encountered only token resistance. After a few months, Urizen sent for his sons Victor and Isaac, who were also warriors in the blossoming Kuritan tradition. Urizen's health was slowly deteriorating, and he wanted to ensure his bloodline would remain in battle. The younger Kuritas flourished in combat and quickly rose within the ranks of the Combine's army.

Several Rasalhague worlds fell in a matter of months, with Combine advances limited more from the logistical chain than the minimal opposition. Using a stellar leapfrogging technique, the Kuritans seized planets in a seemingly erratic sequence. The tactic kept the enemy off guard while continually creating advance staging bases for upcoming attacks. Planets deliberately skipped in this manner were taken during a second wave, sometimes two to four years later.

Moderately large Combine garrisons and sizeable weapon caches were stationed on the advance bases as Urizen and his forces seized worlds and continued to penetrate deep into the Principality. By late 2333, Urizen's forces bypassed Rasalhague, having seized and subjugated New Bergen instead. The move surprised the Rasalhagians, who felt sure Urizen would strike their capital when it was in range.

TENNO KURITA

Born in 2305 on New Samarkand, the eldest son of Shiro Kurita became the Second Coordinator upon his father's death in 2348. Tenno was a skilled organizer and administrator, which matched his mild-mannered persona. He did not, however, possess his father's statesmanship or military acumen. Instead, Tenno spent the first two-thirds of his reign promoting industrial development, forging closer diplomatic relations with the Terran Hegemony and organizing the Combine into a workable administrative government. Tenno divided the Combine into military districts and prefects for better structure and governance. Though the district and prefecture borders would change over time, the system has served the Dragon well for the last seven hundred years.

—*Profiles of the Dragon;* First School Publications, 2980

In January 2334, Victor and Isaac Kurita headed a small Combine occupation force in New Bergen. The troops stationed there were preparing for action against the Outpost system but for the moment they enjoyed an extended R&R period. During this state of lessened attention, a powerful Rasalhague force arrived and combined their might with a prearranged uprising of local citizens. In an unprecedented massacre, the defenders wiped out the occupation force to the last man, including Urizen's sons. Huge stocks of armored ground vehicles, personal weapons, artillery, munitions, other equipment, and a few parked JumpShips were captured and distributed among the Rasalhagians.

The New Bergen disaster provided the natives with a means to fight the Combine on their own terms. The seizure of this single supply depot prolonged the fighting for at least two full decades. The loss of both sons nearly drove Urizen mad. Though he was coordinating battle plans elsewhere, news of the debacle did not take long to reach him. The Warlord vowed revenge.

Urizen never saw his vengeance fulfilled. Though he continued to lead his forces for the next two years, his health continued to worsen. In April 2336, he died from congestive heart failure. Upon learning of his brother's death, Shiro took the news with his characteristic stoicism: "Branches of the tree die, but the tree lives on." Fortunately for Urizen's line, his youngest son Adam and his grandson Vladimir, Victor's son, were safe at home on New Samarkand. The Kuritan dynasty was never in danger of extinction, to the disappointment of its enemies.

Upon Urizen's death, Shiro's son Tenno took command of the Combine forces in Rasalhague. Though he had neither his father's strategic outlook nor his uncle's grasp of military tactics, Tenno kept the Combine's tenuous hold until 2342, when Adam Kurita replaced him. Tenno returned to New Samarkand to finish his tutelage under his father's leadership, preparing to become the next Coordinator. In 2348, Shiro Kurita passed away in his sleep and Tenno ascended the throne of the Combine.

Guerilla fighting on Rasalhague worlds continued for three decades. In 2367, Tenno declared the Rasalhague menace vanquished and withdrew the majority of the Combine's forces. While the Combine put a victorious spin on the entire operation, in reality the Principality was officially neutral and remained an independent state until 2510. Lip service was given towards its would-be conquerors, keeping a fragile peace in place lest the Combine decide to revisit with the issue with more violence.

THE DRAGON GROWS

Tenno Kurita was a pragmatist and knew the Combine's best chances for growth lay in sheer numbers of people. To encourage an expanding population, he awarded merit citations and rewards to mothers of large families. He also developed mandatory indoctrination training for citizens of all ages, beginning as young as four years of age. His sole motive was to boost the number of colonists loyal to the Dragon on thinly populated worlds. The programs worked: families with ten to fifteen children became common. The more populated worlds such as New Samarkand and Galedon V saw an uptick in colonization and relocation efforts as citizens, looking to take advantage of Tenno's population edicts, moved out of the crowded cities and to more underpopulated worlds.

The greatest crisis of Tenno's reign occurred when a terrorist raid took place on Rasalhague in December 2375. An unknown number of guerrillas evaded the guards and attacked the Draconis Combine Rasalhague Military District housing complex. Vladimir Kurita, Rasalhague Military District Governor, and almost every member of his family were killed. Also lost in the attack was Omi Kurita, the

FORCE IN MOTION

"As many of you are aware, the Free Rasalhague Republic—the Republic for short—did not begin in 3034. While the name is new, many students of Combine history recognize the Republic as the proud descendant of the ancient Principality of Rasalhague, which lasted seventy years before Coordinator Shiro Kurita began to absorb the nascent kingdom in 2330.

"During the long process of slowly absorbing the Principality into the Combine, Shiro and his descendants used the low-level conflict to unify the entire realm into a cohesive power to rival the nearby Steiner empire and the Federated Suns, with only the Terran Hegemony a stronger stellar nation.

"One could argue that independence-minded rebels within the newly named Rasalhague Military District caused the turmoil and ill will between the Combine and Rasalhague people over the next several decades. The most infamous example of this being the attack on Vladimir Kurita's estate in 2375, killing Coordinator Tenno's sister and causing a chain of events that lead to many years of brutal tyranny among the Rasalhagians due to Jason Kurita's personal vengeance over the death of his father and family.

"Yet one can also argue that because of the rebels' action, those events led to Daniel Sorenson's birth (from Jason's sister Oma) and subsequent exile among the Rasalhague public, bringing to light the awful truth of Jason Kurita's tyranny. Daniel's reign as Lord of Rasalhague and Warlord of the district helped heal the rift between the Combine and its people. More importantly, Sorenson's birth set the stage for the McAllister Rebellion against the Von Rohrs line and saved the Combine from madness—and destruction.

"In 2510, the Principality formally joined the rest of the Combine and, for the first time in decades, enjoyed peace under Siriwan McAllister-Kurita."

—Lecture notes from *The Ronin Crisis*; Sun Zhang Academy, 3066

Coordinator's sister. Missing from the ruins of the assault was Oma Kurita, Vladimir's eighteen-year-old sister. The governor's oldest son, Jason, was on New Samarkand at the time of the strike.

Tenno found the attack revolting and dishonorable. As the incumbent Coordinator, he was responsible for the well-being of his family. His sister's sudden death was seen as a profound disgrace and loss of personal honor. The Coordinator considered committing *seppuku*—ritual suicide—and when Omi's body arrived at New Samarkand in 2376, he carried out his intentions. Tenno's son Nihongi, who happily stepped into the role of Coordinator upon his father's death, wholeheartedly supported the decision.

SEEDS OF DISCONTENT

Coordinator Nihongi Kurita, the only son of Tenno, was born in 2336. A vain man with little capacity for long-term thinking—and possessing none of the qualities of his father or grandfather—Nihongi treated his newly acquired position as an attractive toy. While his father lived, Nihongi coveted the Coordinatorship. When Tenno passed on to his ancestors and Nihongi ascended, he found little use for his new position.

The Third Coordinator's reign lasted two decades. During that time, he launched no major offensives, signed no meaningful agreements, and spent much of his time whining and sulking about wanting everyone to obey him. To his credit, Nihongi was an excellent horseman and maintained an enviable stable of high-quality Samarkand breeding stock. He was often seen riding a magnificent stallion around the palace grounds. Unfortunately for the Combine, he let pressing affairs of state go unresolved while he enjoyed his equestrian forays.

Word of Oma Kurita's fate came in 2377. Kurita intelligence sources learned that Oma was not killed on Rasalhague with other members of the Kurita family. Instead, Oma was alive on Trondheim. Adam Kurita, Warlord of Rasalhague and sole surviving son of Urizen, led the rescue operation. After several harrowing encounters and an exhaustive firefight, Oma and her newborn son, Daniel Sorenson, returned to the safety of New Samarkand. The Coordinator's only reaction was to withdraw several military units from the Rasalhague Military District, mostly due to Adam Kurita's incessant prompting.

Oma apparently had fallen in love with Jan Sorenson, the High Chieftain of her captors, and in a strange and fortuitous turn of Stockholm Syndrome, married him. Jan was killed during the rescue mission. Oma never recovered from grief for her husband, sinking deep into an addiction to absinthe. At only forty years of age, she died in 2397 from chronic liver failure and related complications.

During the early years of Nihongi's reign, he transferred a number of Rasalhague's units to duty stations along the Skye and Tamar borders. Both leaders of the foreign realms became concerned, believing the moves to be a prelude to a Combine invasion. Nihongi ignored any possible opportunities for advance, however, and Combine attacks never went beyond minor border raids. Some raids were for the sake of capturing supplies or stocks of raw materials, while others had only nuisance value. The transfers gave the Skye and Tamar regions pause and diverted any thoughts of conducting their own invasion.

Nihongi's lukewarm leadership caused consternation throughout the Draconis Combine. Factions began to form within the government, some with the purpose of obtaining his resignation, others offering a more permanent solution. Near the end of Nihongi's reign, even the most patient of advisors and leaders could not accept the Coordinator's political indifference or ineptitude.

The situation deteriorated completely by November 2393. Nihongi's oldest son, Robert, discovered his sister Marika had been visiting the family stables for more prurient reasons. Purely by accident, Robert learned Marika was pregnant by Werner Von Rohrs, one of the stable hands. Enraged at the dishonor brought to his family, Robert confronted Werner and killed him with a shovel. Marika followed through with the pregnancy, giving birth to Nihongi Von Rohrs in May the following year.

ROAD TO WAR

By the end of the twenty-fourth century, ten separate states with strong central governments evolved within the Inner Sphere. Some formed through cooperation and consent, while others were created through conquest and military domination.

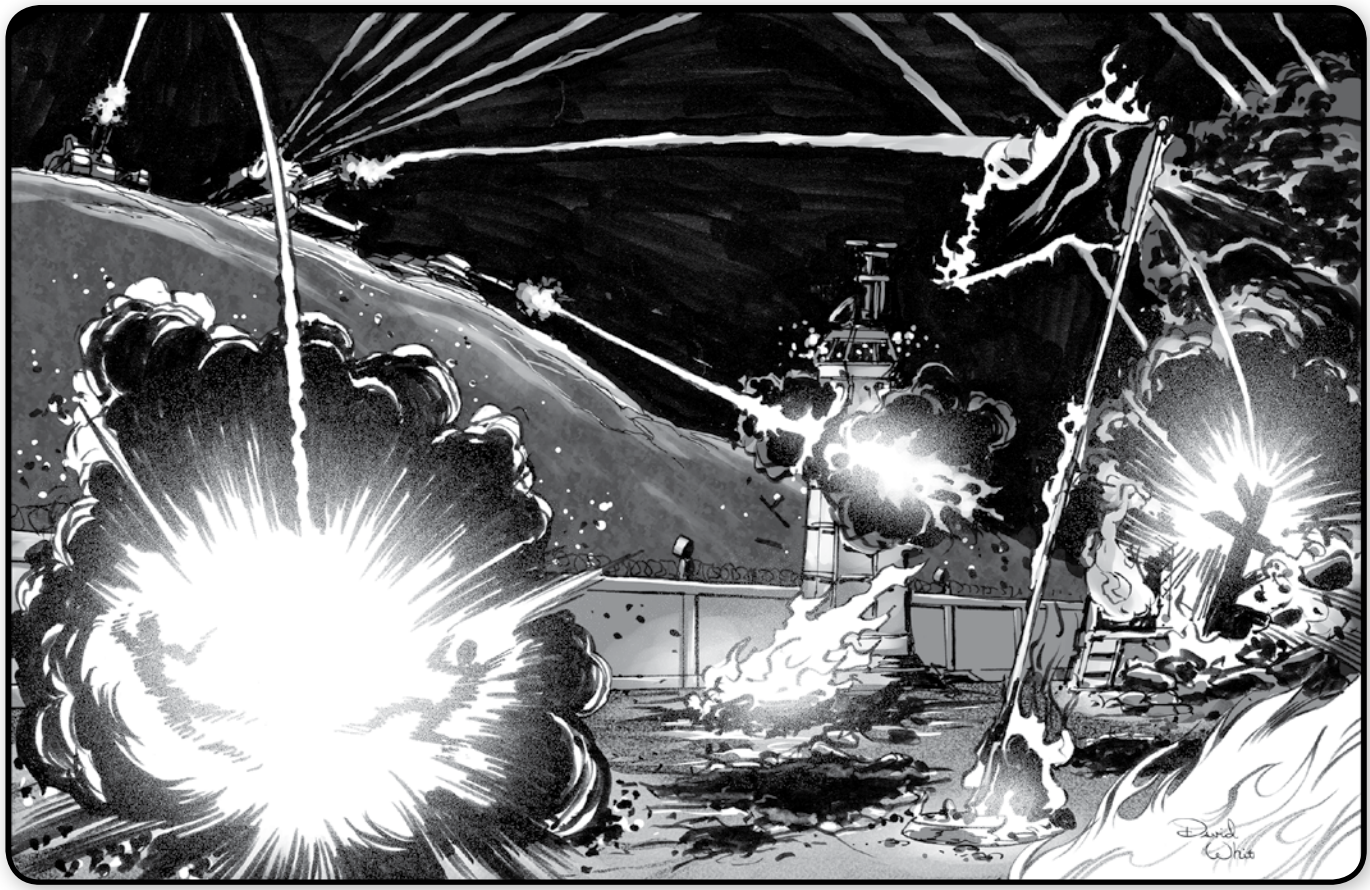
Many of these new political powers faced the same problems that had confronted individual colony worlds during the previous century, only multiplied tenfold. Treachery and political Darwinism flourished, as the richer or more populated planets dominated and often exploited their less fortunate neighbors. Now, instead of two worlds fighting between themselves, two powers (each responsible for many worlds) might face off, and these struggles were not always confined to diplomatic channels.

With a relatively large population base, easily obtained raw materials, and a tradition of many centuries of scientific research, the Terran Hegemony maintained technological superiority over the other states. This in turn enhanced its political influence, especially when dealing with governments whose worlds still lacked such fundamental necessities as water. Trade, both of goods and information, flourished between the Hegemony and the more cooperative governments.

This did not mean that peace was an uninterrupted luxury, however. As the century progressed and each state attempted to define its borders more emphatically, border disputes heightened in frequency and intensity. Struggles over strategically valuable planets escalated from verbal disputes to small skirmishes to battlefields covering an entire world. Scientific research veered away from improving the quality of life, now at comfortable levels on most worlds, and took aim at weapons research and development.

Over the twenty-fourth century's last three decades, many border worlds in sensitive areas underwent a remarkable change. They progressed from being equipped with navigational aids and glorified police officials to having sophisticated ship detection equipment, fully armed JumpShips, a variety of system defense craft, and large garrisons of crack troops. Many border worlds even began to resemble encampments under siege, because their mineral or hydrological wealth made them prime targets for their neighbors. The Age of War would soon rear its ugly head.

—*House Kurita: The Draconis Combine*; ComStar Archives, 3026



Killing Werner did not slake Robert's anger. He sought his father's advice, but Nihongi was of no help. Robert's disgust with the Coordinator's inability to maintain any semblance of decorum within his own house pushed the Kurita heir towards the political opposition on New Samarkand. For nearly two years, political turmoil built on New Samarkand, spilling outwards into the rest of the Combine. The Coordinator remained blissfully unaware of the growing resentment. Robert's faction was ready to implement his own plan to end his father's reign when Nihongi fell from his prize racehorse while riding up a steep incline. The Coordinator broke his neck and died instantly, saving Robert the trouble of executing him. Robert Kurita assumed the throne in April 2396.

WINDS OF CHANGE

With the news of the outbreak of war between the distant Capellan Confederation and the Free Worlds League in 2398, Robert Kurita began making his own plans for an attack. Disappointed he was not the first to reignite the flames of war, the Fourth Coordinator was determined to take advantage of the hostilities.

Robert's advisors unanimously agreed that House Steiner's Skye and Tamar provinces were better targets than those of House Davion. The Steiners were better equipped than the highly disciplined Combine forces. Knowing that even the best-trained troops cannot survive against superior firepower, the Coordinator agreed that he must even the odds and provide his army with more powerful new weapons. Such a decision would delay any major military action for several years.

Not known for his patience, the young Coordinator had difficulty waiting. The time was well spent, however, as his forces were upgraded and readied with new weapons and technology. Robert instead spent his time frequently reconsidering his overall strategy. What little he knew of strategy came from studying Terran history.

The Terran tactical concept of dual encirclement and pincer movements so intrigued Robert that he wanted to give it a try. The Coordinator failed to understand that ground tactics do not necessarily translate to the strategic scale of interstellar war. After much discussion, he settled for an attack against the Federation of Skye.

One pincer would strike near the Tamar/Skye border and swing down deep into Skye territory. The second pincer, launched a year later, would move through the Kessel-Dromini gap and link with the first pincer as quickly as possible. The combined sweeps would theoretically isolate a large portion of the Federation and leave it in Combine control. The Coordinator believed that if all went as planned, the advances might even threaten Terra itself.

The first pincer attack launched in November 2407. Combine forces crossed into the Tamar Pact just above its border with the Federation of Skye. Kurita and his generals directed these forces to make at least two diversionary strikes, then to aim toward Terra in a flanking motion. The second complete force was in position and awaiting orders.

Combat was ferocious. The Steiner defenders, unable to match the Combine's ferocity, deliberately destroyed much of their worlds. Their actions rendered the planets useless to the advancing Kuritan forces. Unfortunately for the Federation, these tactics were only partially successful and led to a major shakeup in Skye's leadership.

The Combine's advances were successful and consistent on both flanks for nearly two years; the most significant victory coming on Menkent when Kuritan forces killed Archon Alistair Marsden. The advance ended when the Combine suffered a major defeat on Meacham. A month later, a devastating covert raid on a major Combine supply depot on Vega severely depleted munitions and materiel for the Kessel-Dromini forces, stopping their forward progress cold.

Three years later, Robert Kurita joined eight other interstellar powers on Ares and signed the Ares Conventions in June 2412. Six months later, the Coordinator was dead from an assassin's bullet on New Samarkand. Though never proven, most of Robert's confidants agreed that his sister brought about the assassination: Marika Kurita never forgave Robert for slaying Werner Von Rohrs.

Stepping into the Coordinator's role was Parker Kurita, Robert's younger brother. The first Kuritan born in deep space—birthed in transit between Benjamin and New Samarkand—Parker did little more than maintain the status quo set by his domineering brother. Considered by most to be a weak leader, Parker did everything possible to follow Robert's will and when in doubt, did nothing at all.

One of Parker's few noteworthy successes came from the seizure of the Lyran Commonwealth world of St. John in 2414. Robert had envisioned the operation as an attempt to destabilize the newly formed Lyran government. House Steiner launched two counterattacks in 2417 and 2418, both of which ended in disaster for Steiner troops.

Viper in the Nest

The new Coordinator's ambitionless rule nonetheless gained him a mortal enemy. Nihongi Von Rohrs, progeny of Marika Kurita and her commoner lover, harbored an ingrained hatred for Robert Kurita for the slaying of his father. With Robert's assassination, Nihongi transferred his thirst for vengeance to Parker Kurita.

Saigo Kurita, the youngest of Nihongi Kurita's sons, died on Vega in a Federation of Skye raid. With his death, Nihongi Von Rohrs was the eldest surviving male in the New Samarkand Kurita bloodline. This made him next in line for the Coordinatorship, even though he was a bastard child.

After serving in several low-grade House units, Nihongi made friends with some ambitious and greedy officers. His promises of high positions persuaded them to assist him in a coup against Parker. In March 2421 during a dark evening, elements of another unit replaced the Kurita Household Guard. Parker put up a fierce but short-lived resistance, barricading himself in his quarters. Shortly after midnight, Nihongi's guards escorted Parker to a holding cell for the night. A sunrise execution in the Coordinator's private gardens ensured Nihongi's rise to power. Several of Nihongi's supporters joined the dead Coordinator after inquiring about their promised promotions.

Suffering from extreme paranoia, Nihongi possessed a strong instinct for self-preservation. After eliminating his less-reliable colleagues, he ensured his position by exiling all of the immediate members of the Kurita line. Why Nihongi chose exile over execution is not known, though many Kurita historians believe the Coordinator wanted his enemies to live and know he reigned in their stead—a fate that, in his own mind, was one worse than death.

Philip Kurita, Parker's eldest son, remained hidden for nearly four years. He was eventually discovered in 2425 and forced to join his two brothers in exile. Von Rohrs secretly sold his mother's youngest sister, Lenore Kurita, into slavery in 2421. She died fifteen years later, killed for sport by her owner, a "noble" ruler of a Periphery world.

With all rivals removed, Nihongi began a series of extensive and bloody purges. These mass executions cut deeply through many levels of Combine society, including the military and mercantile leaders, and created economic instability and near-anarchy.

On Rasalhague, Oma Kurita raised her son Daniel Sorenson in the royal court, despite the stigma of his unacceptable birth. Daniel remained on Rasalhague until the age of eighteen, when his mother died. After her passing, Daniel left Rasalhague and joined the local military, partially to fulfill his own wanderlust and to escape the wary eye of Jason Kurita. Daniel knew that his life was in danger with his mother no longer present to protect him.

Jason Kurita, the tyrannical ruler of the Rasalhague Military District since 2375, continued to hold a grudge against the natives of the Principality. Daniel's existence provided Jason with a continual reminder of the hated Sorenson clan, who in his mind personified the terrorists who killed his father and family. He never referred to Daniel as a nephew, calling him "that trash of sub-humanity" on a good day. For their part, Jason's own family hated him for his depravity as much as his subjects hated and feared him.

As Daniel traveled through the Principality of Rasalhague on his duty tours, he was relieved to be free of the insulated world of Jason Kurita's court. Among the people, Daniel could see the true effects of the dictator whose food he had shared. He witnessed torture, physical and psychological indignities, and the gradual destruction of Rasalhagian morale. With his background, Daniel was sensitive to the emotions of others and could not allow innocent civilians to endure much more. Treasonous ideas quietly passed between Daniel and his few closest confidants.

When Nihongi enacted his coup on New Samarkand, Jason Kurita followed his depraved instincts and supported Von Rohrs, even sending troops to fight against loyal Draconis forces. These actions by the governor shocked Daniel into action. His twin cousins Toshiro and Hanako Kurita, sons of Adam Kurita, came to his aid and support in a revolution against Jason Kurita.

ARES WAXING

In 2398, a territorial dispute between the Capellan Confederation and the Free Worlds League erupted into open warfare, the first stellar war in over a century. Over the next fourteen years, dozens of extremely bloody, destructive wars were fought over frontier worlds along both nations' borders. A catastrophic battle on Tintavel in 2412 resulted in thousands of civilian casualties. With rampant destruction threatening to destabilize civilization, representatives of eight interstellar states, including the Draconis Combine, met in the city of New Olympia on Ares to sign the Ares Conventions. Realizing that war could not be eliminated, these representatives drew up a body of interstellar laws to regulate warfare and to minimize its impact on humanity.

The Ares Conventions, an agreement that the Coordinator and most of his people tacitly agreed to in principle, banned warfare in heavily populated areas and prohibited military destruction of civilian economies. War was an almost continuous fact in the twenty-fifth century, and through the Conventions, warfare became a less destructive event. Military campaigns were transformed into a more chivalric contest of maneuver and tactics. Forces would generally surrender rather than fight against unfavorable odds, with the knowledge that another contest would soon arise. All governments recognized the necessity of preserving the civilian populations, in order to have something left to fight for. This agreement would only last as long as all signers adhered to the guidelines, and so compliance with the Ares Conventions was generally universal. Warfare was indeed far less destructive, but leaders were now more willing than ever to use war as a means of resolving even the most minor of disputes.

Of more immediate impact on the state of warfare—and of immense interest to the Combine in particular—was the unveiling of the first bipedal combat platform on Terra in 2439. Using myomer technology to power artificial legs, these giant battle machines, called BattleMechs, were more mobile than conventional wheeled and tracked vehicles. Their size, firepower, and armor made the BattleMechs invincible on the battlefield. The Terran Hegemony controlled all BattleMech technology at first, using their advantage to subdue every opponent.

In 2455, technical schematics were captured in a Lyran Commonwealth raid on Hesperus II, and the technology rapidly spread throughout human space. The arrival of these war machines on the fields of battle reinforced the ideals of the Ares Conventions. Highly skilled warriors could fight complete battles in a small area, reducing the risk to civilian populations. Even using BattleMechs, very few battles fought at this time were decisive. Most skirmishes established temporary control over a targeted area that could be challenged at any time by another force.

—*March of the Gods*; Focht War College, 3064

As word of the rebellion spread, citizens joined the movement in droves. As a result, Jason recalled his troops from New Samarkand, and Nihongi retaliated by removing the governor from office. While guards loyal to Von Rohrs forcibly removed the governor from his throne room, Daniel offered his uncle one last chance to accept exile. In response, the ex-governor pulled a small pistol and shot at young Sorenson. Fortunately, the youth's reflexes proved superior, and he killed his uncle in self-defense amid several stunned witnesses.

With Jason's death, Daniel Sorenson seized control of the Principality of Rasalhague and assumed the title of Lord. His stated goals were to end all oppression of its citizens and offer opposition to Von Rohrs, who now claimed the title of Coordinator. As a whole, the populace of the Principality accepted Daniel as their rightful leader, the son of their former High Chieftain Jan Sorenson.

Though Daniel's efforts to remove Nihongi Von Rohrs were unsuccessful, the Lord of Rasalhague received great popular support as a leader and allied his own troops with military units loyal to the true Kurita family line. The new governor was a competent and vigorous leader and died at the age of 110 in a mountain climbing accident. That the illegitimate offspring of a one-time terrorist clan proved to be more faithful to House Kurita than his uncle, a pureblood Kurita, was never lost on the Rasalhague populace.

THE AGE OF DISHONOR

Unlike Nihongi Von Rohrs's predecessors, who controlled only the political and military elements within the Combine, the new leader wanted total economic control of House Kurita. He removed and executed competent corporate and mercantile leaders and replaced them with inept but loyal friends and stooges. Political turmoil would have resulted, but the new tyrant dealt with the slightest criticism from anyone in the harshest possible manner. Entire families, from grandparents through grandchildren, were executed if a single family member spoke out against the Von Rohrs government.

Where Robert Kurita called for torture or an execution perhaps once a month, under Nihongi these punishments were a daily occurrence. None could complain, however, as by all the rules of dynasty set down by Shiro Kurita and a century of ongoing tradition, Nihongi was the Combine's rightful heir. The people could do nothing but wait, endure, and let time heal the wounds. They secretly hoped that one of the exiled Kuritas would step forward, and soon. Any other drastic action, such as an attempted assassination or efforts to stage an open election, might mean the collapse of the century-old dynasty. That course of action was inconceivable.

Von Rohrs did reaffirm the House Kurita policy of territorial advances against the Lyran Commonwealth. He also made occasional plans to attack the Federated Suns, which some advisors described as "a dangerous supernova on the edge of the Draconis Combine." For the most part, the previous Kurita leadership had agreed that House Steiner and its predecessors presented less formidable opposition. Moreover, a two-front war involved a high level of risk and was likely to fail disastrously. Even Von Rohrs, in his usurpation, left House Davion more or less untouched, save a diversionary raid now and again. Rumors quietly circulated that Von Rohrs had some form of collusion with Davion leadership; those caught whispering such treason went missing shortly after uttering such words.

THE BLOODY KNOT OF VON ROHRS

As far as it mattered to the average citizen of the Dragon, the eighty-nine year reign of the Von Rohrs could have been under a single man or a dozen different ones. For most, the period was a bloody blur of misery with no tangible changes from one tyrant to the next. Even court observers on New Samarkand had difficulty determining exactly who was in charge or when one man's term ended and another began.

This confusion was largely due to Nihongi's disuse of his first name within a year of his ascension. Throughout the rest of the period, the tyrants went only by their surname. Always fearful of retaliation, Nihongi and his descendants lived out their lives in the strictly guarded seclusion of the New Samarkand palace grounds.

The court chain of command during the Von Rohrs period was confusing and convoluted. Presumably, subordinates would report to their superiors, who would, in turn, report to theirs. After passing through three, four, or even five levels of administration, a message might reach one of a half-dozen persons who actually knew and met regularly with the incumbent leader. Or, in some cases, someone whom they *thought* was the tyrant.

Such confusion spread in full after Nihongi's death. Kozo Von Rohrs was never seen in public and his closest aides were the only persons in all of human space who knew what he looked like. For over sixty years, Combine subjects could have met their Coordinator on the surface of any world and no one would have recognized him. Paranoia enshrouded the upper levels of the Combine government.

To historians' best estimation, Nihongi ruled from 2421 until the mid-2400s. It is not known how many offspring he had: he was known to have a sizeable sexual appetite that ranged across both sexes and beyond. One son, Kozo, is believed to have ruled next, from approximately 2450 until the late 2460s. Kozo apparently had several sons and daughters. According to an exhaustive research study conducted by the Benjamin University College of Ancestry, Yama was next, serving until approximately 2510. Some court accounts indicate a proxy rule by Yama's sons Ulysses and Nii before his brother Krüger officially took over around 2520. Because there is no hard evidence for any of the Von Rohrs progeny serving on the throne save Nihongi, Kozo, Yama, and Krüger, they are considered the Fifth through Ninth Coordinators in the line of succession. Several of the Von Rohrs spawn—most illegitimate—served in DCMS line units, out of the presence of their hyper-paranoid patriarchs.

Regardless of their order, few Combine citizens today refer to *any* of the Von Rohrs tyrants as Coordinator, believing they are not worthy of the honorable title and all it implies.

—*The Bloody Torment*; Benjamin University Press, 2940

BLOOD POISONING

After learning about the development and manufacture of the Terran Hegemony's BattleMechs in the 2430s and '40s, the Von Rohrs agreed that the Combine needed its share of such formidable technology. In 2443, the Hegemony fielded a lance of 'Mechs against a Kuritan armor company on Styx. The enormous *Mackie*s, though primitive by modern standards, easily handled the heavy Combine tanks.

The Von Rohrs dynasty, though highly secretive, maintained an obvious foreign policy. The new ruling family intended to attack weak lines in House Steiner's political leadership while claiming worlds that were inadequately or incompetently defended. By 2445, approximately one-fifth of the worlds in the former Tamar Pact belonged to the Combine. The victories were a small balm to soothe the bloody gashes inflicted upon the Combine's citizenry.

House Steiner had already raided a Terran BattleMech facility, seized the necessary computer data, and begun to set up their own factories. Combine officials agreed it was time to pay the Steiners a visit and steal the valuable technology from under their noses. In 2461, the Combine launched two covert raids against Steiner BattleMech facilities. The success of the operation on Coventry gave the Dragon the technology to design and manufacture its own 'Mechs.

BATTLEMECHS OF THE DRAGON

Following the raid in 2461 that netted BattleMech plans for the Draconis Combine, House Kurita set out on a crash course of construction. To build this first design, the paranoid Kozo Von Rohrs established a secret division of New Samarkand Metals, watched over obsessively by his newly formed Draconis Elite Strike Teams. It would be up to New Samarkand Armor Works to tackle the task. (When the capital of the Draconis Combine moved, NSAW migrated wholesale, becoming Luthien Armor Works). Due to the restrictions of personnel and resources from such secrecy, the GLD-1R *Gladiator* would not reach full production until 2468.

Following the disastrous assault on the world of Nox—the first large-scale 'Mech vs. 'Mech battle—in 2475 against House Steiner, additional resources were poured into the nascent 'Mech program. Advances in new technologies meant an end to the "primitive era" of 'Mech production.

With the *Gladiator* forever dishonored by the Nox affair, the Combine moved on to produce its first "modern era" BattleMech in 2487. The Von Rohrs family immediately created and funded a new BattleMech construction company, Kankoku Military Fabrication Corporation. The sole purpose of the company was to take the lessons learned by NSAW and the battlefield failures of the *Gladiator* and produce a BattleMech that would not only be superior to the Combine's enemies but also a standing reminder of the head of the Dragon. In 2487, the Combine's first "modern" BattleMech, the *Von Rohrs,* walked off the Kankoku assembly line. It was immediately put to use.

The *Von Rohrs* served in every Kurita line regiment that reclaimed worlds lost to the Steiners during the 2463 Lyran invasion. The 'Mech was on its way to becoming the standard Combine BattleMech unit when the success of the McAllister Rebellion wiped out the Von Rohrs line. One of Martin McAllister's first formal orders after taking command of the Combine was to issue the DCMS an order to change immediately the name of all *Von Rohrs* 'Mechs to *Hebi* (serpent). None of the *Hebi* were to be replaced if destroyed, and Kankoku MFC was immediately closed down and dissolved.

Fortunately for the Combine, the years after McAllister's Rebellion were peaceful, allowing the Combine to dismantle and replace the symbols of the former dynasty. Nearly seventy years later, the Combine's leadership blamed this sudden spike in manufacturing and military purchasing (and, by extension, the Von Rohrs Coordinators) for the House's poor economic position when the Star League was formed. Few foreign economists agreed, instead pointing toward much more recent economic mismanagement of the Combine's economy.

—*Early Battle Technology: Draconis Combine*; Sun Zhang Publications, 3067

The Lyran Commonwealth launched an offensive against the Combine two years later, with the target appearing to be St. John. The Von Rohrs stripped several border worlds of their garrisons to fortify planets in the suspected target area. Steiner forces targeted other worlds besides St. John, hitting Skondia and Nox. Caught by surprise, the Combine's forces offered little resistance at first but grew tenacious as the Lyran offensive ground on.

By 2465, the battle shifted to Caldrea. A combination of exhausted Lyran attackers, worn out equipment, determined defenders, and extremely rough terrain created an impenetrable defense. In desperation, the Commonwealth used tactical nuclear weapons on the Dragon's forces and captured the planet. The Lyran push stalled in 2468, and House Steiner withdrew, garrisoning their captured worlds. At this time, BattleMechs began entering the DCMS line units. For the next three years, the Dragon pressed to retake its lost territory, but Lyran forces maintained their expertise in BattleMech tactics and successfully held their ground.

The first full-scale 'Mech-versus-'Mech battle took place on Nox in 2475 as the Second Sword of Light met the Steiner occupation force. Though the Kuritan attack was neither successful nor strategically significant—it was a complete disaster for the Combine—it marked a major turning point in armed warfare.

Political confusion hindered the Lyran armies as each of the three powers—Tamar, Donegal, and Skye—sought to build their own 'Mech force. The Von Rohrs took advantage of the internal dissension within the Commonwealth, and during the last two decades of the twenty-fifth century, all Combine worlds lost in the 2463 offensive returned to the Dragon's rule.

Crushing the Snake

Illiyana Sorenson, daughter of Lord Blaine Sorenson, was fifteen years of age when she met Captain Martin McAllister, the Combine's emissary to the Principality of Rasalhague. McAllister, born on Echo, had come to the attention of the Von Rohrs after a few years of exemplary service in the DCMS and was selected to the prestigious position. During his initial visit to the Dragon's nominal ally, Sorenson and McAllister fell in love and were married in a private ceremony in 2494.

The Principality had steadfastly refused to accept a lasting peace with the Combine under the Von Rohrs' banner. After McAllister's marriage, Lord Sorenson and the young captain grew close and began making plans to not only reunite the two realms but also overthrow the Von Rohrs tyrants and return rule to the Kurita line. McAllister returned to New Samarkand without his secret wife, reporting his diplomatic mission as a failure. Over the next seven years, he returned to Rasalhague several times, ostensibly to maintain contact with Lord Sorenson but in reality to visit his wife.

In 2496, Illiyana gave birth to their daughter, Siriwan McAllister. Three years later, Illiyana drowned during a boating excursion. Martin was present for the birth of his daughter but found out about his wife's accident several months after the incident. Lord Sorenson took over Siriwan's care, raising her alongside his own daughter Zarabeth, born later the same year.

Devastated by the loss of his wife, Martin threw himself into his work. By 2501, the Von Rohrs gave up on a peaceful resolution with the Principality, and McAllister was transferred back to a military assignment, finding himself posted along the Combine/Rasalhague border. For seven years, McAllister passed information to Lord Sorenson, who slowly gathered and repositioned Principality forces. During his service, McAllister rose through the ranks of the DCMS and made powerful friends within the military and the court.

With help from his friends within the Imperial Court, McAllister orchestrated the imprisonment of Yama Von Rohrs in 2508. Krüger Von Rohrs took over shortly afterward, knowing that McAllister was instrumental in his ascension but not aware of how. Martin's political influence skyrocketed in the court, and he continued making new friends and secret agreements.

In mid-2510, Sorenson launched a powerful but brief assault across the Combine border. The reports of enemy activity prompted a massive reassignment of the bulk of the Combine's forces to combat the threat, including half of the Household Guard—of which McAllister then commanded—on New Samarkand. Security was at its lowest state of awareness since the Von Rohrs had taken over.

In late November 2510, Colonel McAllister, Blaine Sorenson's eldest son Jarod, and several score of the Household Guard entered the palace and opened fire. Unsure of individual identities, McAllister's forces took no prisoners in a quick and intense firefight. The entire Von Rohrs family and most of the servants were wiped out, including women and children. Yama, languishing in the palace prison, met the same fate as his sons and brother. Their termination brought an end to the Von Rohrs line; orders went out shortly after for the execution of various Von Rohrs spawn serving in various military forces. Unfortunately, Jarod Sorenson also lost his life.

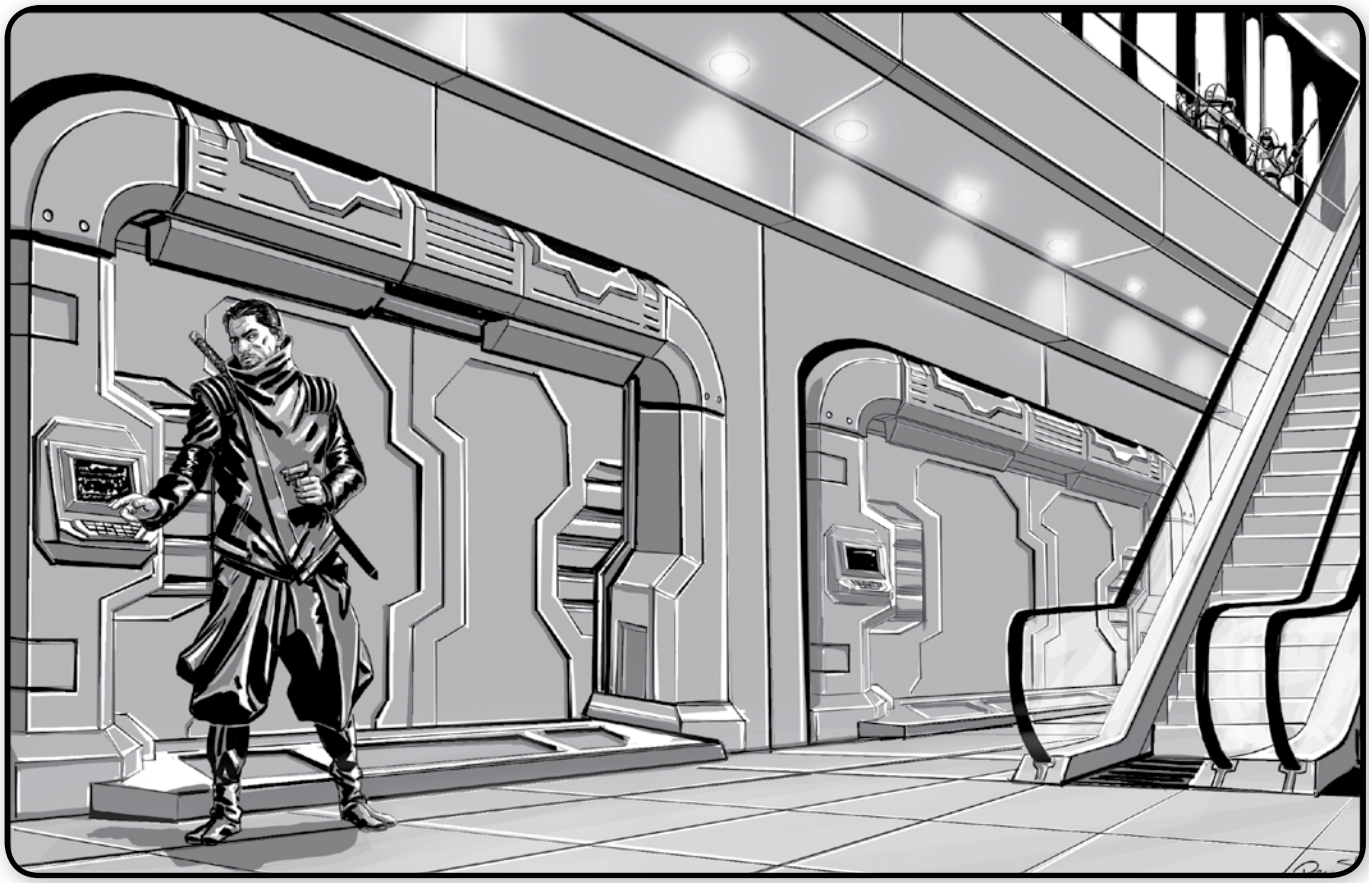
Less than ten hours later, McAllister publicly broadcast the coup and the results of a genetic test, taken at the behest of Blaine Sorenson before his marriage to Illiyana. He was, without any doubt, a direct blood descendant of Shiro Kurita. His sequestered daughter Siriwan would be his heir. The Combine was once again under the proper rule of a Kurita.

Lord Blaine Sorenson was named Duke of Rasalhague, and the two realms were formally united. While a degree of mistrust between the two cultures remained—more from ideological differences—the unification was a monumental step towards peace in the quadrant. More importantly, the Combine gained a long and strategically exploitable border with the Lyran Commonwealth.

With the McAllisters ruling the Combine, an age of relative peace ensued. Combine commanders began a gradual, subtle campaign of conquest along both borders. Full-scale battles with the Commonwealth and the Federated Suns were infrequent, leaving the borders fairly quiet. Thus did the Age of War come to an end for the Combine.

GRACE UNDER SIRIWAN

Siriwan McAllister-Kurita (also referred to as Lady Kurita) is considered the most remarkable woman in Combine history. A smart child, she was present during her father's infrequent visits



with Lord Sorenson and kept her father's secret. Being included in her father's long-range planning had a deep impact on the girl and helped her keep her own counsel later in life dealing with the scheming Kuritan court.

The Sorenson household, which raised Siriwan through her formative years, was warm and close, devoid of the paranoia and intrigue that plagued the Kuritan court. As such, she had the most normal upbringing of any Kurita Coordinator. At the same time, she was always viewed as an outsider. Siriwan learned warmth and caring but also how to remain guarded in one-on-one dealings with people.

After Martin's successful coup, Siriwan relocated to New Samarkand, finding a very different world than she expected. People at court treated her warmly when they wanted something from her—usually a favor from her father. Many saw Siriwan's overtures of friendliness as manipulation, so she found herself lonely for companionship. She used her position as an outsider to her advantage, observing all court proceedings with a detached air. She studied the history of the Combine and the Kurita family extensively and learned how to use her position as the Coordinator's daughter to get what she wanted from people.

McAllister informed his daughter that she could not become Coordinator because she was a woman. He recommended she find a distant Kurita to marry so her son could be designated as heir. Her lady-in-waiting researched the Kuritan family tree to find a suitable mate.

Unfortunately, the Coordinator was murdered by a woman in his bedchamber before he could make definite plans for the line of succession. His sole heir was Siriwan; there were no close male Kurita relatives. Thanks to the Von Rohrs, all the remaining Kuritas in the Combine were equally far from a claim to the throne. To avoid another bloody struggle for power, the court nobles agreed that Siriwan should hold the throne as Coordinator. The Lady Kurita accepted the title with a show of great reluctance, but many nobles were concerned that she actually intended to rule. They believed having a woman on the Kuritan throne was bad enough; her exercising such power was unthinkable. Her status as an outsider and descendant of the rulers of Rasalhague, a former rebellious realm, only added to their apprehension.

Just as court tension was reaching its apex, Warren Kurita appeared at court to be decorated for military service. The great grandson of Grant Kurita, exiled during the Von Rohrs purge, Warren was the only son who devoted himself to military studies. He was a fair tactician and had an affinity for BattleMech technology; however Warren was not a strong leader. He arrived on New Samarkand to be decorated not for exemplary service, but for his work in joint engineering-military projects. Warren's arrival for the decoration had been specially arranged by a few cunning court officials, including Siriwan's lady-in-waiting.

Siriwan was taken by the intelligent, quiet, and unambitious Warren; in return, the young Kuritan was dazzled by the self-possessed young Lady Kurita. They were married a few days after their first meeting, and in May 2515 Warren was installed as the new Coordinator of the Draconis Combine.

Warren slowly settled into his office, learning his way around the court with Siriwan's help. The Lady Kurita was sympathetic to the plight of an outsider who faced the ambitions and hidden agendas that made up the Kuritan court. Siriwan was the picture of the helpful, devoted wife; Warren, who never quite recovered from the sudden transition to Coordinator, depended on her advice. In February 2516, Hehiro Kurita was born and named the Heir-Designate at his naming ceremony a week later.

Siriwan devoted much of her time to Hehiro after his birth. Warren, who missed his wife's guidance in decision-making, began to suffer from depression and disorientation. On the family doctor's insistence, the Coordinator and his small family retreated to a small seaside resort for a quiet vacation. Less than a week later, on 9 February 2517, Warren died from mysterious causes. Officially, the Coordinator had died from improperly prepared shellfish.

With Hehiro only one year of age, Siriwan reluctantly became regent of the realm, though dubbed the Thirteenth Coordinator. A woman serving as regent to a male heir appeared perfectly acceptable to the nobles of the court. Siriwan formally mourned the death of her husband for the mandated year but dropped the "reluctant regent" pose almost immediately.

The Lady Kurita

Siriwan ruled for nearly forty years. She befriended those nobles who were amiable and gradually took power away from those who opposed her. Her years growing up in the background of the court served her well as her court enemies continued to underestimate the Coordinator.

Lady Kurita took pains to treat the women of the court well, suspecting that many of them were the powers behind their husbands as she had been Warren's. (It would not have been proper for the Coordinator—even a female—to befriend the women.) Siriwan was the first Coordinator to lend an ear to what these women had to say. She impressed some with her image as a young widow and mother struggling with the burden of rule, and others were influenced by her position as outspoken, influential woman.

The only gap in Siriwan's education was military experience. Rather than hide such a flaw and expose herself to criticism, she openly admitted her ignorance and surrounded herself with the best military advisors she could. Instead of turning control of the military over to others or leading the Dragon into situations she could not judge, Lady Kurita strove for peaceful solutions to conflicts. The Combine started few armed conflicts during this time, concentrating its forces instead to repel any incursion into the Dragon's territory.

Siriwan would not negotiate with other leaders but assembled a sharp ambassadorial staff to achieve the results she desired. According to many court observers and historians, Siriwan had a leadership style based on "a steely eye, an acid tongue, and an ear that did not hear what she did not want to hear." No one in court wanted to face humiliation before this small, iron-spined woman. What Lady Kurita wanted, she inevitably received. Her tactic of choice was asking the "pre-answered question."

Lady Kurita taught Hehiro the ways of court as she herself had learned them. When he was still too young to fully understand what was going on, Hehiro sat in on sensitive meetings, soaking up the atmosphere in much the same way Siriwan had done at the feet of her father. Hehiro had tutors for every academic discipline—but only Siriwan taught him political science. The

HEHIRO KURITA

Like his ancestor Shiro, Hehiro believed in militant self-reliance and the inherent ideological superiority of his subjects. Hehiro's judgments were significantly influenced by his mother, herself a strong proponent of peaceful expansion and administration. Being raised by his mother rather than by his father undoubtedly made Hehiro a bit more charming than many Kuritas, but he also possessed his mother's cunning mind and skill at matters of state.

Many questions have been raised as to why Hehiro permitted his mother to act as regent until he was forty years of age. Apparently, he never truly wanted the position of Coordinator. He married at the age of nineteen, and his wife died in childbirth. He spent the next decade raising his son Martin before remarrying. Some informed sources indicate that Siriwan offered to step down on several occasions, but Hehiro only accepted after Martin turned twenty. Two years later, Martin died in a battle along the Periphery border.

A skilled and convincing orator, a just arbiter, and an iron-willed leader, Hehiro constantly strived for his ideals of perfection and sought the means to attain them. He may be most famous for signing the Treaty of Vega in 2569, which made the Draconis Combine a member of Ian Cameron's brainchild, the Star League. Some members of the military and the nobility angrily accused him of trusting his enemies more than his friends.

In 2577, Hehiro backed the Star League on the issue of the Reunification War against the Periphery worlds. Having rejected the Star League's offer of membership, these outlying nations formed their own alliance to protect their autonomy. A twenty-year war followed. Despite some political pressure and significant casualties, the general populace threw its support behind their Coordinator.

On issues close to home, Hehiro did condemn many of the court nobles for using bribery, favoritism, blood vendettas, and other similar means to promote their own personal interests. While his actions drew considerable hostility from those same nobles, Hehiro's stance endeared him to his subjects to a degree rarely seen in the Draconis Combine before or since. This probably explains the popular support he was able to muster for participation in the Reunification Wars. Though he had inherited his position, Hehiro liked to believe that he would have been the people's choice—had they been given one. However romantic the notion, the Coordinator was no fool. His tripling the size of the Household Guard provides an illuminating footnote to the story of his reign. That action showed Hehiro finally understood his mother's lessons regarding the difference between gullibility and trust. This well-protected leader ultimately died by accident in 2591 after tripping and falling down a long palace staircase; his neck broke instantly. Witnesses confirmed no one else was near enough to push him, completely ruling out the possibility of foul play.

Hehiro's son Leonard was next in line—and a far cry from his father.

—*Hehiro the Peacemaker (Revised);* Geneva University Press, 2997

THE TREATY OF VEGA

It is resolved whereby the parties who sign and come into accordance with the provisions and conditions of this treaty shall be jointly agreed to abide by the provisions and conditions contained therein.

Condition 1. At which time all parties and States to be concerned have become signatory members, and within a reasonable administrative period not to exceed five years immediately thereafter, the existence of a new hegemony will be created and recognized. This new hegemony, to be known as the Star League, will:

A. consists of founding parties and States, or any subsequent parties and States who accept a bona fide offer to become signatories,

B. recognize, individually and equally, all parties and States as Member-States within the Star League.

Condition 2. The signatory members of this Star League shall, as their first concern, while chartering this League, provide for the rulership and control of said League in a manner agreeable to all. This rule may include, but is not bound by this treaty to require:

A. a single administrator of the Star League, and

B. a body of ruling persons representing each founding Member-Federate

Condition 3. The individual ruler of the State now known as the Draconis Combine, and the rulers of other Member-Federate States, shall maintain control over the internal affairs of their separate states, beyond the control of the Star League, within whatever limits are arrived at in the charter of the Star League, including

A. complete autonomy over all matters of policy that in no way exceed the borders of the State over which he and/or his government rules, the definition of such matters as exceed these borders to be arrived at by agreement of all Member-Federates, and

B. preservation of the internal political structure within the borders of that state.

Condition 4. The Member-Federates shall arrive at a mutual agreement of protection and alliance in the case of attack from outside, non-member states, and a formula for negotiation and/or retaliation in the event of attack by one Member-Federate against another for whatever reason.

Condition 5. The individual signers of this agreement shall not, publicly or privately, discuss, disclose, or otherwise reveal or open the contents herein, until such time as the Terran Hegemony representative, Ian Cameron or his heir or assign, shall deem it meet to open the chartering negotiations of the Star League among all signers of such treaties of intent.

Condition 6. If, within two years from this date, no convention or concordance shall be announced whereby a charter for the aforementioned Star League shall commence, or, if no agreement shall be forthcoming from such convention by five years from its commencement date, this treaty of intent shall become null and void.

Signed this 15 August 2569, Standard Terran Calendar

Ian Cameron, Thirteenth Director-General, Terran Hegemony



Hehiro Kurita, Fourteenth Coordinator, the Draconis Combine



Heir-Designate absorbed from her the preference for negotiation over physical combat and the use of both subtlety and bluntness.

Possessing his father's temperament, Hehiro could never adopt his mother's frank manner, which had earned her in the back halls of the palace the nickname "the Dragon Lady." Hehiro was not weak but preferred to issue requests in urgent whispers rather than by his mother's style of often unanswerable demands.

Hehiro was intelligent, quickly grasping the intricacies of history and applying them to the Combine. Siriwan detected within him an inability to believe the worst. Trust and optimism are fine qualities for a young boy. A monarch, however, needs these qualities tempered with a realistic eye. Concerned that her son would never see the knife angling for his back, Siriwan maintained the throne as long as she could, stepping down when the Heir-Designate reached forty years of age. She remained an active advisor in Hehiro's court until his death in 2591.

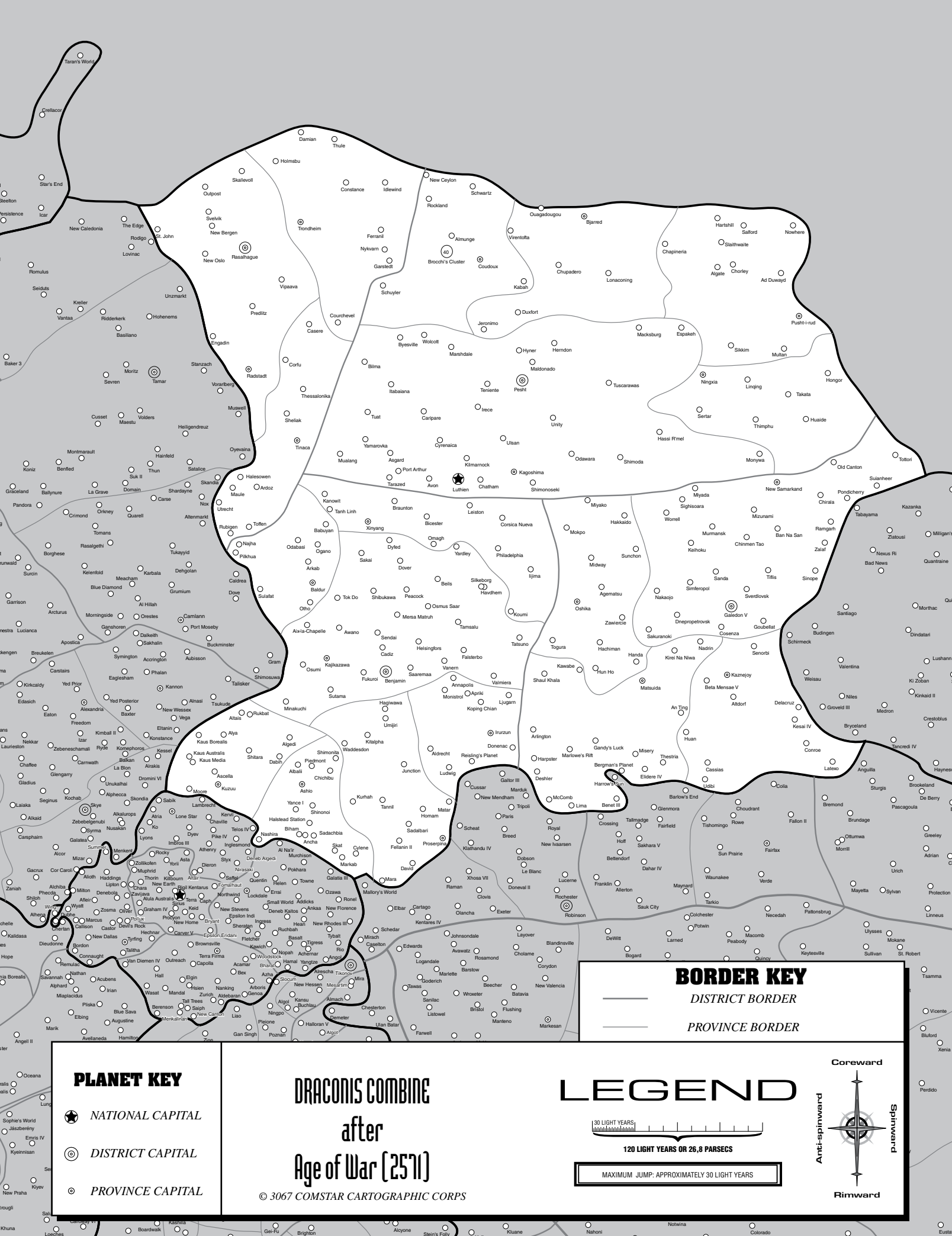
DRIVING TOWARDS WAR

In 2569, Hehiro Kurita formalized a secret agreement with the Terran Hegemony's Ian Cameron and signed the Treaty of Vega. The Combine was the last to join Cameron's string of alliances; the Coordinator spent two years in negotiations with the other Great Houses to form the charter of the Star League. In 2571, the Star League was established—Coordinator Hehiro was the first to sign the accords—and Ian Cameron was recognized as First Lord. The League articles granted each of the other five leaders a seat on the High Council, autonomy over all domestic policy matters, and official sanction of the existing line of succession. Most importantly for the Combine, the member-states had free access to the Terran military research apparatus.

Many critics felt the fundamental differences between the member states ran too deep and too much blood had flowed for a long-lasting, peaceful transition into the Star League. Questions about freedom of trade and about what loyalty meant were raised. Now that all the Houses were on the same side, against what (or whom) could the Star League fight? The only remaining target that could unite all parties in a common cause existed beyond the Inner Sphere's borders: the Periphery. These outlying realms did not want to give up their autonomy by joining the Star League.

REUNIFICATION THROUGH VIOLENCE

In late 2572 the Star League learned of significant 'Mech forces in the Outworlds Alliance. The League immediately launched a police action under the auspices of the First Lord's Directive 21, which called on the Alliance to accept the presence of SLDF troops for protection and to control the outlaw forces that had been gaining a hold in the region. A mixed task force of SLDF and DCMS troops landed on several Outworlds planets, locating and neu-


Taran's World
Crellacor
Star's End
Steelton
Persistence
Icar
New Caledonia
The Edge
Rodigo
St. John
Lovinac
Romulus
Seiduts
Kreller
Vantaa
Ridderkerk
Hohenems
Basiliano
Unzmarkt
Baker 3
Sevren
Moritz
Tamar
Stanzach
Vorarlberg
Engadin
Cusset
Maestu
Volders
Heiligendreuz
Muswell
Montmarault
Koniz
Benfled
Hainfeld
Thun
Suk II
Satalice
Graceland
Ballynure
La Grave
Domain
Shardayne
Carse
Pandora
Crimond
Orkney
Quarell
Allenmarki
Tomans
Rasalgethi
Borghese
Tukayyid
Surcin
Kelenfold
Karbala
Dehgolan
Meacham
Blue Diamond
Grumium
Garrison
Arcturus
Al Hillah
Morningside
Orestes
Camlann
Ganshoren
Port Moseby
Lucianca
Dalkeith
Sakhalin
Apostica
Buckminster
Breukelen
Symington
Accrington
Aubisson
Carstairs
Eaglesham
Phalan
Kirkcaldy
Yed Prior
Kannon
Edasich
Alexandria
Yed Posterior
Alnasi
Tsukude
Eaton
Baxter
New Wessex
Freedom
Vega
Eltanin
Kimball II
Izar
Konstance
Nekkar
Ryde
Komephoros
Laurieston
Zebeneschamali
Kessel
Chaffee
Carnwath
Balkan
Alrakis
Glengarry
La Blon
Gladius
Unukalhai
Dromini VI
Kochab
Alphecca
Seginus
Skoda
Sabik
Laiaka
Skye
Alkalurops
Alkaid
Zebebelgenubi
Nusakan
Syrma
Carsphairn
Galatea
Summa
Alcor
Mizar
Menkent
Cor Caroli
Gacrux
Alioth
Haddings
Thorin
Kiltburn
Muphrid
Zollikofen
Alchiba
Phecda
Denebola
Milton
Shiloh
Wyatt
Alfeir
Zosma
Graham IV
Athenia
Dubhe
Marcus
Callisto
Chertan
Dieudonne
Bordon
Connaught
Remulac
Nathan
Savannah
Alphard
Miaplacidus
Irian
Pliska
Blue Sava
Elbing
Augustine
Marik
Angell II
Avellaneda
Hamilton
Oceana
Sophie's World
Jászberény
Emris IV
Kyeinnisan
New Praha
Kyev
Khuna
Damian
Thule
Holmsbu
Skallevoll
Outpost
Svelvik
New Bergen
Trondheim
New Oslo
Rasalhague
Vipaava
Predlitz
Engadin
Corfu
Radstadt
Thessalonika
Sheliak
Tinaca
Oyevaina
Halesowen
Ardoz
Maule
Utrecht
Toffen
Rubigen
Najha
Pilkhua
Caldrea
Sulafat
Dove
Constance
Idlewind
New Ceylon
Schwartz
Rockland
Ferranil
Nykvarn
Garstedt
Schuyler
Courchevel
Casere
Ouagadougou
Bjarred
Virentofta
Almunge
Brocchi's Cluster
Coudoux
Kabah
Chupadero
Lonaconing
Duxfort
Jeronimo
Byesville
Wolcott
Marshdale
Hyner
Herndon
Maldonado
Bilma
Itabaiana
Teniente
Pesht
Tuscarawas
Irece
Caripare
Tuat
Unity
Yamarovka
Cyrenaica
Ulsan
Mualang
Asgard
Odawara
Shimoda
Port Arthur
Tarazed
Avon
Luthien
Chatham
Kilmarnock
Kagoshima
Shimonoseki
Kanowit
Tanh Linh
Braunton
Leiston
Bicester
Corsica Nueva
Xinyang
Babuyan
Odabasi
Ogano
Omagh
Dyfed
Yardley
Philadelphia
Sakai
Arkab
Dover
Baldur
Tok Do
Shibukawa
Peacock
Osmus Saar
Mersa Matruh
Tamsalu
Aix-la-Chapelle
Awano
Sendai
Helsingfors
Cadiz
Falsterbo
Vanern
Annapolis
Valmiera
Fukuroi
Benjamin
Saaremaa
Osumi
Kajikazawa
Shimosuwa
Gram
Talisker
Minakuchi
Sutama
Hagiwara
Umijiri
Monistrol
Apriki
Koping Chian
Ljugarn
Altais
Rukbat
Alya
Kaus Borealis
Algedi
Waddesdon
Kitalpha
Kaus Australis
Kaus Media
Shitara
Dabih
Albali
Piedmont
Shimonita
Chichibu
Ascella
Kuzuu
Moore
Ashio
Yance I
Shinonoi
Kurhah
Tannil
Junction
Ludwig
Aldrecht
Reisling's Planet
Donenac
Irurzun
Arlington
Gandy's Luck
Misery
Marlowe's Rift
Harpster
Thestria
Bergman's Planet
Harrow's Sun
Elidere IV
Deshler
Cassias
Udbi
Latexo
Anguilla
Conroe
Tancredi IV
Kesai IV
Bryceland
Huan
An Ting
Altdorf
Delacruz
Groveld III
Niles
Medron
Kinkaid II
Weisau
Valentina
Lushann
Ki Zoban
Schirmeck
Budingen
Dindatari
Santiago
Morthac
Nexus Ri
Bad News
Quantraine
Zlatousi
Milligan's
Tabayama
Kazanka
Chirala
Pondicherry
Sulanheer
New Samarkand
Miyada
Sighisoara
Worrell
Mizunami
Ramgarh
Ban Na San
Chinmen Tao
Keihoku
Zalaf
Miyako
Hakkaido
Mokpo
Murmansk
Sunchon
Midway
Iijima
Sanda
Tiflis
Sinope
Simferopol
Sverdlovsk
Nakaojo
Agematsu
Oshika
Galedon V
Goubellat
Dnepropetrovsk
Zawiercie
Cosenza
Sakuranoki
Nadrin
Kirei Na Niwa
Hachiman
Handa
Tatsuno
Togura
Kawabe
Hun Ho
Shaul Khala
Matsuida
Kaznejoy
Beta Mensae V
Senorbi
Tottori
Old Canton
Monywa
Shimhu
Huaide
Sertar
Hongor
Linqing
Ningxia
Takata
Sikkim
Muftan
Hartshill
Salford
Nowhere
Slaithwaite
Chapineria
Algate
Chorley
Ad Duwayd
Pusht-i-rud
Macksburg
Espakeh
Hassi R'mel
Tuscarawas
Shimoda
Kagoshima
Shimonoseki
Tatsuno
Togura
Kawabe
Hun Ho
Shaul Khala
Matsuida
Kaznejoy
Beta Mensae V
Altdorf
Delacruz
Groveld III
Niles
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Kinkaid II
Weisau
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Sverdlovsk
Nakaojo
Agematsu
Oshika
Galedon V
Goubellat
Dnepropetrovsk
Zawiercie
Cosenza
Sakuranoki
Nadrin
Kirei Na Niwa
Hachiman
Handa
Tatsuno
Togura
Kawabe
Hun Ho
Shaul Khala
Matsuida
Kaznejoy
Beta Mensae V
Senorbi
Tottori
Old Canton
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Macksburg
Espakeh
Hassi R'mel
Tuscarawas
Shimoda
Kagoshima
Shimonoseki

tralizing the threat posed by the 'Mech forces. The SLDF focused their efforts on their assigned task but failed to find signs of an extant threat. The DCMS was more heavy-handed and effective in its approach. The Outworlders complained about the Combine's more straightforward tactics, which unfortunately caused damage to property. Matters came to a head on 14 December 2572 in Santiago City when the Seventeenth Galedon Regulars found itself facing hostile crowds. Demonstrations against the occupations were commonplace and generally peaceful, though vehicles and 'Mechs were often pelted with stones and paint.

Many of the unruly local children saw this as a game, daring each other to throw objects and paint at the SLDF troops. What happened next varies depending on source and propaganda. According to ISF reports, a Combine warrior took action against the children by throwing a can of coolant at her tormentors. The can burst and splashed over one boy, who immediately began to scream as the chemicals burned his skin. The crowd went wild and the 'Mech, a *Locust*, was isolated from its lancemates, tripping and crushing several people as it tried to extricate itself from the growing mob. The attacks against the fallen 'Mech escalated and, fearing for her life, the MechWarrior opened fire with the 'Mech's weapons. Twenty-seven people were killed and thirty more hospitalized. (The warrior in question atoned for her actions after her debriefing.)

The deaths sent shockwaves through the Star League and the Periphery. The damage to the League's image was irreparable. Demonstrations erupted across the Periphery and even on some Star League worlds. Coupled with other incidents across the Periphery, the Pollux Proclamation was issued and shortly after the Reunification War began.

Many within the Combine were skeptical that the League would follow through with its aggressive threats until First Lord Cameron announced the suspension of the Ares Conventions. The Dragon was the sole House enthusiastic at the prospect of war. The Conventions had taken much of the sheer brutality out of combat, so many in the Coordinator's inner circle welcomed the opportunity to show their true capabilities in the art of warfare. The leadership of House Kurita knew their history: the people of the Dragon were often at their peak when confronted by a worthy opponent.

The prospect of permanently assigning units to the SLDF met with open hostility throughout the Combine's military. The thought of swearing loyalty to someone other than the Coordinator was heresy.

At first Coordinator Hehiro Kurita asked for volunteers and then turned to his warlords to select units to transfer to the Star League. The bulk of the transferred units were pulled from the district regulars, though the Arkab Legions and Proserpina Hussars each lost a regiment. The Combine lost a total of thirty-nine regiments and fifty-seven WarShips to the forming SLDF. House Kurita later provided an additional six BattleMech, four armor, and eleven infantry regiments. The Galedon Regulars provided the bulk of the forces that made up the Draconis Combine Auxiliary Corps, though each of the other districts ended up providing at least two regiments.

Although the request on the part of First Lord Cameron was initially met with hostility, these additional forces would retain their own identity and remain under the command of a Combine officer. Support for the DCMS corps came from every corner of the Combine and from every class. The people of the Dragon wanted nothing more than to prove their military dominance over the rival Houses.

The Combine's economy was the most isolated in the Successor States because of its nearly constant state of hostility toward neighboring powers. Though many Combine worlds were resource poor, they were particularly well exploited. What a world might lack in raw materials, its citizenry made up for in overall efficiency. As soon as word of war was confirmed, the Dragon's economy went into high gear. The Kuritan economy saw high levels of production and output that rivaled the days of Shiro Kurita's first conquests through the Alliance of Galedon.

With the Rim Worlds Republic near one frontier border and the Outworlds Alliance near another, Combine troops had no lack of opportunities for combat. The Reunification War lasted for twenty years, ending in 2596 when SLDF troops captured the capitals of the Republic and Taurian Concordat. Resistance trickled to nothing and peace was declared by the Star League. For the next 150 years, the Combine would have few opportunities to vent its aggression.

REIGN OF LEONARD KURITA

The accidental death of Lord Hehiro Kurita left a momentary power vacuum in the Combine court. Though his eldest son Leonard was sworn in as the Fifteenth Coordinator, trouble appeared to be brewing at the palace. Hehiro's mother Siriwan led the mourners at Hehiro's state funeral, but Leonard was nowhere to be found. Many regarded such an absence as an ominous note for the future reign of the new Coordinator.

Apparently upon learning of his father's death, Leonard left New Samarkand and spent the first two months of his reign on a planet-hopping orgy. Court insiders quietly admitted that Leonard had departed and left a message that he would be "ensuring that many worthy descendants of Leonard Kurita the First will be planted across the breadth of the realm."

Leonard's premeditated excesses and corrupt nature was the complete opposite of his father's dignified stature. Even during his time as Heir-Designate, the middle-aged playboy behaved more as a rutting Federated Suns lordling than a proper member of the Imperial Court. Once his rule began, he only grew worse and nearly undid all of the political and social advances of his father's reign.

After Leonard's return, state gatherings and family events devolved into raucous, week-long debauches. The district governors of Pesht and Rasalhague saw their individual powers increase beyond their wildest ambitions. While the new Coordinator spent most of his time in a state of inebriation or unconsciousness, circumstances forced these leaders to assume direction of the Combine's participation in the Reunification War.

During Leonard's rare moments of sobriety, he created severe political and military tension for the Dragon, especially during the early and mid-2560s. He ordered large contingents of Kurita BattleMechs to land on planets near Terra to search for and retrieve any children who looked like the Coordinator.

Such use of the Dragon's military was considered a flagrant violation of the Star League Accords. This violation came while the Reunification War was in progress, when the BattleMechs could have been assigned to more critical operations in the war. Leonard paid little attention to increasingly strong warnings from the First Lord of the Star League.

The Reunification War ended in 2597, opening a new era of peace for the Star League. Large garrisons remained in the Periphery, though they would be withdrawn within a decade. Despite the overall success of the Star League's operation, Leonard remained unsatisfied. In the midst of his drunken rages, he threatened to attack Terra. As frontier garrisons were reassigned homeward over the next several years, Star League forces on Terra began to mobilize for possible strikes on Kuritan worlds.

Once a family embarrassment and nuisance, Leonard had turned into a genuine public menace. Elaine Kurita, the younger of his two sisters, became so despondent over Leonard's dishonor that she tearfully begged him to step down. Leonard ignored her and barely noted her act of *seppuku* in December 2604. Her final note implicated the Coordinator for her action. Less than three months later, the political situation had deteriorated so badly that something decisive needed done or the Star League would storm across both the Steiner and Davion borders.

Within a few weeks, Leonard contracted a mysterious and fatal disease that also afflicted several of his forebears, and he died within a week of diagnosis. Leonard's son Blaine became the Sixteenth Coordinator. Aside from Siriwan, still alive at 109 years of age, few could recall Warren Kurita's death from mysterious causes eighty-eight years before.

Blaine Kurita was twenty years old when he took the throne in March 2605. He was already in the final stages of cardiac myasthenia gravis. Despite the most advanced life-support technology available, he succumbed to the illness only seven months later. His brief reign was nowhere long enough to stop the slow slide into dishonor brought on by Leonard's catastrophic reign. No heir had been designated, and with great reluctance Siriwan reclaimed the throne and became the Seventeenth Coordinator.

The Lady Kurita became the only Coordinator in Combine history to ever hold the position on three separate occasions. After a few months, political pressure from court nobles began to build. Though still competent and sharp, Siriwan was showing her age. Two years into her third reign, she grudgingly accepted the inevitable and graciously stepped down from the throne. Her final official act was to name her granddaughter Sanethia as the Heir-Designate. Despite Siriwan's official retirement, she remained a force to be reckoned with in court politics, guiding and advising the new Coordinator. This state of affairs lasted until Siriwan's death in 2632 at the remarkable age of 136.

PEACE, PROGRESSION, AND POWER

Sanethia became Lord Kurita in 2607. (The title applied regardless of gender from this point forward, ensuring Lady Kurita's singular honorific.) A quiet, open-minded woman who was also a serious patron of the arts, Sanethia was an able ruler. Always willing to listen to new ideas, she maintained a firm but gentle grasp over state policy. She often suggested non-military options for resolving disputes, much to her Warlords' chagrin. This attitude reflected her grandmother Siriwan's influence, though Sanethia did much on her own to establish a peaceful yet strong regime. Her calm demeanor, her grasp of court politics, and her grandmother's advice guaranteed Sanethia time to explore other endeavors, such as funding several exploratory ventures on many of the Combine's less industrial worlds.

With the Leonard's death, relations between the Combine and the Star League slowly edged away from the precipice of all-out war. No longer did the Coordinator send Kurita forces on "heavy reconnaissance forays" into other member states. Under Coordinator Sanethia, the Dragon actually paid some reparations to the people whose lives and property the Kurita forces had damaged. Slowly, and with great caution, the Regular Army of the Star League stepped down from its year-long alert status.

Despite the calming of the border, relations between neither nation returned to the previous level of respectful, if not cordial, relations. In fact, the First Lord of the Star League was becoming aware he could no longer really trust the leaders of the League's other member-states. A successful twenty-year ISF undercover operation uncovered secret communications from the First Lord to his commanders. These communications outlined plans for the best way for the SLDF to wage war against each of the five other Houses, should the need arise. The plans for a war against the Draconis Combine were deemed priority. The ISF information, when revealed to the Coordinator, only reinforced the Dragon's wariness and suspicion of the Star League's actions.

Many Kuritans found the period of peace after the Reunification War entirely too quiet and lacking in the excitement that many, particularly the warriors, had grown to expect from life. (Lower class citizens lived vicariously through continual propaganda reporting the Combine's military prowess.) The soldiers' boredom and nervous energy led many to relieve their frustrations through spontaneous brawls and riots, which occurred with increasing frequency. Equally bored and frustrated, citizens often participated in these outbursts of mindless fighting and destruction. On Vanern, for example, rioting and collateral damage destroyed three whole cities.

Coordinator Sanethia and her ever-present grandmother decided the people needed some large project to occupy their energies and to prevent further damage to the realm.

This "lull," as the Dragon's people called the time of peace, was accompanied by a League-wide boom in the economy. Technology, now devoted to peaceful research and development, began paying huge dividends for the Great Houses of the Inner Sphere. By 2630, hyperpulse generators cut communication time by more than half. Improved, low-cost water purification systems

made it possible to settle worlds ignored during the Exodus. These systems also provided an economic boon to worlds that were no longer reliant on Ryan Cartel iceships. By 2700, an additional 750 worlds across the Sphere had been settled.

Major advances occurred in medical technology, biological engineering, and hydroelectrical engineering. Labor-saving devices provided more freedom and leisure time to explore the pleasures of luxury goods and the arts—though within the Combine, these devices were outlawed or restricted through bureaucratic licenses to preserve the citizens' work ethic.

Trading ships travelled the length and breadth of the Inner Sphere, delivering goods and transporting new, exotic wares at each port of call. As the sense of growing prosperity filtered into the most distant reaches of the Star League, the overall quality of life continued to improve. This was to be mankind's apex, the peak of *Homo sapiens*'s accomplishments.

THE KURITA WAY OF BUSINESS

The Draconis Combine was never one to shrink from a task. Its efforts to enter into the League-wide economic market showed determination, if not finesse. The case of Waddesdon Traders is a good example of the Kurita style of business.

In 2617, Sammuel Kestrich and Timth Miyasato bought two near-derelict freighters and founded Waddesdon Traders. Their first two years were spent carrying chemical fertilizers from their homeworld of Tannil to Davion worlds just across the border.

Though business was good, the two wanted to get into bigger-ticket items. Their attempts to break into a new market were continually thwarted by the Kosoan Trading Company, a Davion merchant association with five brand-new freighters.

By 2621, Waddesdon Traders was in deep trouble. Though the company had managed to increase its fleet to four vessels, the Kosoan Trading Company had a virtual lock on almost all inter-House trade in that area of the border. Something needed done, no matter the cost—and no matter what laws might be broken.

In March 2622, an unidentified freighter entered the Shinoni system and quietly approached the *FSS Franklin*, a Kosoan freighter. No one noticed the men hidden on the hull of the unidentified freighter. A small team used rocket packs to scoot across to the *Franklin*, where they planted an object at the drive-sail junction. The mysterious freighter then moved off. After its departure, an explosion rocked the *Franklin*, destroying both the drive core and the sail mechanism. Then came reports that the *Franklin* was one of four Kosoan ships that suffered a crippling explosion that month. A cloud of suspicion quickly settled over Waddesdeon Traders.

The Federated Suns protested these incidents and demanded that the Waddesdon partners be handed over for trial. It was of no use; the Traders' audacity had impressed Lord Kurita and the Minister of Economic Exchange and Expansion. The scandal eventually fizzled out, resulting in Waddesdon Traders becoming the largest trading company in its region within two years. Its flagship was a huge new freighter called the *Wisdom Through Audacity*, which Coordinator Sanethia secretly donated "in recognition of their business acumen."

—*Combine Trade Relations During the Lull*; Galedon Proprietary Press, 2996

Economic Unification Through Temptation

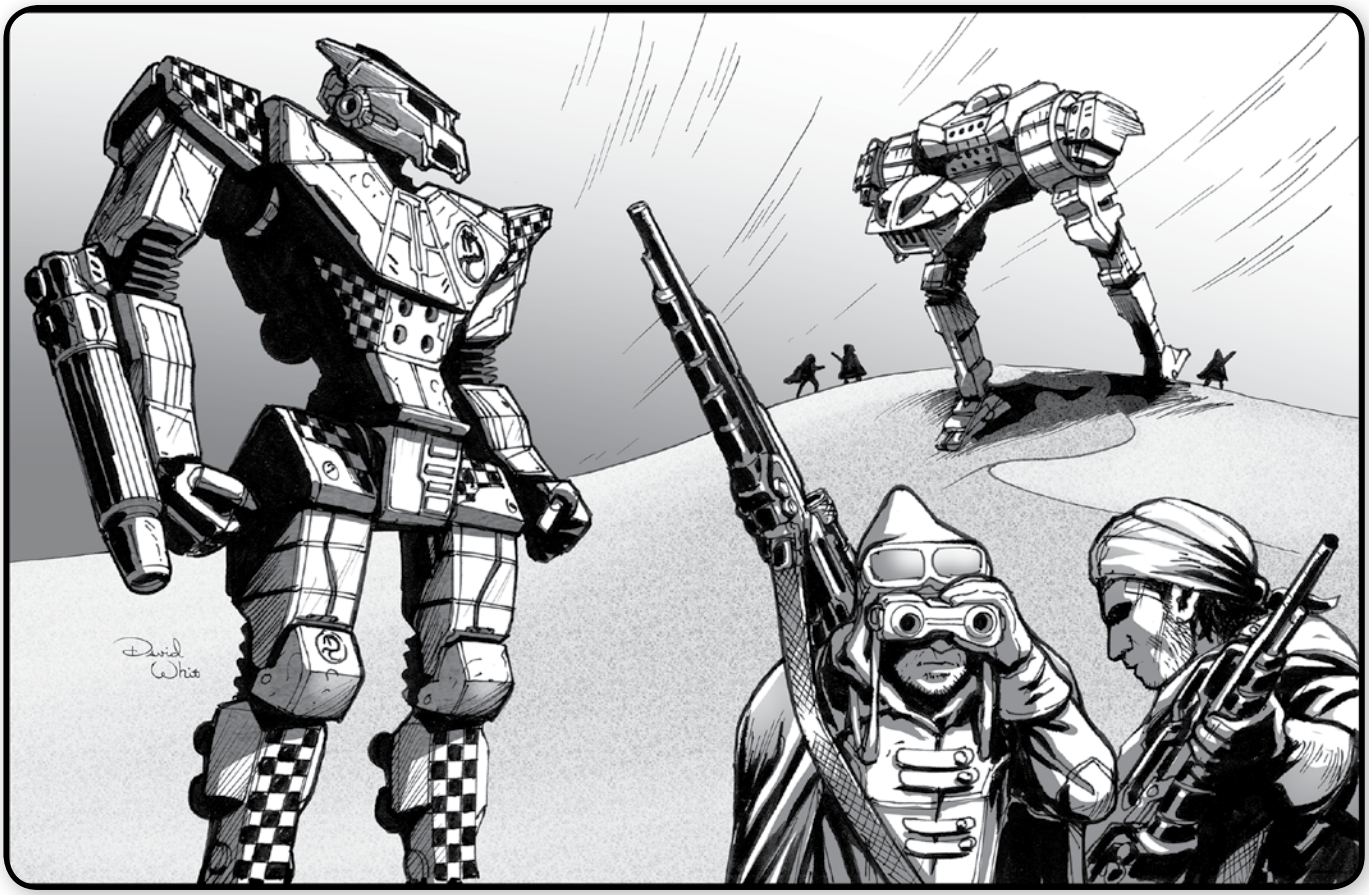
For many members of House Kurita, this forced, peaceful coexistence was unwelcome. A generally unfriendly and xenophobic society, the Dragon's citizenry rarely ventured across the border except when involved in an attack. Until this period, trade with other Houses was rare. When it did occur, the Kuritan merchants' objectives were decidedly simple: get as much as possible, offer little in return, and get out quickly. The Draconis Combine had been created through military conquest, not peaceful negotiation. Some of its leaders would only comply with the new era of cooperation if forced. Not only was the growth of trade ending this time-honored stance; some other House leaders were even calling for a single form of currency to facilitate trade.

When the issue of a universal currency system first emerged, the Combine's corporate sector (not under control of the Kuritan family) opposed it as vehemently as the Star League supported it. According to the First Lord Cameron, a regulated currency would eliminate the awkward system of barter and fluctuating exchange rates between interstellar governments. Combine industrialists feared the new currency would create a dangerous interdependence between House Kurita and the other Houses, endangering their own economic power. They also feared the possibility of Star League-induced currency devaluation, which would render all money worthless. In public statements, however, the corporate heads only said they questioned the Star League's authority to advocate such a massive change.

First Lord Cameron continued to press for better political and socioeconomic relations between the League's member-states. He believed that once trade began to flourish among the six powers, there would be no backing down. Adventurous freelance traders were the first to successfully deal in Combine goods and managed several successful smuggling runs. In their wake, these freelancers left samples of wares available from across the Inner Sphere, ranging from paints, cosmetics, and toys to raw materials for industry. Varieties of vehicles (civilian, industrial, and light military), heavy equipment, and colonization supplies also found their way to "abandonment" at Kuritan spaceports.

As quickly as limited quantities of these high-quality goods were "acquired" and released to the open market, they sold out with avid cries from the nobility for more. Kuritan manufacturers could not resist the lure of fat profits. The Kuritan court did not favor large-scale export trade with the other powers, though the influx of wealth tempted many. Within a few years, large cargo JumpShips travelled where smaller vessels had only visited before. Greed replaced isolationism within the economic and political upper levels of House Kurita. In 2623, the member-states of the Star League voted on the question of a new currency system. After lengthy debates, the system was eventually accepted unanimously.

The Kuritan family reluctantly reversed its traditional position on trade and interstellar relations; once they did, few dared to challenge the new policy. Because of concern that foreign luxury goods might soften the spartan toughness of the Combine citizenry or invite economic sabotage, the Kuritan court restricted incoming trade through bureaucracy and carefully monitored the effects of intercultural relations on the realm.



LUTHIEN AND THE DRAGON'S REBIRTH

In June 2617, Sanethia announced to the Combine that she was relocating the capital from New Samarkand to Luthien. The proclamation came as a shock to everyone, as it was expected the Kurita family would always remain on New Samarkand. The family's roots were there, as were most of their ancestors.

The plan, criticized mostly by non-Kuritas and the more distant nobility of the Combine, was a masterstroke. New Samarkand was distant from the Combine's border with its longtime enemy, House Steiner, and campaigns were difficult to coordinate. Luthien was closer to the center of the realm, better representing the Dragon's heart. It was also a resource-poor world with an ecosystem perpetually on the verge of extinction. The sparse population numbered three million and its economic index was rated as one of the worst worlds within the Combine. All of these reasons and more made Luthien the perfect choice for what the Coordinator had in mind for her people.

In 2620, Sanethia resigned as Coordinator on the same day Urizen II celebrated his thirtieth birthday. The Nineteenth Coordinator inherited his mother's ambitious program on Luthien. Though Urizen was ultimately credited with the rise of Luthien as the jewel of the Combine, the project's success came largely from both Sanethia and Siriwan's oversight. Urizen tasked them to shepherd the project, leaving only the most major of decisions to the Coordinator. When it was completed, Imperial City would become the most ambitious, most expensive, most energy-consuming project ever undertaken by the Combine. The two women were also responsible for the placement of several other city locations on the planet and crafting the infrastructure design that persists today.

The project was plagued with problems from the start. It took five years to drain the enormous swamp that occupied the designated location for the new capital city. More than ten million laborers and craftsmen from all parts of the Combine were tasked with construction. Due to Sanethia's original plan, the entire city was built without the use of modern construction technology. For inspiration, Siriwan and Sanethia patterned the city's architecture and design elements after that of ancient Japan. Unity Palace was modeled after Himeji Castle on Terra, and much of the outlying buildings maintained elements from the Azuchi-Momoyama period. Sections of the city remain dedicated to various Japanese styles throughout the centuries, including the neo-Fujimoto facades of the twenty-third century.

Most of the laborers employed in Imperial City's construction were drawn from the lower echelons of the Kuritan military or chain gangs. As the project progressed, many of the lower castes on other Combine worlds clamored to join volunteer labor groups

URIZEN KURITA II

The Nineteenth Coordinator and eldest son of Sanethia Kurita, Urizen II was a tall, imposing figure. Compared to his namesake of three centuries prior, Urizen was shy and quiet amidst the court. His demeanor did not mean compliance, however; Urizen was a sharp administrator and took after his mother and grandmother in navigating court politics.

Though his detractors dubbed him "Urizen the Passive," he successfully pursued a policy of peaceful economic trade and colonial expansion throughout his reign. Urizen was Kuritan to the core and monitored his Household Guard closely, ensuring their complete loyalty. His precautions served him well; he left office in 2691 at the age of 101. After retiring, Urizen requested and was granted the governorship of Echo, where he lived and ruled contentedly for another nineteen years. He died in a vehicle accident in 2710.

Aside from his installment of the Kokugaku, Urizen was responsible for the citizen's growing distrust of the Star League. The Combine had been the least enthusiastic about joining the League, as it ran contrary to the Kuritan ideology that it was their destiny to eventually rule all humanity. Many, from the highest general to the lowliest Unproductive, believed that to join the Star League was to admit failure, implying the Kuritas no longer honored their sacred destiny.

Urizen ordered gradual changes in the Combine's educational system, underplaying cooperation between the Combine military and Star League Regulars during the Reunification War. Historians began claiming that the Dragon had not joined the Star League because it offered any special benefits, but out of a sense of pity. The media and propagandists avoided reporting on events occurring outside the realm's borders. All of this blended to create an image of the Star League as somewhat apart from the realm. Whenever it suited the Dragon's purpose, the Kuritas used this growing dissonance to portray the League's policies and laws as outside interference.

When Urizen stepped down, he had established his legacy as the Combine's most influential Coordinator (outside of First Coordinator Shiro). Because of his many official and unofficial policies, the Dragon had adopted a nearly uniform culture and awe-inspiring fanaticism. Gone were the trends toward a "melting pot" of cultures. In its place, Urizen capitalized on the citizenry's love for the culture of a Japan that had not existed for more than a millennium. Such a mandate had serious consequences; it has shaped and molded the Combine into one of the most feared Great Houses in existence.

Society was further stratified on top of the existing divide between nobility and the commoner. The new division was between those who could adapt to the new culture and those who would not. Citizens who refused often lost all privileges, including the right to work. If such malcontents were high up in the social hierarchy, they may appear to remain unscathed—but the ISF was only a shadow away. The specter of the ISF loomed large as Urizen increased the department's budget and power, granting them the authority to stifle any trends that encouraged unsanctioned avenues of expression and political criticism.

While most critics of the Combine outside the realm's borders focused on the broad mandates of the ISF, they forget the more positive trends that bolstered the Combine's power. A large expansion of trade opened between the Dragon and its neighbors. The Combine, looking within to strengthen military development and technology, allowed its merchants to look outwardly for commercial endeavors. The Combine's merchants crafted trade alliances that brought needed resources and materials to several of the Dragon's poorer worlds. And with these new agreements and satellite facilities came new outlets for the ISF to use in its ever-expanding role as an intelligence service.

Hand-in-hand with its economic gains came the Combine's increasing self-sufficiency in military technology. Until Urizen's reign, House Kurita relied heavily on the Star League for its military edge. Urizen's mass building programs encouraged factory construction and expansion of the Kuritan military industrial arm.

—*Urizen II and the Political Realities of the Star League-era Combine;* New Samarkand Educational Press, 3024

that were brought in to bolster the workforce. Because of the insistence the city be built without modern machinery, the brute labor jobs were dangerous. Foremen considered it a good day if fewer than five hundred workers were killed from accidents or other project-related incidents.

The massive project created an economic boom across the realm and bolstered the flagging spirits of the populace. Archaic building materials such as teak, granite, marble, and mosaic tile were in great demand. Progress reports became highly anticipated news items on other worlds.

The flow of materials and labor to Luthien prompted the need for lesser cities around the capital, a situation Sanethia and Siriwan had already prepared for. These support cities and infrastructure followed the careful planning and guidance of the Coordinator's advisors, keeping order amidst the growing chaos. Within ten years of the cornerstone being laid, Luthien's population blossomed to fifty million and showed no sign of slowing.

The erection of this tremendous homage to ancient Oriental architecture sparked a mass wave of interest in the old ways. Urizen instituted the Kokugaku—National Learning—program, which stressed Japan's ancient history in its curriculum. Buddhism and Confucianism saw an increase in membership, as did many martial arts dojos. The idea of *bushido* became vogue among the nobility and middle class, peaking in the 2650s.

Despite propaganda from the Combine's neighbors, the embrace of the past did not mean House Kurita was eschewing the ways of modern science and technology. In 2652, Urizen tasked the Combine government with an ambitious program of industrial development. In addition to the goal of expanding new technologies such as HPG communications—introduced by the Star League—the project focused the Combine's scientific resources on designing and producing its own weapon systems. House Kurita did not want its military to rely on other Houses or the Star League for assistance or parts.

BUSHIDO AND THE BATTLEMECH

Renewed interest in the ways of ancient Japan sparked across the worlds of the Combine. New architecture replicating that found on Luthien began replacing older buildings in cities on every world in the realm. An immersion in ancient cultural history prompted the adoption of "the old ways," accented by technology where needed. Japanese became popular again and was installed as the official language of the realm—though Star League English remained the primary language among the nobility and merchant citizenry.

The military saw the rapid reemergence of *bushido* among its soldiers, especially the pilots of the massive BattleMech war machines. As the pinnacle of the military, the Kuritan MechWarriors took every ancient word to heart. MechWarriors adopted the fashion of carrying the wakizashi and katana (short and long swords) of the ancient samurai to formal dress occasions. Dojos sprang up everywhere, reviving and fostering the nearly lost arts of *kendo* and *kyudo*—the ways of sword and bow. Sword dueling was revived, and by the 2670s the Coordinator commissioned the creation of rules to ensure his MechWarriors didn't kill one another off.

Warriors who did not have strong ties to Japanese or other Asian ancestry were slower to accept the samurai ways. Several proclamations by the Coordinator, emphasizing a warrior's loyalty as vital to the Combine's respect, brought them around.

The steady proliferation of the way of the samurai led to a growing popularity of BattleMech duels and the concept of a "Champion" MechWarrior. In some ways, these revivals occurred because of Michael Cameron's Edict of 2650, which required mass cutbacks of the Kuritan military and put many MechWarriors out of service. These leaderless warriors—*ronin*—were forced to sell their skills so they could provide for their families.

A duel resulted when one MechWarrior somehow insulted another. The two would then decide where and when their contest would transpire. The duel typically occurred with few rules and continued until one 'Mech was disabled. Those who survived many duels became known as Champions among the citizenry. These Champions traveled about the realm, with aid from the Kurita family, to test their skill by taking on all comers. Champions such as Kendrick Musashi, Amanda Kazutoyo, and Rikkard Sveson became cult heroes. The government rewarded those who survived seventy or more contests, appointing them to lead their own dojos so they could train and teach others. The reputation of the Sun Zhang Academy, which had the most Champion alumni on its rolls, increased exponentially; many retired Champions returned to the school to teach.

Dueling was not confined to competitions between Kurita warriors. The more arrogant Champions were known to wander up to the entrance of a Star League Regular Army base and challenge its best MechWarrior to a duel. When First Lord Cameron learned of this practice, he ordered that no one among his troops was to accept such challenges. Cameron also lodged a formal complaint with the Coordinator, insisting these duels were wasteful and politically dangerous.

Urizen Kurita's response included a full copy of *The Book of Five Rings* and a detailed explanation that these men were technically *ronin*—and reminded Cameron this was due to the First Lord's military cutbacks—and therefore beyond the Coordinator's control. Though the Kurita family supplied travel for these Champions, they were powerless to stop them from challenging whomever they chose to duel.

Shortly afterward, the First Lord rescinded his order. Star League troops pleaded for their chance to show their refusal was not based on cowardice. From 2681 through 2751, there were more than three hundred officially recorded duels between the Star League and the Combine Champions, with 157 of those battles ending in victory for the Dragon. An estimated five hundred unofficial duels were also fought during that period. These were never counted as part of the official record as they were initiated by grudge-bearing Regulars or MechWarriors from other Houses and not by Combine Champions.

The Regulars MechWarriors lost with alarming ease to their Kurita challengers in the beginning. To counter this, the Regular Army launched an aggressive training program to bring up the standards of the average MechWarrior. The Advanced Combat Maneuvering Skills (ACMS)—or "Gunslinger" program—barely elevated its participants to the elite status of Combine warriors. Veteran MechWarriors from other realms also came forward to fight, ostensibly to keep the honor of the Star League from being tarnished by the Dragon—but more to test their own skills against Combine warrior prowess.

BEGINNING OF THE LEAGUE'S END

Takiro Kurita was the eldest of Urizen's six children and took the role of Coordinator after Urizen stepped down in 2691. Several DCMS officials initially opposed his appointment because of Takiro's dedication to a life of contemplation and reflection. Such a background, however, was exactly what the next Coordinator would need as the Star League slowly fell from its Golden Age.

Coordinator Takiro was an example of a true samurai. An expert in the use of the katana, he was also an accomplished poet and painter. His religious upbringing shielded him from the fanatical patriotism that swept through much of the Combine's nobility, giving many courtiers the impression that Takiro was impassive and difficult to read. Nonetheless, the new Coordinator continued most of Urizen's established policies, with a particular interest in seeing the realm's military industry freed from reliance on Star League and other non-Combine resources. He was present when the first *Panther*s (and later *Dragon*s) stepped from the testing fields onto the parade grounds, signifying the start of active service. (The vaults beneath Imperial City still hold the first *Panther* and *Dragon* seen by Takiro. Both BattleMechs were gifted to the Coordinator as symbols of the Dragon's growing might.)

Takiro differed from his father in one crucial area, however: the imposing of Japanese culture on the people. He eased the strict Kokugaku and made knowledge of Japanese a requirement only for those entering government and military service. He also made conciliatory gestures towards several non-Japanese groups within the Combine, following the footsteps of Shiro during the assimilation of the Rasalhague people.

Thanks to an earlier assassination attempt on his life while still the Heir-Designate, Takiro ordered a full purge of the ISF—done with the blessing of his father, who had retired to Echo. The resultant purge made the agency leaner but utterly loyal to Takiro. As a show of gratitude, the Coordinator increased the organization's funding and expanded their power and duties to include scrutiny of the military. He also used the agency to suppress the Fukuroi Riots on Benjamin in 2743. Though brutal by necessity, the quick action quelled future outbreaks and negated the power of large labor unions on several industrially important worlds.

None of these accomplishments, however, stand above Takiro's greatest achievement: orchestrating the eventual fall of the Star League. The Coordinator had his hand in passing new laws that pushed the teetering League over the edge. Takiro used each of the Council Lords' pride and stubbornness against them; while technically all five Lords had a hand in the events that followed, the primary instigator was the Coordinator of the Draconis Combine. It is fitting that the reluctant final signatory of the League's Charter would be the orchestrator of its collapse.

The first major action was the passing of an amendment to Michael Cameron's Edict of 2650, which limited the size of House armies. The new amendment allowed the five Lords to legally double the size of their own personal militaries. The move was a formality, since every House Lord had begun a military build-up the day Simon Cameron died in a mining accident in 2751.

Roughly a year later, the Star League Council Lords passed another edict that raised the taxes levied on the territorial-states. It also gave each House an increased portion of the League's revenue. The Combine's merchants were especially happy with this development, as it provided even more avenues for the Combine's economy—and themselves—to prosper. Officially, the Kuritas heralded the edict as yet more proof of their dynasty's obvious superiority as leaders of men and nations.

When Richard Cameron came of age and accepted the mantle of First Lord a decade after the death of his father Simon, he enacted Executive Order 156. This mandated all five Council Lords immediately disband their private armies. The Dragon's reaction was one of unrestrained laughter; Coordinator Takiro led the Council's vocal derision, forcing the young ruler to rescind the order.

The New Vandenburg Revolt in 2765 brought another war between the Star League and the Periphery realms. Rankled by the oppressive taxes levied upon them for over a decade, the Territorial States revolted. By 2766, most of the Star League Regular Army was involved in the fighting. Richard Cameron ignored SLDF Commanding General Aleksandr Kerensky's advice and invited loyal units from the Rim Worlds Republic to guard the Star League's interior.

Takiro Kurita saw through the Republic's leader, Stefan Amaris. From his own dealings, Takiro knew Amaris was a man greedy for power. Though not disapproving of that trait, the Coordinator knew Amaris needed to be watched carefully. The Dragon assumed Amaris was playing on the idealistic and impressionable Richard's fragile ego and surmised some secret agreement had been struck for the use of large numbers of BattleMech regiments on worlds surrounding Terra.

The Dragon did not foresee how swiftly Amaris would move. The murder of First Lord Richard Cameron, followed by the seizure of Terra, was unexpected. The Usurper acted when Republic troops outnumbered the remaining Regular Army forces and seized Terra and many nearby systems. Of particular concern to the Coordinator was the news that his grand-nephew Drago and family was still on Terra under "protective custody" of the Usurper. Drago was the Combine's ambassador to the Star League. The news of the family's capture caused the Coordinator's heart to fail. He died a day later after passing on his political views and wishes to his son Minoru, the Heir-Designate. Takiro took after his father for longevity; he was 121 years old when he went to be with his ancestors.

The Long Night of Turning

Minoru Kurita stepped into the Coordinator's path with his father's passing. Because of his aggressive nature, many within the Imperial Court assumed the Combine would soon be on the road to war. However, Minoru's honor bound him to a different path. The new Coordinator chose to honor his father's deathbed request, to handle the current crisis through negotiation, not violence. No other path was available, as it would mean a great loss of face for himself and the Dragon.

Threats disguised as jovial comments from Amaris were frequently sent to the Imperial Court. Minoru trod a fine line, honoring his father's wishes by agreeing with the Usurper's demands. In true Kurita fashion, such agreements were carried out to the strict letter of the request and often to further other ends. In one notorious example the ISF tipped off Amaris' forces to the plans of the Third RCT's Nineteenth Striker Regiment, one of the Regular Army's best units. The information allowed Amaris to ambush and destroy the unit.

Minoru banned General Kerensky from entering the Combine with his Regular Army, though the other four Houses allowed such passage. This was less an agreement with Amaris than an assertion of sovereignty; nonetheless, the media within the League realms took the news and exaggerated it, making the Combine a scapegoat. The ban remained in place, forcing Kerensky to invade several Combine worlds in order to access Star League facilities in an attempt to flank Amaris' forces. Under orders from the Coordinator, the Combine units faced the invaders briefly, executing orderly withdrawals after a few minutes of combat. The Dragon retained its public stance and Kerensky received use of the much-needed facilities. The defection of a few *ronin* duelists and of the Combine battleships *Kumamoto* and *Shizuoka* (escorting the damaged carrier *Seoul*) to the General's army were quietly swept under the rug.

The motivation behind Minoru's actions—that Amaris held part of the Kuritan family hostage—did not become apparent to the rest of the Inner Sphere until Kerensky had reclaimed Terra. The Army forces found the bodies of Ambassador Kurita and his household in the Combine embassy. They had been defiled and slaughtered during Amaris' final hours before Terra's fall.

After General Kerensky liberated Terra, the five Council Lords gathered in October 2780 to discuss the future. The first action they could all agree on was to strip Kerensky of his duties as commanding general. The motion to divest the general of his duties was instigated by Minoru, who privately blamed Kerensky for failing to save his kin from the Amaris horror.

The other action the five Lords mutually agreed upon was the installation of Jerome Blake as Minister of Communications. From there, the Council degenerated into chaos as each member tried to make deals with the others to get themselves seated as the new First Lord. In August 2781, the Council broke up and would never

meet again. Almost immediately, the Draconis Combine went on a war footing. The Coordinator issued orders to his most trusted merchants before leaving the Terra system: purchase whatever valuable natural resources remained on the open markets for whatever cost before the borders closed. To his generals he gave the authority to hire whatever non-Star League military units that survived the recent fighting, including deserting Regular Army units, and bring them into the Dragon's fold.

In 2784, word of a surge in activity within the Regular Army in and around Terra reached Minoru. He was informed that several League bases within the Combine were being stripped and disassembled, shipped off to parts unknown. Reports from New Samarkand indicated a large upswing in activity around the large SLDF base and spaceport on the planet's southern continent. The system's nadir point was becoming the center of tremendous traffic—all under the Regular Army's protection. These reports made the Coordinator uneasy, as the Combine's military strength was not yet great enough to take on the SLDF Army. Minoru sent a diplomatic mission to the Lyran Commonwealth with an important and secret proposal.

By November 2784, New Samarkand was overflowing with hundreds of freighters and naval vessels. The system's jump points were populated with over a thousand vessels, from JumpShips to intrasystem craft. The ISF noted SLDF fleets normally assigned to other Houses mixed within the gathering. Any Combine naval vessel was soundly rebuffed if it approached the growing flotilla.

With growing alarm, the DCMS generals urged a complete war alert for the Galedon Military District. The former capital world was completely shut off from the Combine; only Ambassador Raymond Sainze was authorized contact with the general on Kerensky's flagship. ISF courier ships made daring intelligence runs near the Star League armada on their way to distant JumpShips. Minoru took no action in response to the gathering threat, instead focusing the realm on stockpiling equipment and supplies. His sole response to the general in command of the Galedon District was itself cryptic: "Masterless warriors tend to gather together before departing a burning castle." The Coordinator had divined the general's intent from his brief meetings with the man. Like a true warrior, Kerensky would rather exit the scene than face disgrace as a non-participant in future events.

If Kerensky was to seek the route akin to that of the fabled forty-seven *ronin*, the Coordinator knew the Combine could not withstand such an assault.

As activity at New Samarkand reached a fevered pitch and Regular Army units began loading countless tons of supplies, machines, and troops, the Combine's generals prepared for the inevitable. Pressure from the Imperial Court demanded Minoru conduct a preemptive strike on the gathering fleet. The Coordinator stayed his hand, as he felt it would be ignoble to deny Kerensky's people their chance to leave gracefully and with honor—if that was indeed their intention.

On 5 November 2784, Kerensky and the bulk of the SLDF left—with the Combine Ambassador—New Samarkand and the Inner Sphere behind. Centuries would pass before their fate was known.

THE FIRST SUCCESSION WAR

The Combine's entrance into the chaos created by Kerensky's departure owed to the art of *iaijutsu*. The ancient practice involved two opposing samurai kneeling before each other, katanas sheathed at their sides. A samurai skilled in *iaijutsu* could draw his sword and strike his opponent first through great speed and grace. Minoru Kurita saw the Combine and the Lyran Commonwealth in such a manner, and proper application of *iaijutsu* would be crucial to the Combine's success in cowing its avowed Lyran enemy.

In August 2785, unmarked Azami BattleMechs hit Bone Norman. The Commonwealth interpreted the attack as originating from former Rim Worlds Republic forces in the Periphery and shifted their forces appropriately—away from the Combine border. The action was exactly as Minoru had planned.

The DCMS seized Trolloc Prime and Gram and then waited for a Lyran counterattack that never materialized. Emboldened by their success, the DCMS launched another invasion in June 2786. The first system to fall was Skondia, which suffered enormous industrial and civilian casualties. The Combine's forces faced little resistance and Minoru assumed the Lyrans were weak. The Coordinator was looking for a more challenging foe, and since the Lyrans proved to be anemic in their defense, he decided to come back later to finish off the Commonwealth. With successful raids on a few Davion worlds such as Towne, Minoru saw another opportunity. The Dragon turned its eyes to its other neighbor, the Federated Suns.

The Coordinator's official proclamation as First Lord of the Star League in December 2786 precipitated the invasion of the Suns. Minoru Kurita believed it necessary to follow up such a bold declaration with a show of overwhelming strength. With the Lyrans putting up only a token resistance and the Dragon spoiling for a fight, the Coordinator chose to match the might of the DCMS against that of the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns. The Heir-Designate, Jinjiro Kurita, was given the honor of planning and carrying out the invasion.

Using the high state of alert still in effect in the Galedon Military District—thanks to Kerensky's recent exodus—Jinjiro masked the arrival of additional Kurita regiments from the Steiner border. The Federated Suns, apparently used to its neighbor's constant state of alertness, failed to notice the uptick in transport arrivals routed through Galedon before being dispersed to various staging areas along the border.

The ISF also discovered that the leaders of the Suns were planning their own offensive against the distant Capellan Confederation. As such, much of the Suns' Draconis March forces were being shuffled to prepare for the assault. By spring 2787, the Kuritas had nearly seven hundred regiments—two hundred of them dedicated BattleMech regiments—ready for the campaign. To maintain deception, Jinjiro ordered commanders to use minimal force defending worlds against probing raids, even if it meant losing.

The Combine's assault unfurled in May 2787. Though the Kuritans attacked all along the border, the invasion's focus was the Cussar pocket, where more than fifteen 'Mech and fifty-five conventional regiments were concentrated. The surprise attack

JINJIRO KURITA: A STUDY IN CALM VIOLENCE

The Heir-Designate to Coordinator Minoru Kurita during the opening moves of the First Succession War, Jinjiro Kurita suffered during his upbringing. The son of a concubine—Minoru's first wife Clarissa was barren—Jinjiro spent most of his early years embroiled in the center of heated Court politics.

His mother's maiden name has been lost to the mists of time, though her adornment name (customary for royal concubines) was Heaven's Gate. She was a native of Radstadt whose non-Asian features made her popular in the *ukiyos* (pleasure districts) until Minoru bought her contract. After Jinjiro's birth, Heaven's Gate used every persuasive art—and some apparent blackmail—to convince Minoru to adopt the child and make him the legal heir. Her access to the Imperial Court allowed her to poison other contracted concubines with chemicals that forced miscarriages. (Many historians suspect an overdose of this chemical caused Clarissa's death.) Believing the fates and his ancestors against him for his failure to save Drago Kurita and his family from Amaris, Minoru recognized ten-year-old Jinjiro as his son and heir just before learning his second wife, Yvonne Toshi, was pregnant.

A whispering campaign within the Court suggested the Coordinator was under the charms of his concubine. True or not, the rumors persisted until Yvonne, days from giving birth to Zabu Kurita, shoved Heaven's Gate from the parapets of Unity Palace in the middle of the night. Jinjiro discovered the bloody, broken form of his mother early the next morning. She had survived the night and died in her son's arms.

Combine historians and psychoanalysts believe this was the catalyzing event that began Jinjiro's slow slide from sanity. The pain and shock of witnessing such an event was enough to push the sensitive child along the road to madness and eventually, planetary atrocity.

—*The Bloody Coordinator: Seeds of Kentares*; Proserpina Publications, Ltd., 2971



caught the Federated Suns completely off guard. In the initial chaos, the AFFS received conflicting orders to retreat and to hold the line. Some regiments remained and others pulled back, creating gaps along the front that the DCMS ruthlessly exploited.

Within a month, the First Sword of Light, led by the Heir-Designate himself, arrived on Franklin. The Coordinator, at the head of the Third Sword of Light, landed on Cartago. Both assault groups aimed to engage and cut off Suns forces by destroying Davion JumpShips and DropShips, marooning the AFFS in place. The DCMS then landed a massive assault force to grievously wound the stranded Davion forces—but not destroy them. Once that objective was accomplished, the assault force moved on while a lighter DCMS force arrived to finish off the surviving Suns troops.

The strategy was superb; the Dragon penetrated as far as Imbrial III, Kestrel, and Saunemin in the first five years of the attack. Though facing stronger resistance in some systems (such as Galtor III), Jinjiro predicted that the Combine would plant the Dragon's flag on New Avalon before the end of the century. The massive naval battle in the Cholame system bolstered his claim, resulting in the loss of nearly two hundred Davion vessels. The six-week-long engagement resulted from a successful ISF espionage operation within the halls of the Federated Suns' Department of Military Intelligence.

The other Great Houses later adopted Jinjiro's strategy, dubbed "planet hopping" by armchair strategists. The brilliance of Jinjiro's plan served the Dragon well, though it also altered the other Houses' perception of the Combine. Secret discussions at consulates in the Commonwealth, Free Worlds League, and Confederation began, debating the wisdom of allying with the Combine in future endeavors. Such deliberations ultimately scuttled talk in various Lyran circles regarding a non-aggression pact with the Dragon.

The Combine's successes against the Suns had the opposite effect within the Capellan Confederation. Longsuffering victims to Suns aggression and political meddling, the Capellans welcomed the growing possibility that Kurita might bring down the Davion empire. The Combine's own cultural affinity to Confederation's quasi-Chinese traditions made an alliance appealing.

As the Combine war machine gobbled up Davion worlds, the Confederation put forward an alliance proposal. Riding high on his troops' successes, the Coordinator flatly rebuffed the Liao diplomats. Minoru countered with a proposal for the Confederation to execute an immediate offensive against the Suns flank. With little enough military power to successfully carry out such an assault, the Confederation quietly removed themselves from the bargaining table and let the Combine continue in its conquest.

The Free Worlds League, while not considering an alliance with the Combine, hoped the Dragon would turn towards House Steiner after their Davion conquest. House Marik hoped to see its traditional enemy vanquished and welcomed any power capable of weakening the Commonwealth.

UNFORGIVING BLOOD

By 2796, the Dragon's offensive reached Odell, Saginaw, Arcadia, and Delavan. Only a few light years remained between the DCMS and the crown jewel of the Federated Suns, New Avalon. Several Kuritan raids had already hit the system, assessing its defenses and taunting the Davion defenders. Despite losing just over one hundred vessels during the Kuritan ambush in Cholmane, the DCA crews performed admirably in reconnoitering the Davion capital.

Before the final push, the Coordinator decided to give his troops some rest and cycle his heavier units back through the lines, assisting in the continual cleanup of captured and bypassed worlds. Jinjiro strongly disagreed, insisting that the offensive continue while momentum was hot. The Coordinator, now ninety-one years of age, was tired of the constant fighting and did not feel the same drive to conquer that saturated his son. He ignored Jinjiro's advice.

The DCMS suffered a setback on New Rhodes III, losing a massive supply depot and two armor battalions' worth of equipment to a small Davion rebel force. The news and video footage spread throughout the Federated Suns, showing the Dragon's humiliation and inspiring other Davion resistance cells to rise up on conquered worlds.

The Combine's assault on Kentares stalled as a result of the loss of materiel to Davion counterattacks along the Kuritan supply chain. The lack of forthcoming supplies had slowed the progress of the Sixth Pesht and Second Benjamin Regulars against the defending Seventh Crucis Lancers. As such, the Coordinator arrived with the Sixth Sword of Light in the summer of 2796. Using sheer weight of numbers and an infusion of fresh supplies, the Coordinator forced the Davion troops onto a single continent and nearly encircled them.

Outside New Snowfield, a small mountain village in the Carmelite Mountains, Minoru stopped to take in the incredible vista before him. He dismounted from his *BattleMaster* and, accompanied by his three lancemates, three guards, and a local Buddhist priest, made his way to an alpine meadow. Once there, the Coordinator and the priest sat quietly among the trees, privately conversing.

A chance passing by a Seventh Crucis sharpshooter ended the conversation. The sniper's laser shot caught the Coordinator squarely in the back. As he lay dying, Minoru whispered something to those gathered around him. The conversation was lost to posterity, as the remaining seven never betrayed the Coordinator's trust.

What followed remains a stain upon the Dragon's honor and history and should never be forgotten, if only as a lesson in what the madness of power can bring upon a man and a nation.

Jinjiro was on Franklin when he was informed of the Coordinator's death. Upon his arrival at Kentares, the new Coordinator ordered his troops to kill every living soul upon the planet. To defy the order was a death sentence. During the following five months, Kuritan units on Kentares dispersed across the planet and began the systematic killing. The mass executions were accomplished by rounding up as many as possible in the cities, then using 'Mechs and vehicles to hunt down the rest. During the second month, Combine military discipline began to waver. Despite deep indoctrination in stoicism and obedience, the duty of killing hundreds and thousands of people day after day began to take a psychological toll on the common Kurita soldier. Some were deliberately allowing groups of Kentares citizens to escape, and reports began to surface of officers doing the same. Many good Kuritan soldiers began to commit suicide because of their role in the continuing atrocity.

Jinjiro finally ordered the DCMS to withdraw in February 2797, leaving a world missing more than ninety percent of its population, roughly fifty-two million men, women, and children. Among the dead was the Buddhist priest who had been conversing with Minoru at the time of his death. He lay dead from Jinjiro's own hand after the priest came to him with a plea to stop the genocide.

ComStar broke its neutrality with the Combine, broadcasting news of the massacre at the first opportunity. The entire Inner Sphere soon learned of Jinjiro's actions on the Davion world. The Combine's actions had consequences, not least of which was the formal desertion of several mercenary units. The Eridani Light Horse attempted to leave even as a Combine liaison held nearly a thousand of the regiment's dependents hostage on Sendai. The mercenaries refused to honor their contract and failed to surrender; the hostages were killed. This would not be the last time a mercenary unit failed to honor or obey its contract with the Dragon.

THE HONOR OF THE DAIMYO

Under Jinjiro's orders, the ISF conducted an intensive investigation into the matter of who provided ComStar with the data footage that made its way out to the other Houses. The inquiry lasted less than a week, as the transmission's video data contained coding that was traced back to the crew of a Daimyo HQ 67-K. The crew was arrested and brought before the Coordinator, who killed each of them with a single laser pulse to the brain.

During a standard maintenance routine in 2910, mechanics from the Second Sword of Light discovered the headquarters vehicle in a motor pool on Luthien. The vehicle had been transported without record from the bloody fields of Kentares and left on the capital world, possibly as some disagreeable officer's quiet notion of rebellion.

The vehicle was reclaimed and refitted for duty and its battle history made known to the Second Sword's command staff. From then on, the regiment used it in every campaign as a distinct reminder of Sworder history. Crews volunteered for assignment to the mobile HQ, knowing full well the dishonor that came with its operation.

In 3051, the Daimyo was an active participant in the defense of Luthien from the Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat assault. During the later stages of battle, both Takashi Kurita and Shin Yodama commanded from the vehicle as the Combine successfully repelled the invasion.

After the battle and seeing the crew operate with no regard for their personal safety as they assisted the Coordinator in his command, Takashi declared the vehicle cleansed from its historic stain. The Coordinator personally paid for the vehicle's repair and refurbishment, and it proudly occupies a place in the Second Sword of Light's order of battle.

—*Quirks of the Kuritan Army*; Orestes Public Press, 3062

SUNS ASCENDING, DRAGON FALLING

The sheer enormity of the Kentares massacre paralyzed the Federated Suns for a short time as anger began to build from within and then exploded back at the Dragon with predictable violence.

Davion troops began launching spontaneous offensives against Combine forces. Although fueled more by emotion than strategy and tactics, the attacks still succeeded more often than not. Affected in their own way by the news of the incident, the Kuritans retreated in the face of the increasing assaults. Davion generals first tried to halt the independent actions, but as reports of building success rolled in, the AFFS commanders took advantage of the situation. By December 2798, the Kuritan line had been pushed back to Streator, and New Avalon was no longer in immediate danger of assault.

Jinjiro, ill-prepared to counter the Davion counterassault, fell back on traditional Kuritan defense strategy using a series of staggered counterattacks and fighting to the last man. Such a defense failed to stem the rolling tide of Suns forces. Troop morale hit an all-time low. Though many Kuritan soldiers accepted the Kentares massacre with a disciplined blandness, the news instilled many with feelings of guilt. Many Kuritan forces surrendered in order to defect to the other side.

Such actions gave House Davion a treasure trove of intelligence and insight into the Kuritan military. The Suns formed the core of a new intelligence-gathering structure that would ensure the AFFS would never be caught off-guard again.

It quickly became obvious even to Jinjiro that the actions on Kentares had given the Federated Suns the inspiration they needed to turn back the Combine assault. Jinjiro's new plan was to merely hold on to what the Dragon had won previously.

Many within the DCMS command began to rue the earlier decision to ignore the Lyran Commonwealth. In their efforts to prove the Dragon's strength against the Davion war machine, Jinjiro had neglected the fact that House Steiner possessed some of the richest worlds in the Inner Sphere. Now, with most of the Dragon's forces committed to holding onto its gains in the Suns, the Combine could launch only infrequent invasions and raids against the weaker Lyrans.

Despite the sporadic effort, Kurita forces captured a few worlds and crippled several Lyran industries. This would become a continuing pattern as the First Succession War dragged on. The Combine primarily sought to hold their early gains. Seizing territory became a secondary objective as the Dragon tried to hurt the enemy by destroying whatever it could reach. Using battalion-sized 'Mech units reinforced with heavy aerospace and WarShip support, Kuritan forces launched deep raids against both of its opponents. Though the raids were more effective against the Lyrans, they failed to destroy the massive BattleMech factories on Hesperus II.

DEVOTION THROUGH HARDSHIP

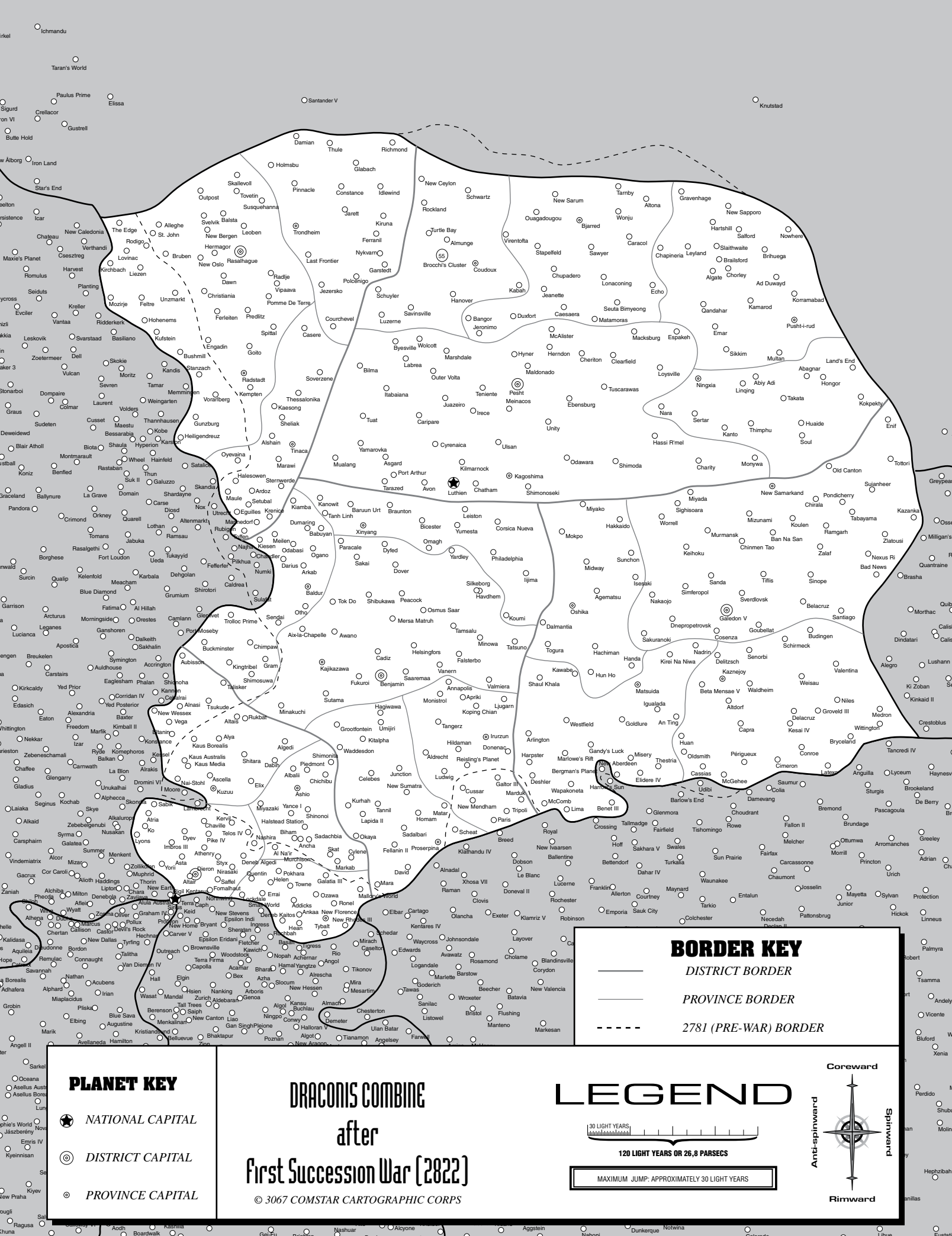
The First Succession War put an immense strain on the civilian sectors of the Combine during its later years. After the military seized most of the commercial JumpShips, the Kuritan economy nearly ground to a halt. Factories devoted to the production of purely civilian goods either converted to manufacturing for the military or closed up entirely.

The lower classes of the Dragon's society were hit the hardest. The common citizens were the first to feel the shortages of essentials such as food, clothing, and housing. For them, rationing of food and water became a way of life for the next several decades, stretching into the Second Succession War. Textiles became scarce. Housing stock shifted to the cheapest building materials available, as constant raids destroyed as much as was created.

Throughout it all, the citizenry was reminded that to sacrifice one's comfort, security, and health for the greater good was honorable and beneficial to the Dragon as a whole. There were numerous government-sponsored contests on worlds far from the war to promote the art of selfless giving and to hold up for praise those who best exemplified it. Those who questioned such actions found themselves facing the stern hand of the local ISF; public complaints were handled quickly and efficiently through public execution.

Blood sport made its first appearance in the Combine during these trying times. Though initially started as classic gladiatorial matches between criminals, the Dragon's officials quietly put their stamp of approval on the activities. These brutal spectator sports helped channel the social resentment that otherwise might have built up to inappropriate and dangerous levels.

—*The Dragon's War: Behind the Border of the First Succession War*; Togura Press Limited, 2915


BORDER KEY
DISTRICT BORDER
PROVINCE BORDER
2781 (PRE-WAR) BORDER
PLANET KEY
NATIONAL CAPITAL
DISTRICT CAPITAL
PROVINCE CAPITAL
DRACONIS COMBINE
after
First Succession War (2822)
© 3067 COMSTAR CARTOGRAPHIC CORPS
LEGEND
30 LIGHT YEARS
120 LIGHT YEARS OR 26,8 PARSECS
MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS
Coreward
Anti-spinward
Spinward
Rimward

WAR'S DARK END OF DAYS

By 2808, the Federated Suns had pushed the Combine back to the border between the Crucis and Draconis Marches. Jinjiro's attempts to motivate his soldiers through judicious executions and torture failed, and the Dragon's troops remained uninspired past their immediate defense.

The Davion troops turned the tables on the Combine, using the Dragon's own tactics against them. The Federated Suns forces launched swift attacks against Kurita JumpShips and DropShips, stranding the DCMS forces for the AFFS to hit them piecemeal. Soon enough, both sides experienced difficulty in finding enough transportation to move their armies. Taking a cue from the Lyran Commonwealth, each House began seizing commercial JumpShips and pressing them into military service. Foreign vessels were detained under dubious charges and then confiscated.

House Davion launched a heavy counteroffensive in 2808, overwhelming Kuritan defenders on most of the targeted worlds. Additionally, the AFFS launched small-unit raids against supply centers deep behind enemy lines. Initial successes demoralized Kuritan defenders on nearby worlds, sparking a panic. The Kuritan troops became cautious, attempting no major offensives and offering token defense. Encouraged, the Davion forces launched a new counterstrike in 2811 to yet more victories. For the failed efforts to stem the tide, ritual suicides were common among the Combine's officer ranks, causing hierarchical chaos in the command and control of the DCMS. The Coordinator was forced to issue edicts that forbid further *seppuku* ceremonies until such time as the manpower could be spared. Additionally, Jinjiro authorized the early graduation of thousands of cadets, putting wholly inexperienced troops on the front lines.

The Combine's reputation for fanaticism became its redeeming quality in the conflict. Davion command knew that the instant an AFFS unit landed on a Combine world, they would face an entire planet of rabid defenders. From the highest MechWarrior to the lowliest Unproductive, every Kuritan would be honor-bound to sacrifice their lives to rid their world of invaders. For the time being, House Davion set about consolidating their gains among the worlds recently liberated.

By 2821, an unofficial ceasefire existed between Kurita, Davion, and Steiner. Though raids still occurred, these usually involved forces no larger than a battalion and were aimed at either destruction or seizure of resources rather than invasion.

To take stock of the war's effect, Coordinator Jinjiro ordered a huge national census with a twofold purpose. First, it would measure the toll taken by three decades of fighting. Second, the census would identify the thousands of people who had used the chaos to escape the realm's meticulous recordkeeping. The Coordinator was especially keen to see everyone accounted for and wrapped back into the fold of Kurita society.

A major consequence of the war was the massive loss to Combine shipping. Of the numerous shipyards capable of manufacturing and assembling JumpShips, only two survived due to their distance from the Steiner and Davion borders. BattleMech facilities also suffered from the war: two of the Combine's seven major factories survived the carnage. The Luthien Armor Works factory sustained heavy damage but was able to restart in less than a year; the Alshain facility would maintain production on a limited scale for the next two decades. Several subcontractors escaped destruction as well but were severely hampered by limited resource flow.

While the massive destruction of the Combine's war-making capability put the Dragon in a bind, the loss of thousands of water purification plants and the factories to construct them hurt the Combine more. The reduced availability of fresh water affected many important activities. Though the Combine wanted to rebuild industries, its leaders knew this would be futile in areas lacking enough fresh water for their needs. This forced the abandonment or declassification of some reconstruction efforts and the relocation of factories to systems deeper into the realm—which cost the Dragon more in terms of money and time.

The upside of the war was the new territory taken by the Combine, though the Dragon lost eight systems. Thirty-three major systems (and a handful of minor outlying colonies) were under the Dragon's sway: nineteen Lyran worlds and seven from the Suns. Some of these worlds were prizes rich in natural resources. The government of the Draconis Combine used the acquisition of these systems as proof they had "won the war." The Coordinator and the Imperial Court wanted to blur from public memory as quickly as possible the Kuritan mass retreat from the forces of House Davion.

Of all the regions in the Combine, the Benjamin and the newly formed Dieron Military Districts were hit hardest. Steiner and Davion forces destroyed more than sixty percent of the Dieron District's industrial capacity; nearly half of the Benjamin District's capacity suffered the same. Both areas sustained crippling commercial damage, with nearly eighty percent of the combined area's capacity shut down or reduced to minimal levels due to rising inflation and limited transportation capability.

Coordinator Jinjiro did not take the overall performance of the DCMS well, especially the stunning reversal after Kentares. He felt the need to review in intricate detail the process of interservice cooperation, as its lack caused the loss of several key campaigns.

Though sorely tempted, Jinjiro kept the postwar executions for failure to a small number, carried out in less than a week at Imperial City. Instead, he demoted most officers who failed in their duty to the Dragon down to the lower classes. Most were lucky to find themselves of any rank above private among the militia forces. The few officers who actually pleased the Coordinator were promoted, most going to the military academies to train the upcoming crop of cadets.

Arguably the worst to suffer were the political figures among the nobility. Many district governors, civilian leaders, and planetary officials had shown poor foresight in preparing for the war. Such inaction failed to provide enough protection to defend the Dragon's resources from enemy attack. These dishonored politicians suffered fates similar to that of their military counterparts, with many finding themselves exiled into peasant farming or even the ranks of the Unproductives.

THE SECOND SUCCESSION WAR

Reconstruction efforts went into high gear after the completion of Coordinator Jinjiro's mandatory census. The few remaining military and private heavy industries were nationalized, giving the Dragon complete control over the realm's industry and economy for the next decade. Jinjiro viewed the reconstruction to be the moral equivalent of war and demanded the citizenry see it in the same light. When not overseeing construction or production on various worlds, the Coordinator could be found visiting and purifying the DCMS.

PEACE OF UNITY WITHIN

The formation of the People's Reconstruction Effort (PRE) was one of Jinjiro's proudest—and most positive—achievements. The PRE became the ruling board and coordinating bureau of the government's various military, economic, scientific, and political reconstruction projects. Jinjiro appointed his half-brother Zabu as head of the PRE.

Under Zabu's calm and rational hand, the PRE became a textbook example of what unity of purpose can accomplish. Zabu's official position as PRE Coordinator was second only to Jinjiro in importance within the Combine. Five subcoordinators, representing each of the Combine's five pillars assisted Zabu.

Zabu's main focus centered on the preservation of knowledge. As a well-educated man, he had been horrified by the wanton destruction of universities—including his own alma mater, Ashio University. As PRE Coordinator, he convinced Jinjiro to let him establish the PRE Academy on Dover. Professors and teachers who had lost their livelihoods from the destruction of the war staffed the academy. The faculty included visiting industrialists, engineers, technicians, and mechanics from undamaged factories that could spare them to help others rebuild. Zabu hoped to preserve as much knowledge as possible by creating an enormous library acting as a free consultation group for Combine efforts in rebuilding.

Though noble in design, the PRE Academy faced stiff opposition from both the military and the ISF even before it opened its doors. Both agencies had grave reservations about how the Dragon's knowledge would be disseminated to anyone who asked. Jinjiro formally backed Zabu after it was understood that only Combine corporations and groups whose loyalty was proven would be allowed to avail themselves of the Academy's resources.

Caution in the Quiet

By late 2824, Coordinator Jinjiro was suffering from excessive mood swings and mental degradation. Observant court staff would step in when a manic episode erupted, protecting everyone from the Coordinator's shameful and uncontrolled behavior. Through a secret examination, physicians soon learned there was no cure for Jinjiro's deteriorating condition.

The ISF, still loyal to the Coordinator, informed him of the diagnosis and expected to carry out another bloody purge. Instead, Jinjiro considered his options carefully and methodically. The obvious options were retirement or ritual suicide, but both would leave Zabu Kurita as the next Coordinator. As Zabu was more intellectual than militaristic, few leaders within the DCMS viewed the Coordinator's half-brother with respect. With so much depending on united efforts by the government and military, Jinjiro felt it unwise to withdraw at that point. After much self-examination, he always managed to hang on to a single thread of sanity when directing the military, even during his darkest spells.

The Coordinator's conclusion would once again ignite the Inner Sphere. His decision was to spend the next decade rebuilding—and then start another war.

After a series of vicious raids by a mysterious raider force dubbed the "Minnesota Tribe," the Coordinator decided to accelerate his timetable. In 2830, House Kurita conducted a deep-raid strategy and hit Chandler and Moore in Steiner space and Lucerne, Franklin, and Sakhara V in the Federated Suns. These invasion assaults were accompanied by smaller outlying raids intended to pin down nearby defenders. A few deeper raids were also launched, targeting major manufacturing and industrial centers identified by the ISF's own efforts.

The raids in Davion space turned into a disaster. With the Suns knowing part of the Combine's assault plans through extensive intelligence operations, the AFFS was prepared on Lucerne and

MERCENARIES AND THE DRAGON

In 2822, the DCMS announced a new and optional system of procurement for mercenary units contracted to the Combine. The new system allowed an increase of the mercenary unit's pay so they could buy supplies directly from the Procurement Division. Some larger units quickly realized the dangers inherent in the Dragon's new policies, born from experience in the First Succession War and the massive reconstruction efforts throughout the military.

Pay did increase but not at a rate that equaled the expense of supplies. As a result, an unsuspecting unit went deeper and deeper into debt to the Procurement Division. In an effort to work their way out of the situation, a mercenary unit was forced to take on more contracts. That, in turn, created an increased need for more supplies, causing more debt.

Units that stepped beyond the bounds of their contract by robbing or assaulting Combine assets to arm or supply themselves soon learned the depth of Kuritan punishment. Mercenary DropShips could be destroyed or JumpShips seized; DCMS line units might be ordered to exact retribution on the mercenaries, often couched as "live fire training exercises." After some aggressive actions by a few mercenary forces, the Combine changed their approach.

The Dragon made the "company store" syndrome more subtle, so that a unit took longer to sink further into debt with the Combine. It also took longer for a unit to realize what was happening. The DCMS perfected the system to the point where several large mercenary regiments were eventually forced to sell themselves into the DCMS in order to pay off their debts.

While none of the other Great Houses treat mercenary units well, they also do not make such a concerted effort to subjugate them, either. The Combine either ignores the needs of a unit to avoid squandering its own precious supplies or else attempts to entangle the unit in a constricting web of debt.

—*The Dragon's Subtle War on Hired Forces*; Galatea Press Syndicate, 3004

THE DRAGON'S CHAIN GANGS

As the Dragon rebuilt its strength, the Coordinator needed something to keep his enemies off-balance and distracted. The result was the creation of the Combine's Chain Gang regiments.

A mix of convicts, Unproductives, and disgraced officers, these men and women received minimal BattleMech training. They were supplied with barely serviceable, obsolete, or malfunctioning 'Mechs. Chain gangs were promised freedom, citizenship, money, and reinstatement upon the successful completion of their assigned mission. The gangs were doped up with battle stimulants, chemical psychoactives, or narcotics and then sent on raids across the Suns and Commonwealth borders.

Few of the missions succeeded, but those that did were wildly effective. Many times, the Chain Gangs would surrender at the first sight of a Davion or Steiner 'Mech. Gangs were typically delivered to the target world a lance or two in strength. Despite the promise of rewards, the Kuritans never intended on retrieving any survivors of a Chain Gang mission. After they were dropped off, the Kuritan DropShip and JumpShip would depart for good.

The most successful mission was conducted by the Turkish Chain Gang, two lances of convicts dredged from the Port Benjamin State Correctional Facility on Schuyler. These seven men and one woman were dropped on Tamar in early 2825 and wreaked havoc on the Commonwealth's industry. They gutted three BattleMech factories, torched several million acres of farmland, and engaged an entire continent attempting to search for them. The prisoners went to ground for weeks at a time. They were finally rooted out three months later in a massive firefight that destroyed the city of Chevy Chase and put the nearby spaceport out of commission for over a year.

—*Criminals and Malcontents Unleashed: Jinjiro's Chain Gangs*; Tamar Society Press, 3016

Franklin. *Tai-sho* Chosokabe Motochika, commander of both invasion paths, found himself trapped on Lucerne after a subordinate failed to submit the *tai-sho*'s request for withdrawal. Rather than return to the Combine and embrace the honor of *seppuku*, the *tai-sho* took his four regiments deeper into the Federated Suns, arriving at Dahar IV.

Motochika devised an elaborate plan that sacrificed himself and gave the Kuritans the element of surprise, quickly overwhelming the Davion garrison. Though Motochika died, his men savaged the world—previously untouched by war—and were allowed to return to the Combine with their honor intact.

Summer Twilight; War is Peace

By the end of 2835, the Coordinator's mental health had deteriorated to the point that his guard was always at arm's reach to restrain him when a bad episode struck. However, in his lucid moments Jinjiro remained a brilliant strategist. Instead of launching another wholesale border invasion, the Coordinator funneled the Combine's military strength into targeted search-and-destroy missions. Several worlds in both Steiner and Davion space suffered catastrophic damage to their vital heavy industries and infrastructure, with only Hesperus II being spared the Dragon's wrath.

THE MINNESOTA TRIBE

The Minnesota Tribe mystery started with a raid on Svelvik, conducted by a previously unknown force. Nearly a regiment in size, this BattleMech force showed considerable skill in defeating the small garrison. Refusing any communications, the raiders took what they needed and departed without further bloodshed.

What caught the Coordinator's attention upon viewing a video recording of the attack was the raider 'Mechs were impeccably maintained and freshly painted in Star League Regular Army colors. Zabu Kurita noticed that the regimental patch was an outline of Minnesota, a geo-political domain in the North American region of Terra. The Imperial Court also learned from the reports that the regiment was apparently escorting a fleet of cargo, commercial, and liner JumpShips. This fleet, with their elite escorts, apparently had some destination in mind and used uninhabited star systems to reach it at a steady pace.

Called the Minnesota Tribe by Kuritan analysts, the mysterious raiders appeared again at Trondheim. Being a prefecture capital, the system was well defended by the resident Twentieth Rasalhague Regulars. The ensuing battle was remarkable for the way the mystery raiders dealt with the Kuritan defenders, using strict SLDF formations and tactics. The Minnesotans refused all attempts at communication, to the point that pilots of destroyed 'Mechs killed themselves to avoid capture. The fleet then jumped from the system, apparently headed for another nearby system.

At this point, the Kuritans firmly believed the raiders were a Regular Army unit, the 331st Royal BattleMech Division. The possibility that the Minnesota Tribe might be an advance scout group raised the frightening specter that General Kerensky or his successor might return in an angry fashion. Such thinking made Jinjiro exceptionally nervous. As such, he ordered a high state of alert for the Rasalhague and Pesht Military Districts and moved troops within these areas towards the Periphery border.

The Minnesotans hit Jarrett, taking what they needed and moving on. The raiders unveiled their powerful aerospace force when their flanking maneuver stopped two Kuritan battalions cold.

With the Combine occupied, the Lyrans struck across the border in a series of lightning raids. The Commonwealth was carrying out a retributive strike for the Combine's capture of the *Chahar Profit*. The supply transport was carrying grain to Chandler and had mis-jumped to Darius, right into the teeth of a massive Kuritan aerospace training operation. With the systems around Darius in disarray from the Lyran raids, a Steiner special forces unit slipped in and reclaimed the wayward JumpShip. (Nearly a century would pass before the Combine discovered the *Profit* had actually jumped to Darius to execute a rescue operation of a Lyran intelligence cell.)

The Minnesota Tribe struck the Combine one more time, hitting Richmond vigorously. The raiders immediately made for the large prison and slave camps on the planet, established after the fall of the Star League. Despite the prison's isolated location, the Minnesotans knew exactly where to strike. They freed thousands of prisoners, who were loaded onto several landing DropShips and taken offworld before the Kuritan garrison force could arrive.

This was the last time the Minnesota Tribe made an appearance in the Inner Sphere.

—*The 331st and Jinjiro: Dancing In the Minefield*; Alshain Publications, Ltd., 2989

Because of Jinjiro's condition, Zabu Kurita stepped into a de facto leadership role, making most of the day-to-day decisions. He showed typical Kurita shrewdness by building two new planetary supply centers into his budgets. However, the tension between Zabu and the DCMS High Command continued to increase. The generals believed Zabu weak and soft compared to Jinjiro's utter ruthlessness. As long as Jinjiro had confidence in his half-brother's ability to lead, the generals could do nothing publicly against Zabu.

In early 2837, a mysterious gift was delivered to the Coordinator's chambers. Through closed doors, his retainers could hear his loud screams and the thud of thrown furniture. Few took notice, however, because such scenes had become increasingly common. His shouts that billions of corpses were coming to get him were pointedly ignored.

The manic episode lasted for hours, which was unusual for the unstable Coordinator. Zabu finally ordered the Otomo, properly protected with riot gear, to enter Jinjiro's suite. They were attacked immediately; despite being ninety years of age, Jinjiro nearly killed both guards. It took two hours to corner and calm the Coordinator.

Amid the rubble of the furniture, Zabu found a toy soldier dressed in the uniform of a Star League officer. The doll's features were so angelic, so unforgivably pure, that even Zabu felt uneasy looking at it. No one knew who sent it or how it managed to slip past so many guards and examiners. This little toy had apparently driven Jinjiro past the breaking point and into permanent psychosis.

The Coordinator spent the next four years either heavily sedated or in a featureless, soundproofed room screaming in terror. He died in July 2841, fashioning a noose from his own clothes.

When Enemies Rest

Zabu Kurita stepped in as the next Coordinator, but his reign lasted less than a year. With Jinjiro gone, no one could shield Zabu from the military's disgust. After years of maintaining silence under Jinjiro, the generals felt free to act upon their real and imagined perceptions about Zabu. *Tai-sho* Frederick Kozoma confronted Zabu in his quarters one evening, and Zabu committed *seppuku*. The DCMS High Command officer stepped for-

NIGHT OF THE SWORD

I, General Frederick J. Kozoma, member of the DCMS High Strategic Council and the Procurement Evaluation Board, do hereby assert that what follows is a factual account of what transpired on 23 June 2838.

My reasons for acting as I did are numerous and perfectly reasonable. After Jinjiro's illness forced that great leader to retire, Zabu assumed the throne.

Though I am sure he was an honorable man, Zabu lacked what has always made the Kurita family great: the desire to reduce his enemy to groveling at his feet. I doubt Zabu even believed in the Kurita destiny. He certainly didn't show any such Kurita breeding when he issued the 2839 budget.

My fellow generals and I couldn't believe it when we found it called for a four percent cut in our military budget! I haven't the serenity of my more Japanese colleagues, so I was unable to control my anger and displeasure.

Apparently, I was not the only one who felt betrayed by Coordinator Zabu's actions. Three nights later, a group of my colleagues knocked at my door. They came to say that Zabu Kurita represented a clear and definite threat to the destiny of the Draconis Combine and something had to be done about him before his pacifist policies spread further.

They appointed me to be the sword of their desire. The next night I concealed a sword in my cloak. The sword was made of a special plastic that enabled me to walk through the metal and explosives detectors without incident.

I informed Zabu's secretary that I was there to deliver an urgent message of military importance. That the secretary dared ask me if it could wait until morning confirmed the rightness of the deed I had come to do. Why, in Jinjiro's day, any man bearing important military news would have been ushered in immediately.

As it was, I had to wait some ten minutes in the corridor outside his door. When I finally entered, I was shocked to see one of his concubines lying among the rumpled sheets of his bed. Gods, Jinjiro would never have allowed a mere woman to stay a second longer than was necessary to service his needs. This seemed one more proof of Zabu's weakness. He must have been one of those "perfume men." You know the type, the ones who actually lend a serious ear to what a woman might have to say.

All this so enraged me that I immediately drew my weapon. Seeing the sword did not affect Zabu as I had expected, however. He showed no fear but only looked me in the eye and asked if I was acting alone or if I represented the other generals as well. When I told him that I was acting in accordance with the views of most of the military High Command, he gave a slight nod.

He looked at my sword again then got up and walked toward one of the room's walls. Half expecting him to call for guards, I was preparing to launch myself at him when he reached up and pushed a concealed button. A portion of the wall slid back, revealing an array of the most exquisite swords I had ever seen.

He reached up for one, smiling slightly. By now, I was certain that he was going to fight me personally. Feeling a bit outclassed by the sword he chose, an incredible blade that must have been an ancient Japanese antique, I prepare myself to die. Just then, Zabu turned and offered me the sword with a smile.

Shocked, I took the blade without saying a word. He then asked to be allowed to send his woman away. I agreed and watched with more puzzlement as he roused her, kissed her most lovingly, and sent her from the room.

I could not help but ask how he was able to accept his death so gracefully. This was far from what I had expected. Zabu replied that he was above all a Kurita and so viewed death in its proper light. He said, too, that it would have been ridiculous to try to avoid his death when his own military was dead set against him. No matter what he might do—purges, executions, and the like—he would always have to consider the DCMS as the enemy. Better to let the inevitable happen now, he said.

I gave him all the ritual courtesies. First, he wrote his death haiku, which was a fine one. I then allowed him to shower and to change into his best uniform. Finally, he took a silk mat and laid it in the center of his room. Kneeling on it, he took a short sword—another antique with beautiful designs along the blade—and wrapped it in a sheet of clear, white rice paper. He then took the sword and laid the point of it on the skin of his belly. I raised my sword.

I still do not understand his ability to meet death so honorably. Could he have been a better man than we imagined? Have we made a mistake in judging him so harshly against the pillar of his stepbrother's honor?

—*Confession by Tai-sho Frederick Kozomoa, taped by the ISF before his execution;* ISF 2838



ward and admitted he had attempted to assassinate Zabu but was too late to prevent the Coordinator's actions. Kozoma was executed shortly after the discovery of the Coordinator's body.

The Combine was in a hurry to return to normal. With the confirmation of Zabu's eldest son, Yoguchi Kurita, most believed that a true Kurita was once again on the throne. Many were soothed by Yoguchi's first speech, which was filled with comforting words about how the Draconis Combine would one day rule the Inner Sphere and how that would require a supremely strong military.

To assert his ability to command the DCMS, Yoguchi planned and launched an immediate raid against the Commonwealth BattleMech facilities on Hesperus II. Though seven regiments were insufficient to destroy the factories, they did manage to come much closer to success than had any previous attack. This did wonders for the Coordinator's confidence and his standing among the Combine's officers. Confident of his control over the government, Yoguchi allowed the action along both borders to grow quiet as he began plans for a major offensive.

During this planning phase, Yoguchi ordered the ISF attached to the DCMS, an action that made no sense and pleased no one. The military, with as much reason to fear the ISF as anyone else, realized that it dared not exert its supposed authority over the Combine's secret police.

The ISF considered Yoguchi's order an insufferable insult. The agency, since its formation, had considered itself the personal servant of the Coordinator. Since the *Metsuke* considered the military inferior warriors, the ISF interpreted being placed under the military's control as a sign that Yoguchi no longer valued the agency's services. This event sparked a rift that would only widen in the future, developing into a long, complicated, and fateful series of power struggles between the two offices.

YOGUCHI'S WAR

After spending nearly a year in planning with his top generals, Coordinator Yoguchi Kurita unveiled a new version of Jinjiro's planet-hopping strategy that worked so well in the previous war. The plan called not for deep pushes into enemy territory but a slower, more methodical capture of worlds nearest the Combine. The only exception to this steady application of strength would be a series of deep raids conducted away from the main offensive to keep the enemy guessing. Yoguchi and his military commanders firmly believed the Dragon would be easily gobbling up worlds.

The new offensive began in 2840 against a few worlds in Lyran space. As the LCAF began to muster a response nearly a month later, a Kuritan deep raid smashed into Thorin. The raid caught the Lyrans off guard even though the planet's weather worked

against the Combine. Though defeated, the Dragon's action delayed reinforcement of the Combine's main thrust.

The opposite occurred along the Federated Suns border. The worlds targeted in the first wave put up a stiff resistance, and the deep raid on Robinson, designed to freeze Davion reinforcements in a similar manner, was a disaster. The second wave was delayed as the Combine continued to fight on its initially targeted systems. In 2841, the Suns slipped heavy reserves close to the border and struck into Combine space using two main task forces. One was a major thrust apparently intended to take back worlds in the Kentares area. The other appeared to be an attempt to bypass and surround the Dragon's troops attempting to take Davion worlds on the Periphery edge of the border.

Though the AFFS had its successes, the Kuritan commanders were relieved to see their troops retreat in an orderly fashion. This allowed the DCMS to withdraw, re-concentrate, and launch a well-planned counteroffensive.

By 2849 the Davion offensive had gained four Combine worlds and faced massive resistance from Draconian citizens. Coordinator Yoguchi was beside himself with anger. His carefully planned offensive was thwarted by AFFS audacity and was more than an embarrassment for the Dragon. It was an insult to his family's destiny. If not for the Combine's victories on the Lyran front, including the Coordinator's son Hugai exterminating the elite Fourth Royal Guards on New Caledonia, the campaign would have been an unmitigated failure. The Coordinator began preparations for *seppuku* until Yoguchi read reports that House Davion had chosen Tishomingo as its next target. In a measure designed in part to atone for his poor battle planning, Yoguchi decided to personally lead the planet's defense.

The choice proved near-disastrous: after the AFFS landed an overwhelming force on the planet, Yoguchi was caught behind the Davion lines and presumed dead. Unfortunately for the Federated Suns, Yoguchi was very much alive and organized the planet's population to resist Tishomingo's unwanted guests.

By virtue of her position as head of the PRE, Roweena Kurita became de facto leader of the Combine, much like Zabu before her. Seeing how systematically the loyal Kuritan people of Tishomingo were resisting the Davion intruders, she suspected this was the result of her brother's handiwork. On a hunch, she decided to organize a military campaign to rescue whomever was directing the Tishomingo resistance. The hastily assembled force arrived at the system two months later, just in time to save Yoguchi's life and spirit him away.

Less than a month later, the Coordinator was dead at the hands of an assassin.

Despite his outward toughness, Yoguchi Kurita had a weakness for women, a fault inherited from his father Zabu. Yoguchi enjoyed "falling in love" every time a beautiful woman caught his eye. He collected many concubines during his reign; the courtesan known simply as Snow Fire was his first choice.

Yoguchi first saw her in an *ukiyo* in the Rasalhague district, bought out her contract, and relocated her to Unity Palace because he wished for no one else to have her. She was the first concubine he returned to after his time on Tishomingo.

From what investigators determined, one evening after the Coordinator fell asleep, Snow Fire took a knife she had hidden and slit his throat. She then laid an embroidered patch from the Commonwealth's Fourth Royal Guards on the Coordinator's body, lay next to him, and took a suicide pill.

ROWEENA KURITA: VIPER AMIDST THE WEEDS

Roweena Kurita was Coordinator Yoguchi's younger sister. Intelligent and astute, she saw clearly the effect of placing the ISF under the control of the DCMS. An ambitious young woman, Roweena took advantage of the *Metsuke's* hurt pride and began to curry their favor.

When her brother appointed her Coordinator of the People's Reconstruction Effort in 2841, she used the powers of her post to aid the ISF. In the beginning, she asked little in return. After 2842, she began to request the ISF's assistance. The ISF leaders agreed to help because her schemes revolved more around accumulating wealth than seizing power. She loved luxury and had an obsession for collecting rare works of art.

In return, Roweena gave the ISF important access to the far-reaching network of the PRE, which had become a second-level bureaucratic communication system. As the people of the PRE came to realize the ISF had intimate knowledge of their actions, the reconstruction of the Draconis Combine began to operate even more effectively than before.

And the ISF's shadow power began to build.

—*The Viper's Shadow*; New Samarkand Print, 2999

THE HESPERAN GAMBIT

Public reactions to Yoguchi's assassination varied. The Combine propagandists described it as a heroic death, that Yoguchi had died at the hands of a large group of assassins. Those who knew the truth felt deep shame that a lowly Steiner spy had been able to murder the Coordinator. Miyogi Kurita's first action as Coordinator was to order the deaths of all civilians with Lyran heritage who served in the Imperial Court. Thirty-six servants and eighteen concubines were identified by the ISF as having ties to the Lyran Commonwealth and summarily executed. The fifty-four deaths would be only the first of Miyogi's plans to avenge his father's death.

The Combine High Command hastily set in motion a plan that their strategists had been fashioning with great care. The mission would strike at the very heart of the Lyran Commonwealth—their BattleMech factories on Hesperus II. Miyogi wholeheartedly approved the operation.

The plan consisted of two parts. First was to gather up the remaining WarShips in the Combine Admiralty, along with support vessels and aerospace cover, to counteract the Steiner defenses and blockade both jump points. The second phase would starve out the planet's defenders and follow up with a massive ground assault. Politically, the Lyrans were in prime position to be attacked—ruled by a shaky committee of three weak leaders—and the DCMS High Command believed them vulnerable.

TURNING POINT: TISHOMINGO

Tishomingo was one of the worlds that escaped the ravages of the First Succession War because it lacked any heavy industry. Agriculture was the planet's main worth. Its temperate climate, abundant water supply, and good soil made the planet ideal for large-scale crop production. Because many water purification plants had been destroyed in the previous war and the current conflict threatened to destroy the rest, Tishomingo's abundant fresh water was a key asset for the Kuritans.

With the scarcity of useable farm machinery—also a result of the First Succession War—the planet's population had increased to a high level for an agricultural world. Several of the largest transplanted family groups were rabid supporters of the Kurita family, and the presence of a large number of ISF agents helped keep the populace in line, as Tishomingo had been a Davion world for centuries prior. As a result, the civilian militia units, composed of a fair number of DCMS veterans, were well organized if not well armed. Also, three regiments of armor and three more of standard infantry held garrison duties.

The Coordinator arrived to reinforce the world with the Fourth Sword of Light and three other line regiments. Though most of his generals believed the planet's total defense to be insufficient, Yoguchi was confident. However, he was unaware of the importance the Davions placed on reclaiming Tishomingo. With several nearby Suns systems in desperate need of water, Tishomingo drew twenty regiments, four of which were full 'Mech regiments.

The offensive launched in typical fashion, with the Davion landing ships fighting through Combine aerospace. The overwhelming force dropped on the planet, including a full battalion of 'Mechs on top of the Coordinator's headquarters, nearly broke the Combine force before the day was over. The campaign lasted three months, but the outcome was certain from the opening hours.

The Davion 'Mech units spent the next month mopping up the planet. Three of the four Davion 'Mech regiments departed the planet after taking care of the last Kurita 'Mech. If the AFFS leaders had realized they had nearly missed killing or capturing the Coordinator, they would never have left Tishomingo defended with only a single 'Mech regiment.

For the next several months, the entire Davion garrison was almost forced to retreat inside its military bases for fear of being shot at, blown up, or poisoned. The local population's fanatical willingness to give up their lives shocked the Davion soldiers. Through a system of runners, Yoguchi Kurita communicated his orders to various fighting commanders across the planet.

A surprise Davion patrol accidentally discovered Yoguchi's presence on the planet. Though the Coordinator escaped, the AFFS knew they had a prize on the planet worth taking besides the water. Yoguchi slipped his pursuers, making his way to the city of Urado.

Warned of his arrival, the city's militant underground sponsored a religious festival. Using this as cover, the population of the city swelled to twice its normal size as the farmers from the surrounding countryside entered. Leaders of the underground passed out weapons that had been stockpiled and hidden before the planet's invasion.

When the Coordinator arrived, the people rose up and killed the Davion garrison before it could mount a defense. They erected barricades to block vehicles coming into the city and turned strategic buildings into impromptu fortresses. Urado became a Kurita stronghold in a matter of hours. The first Davion attempts to retake the city failed miserably. They knew trying to starve out the city would be useless, as it contained several fortified underground food and water warehouses.

A week later, a 'Mech battalion arrived and was met by civilians carrying out desperate guerrilla actions. Despite the Uradoans' courage and fierce determination to protect their ruler, they soon realized they would be unable to prevent House Davion from capturing Yoguchi.

The rescue force sent by Roweena Kurita landed just in time to save Yoguchi's life. Suddenly faced with a major Kurita presence on the planet, the Davion defenders pulled back to await reinforcements. More than three million Kurita citizens gave their lives fighting against the Davion troops. Fifty thousand died in Urado on the final day. The Coordinator accorded them the ultimate honor when he mentioned their courage in a speech to the Combine a few weeks later.

—*The Blood Honor of Tishomingo*; Dieron District Publications, 3008

The attack began smoothly with success against both jump points. Steiner reinforcements and supplies arrived and were quickly seized; the Lyran defenders began to eat into their own stores. After several weeks, the Kuritans launched their planetary assault.

Twenty-one regiments—six of them 'Mech regiments—dropped onto the lightly defended portions of Hesperus II and began a grueling, methodical campaign to exhaust the three defending Steiner 'Mech regiments and five support regiments. The whole point of the strategy was to wear the defenders down, rather than striking directly at the 'Mech factories.

After a long six months, the Kuritans had scattered the Commonwealth defenders around the planet and advanced on the massive Defiance Industries factory. They were stunned when the doors opened and they found themselves facing a battalion of brand-new heavy and assault BattleMechs piloted mainly by factory workers and civilian volunteers. As the DCMS fell back, they were hit from behind by remnants of the Lyran defenders.

Worse, the Lyrans finally pushed through the ring of Kuritan WarShips. The arrival of the LCS *Invincible*, a Star League-era battlecruiser formerly reduced to a floating museum over Tharkad, surprised the Combine naval commanders. The Kuritan fleet scattered in haste, and the Lyrans seized the jump point before the Combine navy could reorganize. The remainder of the Steiner reinforcements arrived, and the task force made their way to the planet, escorted by the *Invincible*.

The Kuritan troops regained the ground they had lost over the prior two weeks. Once again facing the surprise reinforcements at the factory doorstep, the Combine's might forced the Lyrans into a disorganized retreat. Just before the Combine troops could enter the complex, the guns of the *Invincible* shattered them as it entered orbit. Within minutes, the WarShip destroyed most of the Combine attackers near the BattleMech factories.

The commanding Kurita general—Carson Santander—considered the Hesperus strike a marginal victory. The DCMS had destroyed part of the outlying complex, amounting to one BattleMech line. What impressed Coordinator Miyogi most, however, was the destruction of two veteran Steiner 'Mech regiments and four of the five support regiments—at the cost of one Combine 'Mech regiment and nine infantry regiments. Upon the surviving task force's arrival in the Combine came the news that the LCS *Invincible* had mis-jumped, depriving the Lyrans of the last known WarShip in the Inner Sphere.

ISF REPORT 0077367- 11 JUNE 3052
****COORDINATOR'S EYES ONLY****

Kurita-*dono*,

Pursuant with your will, we continue the reconstruction of archival materials damaged in the *gaijin* assault on Luthien. Materials dating as far back as the Von Rohrs dynasty have been discovered and preserved, offering an insight into the lives of your illustrious ancestors. This effort has proven to be of great interest to the *Metsuke*, allowing us to study in detail many of the great historical events within the Combine by applying modern techniques and insights to these ancient cases. One in particular, *tono*, may be of significant interest.

The agent known as Snow Fire is notorious as the slayer of your ancestor Yoguchi. Our agents on Tharkad confirmed she was a Norn agent (with an alias of "Denise Vanderham"), tasked with gathering intelligence and later murdering the Twenty-fourth Coordinator in what the Lyrans call Operation PRAYING MANTIS. That Snow Fire killed your ancestor on 12 December 2850 at the height of the Second Succession War, having wormed her way into Lord Yoguchi's bed, is well known. What has never been clear is how she received her orders; the LIC cells here in Imperial City were in disarray in the late 2840s, heavily infiltrated by Katsuyori-*san*'s agents. No identifiable contact occurred between Vanderham and the compromised LIC teams, and it has been assumed that she acted in response to orders from agents who eluded detection. Modern reexamination of the archives suggests another possibility.

Shortly before Yoguchi purchased Snow Fire's contract, she met with a trade attaché from the Free Worlds embassy. We can now identify this individual as Emun Moray, revealed as SAFE's Luthien Station Chief after the scandal of 2863. Initial suspicions that this individual was a Lyran double agent were swiftly disproved, leading us to assume that SAFE rather than the LIC instigated the attack. Our current hypothesis is that while Vanderham was an LIC agent, she had been suborned by SAFE and used to manipulate the flow of information to the Lyrans. It would seem the Free Worlds became aware of Operation PRAYING MANTIS and its failure in Katsuyori's purges but chose to sacrifice their own double agent for the mission to proceed, thus ensuring Yoguchi fell to the assassin's blade.

Were it not your own honored ancestor who met his fate, I would have to describe this as a move of genius by the SAFE director; in killing Lord Yoguchi the flames of vendetta between the Dragon and the Lyrans were stoked and we continued to prosecute the Second Succession War for another fourteen years, leaving the Free Worlds League free to campaign against the Capellan Confederation without interference.

One wonders if this information might prove advantageous in negotiations with the Captain-General—a bargaining chip against his usurious demands regarding technology upgrades, perhaps?

Your humble servant,

Indrahar

Indrahar-san,

This message reached me rather than my father and I would argue against bringing it to his attention. My father would feel honor-bound to confront Marik, but we must think of the Combine. The Fox and the Clans have driven Thomas into our camp and using this information for something as base as commercial advantage would undo this detente. An old slight from two centuries ago is not worth blood-feud and, as you say, one must respect the subtle cunning of the operation.

–Theodore

THE MARATHON OFFENSIVE

Coordinator Miyogi Kurita was a great believer in studying his opponents. To do so, he greatly expanded the operational powers of the ISF and O5P. He also spent considerable time talking with ComStar representatives, hoping they would help him gain a clear picture of the nature and motivations of the other powers in the Inner Sphere.

After the semi-successful attack on Hesperus II, Miyogi's analysis of current Steiner and Davion politics made him believe it was time to launch yet another major offensive. Convinced that both realms were too concerned with political matters to respond effectively, Miyogi planned to launch attacks that concentrated in strong, decisive thrusts. Though he regarded his predecessors' "planet hopping" strategy as effective, he believed it was too draining on resources. He was also hoping his offensive would put an end to House Davion's operations in the Galedon area of the front.

The DCMS generals had some misgivings about the Coordinator's plan, however. Though it was true that planet-hopping offensives were a drain on resources, the Coordinator's plan could turn out to be even more costly. *Tai-sho* Santander in particular had serious questions about the logistics of keeping two deep penetrations effectively supplied.

Nevertheless, in 2854 the Dragon's military launched its offensives against both neighboring Houses. The first five years of each campaign met with considerable success. Three Lyran systems fell early, and the Combine held Dehgolan, Tukayyid, and Grumium against two Steiner counterassaults. On the Davion front, only one world was captured, but its value was worth several worlds. Robinson, capital of the Federated Suns' Draconis March, fell after a few months of hard fighting. Four elite Sword of Light regiments, supported by ten conventional regiments, crushed the Davion defenders and held off four separate counterassaults over the next two years.

By 2862, however, the Dragon's fortune began to turn. With aggressive campaigns on both borders, the supply lines had become too long. Units began facing critical tactical weaknesses due to lack of sufficient supplies, with many becoming impossible to find. This led to cannibalization as an accepted practice to keep the Combine's 'Mechs operational. There was an increase in disobedience among Kuritan MechWarriors as they insisted on thoroughly searching all targets for useable supplies before putting the remains to the torch. This slowed down operations on several planets, putting several campaign timetables far behind projections.

Tai-sho Santander humbly asked Coordinator Miyogi on behalf of the generals to either stop the offensive or slow it down. To their surprise, the Coordinator agreed. With his subsequent order, the Coordinator ended the Combine's part in the Second Succession War. After reviewing their position, the Coordinator and his top military advisors believed they had come out on top again, with gains along both fronts. Eighteen Steiner and fourteen Davion systems were now in the Dragon's fold, as well as all of its former worlds previously occupied by

the Federated Suns. Conversely, the Dragon lost nine worlds to the Commonwealth and twenty-two to the Davions.

With its borders secured, the Dragon turned to look within to purge any identified threats. The largest of these was the Coordinator's own kin and head of the PRE, Roweena Kurita.

SHADOW PLAY

Roweena, nearly seventy years of age when the Second Succession War ended, had become something of a mother figure for the average Combine citizen due to her nearly three decades of PRE leadership. Her grandmotherly face stared down from a variety of posters admonishing the people that recycling, for example, was the honorable thing to do. Her voice came over various communication devices in public service announcements and calls for blood donations. She was everywhere the common citizen lived and worked.

In many ways, Roweena was more a public figure than her brother Miyogi—which was why he had come to fear her. What he didn't know was that Roweena had considerable influence within the ISF, the very agency that was supposed to be spying on her un-Combine activities.

Her influence over the secret police had been fostered when Yoguchi Kurita had put the ISF under the oversight of the military, a horrible insult to the agency's elite. The astute Roweena stepped in to stroke the ISF's ego and allowed the agency to use the PRE to gain access to all portions of Kurita society. Inside the ISF she came to be seen as the Kurita to which greater loyalty was owed.

Not all of the ISF was under Roweena's sway. Rajiv Sulevani, a high-level investigator, formed a small, elite squad composed of agents whose loyalty to the Coordinator was unquestioned. Using his authority, he began a clandestine investigation into the rumors of the distinctly un-Combine activities being perpetuated by Roweena.

Sulevani was a true believer in the Combine's destiny and the greatness of the Coordinator. He did not approve of the growing coolness between the ISF and the ruler of the Combine. He had already dueled and killed a fellow *Metsuke* who dared say the ISF no longer owed loyalty to the Coordinator because he had abandoned them to the lowly Arm of the Dragon.

To strengthen his position, Rajiv began a secret assassination campaign to rid the agency of its most anti-Coordinator members. Not until four turned up dead in the span of a month did the other agents realize their enemy was within. Sulevani's actions were not unique; several loyal ISF agents conducted similar actions on other Combine worlds, though without awareness of each other's actions.

The conflict between the pro-Coordinator and pro-Roweena factions became as deadly as it was confusing. A person might be shot, strangled, or stabbed on the thinnest of evidence and mountains of innuendo. Somehow, news of the internal struggle leaked out to the public, which led to what came to be known as the "Shadow War." For once in the Dragon's history, the head found stuck upon the *yari* was more likely to belong to a *Metsuke* than some poor citizen.

By 2865, more than a thousand *Metsuke* had been killed in the Shadow War. Though Miyogi and Roweena maintained a semblance of cordiality during this time, both were struggling behind the scenes to gain the upper hand. In a major escalation of conflict, Roweena attempted to expand the powers of the PRE by absorbing a vital section of the DCMS Procurement Department. This would have forced the entire military to funnel their supply requests through the PRE.

The conflict between the two Kuritas was evolving into a clash between the Pillar of Gold, the established governmental structure, and the People's Reconstruction Effort. It was an eerie time for the average Combine citizen on many worlds, as sometimes gauging which faction had the most control over their world was a matter of life and death. Paying homage to the wrong side was a quick and easy way to lose one's head.

The DCMS, which had done its absolute best to remain neutral in this massive political struggle, was forced to react when they learned that news of the Combine's difficulties was spreading to the Dragon's enemies. In an effort to resolve the conflict, DCMS generals found themselves divided over which Kurita, and therefore which faction, to back. To avoid truly splitting the realm, the High Command voted to postpone their decision for a week.

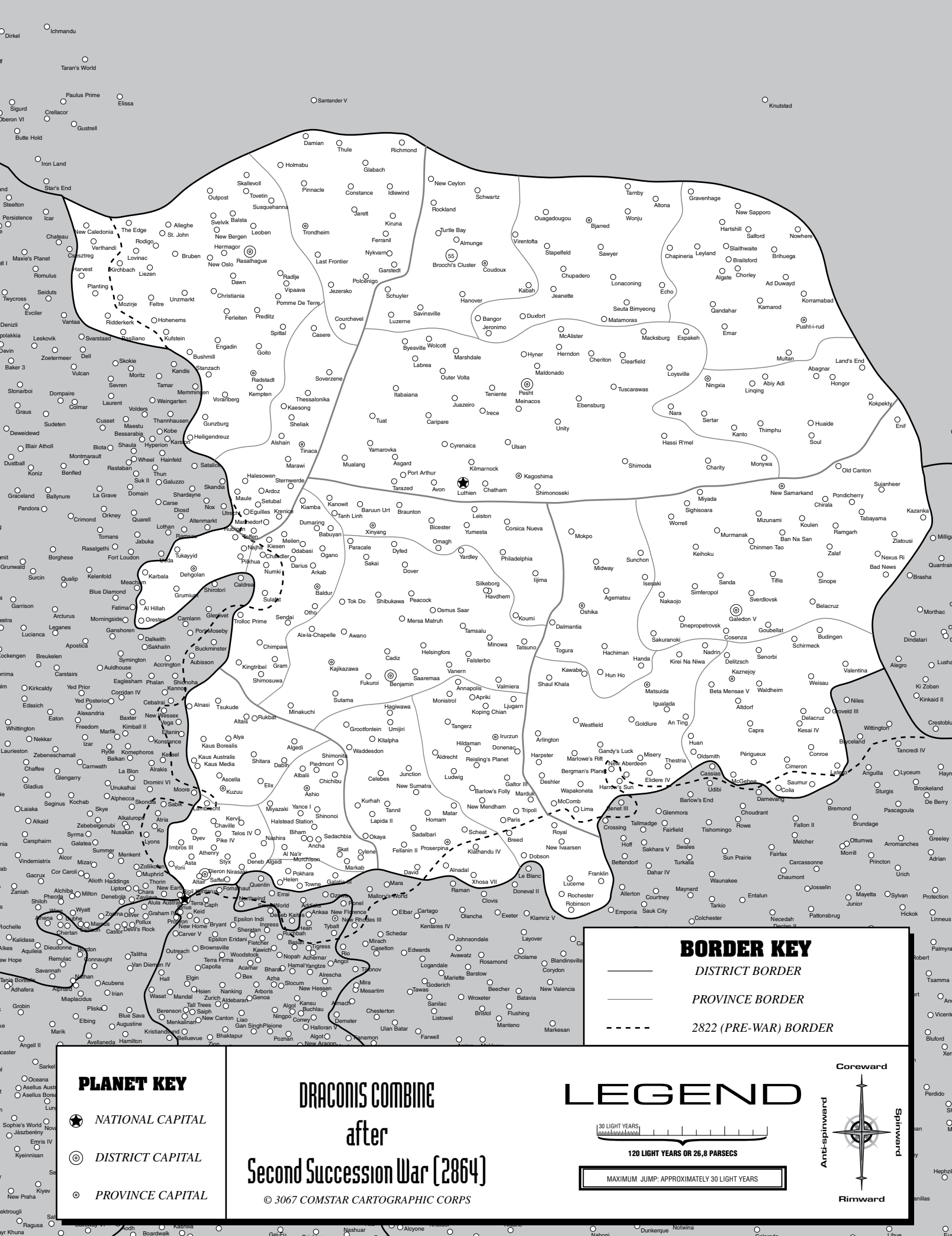
Taragi Kurita, a mid-level officer and aide to *Tai-sho* Santander, sensed an opportunity to increase his own power and prestige. In separate audiences with Miyogi and Roweena, he attempted to peddle his influence over the generals of the High Command. Both the Coordinator and his rival knew Taragi's true position; Roweena dismissed him out of hand, while Miyogi half-heartedly offered a promotion if Taragi could sway the generals to his position.

When the High Command reconvened, Taragi faced the assembled generals. He then held up the Dragon Medallion, the chain and seal that all legitimate Kuritas wear. He proceeded to give an impassioned speech extolling the virtues of Miyogi and characterizing Roweena as a witch. The speech lasted an hour; the vote, taken immediately, was unanimous in support of the Coordinator.

The DCMS mobilized swiftly. Aided by *Metsuke* loyal to the Coordinator, commando teams stormed key offices of the PRE and pro-Roweena ISF. On Ashio, the massive Grand Library of the Kuritas, part of the PRE University complex, burned to the ground. With it went centuries of knowledge and artifacts, most notably a large portion of Star League technical research that was unduplicated elsewhere. By the beginning of 2866, the Shadow War was over.

Miyogi officially decreed the end of the PRE. Roweena was sentenced to house arrest, as suggested by Taragi Kurita. He felt execution might have later repercussions, as there might be ISF agents still loyal to her seeded throughout the realm.

Taragi was promoted immediately and became Miyogi's trusted advisor during the later years of his reign.


Ichmandu
Dirkel
Taran's World
Paulus Prime
Elissa
Sigurd
Crellacor
Oberon VI
Gustrell
Butte Hold
Santander V
Knutstad
Iron Land
Star's End
Steelton
Persistence
Icar
Chateau
New Caledonia
The Edge
Alleghe
St. John
Rodigo
Verthandi
Lovinac
Bruben
Maxie's Planet
Romulus
Harvest
Kirchbach
Liezen
Planting
Seiduts
Twycross
Evciler
Vantaa
Denizli
Leskovik
Svarstaad
Basiliano
Kufstein
Devin
Zoetermeer
Dell
Baker 3
Vulcan
Skokie
Moritz
Kandis
Stonarboi
Dompaire
Sevren
Tamar
Colmar
Laurent
Weingarten
Graus
Volders
Sudeten
Thannhausen
Deweidewd
Kobe
Blair Atholl
Biota
Shaula
Hyperion
Karson
Montmarault
Wheel
Hainfeld
Dustball
Rastaban
Thun
Koniz
Benfled
Suk II
Graceland
Ballynure
La Grave
Domain
Pandora
Carse
Orkney
Crimond
Quarell
Diosd
Nox
Altenmarkt
Lothan
Tomans
Jabuka
Rasalgethi
Fort Loudon
Borghese
Grunwald
Surcin
Qualip
Kelenfold
Meachim
Blue Diamond
Fatima
Al Hillah
Garrison
Arcturus
Morningside
Orestes
Leganes
Lucianca
Ganshoren
Apostica
Dalkeith
Sakhalin
Symington
Accrington
Auldhouse
Eaglesham
Phalan
Shimohna
Kannot
Carstairs
Kirkcaldy
Yed Prior
Corridan IV
Yed Posterion
Edasich
Cebalrai
Eaton
Alexandria
Baxter
New Wessex
Vega
Freedom
Kimball II
Whittington
Marfik
Nekkar
Izar
Eltanin
Konstance
Laurieston
Zebeneschamali
Ryde
Komephoros
Keisel
Chaffee
Carnwath
La Blon
Balkan
Arlakis
Glengarry
Gladius
Dromini VI
Unukalhai
Moore
Seginus
Kochab
Skonods
Sabik
Laiaka
Skye
Alkaid
Alphecca
Alkalurops
Nusakan
Zebebelgenubi
Atria
Ko
Lyons
Syrma
Galatea
Summer
Menkent
Vindemiatrix
Alcor
Mizar
Cor Caroli
Gacrux
Alioth
Haddings
Thorin
Liptor
Chara
Zaniah
Alchiba
Phecda
Denebola
Milton
Shiloh
Wezn
Wyatt
Athena
Zosma
Oliver
Rochelle
Kalidasa
Aquileia
Dieudonne
Bordon
Remulac
Donnaught
Talitha
Savannah
Nathan
Van Diemen IV
Adhafera
Alphard
Miaplacidus
Irian
Grobin
Plaski
Elbing
Marik
Augustine
Blue Sava
Angell II
Avellaneda
Hamilton
Kristiansand
Bellevue
Bhaktapur
Poznan
Algot
Tanamon
New Aragon
Farwell
Ulan Batar
Markesan
Damian
Thule
Richmond
Holmsbu
Glabach
Skallevoll
Outpost
Tovetin
Susquehanna
Pinnacle
Constance
Idlewind
Jarett
Kiruna
Svelvik
Balsta
Leoben
New Bergen
Trondheim
Ferranil
Hermagor
New Oslo
Rasalhague
Bruben
Last Frontier
Nykvarn
Garstedt
Radlje
Dawn
Vipaava
Christiania
Pomme De Terre
Unzmarkt
Feltre
Mozirje
Ridderkerk
Hohenems
Ferleiten
Predlitz
Spittal
Engadin
Goito
Bushmill
Stanzach
Radstadt
Kempten
Vorarlberg
Memmingen
Soverzene
Thessalonika
Kaesong
Sheliak
Gunzburg
Heiligendreuz
Alshain
Tinaca
Marawi
Halesowen
Sternwerde
Ardoz
Maule
Setubal
Utrecht
Eguilles
Krenice
Marinedorf
Rubigin
Telfen
Najha
Kiesen
Meilen
Chandler
Pikhua
Numki
Darius
Arkab
Caldrea
Sulaiat
Baldur
Tok Do
Shibukawa
Peacock
Osmus Saar
Otho
Sendai
Trolloc Prime
Glenrivet
Port Moseby
Buckminster
Aubisson
Kingtribel
Gram
Chimpaw
Shimosuwa
Kajikazawa
Fukuroi
Benjamin
Saaremaa
Vanern
Annapolis
Apriki
Koping Chian
Ljugarn
Valmiera
Shaul Khala
Hun Ho
Kawabe
Hachiman
Handa
Kirei Na Niwa
Togura
Tatsuno
Minowa
Tamsalu
Donenac
Hildaman
Aldrecht
Reisling's Planet
Harpster
Marlowe's Rift
Gandy's Luck
New Aberdeen
Misery
Thestria
Oldsmith
Périgueux
Conroe
Cimeron
Lateo
Anguilla
Lyceum
Sturgis
Brookeland
De Berry
Pascagoula
Bremond
Brundage
Fallon II
Melcher
Ottumwa
Arromanches
Greeley
Adrian
Princton
Urich
Protection
Hickok
Linneus
Palmyra
Tancredi IV
Bryceland
Wittington
Crestoblu
Morthac
Dindatari
Alegro
Lusha
Ki Zoban
Kinkaid II
Niles
Groveld III
Delacruz
Kesai IV
Capra
Goldlure
An Ting
Huan
Arlington
Westfield
Irurzun
Tangerz
Grootfontein
Umijiri
Kitalpha
Waddesdon
Shimonita
Piedmont
Albalii
Chichibu
Celebes
Junction
Ludwig
New Sumatra
Kurhah
Tannil
Lapida II
Matar
Homam
Sadalbari
Scheat
Paris
Tripoli
Barlow's Folly
Galtor III
Marduk
New Mendham
McComb
Lima
Wapakoneta
Deshler
Bergman's Planet
Harrow's Sun
Elidere IV
Cassias
Udibi
McGehee
Saumur
Colia
Damevang
Barlow's End
Benet III
Crossing
Tallmadge
Fairfield
Glenmora
Tishomingo
Rowe
Choudrant
Hoff
Sakhara V
Swales
Bettendorf
Turkalia
Dahar IV
Sun Prairie
Fairfax
Carcassonne
Chaumont
Waunakee
Franklin
Le Blanc
Lucerne
Rochester
Robinson
Allerton
Courtney
Maynard
Josselin
Entalun
Tarkio
Junior
Mayetta
Sylvan
Protection
Emporia
Sauk City
Pattonsbrug
Colchester
Necedah
Declae II
Royal
New Ivaarsen
Dobson
Breed
Klathandu IV
Proserpina
Fellanin II
Okaya
Sadachbia
Nashira
Biham
Ancha
Al Na'ir
Murchison
Skat
Cylene
Markab
Dieron Nirasaki
Altair
Saffel
Yorii
Asta
Styx
Deneb Algedi
Pokhara
Helen
Towne
Galatia III
Mara
Mallory's World
Ozma
Errai
Quentin
Fomalhaut
Terra Caph
Keid
Graham IV
Zavijava
Alula Australis
Northwind
Sword World
Ardeks
Ponel
New Florence
Elbar
Cartago
Olancha
Exeter
Klamriz V
New Rhodes III
Ankaa
Ingress
Dellab Kaitos
Hean
Tybalt
Schedar
Mirach
Caselton
Edwards
Johnsondale
Layover
Kentares IV
Epsilon Indi
Epsilon Eridani
Sherstan
Fletcher
Ruchbah
Basalt
Rio
Nopah
Achernar
Angol
Awawatz
Rosamond
Cholame
Blandinsville
Corydon
Logandale
Barstow
Marlette
Goderich
Beecher
New Valencia
Batavia
Wroxeter
Bristol
Flushing
Manteno
Sanilac
Listowel
Chesterton
Demeter
Conwy
Halloran V
Ningpo
Liao
Gan Singh
Pleione
Menkalinan
Tall Trees
Saiph
New Canton
Berenson
Wasat
Mandal
Zurich
Aldebaran
Genoa
Arboris
Nanking
Hsien
Slocum
New Hessen
Mesartim
Mira
Tawas
Sanilac
Algol
Kansu
Buchlau
Amach
Ulan Batar
Farwell
Tanamon
Markesan
Bhara
Hamal
Yangtze
Tibonov
Alrescha
Azha
Acamar
Bex
Elgin
Hall
Outreach
Capolla
Terra Firma
Woodstock
Kawich
Brownsville
Ingress
Nopah
Achernar
Angol
Van Diemen IV
Donnaught
Talitha
Outreach
Capolla
Terra Firma
Woodstock
Kawich
Brownsville
Ingress
Nopah
Achernar
Angol
Rio
Tibonov
Alrescha
Azha
Acamar
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Ulan Batar
Farwell
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Markesan
Chesterton
Demeter
Conwy
Halloran V
Ningpo
Liao
Gan Singh
Pleione
Menkalinan
Tall Trees
Saiph
New Canton
Berenson

THE THIRD SUCCESSION WAR

Miyogi and his generals did not wait for the wounds from the Shadow War to heal. The Combine quickly sought to punish all outsiders who had learned of their internal difficulties. The full force of the Dragon's wrath was directed at the Lyran Commonwealth, as Archon Elizabeth Steiner seemed so well-informed of the sordid details of the Shadow War. That knowledge allowed her diplomatic and economic actions to create even more tension between the two warring political factions.

The Combine also wanted to punish the audacity of Lyran traders attempting to expand their influence deep into the Rasalhague Military District. This was a clear nuisance, made even more so because the Lyrans found willing markets for their many goods. Food was a much sought-after trade item on many Kurita worlds, and this deeply embarrassed the Coordinator.

Additionally, the Dragon believed the Commonwealth weak. With most of its industry located within the Federation of Skye, a relatively small section of space near Terra, the DCMS High Command considered it a fairly easy target. The Archon had also relaxed the military vigilance of her realm, believing that a time of true peace was at hand with the Combine crippled from its brutal internal war.

THE RETRIBUTION STRIKES

In early 2867, the Combine launched an offensive against the Lyran worlds Chateau, Icar, and Steelton. The campaign appeared to be a full invasion attempt but was actually a ruse, with mostly second-line and support regiments. The Dragon hoped to lure some of the defending units located in the Skye region before beginning its true campaign.

The offensive progressed far better than the Kuritans hoped. Caught unprepared, many Commonwealth units retreated from their worlds without firing a single shot. The Archon mismanaged her reserves, giving the Dragon free rein over many important systems in the region such as Kessel, Ko, Dromini VI, Aubisson, and Port Moseby.

What the Kuritan generals failed to consider was what actions the Federated Suns might take. The AFFS, with damnable foresight, had made plans based upon the probability that the Combine would go full-force into the Commonwealth. Davion forces opened their own maneuvers with a series of raids along the border to wear down the Kurita forces still stationed there.

To combat the threat, the Coordinator sent Taragi Kurita to the Davion front as chief advisor to the Warlords of the Galedon, Benjamin, and Dieron Military Districts. The three *tai-shu*s had shifted their attention from the Lyran front to try to stem the tide of Davion aggression, leaving the Skye campaign in the hands of their counterparts.

The Combine received a boost to their efforts against House Steiner when emissaries from the Free Worlds League arrived on Luthien to discuss an alliance. Though officially noncommittal, the Coordinator was encouraging enough that House Marik went ahead with their assassination plot against Archon Elizabeth Steiner.

The attempt was an enormous failure but signaled the start of hostilities between the two states, embroiling the Commonwealth in a war on two borders. The distraction further weakened Steiner forces and by 2870, the Dragon had seized worlds anti-spinward up to and including Marfik.

TARAGI KURITA

Born with an inner ear problem that gave him chronic motion sickness, Taragi Kurita was never a MechWarrior, aerospace pilot, or even a crewman on a space ship. He spent the early years of his military career delving into the intricacies of the DCMS bureaucracy. While others were learning to do reverse Immelmanns in aerospace fighters or strike from a prone BattleMech, Taragi learned how to secretly manipulate the bureaucracy entrenched in the Combine's way of life. When he became a *sho-sho*, that talent came in handy for siphoning off money and goods anytime he wished.

The process was more a game to him than anything else, as riches and power were not the prime motivators of his life. An intellectual of the first order, his real interest lay in solving problems. Being a Kurita, especially one born in secret thanks to his father Yoguchi's own sense of security, meant the problems he wished to solve were tied to the destiny of the Draconis Combine. He also had a mischievous streak, which played itself out in full during the latter part of the twenty-ninth century.

—*The Promise of Taragi*; Ashio Print, 3009

Taragi's Plan

Upon arriving on the Davion front, Taragi decided to see how far he could get by taking advantage of his position and using his cunning. As the Coordinator's official representative, Taragi was treated with respect and even awe by the three Warlords. With malicious glee, he dove into the politics of the situation and secretly pitted each Warlord against the others. At the same time, he was examining the procurement system of the front as a puppet master would examine a new acquisition.

Within a year, the bureaucracy was a tangled nightmare all along the Davion front due to Taragi's manipulations. The three Warlords fought among themselves, with each blaming the other for the poor supply situation. Militarily, the AFFS took advantage of the situation, attacking seven worlds and seizing three. The only Kurita commander who was able to pull any victories from the mess was Taragi.

In 2885, Davion forces raided major supply points at Towne, New Ivaarsen, and Colia. All were successful, mainly because Taragi made sure these depots were ill-protected. After the Davion raids, Taragi returned to Luthien and reported to the Coordinator on the complete ineptness of the three Warlords. Though he never blamed anyone specifically, Taragi's report made it clear that he believed the Davion front should be commanded by a single *tai-shu*—namely, himself.

After digesting the report, Miyogi thanked Taragi for his valuable service to the Dragon and agreed with his conclusion. The Coordinator already had someone in mind—his own son, Jon Kurita.

Taragi was deeply humiliated when the Heir-Designate became his superior on the Davion front. He had been sure the appointment would go to him. Such an insult to his personal



honor galvanized his once vague ambition and formed a razor-sharp focus: he set his sights on the pinnacle of power within the Draconis Combine.

The ambitious *sho-sho* knew where to turn: Roweena Kurita. Now ninety-four years old, she was living out her house arrest in grand style. When Taragi came to visit her with a request for assistance and advice on how to win the Coordinator's seat, Miyogi's sister saw her last chance to strike out at the man who had broken and imprisoned her.

Roweena gave Taragi greater access to the ISF. Despite Miyogi's many purges to rid the agency of pro-Roweena elements, a few higher-placed officers managed to escape detection. Though not many, they had maintained contact with Roweena and now gave Taragi access to secret information.

The former PRE Coordinator also advised Taragi that it would be best to discredit Jon Kurita first. If Taragi could do that, then Miyogi would have to replace his son with Taragi. Retaining Jon as commander would only anger the DCMS, whose leaders could not abide an incompetent ruler. Either way, Taragi stood to benefit.

As second-in-command of the Davion front, Taragi began to secretly manipulate the bureaucracy so that sufficient supplies failed to reach the Third Sword of Light on the vitally important world of Robinson. Exacerbating the lack of supplies was the substantial force of Davion guerrillas who generally made life difficult for the Kuritan occupation force on the former Draconis March capital.

The Federated Suns did not take long to recognize that the elite Third Sword was low on supplies, especially ammunition. In late 2891, a large Davion invasion force of conventional and 'Mech regiments landed on the world. When a consistent flow of supply was most needed, Taragi secretly manipulated the procurement routes so that the planet received nothing for a month. Seeing they were in danger of running out of ammunition and spare parts for their BattleMechs, the Third Sword and its supporting regiments were forced to retreat. Robinson was recaptured by the AFFS shortly afterward.

The commanders of the Sword of Light regiments have always had considerable unofficial influence because of the elite status of their troops. *Tai-sho* Yori Granada of the Third Sword angrily confronted Jon and Taragi Kurita, wanting to know who caused the supply snafu. Taragi then sprang his trap. Using falsified information, as well as the counterfeit testimony of a procurement officer (actually an ISF officer), Taragi presented a mountain of damning evidence against Jon Kurita.

Tai-sho Granada and his staff urged the Coordinator in strenuous terms to remove Jon from command and place Taragi in his place.

The Coordinator's position was as perilous as Roweena anticipated. Miyogi attempted to rally his own support by calling on certain key generals to come to his son's defense. To the Coordinator's dismay, everyone had an excuse to stay neutral, due largely to a smear campaign being waged by Roweena's allies within the ISF. The agents were spreading the lie that Miyogi was sending an offer of alliance to First Prince Melissa Davion of the Federated Suns, in lieu of a counterattack.

The conflict played out in horrific fashion. On 20 March 2892, *Tai-i* Hideyoshi Toyama, a mid-grade officer in the Third Sword of Light, sought to avenge his unit's humiliation on Robinson. He smuggled a bomb into Unity Palace and entered the Audience Hall with the device strapped to his chest. After gaining permission to present his petition, Toyama detonated the bomb. The explosion killed Toyama, twenty-five soldiers, three civilians, and Coordinator Miyogi Kurita.

Upon hearing of the assassination, *Tai-sho* Taragi had his ISF contacts place Jon Kurita under arrest. A short trial found Jon guilty of negligence and treason. Jon Kurita died by firing squad exactly one week after his father's death.

THE UNOFFICIAL RULES OF WAR

Since the beginning of the latest war, a set of rules governing combat has been slowly evolving. As the high commanders realized their supply of resources was dwindling fast, they began to adapt to the scarcity. Even before engaging in battle, one side might realize his force had no chance to win and so would withdraw to cut his losses. Such a phenomenon would have been unthinkable during the previous two wars, both of which were famous for battles in which the winner was the last one left standing.

Early in the Third Succession War, commanders began to plan battles in clear and open areas away from cities because they wanted their troops to have the best terrain in which to use their precious supplies. This tendency to fight away from cities was soon reinforced by the scavenger mentality that seized all the realms. With parts and equipment often irreplaceable, scavenging through the rubble for spare parts in the aftermath of battle became almost as important as the fighting itself.

This trend did not sit well with many of the more conservative DCMS generals. Raised in the old ways, they expected war to be terrifying, gruesome, and dramatic.

When Taragi learned that some of his generals questioned the new way, he issued a booklet entitled *The Katana Principle*. Consisting of a series of the Coordinator's observations, this small report outlined the religious and moral beliefs that supported the newer, more humane way of fighting. He wrote that the new style of fighting might not be as exciting as some of the older ways, but it was the only way to preserve the equipment and people vital to the Draconis Combine's eventual dominion over all humanity. The brief essay ended with the reminder to the generals that *bushido* demanded obedience to one's lord above all. The question never came up again.

—*Taragi and the Katana Principle*; Sandhurst History Press, 3020

REGRETS OF PAST SINS

Named Coordinator at the age of sixty, Taragi found that the appointment brought him no contentment. The pursuit of the goal had been far more exciting. Now in possession of it, he found himself burdened with the heavy decisions and responsibilities of the realm. Taragi dearly missed the days when he could immerse himself in the curious pleasures of maneuvering through the vast intricacies of the Combine bureaucracy.

The High Command looked to him to design a plan that would halt the enemy's gains on the Davion front. On the Steiner front, the Dragon's inability to take Skye forced a complete change in the offensive's direction, which snarled logistics and forced some difficult decisions. Bandit activity along the Periphery border created food and water shortages for the people along the distant border systems. The ISF, now having discovered the last remaining *Metsuke* loyal to the recently deceased Roweena, awaited the Coordinator's decision on its fate. In addition to all of these issues, Taragi held a nagging fear that Miyogi's three daughters might be plotting against him.

With such a massive burden facing him, Taragi was tempted to retire on several occasions. Each time, the thought of his son Shinjiro ruling the Combine prevented him from doing so. Though Shinjiro was nearly forty and an excellent officer, Taragi believed the Heir-Designate too politically naïve to rule. Thus, Taragi persevered and quietly paid the price for his schemes and plots against others in his earlier years.

THE NEW CENTURY

As the thirtieth century dawned in the Combine, it brought news of a massive plague sweeping through Albiero and Bjarred Prefectures. Though the disease could be treated with an existing vaccine, both the treatment and vaccine depended upon advanced medical facilities—something sorely lacking in both prefectures.

When confronted with the news of the plague, the Coordinator faced a difficult decision on how treatment might be carried out. Some advisors counseled he place both regions under strict quarantine. Should anyone from those areas attempt to leave, their JumpShip or DropShip would be destroyed to prevent spread of "Albiero Consumption."

A smaller group of advisors suggested that to abandon so many people to certain death was an affront to the oath Taragi had taken on becoming Coordinator. He should honor his pledge to "do [his] best to protect the lives and well-being of those that aid [him] in [his] quest to fulfill the Kurita destiny."

Taragi ordered as much assistance as possible be given to the two stricken prefectures. In retrospect, his decision proved most fortunate. Three years later, in 2904, an inexpensive and easily prepared vaccine was developed as a result of work in Albiero Prefecture. Within another three years, the plague had been brought fully under control. Millions were spared by the Coordinator's decision to actively combat the plague.

Ironically, the medical profession that the Coordinator championed with his trust during the Albiero plague ultimately failed him. In November 2907, a latent congenital defect in his heart suddenly struck Taragi down. The doctors in Imperial City tried to save him, but an error during surgery ruined his chances for recovery. He died—as did the surgeons who made the mistake.

THE DEADLY DOUBLE COBRA

Scientists and medical experts from systems near the affected prefectures were called in by the Coordinator to combat "Albiero Consumption." Using samples gained through strict protocols, this special medical task force—coordinating across eight different systems and facilities—finally struck success in 2904. As a result, millions of people were spared a lingering death from the fast-spreading virus. Removing the quarantine kept the Dragon's stretched economy from going under completely.

The DCMS special warfare labs also benefited from the research. After the crisis had passed, the medical facilities were closed down, except for two. Research moved from vaccinations and public health into a related field: biowarfare. While not commonly used during the previous Succession Wars, the DCMS High Command had considered it in the event of an overwhelming assault by its neighbors.

After several months of extensive testing, a weaponized version of the plague was created after merging it with an Age of War-era viral experiment. The new virus, called the "Double Cobra" for its two transmission vectors, was capable of infecting an entire planet within weeks, depending on exogenous environmental factors. The Double Cobra was theoretically more lethal than any other chemical or biological weapon posited during the height of the Star League era. When the full range of the virus and its effects was disclosed to Coordinator Shinjiro, he immediately ordered the samples sealed and locked down. Only in a case of extreme emergency—such as the imminent downfall of the Dragon—would such a weapon be unleashed.

The DCMS High Command placed the Double Cobra in a buried vault complex chosen for its proximity to the Federated Suns border, as the Dragon believed if any enemy was capable of pushing the Combine to the brink, it would be the realm of the hated Davions. If that inconceivable situation happened, the Double Cobra would be ready for use.

—*SX-RT3*; Luthien Court Library, 2933

BORDER CLEANSING

Shinjiro Kurita proved to be far more politically skilled than his father imagined. Upon assuming the mantle of the Twenty-seventh Coordinator in 2907, he immediately dismissed his father's counselors to show he was in full control. He replaced them with a group of retired officers and diplomats who were among his teachers at the Sun Zhang Academy.

His first concern was how to deal with the forces of the so-called Bandit King harassing the realm's prefectures along the Periphery border. All diplomatic attempts had failed, and to sit waiting for an attack was pinning down too many of his troops. In 2911, Shinjiro established a bounty system that encouraged hunting down bandits. Open to all combat veterans of the DCMS, the program provided bounty hunters with surplus weapons systems, including a few battered BattleMechs and JumpShip transport. These bounty hunter groups, nicknamed the "Gray Dragons," slowed the rate of pirate attacks against Kurita border worlds along the Periphery.

In 2913, the Lyrans attempted a counter-offensive campaign they dubbed Operation FREEDOM, after one of the worlds they hoped to liberate. The Combine lost a sizeable portion of the Sixth Sword of Light in a push by the Third Royal Guards, led by the Lyran Archon Eric Steiner. Commonwealth forces shelled the boxed-in 'Mechs until they were destroyed. The death of the Lyran Archon in a BattleMech explosion a short time later did little to blunt the sting of Freedom's loss. The marked improvement in Lyran skill gave many generals in the DCMS pause.

With the failure to take Skye in 2894, the Combine had shifted its offensive into the Tamar Pact region. Though not as heavily industrialized as the Federation of Skye, this area possessed some relatively undamaged manufacturing centers and agricultural worlds, which the Combine wanted.

Fifteen regiments slammed into Tamar. Success was promising until several stalwart defensive actions by the Stealthy Tigers and Lyran mercenaries inspired the defenders. With the bulk of the Dragon's invasion force tied up on Tamar, DCMS timetables slipped and then collapsed as Lyran reinforcements poured into the region. Less than a year later, the Combine pulled out and abandoned its initial plans to push through Tamar and the surrounding systems.

MENDING SHADOWY FENCES

When members of the ISF realized they had become nothing but pawns murdering each other in the Shadow War between two Kuritas, it took some doing for ISF Director Jacob Yokohama to control his people's desire for revenge. In the end, the ISF reaffirmed its loyalty to the Draconis Combine, if not to the Kurita family.

After the Shadow War, the ISF remained cloistered in its New Samarkand headquarters, avoiding direct contact with the government for the next decade. This was also the location of the "Black Dojo," a massive, featureless building that serves to this day as the training center for the *Metsuke*.

Not wishing to stir the wrath of the agency, Coordinators Miyogi and Taragi did not pressure the ISF into returning to its more active former (and traditional) role. When contact between the ruler and ISF was necessary, the commander of the Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy acted as mediator. Though the ISF's core operations staff had withdrawn from Luthien, the organization continued to fulfill its obligations to the Draconis Combine during this time. Whenever the Sun Zhang commander passed on a request for the agency's services, the ISF responded without hesitation. The main reason for remaining so obstinately separate from the government was to show the ISF's displeasure at being used so callously.

Coordinator Shinjiro recognized that dwindling resources in the Inner Sphere would eventually put limits on even the Arm of the Dragon. As such, the concealed knife or poisoned drink might become the most efficient way to eliminate some future enemies. Shinjiro felt it was essential to restore the closeness that had previously made the Coordinator and the ISF such a lethal combination.

The Coordinator visited New Samarkand in 2921. Though officially there to address the graduating class of officers from the nearby Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy, his real purpose was to meet with ISF Director Clarissa Indrahar and her Council of Five.

The meetings between Shinjiro and Clarissa stretched from the initially proposed three weeks into six months. As a result, the two managed to hammer out a new accord between the ISF and the government. The agency's main grievance was being placed under the control of the DCMS. As a compromise, Shinjiro offered to make the Director of the ISF a full member of the High Command. In this manner, the Director would have a say and a vote on what the *Metsuke* would be asked to do.

This concession satisfied Director Indrahar enough that other points of contention were resolved quickly. The Davarapala Accords were signed in 2921.

—*The Modern ISF*; New Samarkand Pressworks, Ltd, 3054

The DCMS reexamined its operation and found it needed more time and many more units than originally intended. The cost of supplies tagged for the Steiner front was mounting far beyond the High Command's initial estimates.

The Dragon pulled some its better line units from duty along the Periphery and replaced them with lesser quality regiments. The various bandit kingdoms took notice and responded by attacking Kuritan worlds with abandon. Of all the Gray Dragons operating along the border, only *Tai-sho* Ricardo "Geriatric Judge and Jury" Gillespie and his volunteers were continually successful in beating back whatever raiders they encountered.

Because so much manpower and materiel was being funneled to the Lyran front, Davion commanders were able to take advantage of the situation, especially on worlds close to Terra.

Though House Kurita was winning more worlds along the Steiner front than it was losing to the Federated Suns, the losses to the AFFS were disheartening and humiliating. As Combine commanders considered the AFFS an equal to the DCMS, each system lost hit the Dragon's morale doubly hard.

The lessons of the Marathon Offensive during the Second Succession War had convinced the Combine military that attempting to sustain a major campaign on both fronts was folly. In 2924, the DCMS High Command decided that as long as they continued to gain strategic advantage along the Commonwealth front, they would continue to devote to it the lion's share of supplies and equipment. This was not a popular decision to those Kuritan commanders posted on the Davion front.

In 2925, Shinjiro died unexpectedly in his sleep. The circumstances of his death were suspicious, as a security computer had recorded the presence of a late-night visitor to the Coordinator's chambers on the evening of his passing. The ISF and Grand Inquisitor both heavily investigated the matter and pronounced Shinjiro's death due to natural causes.

ENTER HUGAI

At thirty-five years of age, Hugai Kurita became the Twenty-eighth Coordinator of the Draconis Combine. He had just taken command of a regiment when news of his father's death reached him, forcing his return to Luthien. Despite his youth and inexperience, Hugai impressed the Draconis High Command with his calm bearing and quiet manner.

Hugai barely knew his father Shinjiro, who was fond of the spotlight. Hugai and his sisters were raised away from Luthien, so the elder Kurita would not need to share his popularity with his children. Though the estrangement did not seem a problem, an occasional streak of violence worried Hugai's mother and siblings.

SUNBURST ON XHOSA

Rich in metal deposits and chemical energy sources, Xhosa VII served as a major resource and transportation hub for the Combine, particularly servicing industries and military units stationed on the Davion border. Early in Hugai's reign, the Federated Suns invaded this stellar crossroads.

For over a decade, the Draconis High Command took note of the Suns' continued grinding war against the distant Capellan Confederation. The DCMS leaders assured the Coordinator there would be little activity on the Davion border for several years.

AFFS strategists, however, were not content with a stable border. Despite tight supplies, the Davion generals decided to hit a Combine world and chose Xhosa VII for its importance to the Dragon. Fifteen regiments, three of them composed of BattleMechs, slammed into the world in early 2930. Defending the system were six regiments, two of them Galedon Regulars 'Mech regiments. The Dragon's forces were commanded by the illustrious and honorable *Sho-sho* Samson Sakamoto, the Coordinator's mentor and a staunch defender of the Kuritan throne.

Hugai had served under *Sho-sho* Sakamoto and regarded him with great fondness. Sakamoto took command of the Twelfth and Seventeenth Galedon Regulars as a personal favor to the Coordinator. The commands were recently reorganized and lacked regimental cohesion.

The Davion assault group managed to insert itself within the system's commercial traffic stream and was discovered scant hours from landing. Sakamoto had little time to organize a strong defense, instead breaking the Twelfth into smaller companies and leading the Seventeenth directly into the teeth of the Davion assault.

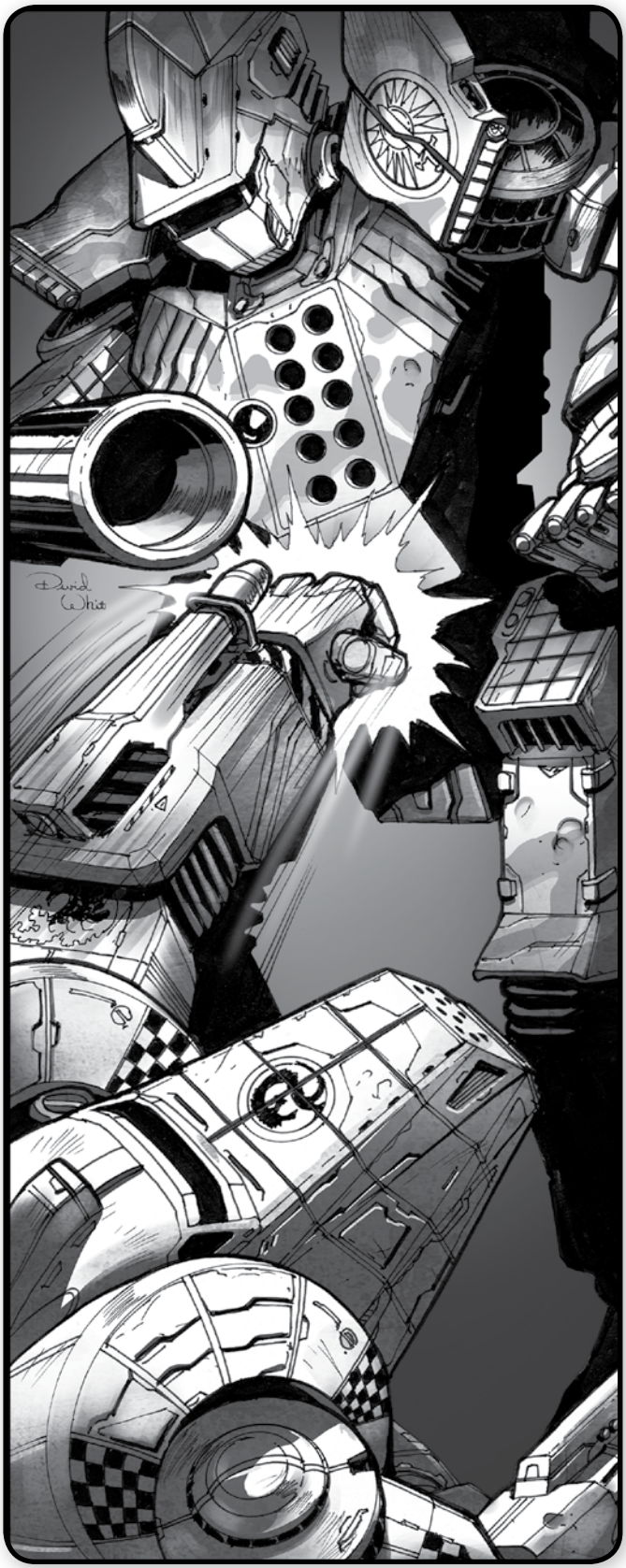
The *sho-sho* challenged an advancing Davion 'Mech regiment outside New Xhosa. Though outnumbered and harassed by heavy artillery, Sakamoto's force maneuvered the advancing enemy into exposing their command lance. He then engaged General Mickertrick, the Davion commander, in a combat duel. By the time reinforcements arrived, both commanders were dead, their 'Mechs blackened hulks on the rocky plains.

With their charismatic and storied leader dead, the Kuritans fought a delaying action against the overwhelming Davion force, themselves in disarray. Most of the survivors who made it off Xhosa were from the Seventeenth; many of the Twelfth Galedon soldiers remained behind to organize a guerrilla force to antagonize the Davion occupiers. *Sho-sho* Evan Aberdeen, Sakamoto's second-in-command, personally delivered the news to the Coordinator of the defeat and Sakamoto's loss. Aberdeen graciously requested and received the Coordinator's honorable solution shortly afterward.

TRAITOR TO THE STAR

Hugai took the news of *Sho-sho* Sakamoto's death hard. Though his training allowed him to master his grief, those close to him in the Court knew how the loss affected the Coordinator. Within a few weeks, another blow was delivered: Necess Kurita, Hugai's older sister, joined ComStar.

Necess had grown increasingly frustrated by the restrictions placed upon her medical studies and travel beyond the Combine borders. She was also aware of the increased attention the ISF gave her whenever she visited other systems beyond the Dragon's border. Disgusted by all of the "protection" lavished upon her by Hugai, she walked into the Office of the Precentor on Luthien and announced her defection to the Order.



THE WAYWARD KURITA

Necess Kurita was the eldest of Shinjiro's children, though Hugai was the oldest son. The High Command purposely passed over Necess for rulership due to their prejudice against her femininity. The old *bushido* mentality reinforced the second-class status of women in Combine society, and a few centuries had passed since the successful reign of Lady Kurita and her granddaughter.

Despite the slight, Necess had no interest in becoming Coordinator. From her youth, she had been drawn to the healing arts, which she believed were a more honorable pursuit that holding power over other humans. Her special interest was to rediscover lost medical techniques and technology, based on her training in medical sciences. Her work had already taken her to worlds in the Free Worlds League, Capellan Confederation, and Outworlds Alliance—much to Shinjiro's displeasure. Being a most stubborn and intelligent woman, Necess had decided that political boundaries would never prevent the possible rediscovery of some valuable tool or technique of the past.

—*Tale of the Tearful Kurita*; Dover Biographical, 2998

Tthe Order was ecstatic that such a personage as Necess chose to defect. The ISF quickly discovered the elder Kurita's decision and informed the Coordinator.

Hugai's response was calculated and bold. In November 2931, two DEST squads visited the ComStar Hospice on Luthien where Necess was serving in her new apprenticeship. The firefight was quick and brutal, with several ComStar ROM agents executed for their actions in harboring the Coordinator's sister. A few DEST agents gave their lives in the process; their sacrifice was honored when the ISF agents returned to Imperial City with Necess in tow.

Hugai sequestered Necess in a wing of the palace—ironically the same quarters previously inhabited by Roweena Kurita during her imprisonment—and refused to hear protestations from Precentor Stephanie Hendriks. The Coordinator was convinced ComStar had brainwashed Necess into joining.

Precentor Hendriks sought Terra's direction in handling the situation. The solution, according to her superiors, was to enact ComStar's "Emergency Powers Protocol of the Communications Act of 2787." This authorized her to hire mercenaries—the Bandersnatches—and sneak into Luthien's heavily travelled orbital space through deceptive means.

She then bullied her way into a meeting with Hugai after shutting down the Luthien HPG station for one day. As was his right, the Coordinator refused to subject Necess to further manipulation and barred his sister from the meeting. The infuriated precentor laid out her demands, which included the threat of a full Interdiction. Hugai, prepared for such a demand, refused.

The Coordinator did not anticipate ComStar's hired thugs, who were under orders to rescue Necess and Hendriks from Unity Palace or lay waste to it in the attempt. When the mercenaries' imminent arrival was discovered, Hugai had no choice but to release his sister into ComStar's possession. Because Hugai acquiesced graciously, Hendriks called off the assault and did not attempt to punish the Combine for its actions.

But the Dragon never forgot ComStar's audacity and arrogance.

THE STEINER CONUNDRUM

The loss of Xhosa VII to House Davion made the Draconis High Command reexamine their military expectations on the Lyran front. In a year-long meeting held on Luthien in 2993, they discussed the current operation in detail.

Though the Dragon seized nearly twenty planets in their efforts, the DCMS had failed to take the two most important: Skye and Tamar. Both regional capitals were linchpins to the Coordinator's plan in order to force House Steiner to sue for peace. Though invasion attempts against both planets had failed, the Kurita generals still held hope of taking Tamar.

After the failed attempt against Skye, Commonwealth forces managed to push the Kuritans off nearby Zebebelgenubi, which had served as the Dragon's jump-off point for the invasion. Now the Dragon was forced to use distant Alkalurops or Skondia as staging areas for future actions, which would make future attempts against Skye extremely costly.

The continual improvement in the LCAF's quality was another sore topic. During the First and Second Succession Wars, Lyran forces had proven rather incompetent, particularly the officer corps. They seemed more interested in the cut of their uniforms than in strategy and tactics.

Though the vanity still existed—according to merchants and ISF agents—a sense of determination and self-confidence seemed infused among the Steiner military. The officers seemed more willing to stand and fight, inspiring the lower ranks to rare acts of courage and heroism. This was bad news for the DCMS, which was used to seeing Commonwealth troops cower and run at the mere appearance of the Dragon's military.

DRAGONFALL

The combined losses of Hugai's mentor on Xhosa and his eldest sister to ComStar took a heavy toll, and the Coordinator became withdrawn. During his increasingly long bouts of indifference, Hugai spent much of his time wandering the Palace gardens. The Palace guards were under orders to keep everyone from disturbing the Coordinator's peace, no matter the urgency or need.

Without the Coordinator's approval, the rest of the government could not create budgets. As a result, the military was stuck using repetitions of their 2952 budget for the next decade, until Hugai's death in 2963. Military industries churned out the same quotas of parts and supplies and technology, which perpetuated shortages in some products and a surfeit of others. An underground barter market sprang up among unit quartermasters, which drew local yakuza gangs and other organized criminal elements. A burgeoning black market bloomed on several DCMS supply worlds.

The mercenary trade thrived during this time as mercenary units became conduits for black market supplies to various DCMS quartermasters. Those mercenaries lucky enough to be employed by the Dragon often found themselves the best-equipped units at their duty stations.

The Third Succession War stagnated for the Dragon until 2953, when McGee's Cutthroats—a Combine-backed mercenary unit—landed on Alexandria in Steiner space. The mercenaries quickly found themselves outgunned and called for reinforcements, and the battle escalated a simple raid into a two-year campaign involving seven different Combine 'Mech regiments.

The Lyran boldness on Alexandria, along with their retaking of Phalan, alarmed the High Command. The generals began seeking a way to lessen the LCAF's effectiveness. They decided on another attack aimed at destroying the Steiner's huge BattleMech facilities on Hesperus II.

In 2957, two Kuritan regiments carried out an almost suicidal mission. The Combine troops surprised the Lyran defenders and dropped not on the plains as expected, but into the surrounding mountain range. More than half of the MechWarriors who participated in the attack died when their 'Mechs impacted the mountain slopes. Those who survived managed to regroup and savage the BattleMech factories before the Lyran defenders could drive them off. Their heroics crippled the Hesperan factories, cutting their output by more than half.

This was one of the few bright spots during Hugai's remaining years as Coordinator.

NOT LIKE THE FATHER

Where Hugai Kurita was weak, falling prey to depression and loneliness, his son Hohiro was strong. Believing his father and other recent predecessors had failed to live up to their duty of fulfilling the destiny of House Kurita, Hohiro devoted himself body, mind, and soul to the Dragon's heart.

Hohiro was a tall man whose imposing face and body made even his smile seem like a threat. As a regimental commander, he ruled by fear. Whippings and beatings were common in his unit; anyone not scarred by the lash was either a new recruit or the commander himself. He was Kurita to the core, carrying out attacks with abandon. He preferred to execute a good plan today rather than wait for a better plan tomorrow.

When Hohiro assumed the Coordinatorship, he immediately injected life into the moribund DCMS and DCA by appropriating funds for them from the already meager budget of the People's Medical Services. Though this decision would eventually result in severe plague outbreaks that would kill millions, the money did provide a much-needed kick start of parts and supplies for the Arm of the Dragon.

—*The Reign of Hohiro Kurita*; Imperial Press, 3058

DRAGON AFIRE

Hohiro Kurita succeeded his father in 2963, becoming the Twenty-ninth Coordinator. The Imperial Court immediately realized the son was not the father. One of Hohiro's first acts was to take redirect various monies earmarked for civilian concerns into the Combine's military industry. This indicated how the Coordinator intended to treat anyone not intimately connected with the Kuritan military. Hohiro considered "the coddling of the common citizen" a subversive social policy that needed removal.

Under the banner of "Dragon Renewals," Hohiro took away the few services that existed for aid and relief of the lower classes. Only the ComStar Hospice stations remained, though the Coordinator

did attempt a few times to rid himself of these "secret recruiting stations taking advantage of the Kuritan work ethic." (ComStar recruitment did rise in the Combine during Hohiro's reign, most likely due to the state of lower-class affairs at the time.)

Language was another point of confrontation. The Coordinator wished to make Japanese the Combine's sole language, suggesting that violations be punishable through public whippings. When ComStar leaked a private recording of Hohiro discussing this policy with his advisors, it triggered numerous public demonstrations across the realm. The situation intensified in 2978 when Hohiro made the new language policy law. After more than twenty violent demonstrations—including two on Luthien outside Unity Palace—the Coordinator was forced to nullify the order less than nine months later.

THE ARM, TWISTED

While Hohiro's policies caused a cascade of mass disobedience unheard of in Kuritan history, the DCMS suffered under its own set of new policies.

Coordinator Hohiro stripped much of his Warlords' power, crippling their ability to carry out many of their station's actions under their own initiative. Now all decisions and orders were required to pass through High Command, resulting in a military too sluggish to respond to new situations. The ultra-harsh treatment of the soldiers, which Hohiro seemed to believe was beneficial to his warriors, also took its toll. The constant terror under which the average soldier now lived made him dull, completely lacking the fire that formerly characterized the Dragon's troops.

Both the Lyran Commonwealth and the Federated Suns took advantage of Hohiro's egomania by making gains against the DCMS. The Lyrans swiped a few worlds back from the Federation of Skye section of the front. The Suns gained the most, however, taking back seven border worlds from the Draconis March region. The AFFS success in the region sparked a heightened clamor within the Robinson theater, and the Suns generals began advocating for a renewed push from the March border.

—*Leadership Trends in the Combine During the Third War: Revised;* Focht War College, 3065

Hohiro also rankled the top echelons of the ISF, announcing that as part of the "Dragon Renewals" protocols he would be reviewing the Davarapala Accords. The Coordinator cited his grave doubts about nearly all of the previously agreed-upon provisions. Director Jervis Indrahar was alarmed and communicated the agency's displeasure by having agents burn a large *yari* in the center of the Coordinator's favorite palace garden. Hohiro was amused by Indrahar's audacity and quietly dropped the issue, allowing the ISF to continue operations under the Accords.

What the Coordinator did not find amusing was that many of the lower-tier nobility of merchants, bankers, and industrialists resented his efforts to tighten his hold on the Combine. When some came to him in audience to protest the harsh policies, Hohiro seized their holdings and had the protestors beheaded.

Word quickly spread of the Coordinator's actions; the protestors' heads on poles outside of the palace gates did much to publicize the incident. In less than a month, an unprecedented revolt—now known as the Strike of 2989—erupted. Major Combine industries shut down in protest of Hohiro's tyranny. Though the Coordinator tried everything from executions to using the military to run the factories, he could not break the will of the bankers and industrialists. After four months, the strike threatened to tip the DCMS into chaos. Hohiro finally relented and scaled back many of the reforms instigated by his Dragon Renewal program.

NEW DAWN FOR THE DRAGON

As the dawn of the thirty-first century approached, the Draconian people were exhausted, fearful, and fatalistic. The spirit of the Dragon was flagging; of all the proper Kuritan Coordinators, Hohiro was the most cruel. The turn of the millennium provided the Coordinator a unique opportunity to bring the people back under his shadow.

To celebrate the millennial turn, Hohiro called for festivals and observances to take place across the realm. When the populace realized the Coordinator was serious, they plunged into preparations with fervor.

The reason for the Coordinator's benevolence became clear as the festivals commenced a month before the new year. In 2997, Hohiro had recalled his eldest son Takashi from the Davion front to serve as a commander in the Otomo. In early December 2999, the Coordinator announced he had important plans for the Heir-Designate, which Hohiro would announce on New Year's Day, 3000.

It was obvious the festivals and celebrations were as much for Hohiro's coming announcement as they were for the advent of the millennium. The cruel leader had one soft spot—Takashi—and had lavished attention and gifts on his son during his childhood.

THE YOUNG DRAKE

As a young officer in the Second Sword of Light, Takashi displayed considerable talent. His skill at piloting his family's *BattleMaster* was exceeded only by his innate leadership ability. Even the already elite Second Sword improved upon his arrival. Takashi eventually rose to command the regiment's heavy assault battalion. He enjoyed the life of a battlefield commander and was not pleased to be pulled from the regiment and brought home to Luthien.

Serving in the Otomo is considered a high honor within the DCMS. The assignment is also known as easy duty. To be assigned to the Otomo is known as getting the "dream ticket." Command of the Guard is a titular honor reserved for hereditary Kuritas.

Despite the honor, Takashi was ambivalent about the new assignment. On one hand, he enjoyed Imperial City for the politics and inner workings of the Combine's power. Hohiro's son no doubt looked forward to ascending to his father's throne, but Takashi believed he would never feel the euphoric heat of battle again. This saddened him; his sadness would later crystallize into anger.

—*Wyrm Turning: The Rise of Takashi Kurita*; Imperial Press, 3066

(This behavior sparked a common complaint within the lower classes: if Hohiro had spared one-tenth of one percent of the love for his son on the Combine, then the Unproductives would feast on caviar every day.)

By all accounts, the New Year's Eve celebration was truly spectacular, especially on Luthien. More fireworks were expended over Imperial City than in the previous century combined. For years, the common joke was that telescopes on neighboring Chatham noted a slight increase in the Luthien system's apparent brightness due to the massive display.

As scheduled, Hohiro made his much-heralded announcement on 1 January 3000. In a speech broadcast to the entire realm, he announced Takashi's promotion to *Sho-sho*, that he would serve as Hohiro's proxy in the DCMS High Command and would take overall command of the Otomo.

DEATH OF THE DRACONIAN TYRANT

Anyone expecting Hohiro's benevolence and leniency to continue after the turn of the millennium was sorely disappointed. Immediately after the festivities concluded, the Coordinator re-imposed all of his Dragon Renewal edicts. He even strengthened a few, in order to "help strip away the laziness caused by the celebrations." The festivities reminded the Draconian people of a more joyful way through life; the imposing of the Dragon Renewal edicts reignited resentments abandoned only a few months before.

Riots sparked on a few industrial worlds but were brutally squashed. DCMS soldiers and conventional regiments were commonly found on heavy patrol around many of the Dragon's military-industrial sites, breaking up any gathering through use of force. The strong use of force did little to stem the simmering resentment among the civilian classes. The more public outbursts were limited to systems within the Rasalhague Military District.

In February 3004, Otomo *Kashira* Ingmar Sterenson slipped into the Coordinator's private gardens. A trusted aide to Takashi, Sterenson knew the location of the palace's motion and heat sensors and deftly avoided them all. He did not take into account the ancient flooring of the Coordinator's private quarters, however. By design, the polished wood would squeak loudly when someone traversed the boards. As Sterenson passed through the antechamber, the squeaking alerted the Otomo guards stationed outside. The elite guardsmen confronted the intruder but were cut down before they could stop the assassin.

Sterenson burst into Hohiro's bedchamber, raised his sword, and screamed "Independence for Rasalhague!" He then split Hohiro's skull in two.

The assassin was soon apprehended and held until Takashi was located. The Heir-Designate had Sterenson taken into the garden and shot. His body was hung upside down from a tree until the bones dropped to the ground then cast into an Unproductive grave site.

Though many among the populace were relieved when news of Hohiro's death reached them, a general feeling of uneasiness permeated the Combine. No one knew if Takashi would be better or worse than his father, so the realm waited with tense anticipation to see what their new Coordinator had in store for them.

A month after his father's funeral, Takashi Kurita announced sweeping reforms to the laws governing the Combine. Acting the part of the benevolent leader, he outlined plans that significantly loosened the chains clapped on by his father.

As the public rejoiced over the proposed changes that removed nearly all of Hohiro's restrictions enacted over the previous forty-plus years, critics within the higher levels of government began muttering. These nobles considered Takashi's reforms a ploy to prevent a closer investigation into how Sterenson had managed to kill the Coordinator. They insinuated the assassin had help from Takashi, head of the Otomo at the time of the incident.

The ISF informed the Coordinator of the rumors circulating Imperial City and the surrounding bureaucratic strongholds. Takashi ordered Otomo to round up into the palace courtyard anyone who had been spreading such sedition, along with many of Takashi's political enemies. The Coordinator accused them of traitorously weakening the Draconis Combine with their malicious lies. There was only punishment for such behavior.

The Coordinator gave the order, and the Otomo cut down every politician and dissident in the courtyard. He then turned his guards onto the families of anyone who questioned him. Among the common people, this purge was a sign that Takashi's true nature was as violently repressive as his father's.

Once Takashi was sure the people of influence as well as the general public understood his ruthlessness, he formally passed the new laws and loosened the strictures on Kurita society.

MUSTERING THE DRAGON'S MIGHT

As control of the government settled under Takashi's rule, the DCMS and DCA suffered a series of setbacks from the Federated Suns. Davion troops were aggressively pushing at the shared border between the realms. Just before Hohiro was assassinated, the Suns managed to create two significant bulges into the Combine, one tipped by Harrow's Sun and the other by Cylene II.

Because of the faltering military, Takashi moved to revamp the Dragon's troops. The Coordinator made it obvious to each regiment's officers that no one's job was secure. To strengthen the entire structure, Takashi reshuffled many regiments' chains of command and showed through several aggressive examples he would not hesitate to remove even the most illustrious commander from his post if necessary.

Every officer on and off the field knew he would be under close scrutiny, which created a sense of competition between unit commanders. The fear of imminent dismissal served to heighten each unit's performance It even promoted the use of innovative tactics, though this was not the Coordinator's aim.

Takashi also removed the commanders from both fronts and returned to the policy of each military district's Warlord commanding the fight on their portion of the front.

In 3007, Coordinator's additional scrutiny within the DCMS appeared to have worked. A modest offensive along the Davion border reclaimed Cylene, Mara, Galatia III, Harrow's Sun, Benet III, and Crossing, blunting the Suns' push into the Combine. The new sense of competition among the Kuritan units saw success. Pleased, Takashi began planning more ambitious schemes.

In 3013, the Coordinator sent thirteen regiments—three of them 'Mech regiments that included the Coordinator's own Second Sword of Light—to Mallory's World. After three months of intensive combat, the main continent was little more than a maze of burnt farm fields and destroyed cities. Though the Dragon ultimately retreated, the Davion troops paid a high price for their victory. First Prince Ian Davion, leader of the Federated Suns, led the defenders against the Kuritan assault and died protecting his troops' retreat.

THE DRAGON AND THE FOX

The relationship between Takashi Kurita and Hanse Davion began for both men before either attained the throne of their respective nations. Takashi read every intelligence report he could find of the young man's early career. Though at the time Hanse was not the Suns' designated successor, being Ian's younger brother and second in line to the throne, Takashi knew any capable leader in the Davion family was a threat not to be taken lightly.

Because of his intense study of the man, Takashi grew to respect Hanse as he watched the younger Davion's career. After the news of Ian's death, Takashi's desire to know his future enemy grew into an odd friendship of sorts. When Hanse's father died, Takashi made an unprecedented gesture of sending a note of condolence. Each took a keen interest in the life and career of the other. Hanse even sent a message expressing his wish that Takashi's wife Jasmine would recover from a serious illness that befell her in 3019. Takashi was invited and attended Hanse and Melissa's wedding on Terra at the start of the Fourth Succession War.

There was never any doubt, however, that each leader considered the other an honorable and respected opponent. They were sworn enemies. The fact that Hanse respected the Coordinator (and vice versa) pleased Takashi immensely as it gave an aura of epic struggle that is prized in *bushido*. The Coordinator realized early on that Hanse Davion was the only person he trusted to do his best.

When word reached the Coordinator of Hanse's death in 3052, Takashi composed a death haiku for his honored adversary and sent it, along with his condolences, to Victor Steiner-Davion, Hanse's firstborn son. With Hanse's passing, the Dragon knew the end of an era had arrived, and he mourned the loss of his most respected enemy.

Interestingly, Victor Steiner-Davion repaid the honor to the Dragon when he sent a note of condolence to Theodore upon learning of Takashi's passing. In 3059, during a visit to Luthien before the start of Operation BULLDOG, Victor also paid honor to the Combine by visiting Takashi's grave.

—*Circle of the Dragon*; Al Na'ir Publication House, 3063

HALSTEAD STATION

One of the first incidents where the Coordinator faced the new First Prince Hanse Davion in a crisis was during the battle for Halstead Station. The Federated Suns leader's exploits during the months of battle cemented Takashi's respect for "The Fox," a nickname coined by Takashi.

In 3012, a year before Ian's death, the Combine began converting large sections of the world into a massive warehouse and arms depot. A top-secret project, Halstead Station was to become one of the Combine's hub worlds in a renewed invasion of the Federated Suns. Combine architects excavated deep pits in the planet's surface and placed built armored bunkers underground. Encircling the depots were rings of hardened positions capable of defending against both land and air assaults.

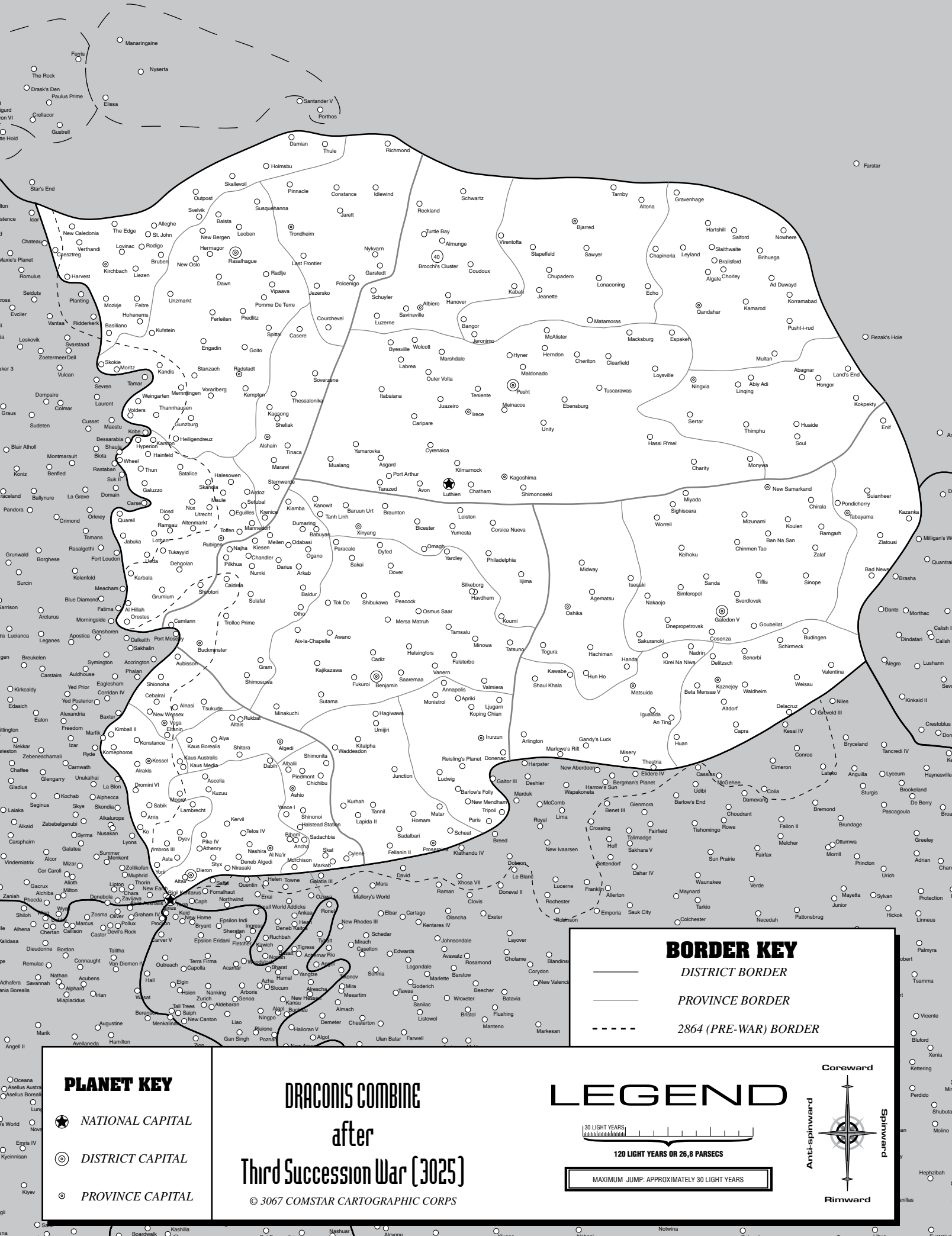
During excavation at Site HS-14U, the Kuritans made a major discovery. A large building complex was discovered under several hundred feet of volcanic ash, the site of an Age of War-era university. A massive room vault was quickly uncovered, which took crews nearly two months to unearth. Kuritan experts believed the sealed chamber contained a wealth of technological data, as the location corresponded to the library and research division of Terra University, one of the few Combine branches of the ancient Hegemony university system.

The Federated Suns attacked the system at the beginning of 3014, shortly after Ian's death. First Prince Hanse Davion arrived just ahead of additional Kuritan reinforcements and landed near the vault. The Davion troops, in their haste to acquire the mysterious contents, punched open the vault door and stuffed 'Mech-sized bags with whatever their BattleMechs could grasp. As the Kuritans approached, the Davion troops then torched the inside of the container, destroying centuries of lost knowledge.

Combine DropShips kept the orbiting AFFS forces from reaching the fleeing Prince and his men for weeks. At the head of the Second Sword of Light, the Coordinator arrived in early February and personally led the hunt for Hanse. During the subsequent cat-and-mouse games, Takashi watched the Federated Suns leader place his own life in jeopardy three separate times in order to protect his troops. Impressed by observing firsthand the cunning and intuition of "The Fox," the Coordinator allowed the Suns troops to retreat with their prize. Only a few texts survived the Davion vandalism. These were immediately relocated to New Samarkand for further study, though the Kell Hounds mercenary unit absconded with a few on Murchison. What remained would later be instrumental in Kurita research on improved particle projection technology.

STATUS QUO ANTE

After Halstead Station, the Federated Suns looked antispinward towards the Capellan Confederation, leaving the Combine-Suns border in a fragile stability. A few AFFS raids struck Combine worlds, but nothing indicated a major assault. The Coordinator moved to take advantage of the Suns' preoccupation with the Confederation and launched a mini-offensive, beginning with the Davion world of Mara in 3015. The assault required cooperation between the Warlords of Dieron and Benjamin, a major test of Takashi's continued attempts to improve the DCMS through competition.


BORDER KEY
DISTRICT BORDER
PROVINCE BORDER
2864 (PRE-WAR) BORDER
PLANET KEY
NATIONAL CAPITAL
DISTRICT CAPITAL
PROVINCE CAPITAL
DRACONIS COMBINE
after
Third Succession War (3025)
© 3067 COMSTAR CARTOGRAPHIC CORPS
LEGEND
30 LIGHT YEARS
120 LIGHT YEARS OR 26,8 PARSECS
MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS
Coreward
Anti-spinward
Spinward
Rimward

Ukita Yorioshi, the new *tai-shu* of the Benjamin District, carried out unconventional tactics that saved the life of Vasily Cherenkoff, later the *tai-shu* of Dieron, and nearly three regiments of troops. Yorioshi was brought up on charges by his peer for "grossly ignoring battle strategy established by the Coordinator." Takashi, however, closely followed the events on Mara and instead decorated Yorioshi for showing initiative.

Despite the Dragon's success, the mini-offensive failed to gain traction, netting the Combine only two additional worlds that were lost within the next five years. On the Steiner front, a successful feint on Sevren allowed Rasalhague Military District *Tai-shu* Ivan Sorenson to assault Laurent. The Commonwealth put up a strong resistance, redirecting several LCAF regiments to the world. Though the Combine retreated, the border destabilized enough for the DCMS to conduct several successful raids through 3020.

In late 3020, a Steiner emissary arrived on Luthien, carrying Archon Katrina Steiner's ceasefire proposal with her. Insulted by the use of a female in such an important role, and mistrustful of the woman on the Commonwealth throne, Takashi refused to entertain such a notion.

In 3022, the Combine learned of a peace and alliance treaty between Houses Steiner and Davion. After regaining his composure following an uncharacteristic fit of rage, the Coordinator sent emissaries to the Capellan Confederation and the Free Worlds League with a proposal of alliance. After two years of effort and discussion, the three realms formed the Concord of Kapteyn, specifically created to oppose the union of their two ancient House enemies. With the announcement of alliances on both sides, the Third Succession War came to an inauspicious end.

THE FOURTH SUCCESSION WAR

The Combine quickly found itself in need of a massive military build-up program after the formal announcement of the Federated Commonwealth alliance. The lengthy series of military exercises being conducted by the LCAF and AFFS made the Coordinator and his High Command even more nervous. Designed to help both militaries mesh with each other, Operations GALAHAD and THOR put the Combine on edge. A common expectation among the Court was that a coordinated invasion from the new, combined realm was not a matter of *if* but *when*.

Despite the martial exercises occurring on the borders of the Combine, no assault manifested itself. In 3028, during the wedding ceremony between First Prince Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner, heir to the Lyran throne, the reasons for the operations became clear. The Davion groom, in a surprising display of gall and without a shred of proper decorum, gave his new bride a gift of immense proportions: the Capellan Confederation. The AFFS launched a mass invasion into the smaller realm.

To protect the nearly defenseless Suns border, the Lyrans in turn invaded the Combine. The combined strikes marked the beginning of the Fourth Succession War.

Unlike the previous wars, the Fourth War lasted a little more than two years. The Combine lost more than fifty worlds to the Steiner blitz, though the Dragon's seizure of fifteen Davion systems assuaged the losses somewhat. The assaults also marked the rise of the Coordinator's son, Theodore, who came into his own during the brief conflict.

SON OF THE DRAGON

Targeted specifically by Lyran forces during the Fourth War, Theodore evaded capture and led the DCMS to its few victories on the Steiner front, most notably in turning back the invasion of Vega. Recognizing that seizing the initiative is a critical component in victory, Theodore commanded a counter-invasion of the Commonwealth

THE RISE OF THEODORE

Theodore Kurita, the only child of Takashi and Jasmine Kurita, began his rise to power in the fires of the Fourth Succession War. His successes against the Steiner military coincided with the loss of support Takashi experienced during the same period.

The Coordinator's obsession with destroying Wolf's Dragoons after the mercenaries left the Combine in 3028 bordered on madness. Takashi took the case to a ComStar Review Board, where the mercenaries were not found at fault. While the Coordinator concentrated all of his energy and attention on the Dragoons stationed along the Davion border, the Combine's military effort on the Steiner front suffered. Takashi became increasingly irrational, flying into rants and fits of rage that echoed memories of Jinjiro.

Constance Kurita, in her position as Keeper of the House Honor, stepped in and forced the Coordinator to undergo extensive medical examination. The Combine doctors found that Takashi had suffered a stroke severe enough to affect his mental functioning sometime during the previous two years. They also predicted he would suffer another more debilitating one unless he underwent a series of operations to remove dangerous blood clots and repair weakened arteries.

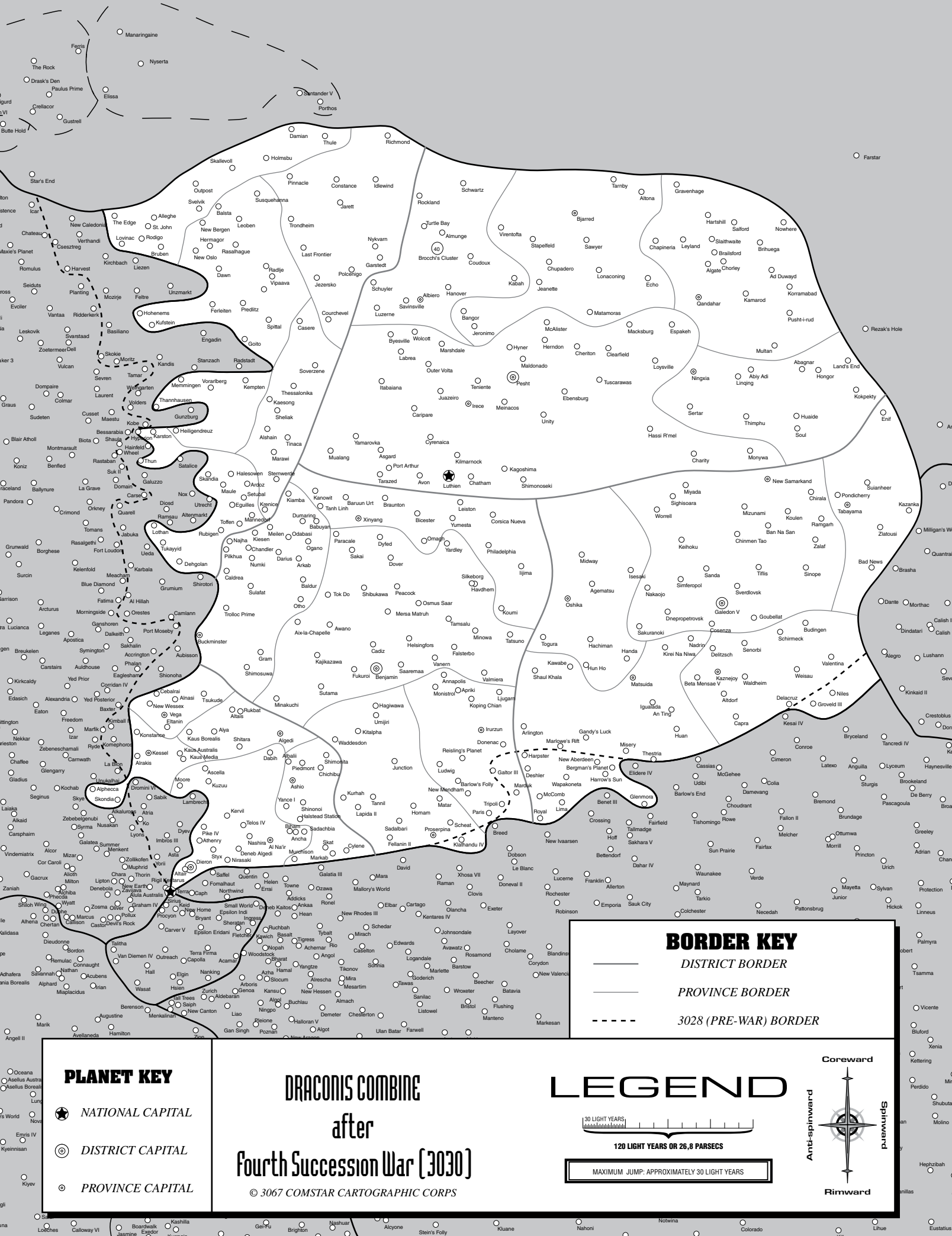
As all of this occurred, Theodore gained prestige and influence within the Dieron Military District. As *Tai-shu* Vasily Cherenkoff did nothing, the Heir-Designate moved from commanding three regiments to near-complete control of the district's military forces. Through shrewd analysis and daring strategies, he succeeded in reversing the Combine's military situation and stopped the Commonwealth's offensive cold.

Though the Dragon lost several dozens of systems and many of its elite regiments were in tatters, the defeat might have been more devastating if not for the young heir's brilliance. He emerged from the war a hero, which touched off a power struggle within the Kurita family.

After the war, Theodore's power and popularity continued to expand. As a result of his skillful leadership, he eventually won the support of most of the regiments of the Rasalhague, Dieron, and Benjamin Military Districts. He also impressed the yakuza, who saw him as a new and potent force compared to the stagnation that Takashi represented. These yakuza later pledged their support to Theodore and helped him resist the Federated Commonwealth's massive invasion in 3039 with the debut of the Ghost Regiments.

Takashi had always been harsh towards his son—not an unknown practice in Kuritan family history—but he could not ignore Theodore's immense popularity with both the military and the people. In 3030, the Coordinator awarded his heir the Order of the Dragon in honor of his achievements during the war. He also appointed him *gunji-no-kanrei*, believing it a hollow honor. Theodore leaped at the chance to remold the DCMS according to his own desires and as *kanrei*, virtually no one stood in his way.

—*ComStar Update 3043*; Sandhurst University Press


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Rimward

THE *RONIN* DECLARATION

"The Dragon has entered a new era. As we look ahead to the future, we are saddened by those who only look behind. For the Dragon to move forward, we must shed the shackles that bind us, limiting our power and holding us back from true greatness. By allowing the Rasalhague people to be free, we have removed the shame that has quietly burdened the Dragon for centuries.

"There are those who believe that to hearken to an older time is to further the purpose of the Dragon. They are wrong. The Dragon endures because it adapts and embraces progress without burying itself in obsolete beliefs. Those who oppose the will of the Dragon are therefore declared *ronin,* masterless warriors who think only of their own selfish desire and not the will of the Combine.

"To these *ronin*, I say: Lay down your arms and accept true honor, or follow your selfish course to a disgraceful and ignoble end."

—Theodore Kurita's public address to the Draconis Combine, May 3034; University of Pesht Archives, 3035

that could have seriously damaged the Lyran war machine had the LIC not successfully carried out a stopgap operation that targeted the DCA fleet at Dromini IV. The brief counterassaults were successful but ended up stalled from the lack of transportation.

Theodore's tactical acumen came under the envious eyes of many within the upper echelons of the DCMS. Takashi noted Theodore's successes; as a reward, the Heir-Designate was named *gunji-no-kanrei*—Deputy for Military Affairs. The Coordinator reinstated the position specifically for Theodore, as Takashi did not have confidence in his son's political strength to handle one of the prestigious Warlord positions. In the position of *kanrei*, a de facto supreme warlord for all of the Combine that reported only to the Coordinator, Theodore would oversee the rebuilding and updating of the Dragon after the recent war. The only way Takashi knew to season his heir and prepare for leading the Combine into the future was to throw his son into the proverbial dragons' den of the High Command.

Theodore planned to use the newly-crafted Genyosha and Ryuken regiments as a model for his intended reform of the DCMS, which called for a more flexible armed forces. Takashi had little intention of granting the *kanrei* any real power and scattered his son's pet projects within the Combine military. This action actually served Theodore's plan, however: it spread the new units' flexible doctrine throughout the DCMS, laying the seeds for true rebirth.

A FREE RASALHAGUE

One of Theodore's more audacious plans to quickly build up the devastated DCMS was the construction of a secret deal with ComStar. The *kanrei* received an offer from Primus Myndo Waterly promising war materiel, BattleMechs, and other supplies in exchange for stationing ComStar-sponsored garrison troops at all Combine HPG complexes. The crux of negotiations was the formation of a free Rasalhague state, independent from Combine rule. ComStar wished to see the new republic more to keep the dominant Davion-Steiner alliance at bay than any altruistic motivation. After intense discussion, the *kanrei* agreed and secured Takashi's approval.

On 13 March 3034, the Free Rasalhague Republic was publicly declared. The new interstellar nation included most of the worlds of the former Rasalhague Military District, recently conquered by the Steiner military. ComStar quickly recognized the FRR, followed by the Draconis Combine. The formation of the FRR created a buffer state between the Dragon and the Lyran Commonwealth, freeing up additional DCMS troops for use elsewhere. Only twenty district worlds remained with the Combine under the newly-formed Alshain District, whereas the Lyrans were forced to give up nearly all they had gained during the Fourth War.

Not all of the Dragon's Warlords accepted the Coordinator's decision to recognize Rasalhague's independence. Marcus Kurita and Vasily Cherenkoff, Warlords of Pesht and Dieron, respectively, vowed to fight. Under the leadership of Marcus, renegade forces moved to attack and seize many of the FRR's newly annexed worlds.

Theodore branded these men as *ronin*—masterless warriors— and declared they were acting neither in the name nor interest of the Combine. The *kanrei* then sent DCMS forces to cut off the *ronin* from their supply bases and crush any resistance. The short conflict that followed killed both Warlords, gutting the resistance of the *ronin* leadership, and the nascent rebellion ended before the close of 3034.

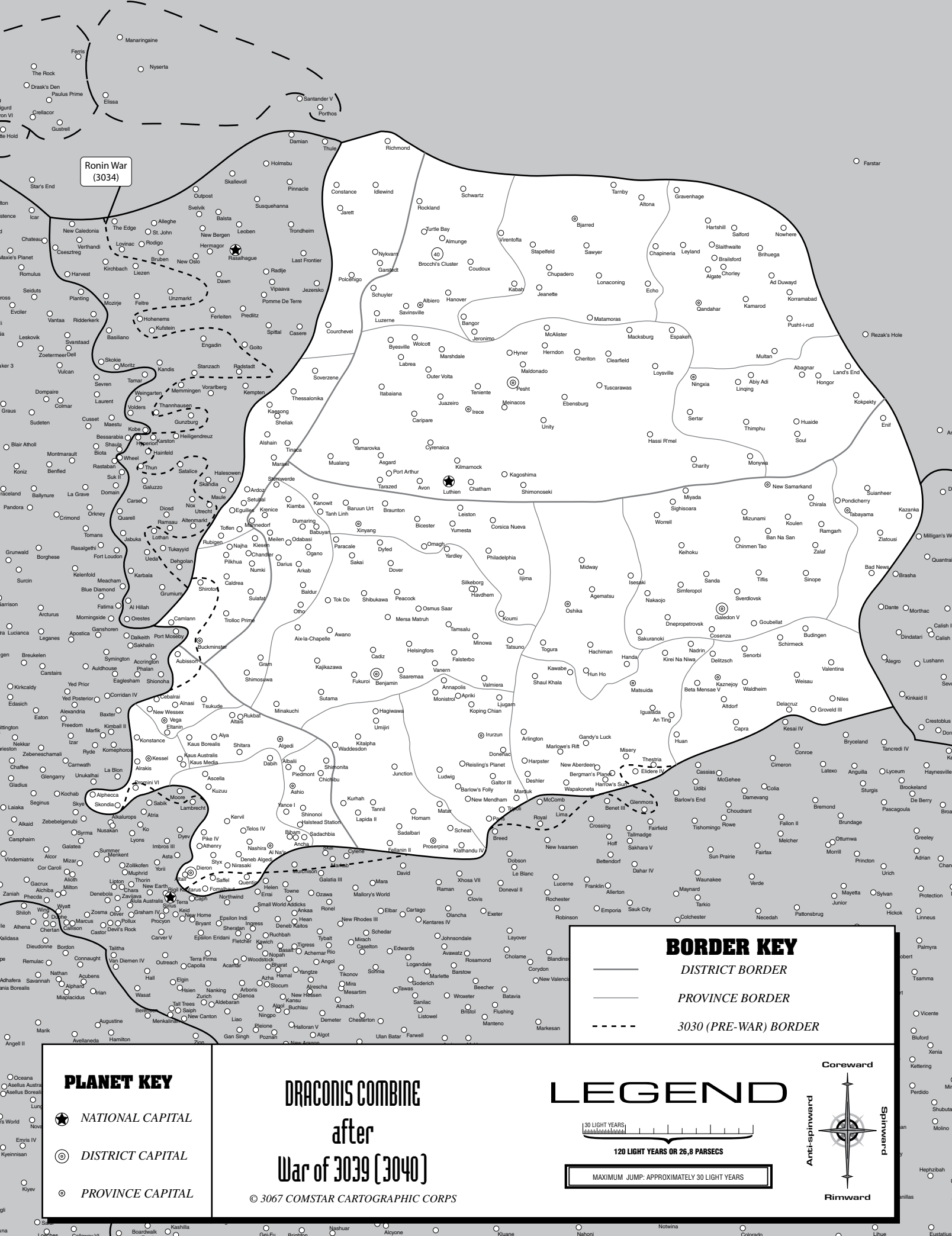
The *Ronin* War was a boon for the *kanrei*. Fighting against rebellious elements within the DCMS, the brief war purged many of the disloyal from the ranks, and Theodore's two biggest adversaries were permanently removed. Also, because the *kanrei* quickly withdrew the DCMS forces after they had crushed the rebels, he raised his political stock with the FRR's new leadership.

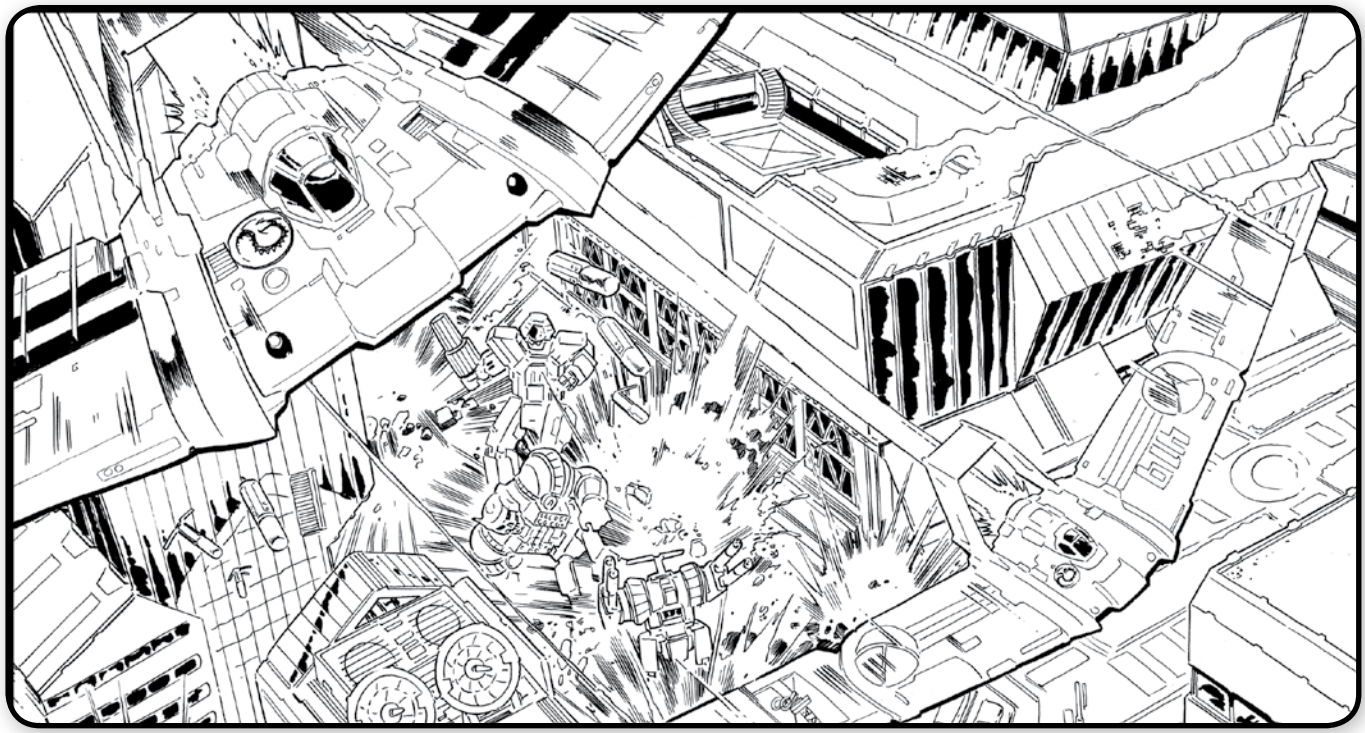
PIRATES AND PRINCES

Theodore's most controversial decision was the appointment of Michi Noketsuna as Warlord of Dieron in the wake of the *Ronin* War. A former aide to Minobu Tetsuhara, commander of the Ryuken in the conflict against Wolf's Dragoons that occurred immediately before the Fourth Succession War, Noketsuna had forsaken his DCMS post to pursue a vendetta against rogue Warlord Grieg Samsonov. His campaign to offset the dishonor inflicted by Samsonov on his former master prompted Noketsuna to adopt the guise of the Bounty Hunter, and in this role his path crossed Theodore's as the *kanrei* sought allies to rebuild the DCMS. Despite the objections of Theodore's advisors, Noketsuna become one of the *kanrei*'s closest associates, standing shoulder to shoulder with him in his efforts to sway the yakuza to his cause.

Noketsuna's rival for the Dieron posting was Dexter Kingsley, who served at the time under Warlord Vasily Cherenkoff. Cherenkoff went rogue during the *Ronin* War and was brought down when Kingsley betrayed him. This action crippled the rebel forces, but Kingsley did it to advance his own position rather than from loyalty to the *kanrei*. Theodore had little desire to promote such a self-serving individual to command of a military district and instead chose to install someone he knew had little desire for such power. Noketsuna, he believed, would command because the Combine needed him. The "old pirate" was not a popular choice with career DCMS officers, but his combat and command skills, developed in his years with the original Ryuken, were beyond question.

—Trevena's Guide to the War of 3039; Focht War College, 3065


Ronin War
(3034)
Manaringaine
Ferrie
Nyserta
The Rock
Drask's Den
Paulus Prime
Elissa
Crellacor
Gustrell
Santander V
Porthos
Damian
Thule
Star's End
Holmsbu
Skallevoll
Pinnacle
Outpost
Susquehanna
Svelvik
Balsta
Leoben
Trondheim
Alleghe
The Edge
St. John
New Caledonia
Chateau
Verthandi
Cseszreg
Lovinac
Rodigo
New Bergen
Hermagor
Rasalhague
Bruben
New Oslo
Last Frontier
Kirchbach
Liezen
Harvest
Romulus
Dawn
Radlje
Vipaava
Jezersko
Pomme De Terre
Seiduts
Planting
Mozirje
Feltre
Unzmarkt
Eviller
Vantaa
Ridderkerk
Hohenems
Ferleiten
Prediitz
Kufstein
Basiliano
Spittal
Casere
Engadin
Goito
Leskovik
Svarstaad
Zoetermeer
Dell
Skokie
Moritz
Vulcan
Kandis
Stanzach
Radstadt
Sevren
Tamar
Vorarlberg
Kempten
Dompaire
Colmar
Laurent
Weingarten
Memmingen
Volders
Thannhausen
Gunzburg
Sudeten
Cusset
Maestu
Kobe
Heiligendreuz
Bessarabia
Hyperion
Karston
Hainfeld
Shaula
Biota
Wheel
Thun
Rastaban
Montmarault
Benfled
Koniz
Blair Atholl
Satalice
Halesowen
Skandia
Maule
Nox
Utrecht
Altenmarkt
Galuzzo
Carse
Diosd
Ramsau
Quarell
Orkney
Crimond
Tomans
Jabuka
Lothan
Tukayyid
Ueda
Dehgolan
Rasalgethi
Borghese
Grunwald
Fort Loudon
Kelenfold
Meacham
Blue Diamond
Karbala
Surcin
Arcturus
Fatima
Al Hillah
Orestes
Morningside
Camlann
Ganshoren
Apostica
Leganes
Dalkeith
Port Moseby
Sakhalin
Buckminster
Shirotori
Caldrea
Sulafat
Trolloc Prime
Grumium
Symington
Breukelen
Carstairs
Auldhouse
Accrington
Eaglesham
Phalan
Shionoha
Aubisson
Kirkcaldy
Yed Prior
Yed Posterior
Edasich
Alexandria
Eaton
Freedom
Marlik
Kimball II
Izar
Nekkar
Komephoros
Ryde
Zebeneschamali
Chaffee
Carnwath
Glengarry
Unukalhai
La Blon
Gladius
Kochab
Seginus
Laiaka
Skye
Alkaid
Zebebelgenubi
Carsphairn
Vindemiatrix
Alcor
Cor Caroli
Alioth
Milton
Gacrux
Alchiba
Phecda
Wyatt
Shiloh
Wind
Dubhe
Alhena
Chertan
Gallison
Castor
Devil's Rock
Pollux
Procyon
Carver V
Epsilon Indi
Epsilon Eridani
Sheratan
Fletcher
Kewich
Ruchbah
Basalt
Achernar
Nopah
Angol
Yangtze
Tikonov
Sonnia
Mira
Mesartim
Tawas
Goderich
Wroxeter
Sanilac
Listowel
Bristol
Flushing
Manteno
Markesan
Beecher
Batavia
Corydon
Blandine
Cholame
Layover
Johnsondale
Edwards
Awawatz
Rosamond
Logandale
Marlette
Barstow
Woodstock
Terra Firma
Capolla
Acamar
Outreach
Connaught
Talitha
Bordon
Dieudonne
Remulac
Nathan
Acubens
Alphard
Miaplacidus
Irian
Augustine
Marik
Angell II
Avellaneda
Hamilton
Zoo
Gan Singh
Poznan
Algot
Ulan Batar
Farwell
Halloran V
Demeter
Chesterton
Ningpo
Liao
Aldebaran
Zurich
Arboris
Genoa
Slocum
Alescha
Hsien
Nanking
Elgin
Wasat
Saiph
New Canton
Tall Trees
Berserker
Menkalinan
Hall
Outreach
Van Diemen IV
Woodstock
Ancha
Sadachbia
Bibarn
Halstead Station
Shinonoi
Yance I
Kurhah
Tannil
Lapida II
Homam
Matar
Sadalbari
Scheat
Proserpina
Fellanin II
Klathandu IV
Cylene
Marduk
Tiboli
Paris
Breed
Dobson
Le Blanc
Dahar IV
Bettendorf
Hoff
Sakhara V
Fairfield
Tallmadge
Glenmora
Benet III
Crossing
Royal
Lima
McComb
New Mendham
Barlow's Folly
Galtor III
Ludwig
Junction
Reisling's Planet
Donehac
Arlington
Gandy's Luck
Marlowe's Rift
Misery
Thestria
Eldere IV
New Aberdeen
Bergman's Plane
Harrow's Sun
Wapakoneta
Deshler
Harpster
Shaul Khala
Hun Ho
Hachiman
Togura
Tatsuno
Minowa
Tamsalu
Koumi
Oshika
Agematsu
Midway
Iijima
Silkeborg
Havdhem
Osmus Saar
Mersa Matruh
Peacock
Tok Do
Shibukawa
Baldur
Otho
Arkab
Darius
Numki
Pilkhua
Najha
Kiesen
Chandler
Meilen
Odabasi
Ogano
Paracale
Sakai
Dover
Dyfed
Omagh
Yardley
Philadelphia
Xinyang
Bicester
Yumesta
Corsica Nueva
Leiston
Braunton
Tanh Linh
Baruun Urt
Kanowit
Kiamba
Egullies
Krenice
Setubal
Ardoz
Slenwerde
Tinaca
Alshain
Marsan
Mualang
Asgard
Yamarovka
Cyrenaica
Port Arthur
Tarazed
Avon
Luthien
Chatham
Kilmarnock
Kagoshima
Shimonoseki
Caripare
Irece
Unity
Sheliak
Kassong
Thessalonika
Itabaiana
Juazeiro
Teniente
Meinacos
Ebensburg
Pesht
Tuscarawas
Soverzene
Outer Volta
Maldonado
Labrea
Byesville
Wolcott
Marshdale
Hyner
Herndon
Cheriton
Clearfield
Loysville
Ningxia
Abiy Adi
Linqing
Abagnar
Land's End
Hongor
Kokpekty
Multan
Sertar
Thimphu
Huaide
Soul
Hassi R'mel
Charity
Monywa
Enif
Rezak's Hole
Farstar
Courchevel
Luzerne
Bangor
Jeronimo
Matamoras
McAlister
Macksburg
Espakeh
Pusht-i-rud
Kamarod
Korramabad
Qandahar
Kabah
Jeanette
Savinsville
Albiero
Hanover
Schuyler
Polcango
Garstedt
Nykvarn
40
Brocchi's Cluster
Coudoux
Chupadero
Lonaconing
Echo
Ad Duwayd
Algate
Chorley
Brailsford
Slaithwaite
Brihuega
Chapineria
Leyland
Hartshill
Salford
Nowhere
Stapelfeld
Sawyer
Virentofta
Almunge
Turtle Bay
Jarett
Rockland
Schwartz
Idlewind
Constance
Richmond
Tarnby
Altona
Gravenhage
Bjarred
Suianheer
Pondicherry
Chirala
Tabayama
Kazanka
Ramgarh
Zlatousi
Ban Na San
Chinmen Tao
Zalaf
Keihoku
Worrell
Sighisoara
Miyada
New Samarkand
Mizunami
Koulen
Milligan's W
Bad News
Brasha
Sinope
Tiflis
Sanda
Simferopol
Sverdlovsk
Nakaojo
Isesaki
Sakuranoki
Nadrin
Kirei Na Niwa
Delitzsch
Senorbi
Schirmeck
Budingen
Cosenza
Dnepropetrovsk
Goubellat
Galedon V
Dante
Morthac
Dindatari
Calish
Alegro
Lushann
Valentina
Weisau
Waldheim
Kaznejoy
Beta Mensae V
Matsuida
Igualada
An Ting
Altdorf
Delacruz
Groveld III
Niles
Kinkaid II
Capra
Kesai IV
Huan
Bryceland
Tancredi IV
Conroe
Cimeron
Latexo
Anguilla
Lyceum
Haynesville
Brookeland
De Berry
Pascagoula
Bremond
Brundage
Fallon II
Melcher
Ottumwa
Morrill
Princton
Greeley
Adrian
Urich
Protection
Sylvan
Mayetta
Junior
Tarkio
Hickok
Linneus
Pattonsbrug
Necedah
Colchester
Emporia
Sauk City
Robinson
Rochester
Allerton
Franklin
Lucerne
Waunakee
Verde
Maynard
Sun Prairie
Fairfax
Dahar IV
Le Blanc
Dobson
Xhosa VII
Doneval II
Clovis
Raman
Mara
Mallory's World
Galatia III
Marduk
Murchison V
Deneb Algedi
Nirasaki
Styx
Athenry
Pike IV
Telos IV
Kervil
Ascella
Kuzuu
Ashio
Shinonoi
Halstead Station
Sadachbia
Bibarn
Ancha
Shai
Al Nair
Nashira
Deneb Kaitos
Hean
Ankaa
Ronel
Elbar
Cartago
Olancha
Exeter
Kentares IV
New Rhodes III
Schedar
Mirach
Caselton
Ruchbah
Tybalt
Tigress
Rio
Achernar
Angol
Sonnia
Mira
Mesartim
Tawas
Almach
Algol
Buchlau
Kansu
New Hessen
Alescha
Yangtze
Hamal
Azha
Slocum
Arboris
Genoa
Zurich
Aldebaran
Saiph
Tall Trees
Nanking
Hsien
Elgin
Alphard
Savannah
Acubens



INNOVATION AND THE DAVION WAR MACHINE

As *kanrei*, Theodore enacted many changes in the DCMS to make it a stronger and more efficient force. He mined the yakuza as a source of pilots and MechWarriors for the new Ghost Regiments. He concentrated on rebuilding the Ryuken and Genyosha regiments using newly commissioned academies and their graduates. Training stressed practical cooperation rather than political correctness, emphasizing coordination between front and rear echelons and among the various military branches.

Formed in utmost secrecy, the so-called Ghost Regiments provided the Combine with a concealed reserve which ultimately gave the *kanrei* a means of taking the war back to the enemy (though this did not overtly deter Davion aggression). Theodore also encouraged commanders to promote soldiers on the grounds of ability and potential rather than by gender or social standing. Consequently, the number of women holding prominent posts in the DCMS rose substantially, though the installation of a female Warlord would not occur until decades later.

The success of Theodore's policies became clear when the newly christened Federated Commonwealth launched a four-prong offensive against the Combine in 3039.

The first assault wave succeeded brilliantly as the Federated Commonwealth sought to break the Combine and assert the Federated Commonwealth's hegemony. Before Hanse Davion could launch his second wave, however, the DCMS viciously counterattacked. Theodore's aggressive strategy pushed the FedCom forces onto the defensive as the AFFC faced fresh DCMS forces resupplied with Star League-era BattleMechs provided through the 3030 deal with ComStar.

By attacking into the teeth of the Davion assault, Theodore made Hanse Davion believe the DCMS was stronger than it actually was. Barely six months after the first wave launched, the FedCom cut its losses and sued for peace.

The War of 3039 accomplished little except remind the Successor States of the severe cost of war. Though small border skirmishes continued through the next decade, military readiness and overcharged political rhetoric remained the Dragon's priority over the next decade.

THE CLAN INVASION

The Combine gained a sizeable advantage in the technology race that followed; the Coordinator's earlier deal with ComStar had netted the DCMS several BattleMechs that were not completely stripped of Star League technology. Despite the vaunted reputation of the New Avalon Institute of Science within Davion space, the Combine was able to return numerous lost weapons and equipment into limited production earlier than the Federated Commonwealth. Nevertheless, the Combine was still woefully unprepared for the arrival of the Clans in 3049. The descendants of General Kerensky's SLDF, the Clans returned with an eye to conquering all of the Inner Sphere.

The Combine MechWarriors' great skill and typical samurai ferocity and dedication allowed the DCMS to slow the advancing Clan hordes (in stark contrast to the performance of other House militaries). Tactics, honed through centuries of combat against the less-than-honorable Lyran and Federated Suns forces allowed the Combine to exploit the strange ritual of battle the Clans insisted upon. Proper battlefield selection and prepa-

ration brought the Dragon victory on Wolcott, the first such defeat of the Clans by Inner Sphere forces. Thanks to the foresight of Theodore's son Hohiro, the Dragon also acquired several valuable pieces of Clan technology to accelerate the Combine's technological development.

The Combine citizenry's refusal to submit and the steadfast leadership of Hohiro Kurita also led to the worst atrocity of the Clan Invasion. Clan Smoke Jaguar, tired of putting down constant damaging guerilla attacks by the resistance fighters on Turtle Bay, annihilated the capital city of Edo through orbital bombardment after the Heir-Designate escaped the Clan's prison. This brutality was more in keeping with tactics the DCMS expected from its Inner Sphere opponents, and it galvanized the Dragon's citizenry and soldiers. No more could the three Clans invading Combine worlds—Smoke Jaguar, Nova Cat, and Ghost Bear—expect to face honorable combat and conduct. The fight was to the death, akin to a sworn vendetta: there would be no surrender, no mercy.

When the Smoke Jaguars and Nova Cats attacked Luthien in 3051, they were met by the full force the DCMS could bring to bear. The *kanrei* also went against the Coordinator's desires and requested aid directly from Hanse Davion, who sent the mercenary Wolf's Dragoons and Kell Hounds to join the defense of the Dragon's capital. Losses were horrendous on both sides. The invaders were defeated and forced to retreat from the system.

The sheer amount of salvage claimed from that battle provided an astounding wealth of Clan technology. The Dragon's scientists and researchers, skills already honed through reverse-engineering Star League technology only a decade prior, unlocked the secrets of the Clans' OmniMech technology. As a result, the Combine's military industry debuted its own OmniMech and pod technology in 3058, placing the DCMS at the forefront of military technology in the Inner Sphere.

After ComStar halted the Clan Invasion with the Truce of Tukayyid, the Combine moved into another rebuilding phase. While successful in defending its capital, the Dragon had lost more worlds to the Clans, including vital resource and industrial centers. Combined with the excessive military losses during the two years of the invasion, the Dragon needed time to heal. There would be a fifteen-year lull before the Clan truce expired. The Combine did not rest easily and embarked on a rebuilding plan aimed not just at preparing a defense but at counterattacking to drive the Clan threat from Combine space.

DEATH OF THE ELDER

Despite its heavy losses, the DCMS was at its highest level of performance in centuries. Nearly every soldier was united behind the single goal of ridding the Combine of the Clan enemy. Impressed with the groundswell of civilian support for this singular goal, the Coordinator ordered the creation of an additional fifty proving ground facilities. Recruitment and volunteerism for DCMS service was at a record high; many defensive garrisons on worlds along the Clan and Federated Commonwealth borders saw an increase in infantry and support regiments. DCMS military academies were flooded with applicants; those who would have qualified before the Clans' arrival were turned away in droves. The Coordinator authorized the creation of several temporary boot camps as an additional avenue to funnel men and materiel into ad hoc conventional regiments, leaving more room for blossoming MechWarriors.

The Clan Invasion also brought an end to the silent cold war between Takashi and his son Theodore. Unified in thought, honor, and duty at the defense of Luthien, the Coordinator and his *kanrei* turned their attention to removing the Clan threat. Alone of the Inner Sphere nations, the Dragon had defeated the Clans and kept a world inside the Clan occupation zone—a feat not even the Federated Commonwealth could claim. With the Dragon's direction obvious, the Coordinator and his kin came to a quiet agreement with their FedCom neighbor: armed peace until the Clan threat was neutralized.

THE *KOKURYU-KAI* ENIGMA

Not all within the Combine's nobility agreed with the changes enacted by Coordinator Takashi and his son. The Dragon's newfound focus and more liberal policies were at odds with those of many hardline, conservative nobles. Within this environment the Kokuryu-kai—the Black Dragon Society—grew exponentially. Originally confined to the mad fancy of Combine nobles wrapped in the trappings of history dominated by Shinjiro and Hohiro Kurita, the Black Dragons found prestige, money, and strength. Bolstered through this renaissance of thought, these elder nobles found new life in their younger *protégés* and began suborning those who could assist them in standing against the Coordinator. Not even our own people were immune. Echoing shreds of the past, we found ourselves divided once again, though such an ideological division would not surface for several years.

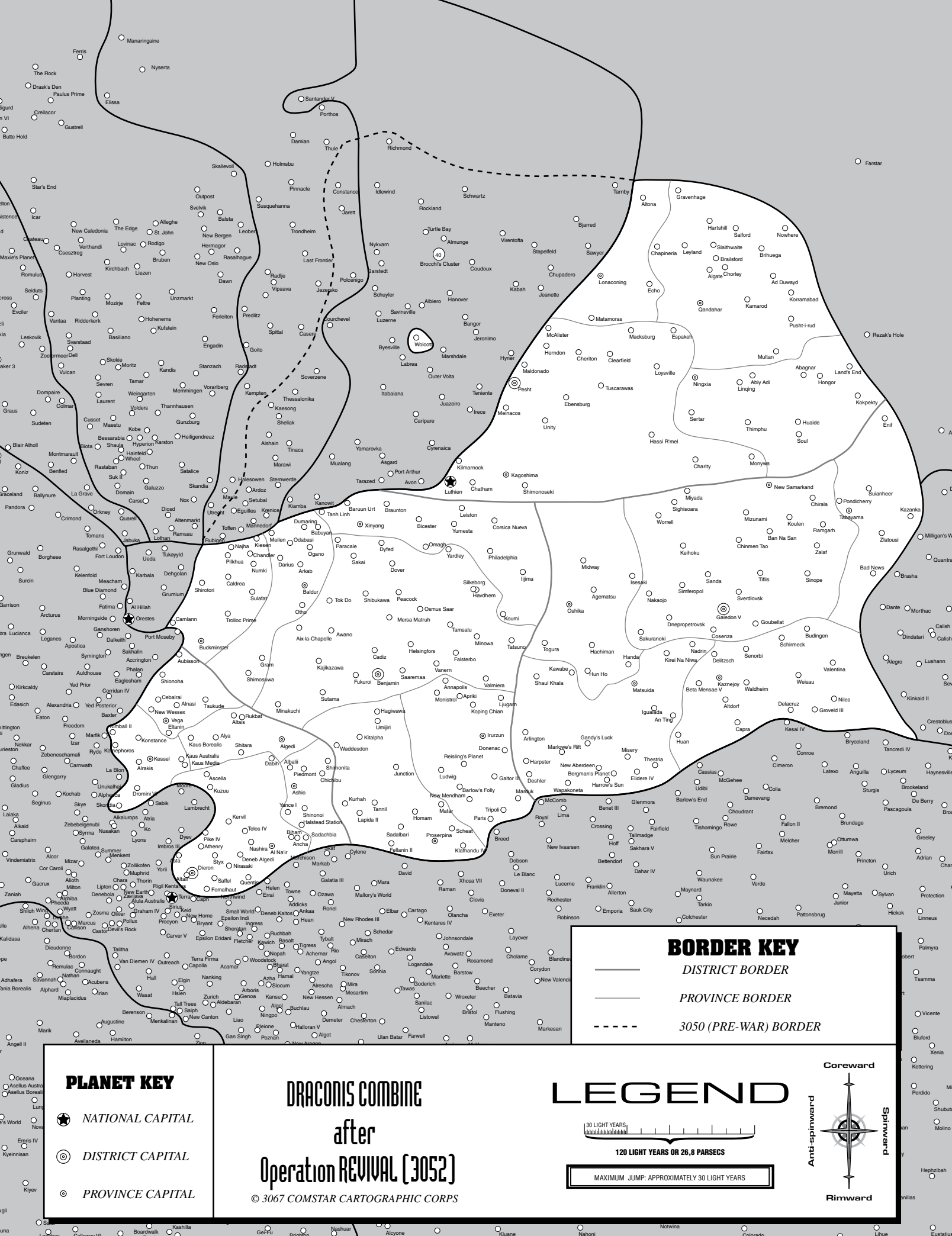
In 3054, Coordinator Takashi Kurita suffered a severe stroke that would end his life, leaving Theodore as his heir. Despite the new Coordinator's uncharacteristically open and public testimony, supported with reports from within this agency, many subversive Combine news agencies began circulating rumors that Takashi had not gone to his death willingly. These independent sources, a product of the Combine's loosening strictures over the last few decades, bolstered the Black Dragons' cause through persistence and casting a modicum of doubt among the populace. These reactionary elements sought a premature return to the Combine's original doctrine of conquest and glory, before Theodore's reforms could destroy the honor and prestige of the DCMS and the Combine.

The *Kokuryu-kai* claims six grievances with the Coordinator:

- The continuing détente with the Federated Commonwealth.
- According common soldiers equal honors alongside noble officers.
- Building BattleMech regiments out of yakuza and other criminals, insulting the well-born and properly bred citizens.
- Permitting the secession of the Rasalhague people.
- Opposing the noble and heroic efforts of Marcus Kurita and his followers in their attempt to redeem the Combine's honor.

When examined thoroughly, the Black Dragons are simply using a myopic view of the past in order to claim authority over the Draconis Combine. Because this ideology is against the purposes and integrity of the Dragon, it is the ISF's duty to completely oppose it.

—Memo attributed to Ninyu Kerai from Subhash Indrahar, 3058; Imperial Court Archives, 3067


BORDER KEY
DISTRICT BORDER
PROVINCE BORDER
3050 (PRE-WAR) BORDER
PLANET KEY
NATIONAL CAPITAL
DISTRICT CAPITAL
PROVINCE CAPITAL
DRACONIS COMBINE
after
Operation REVIVAL (3052)
© 3067 COMSTAR CARTOGRAPHIC CORPS
LEGEND
30 LIGHT YEARS
120 LIGHT YEARS OR 26,8 PARSECS
MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS
Coreward
Anti-spinward
Spinward
Rimward

Enter the Black Dragons

As the Combine adjusted to life with an occupying force at its breast and a détente with its long-standing neighbors, a group of insurrectionist conspirators rose. These collaborators, who called themselves the *Kokuryu-kai* (Black Dragon Society), believed they knew best what path the Dragon should tread and used their growing influence to attempt steering the Combine onto a path that did not truly fit the Kuritan way.

The Black Dragons' first major action came when they suborned several DCMS regiments—led by the Fifteenth Dieron Regulars—to carry out an unauthorized assault on Towne. The Davion world was close to the Federated Commonwealth's destabilized Terran corridor. Encouraged by the recent request for aid from the Commonwealth in keeping peace within the Lyons Thumb region, the Black Dragons believed Towne would be an easy mark. They assumed the Federated Commonwealth could not control its border worlds as it dealt with internal strife that threatened to tear the alliance asunder.

Instead, the assault was rebuffed by the local Towne militia and a handful of mercenaries under Chandrasekhar Kurita's employ, and the Fifteenth returned to the Dragon in shame. The ISF hunted down the *Kokuryu-kai* cells and contacts believed responsible for the debacle. As the Dragon moved to save face from the incident, the Black Dragons struck again.

In 3058, during a birthday parade in honor of the Coordinator, *Kokuryu-kai* agents who had infiltrated the ISF, Otomo, and other DCMS command positions attempted to assassinate Theodore. They blamed the Coordinator's reforms for the degradation of Combine society and accused him of cavorting with the Dragon's ancient enemies. The attempt failed thanks to the timely intervention of the Ninth Ghost Regiment and Chandrasekhar's mercenaries.

Both attacks exposed critical flaws in the ISF's operations and the hardline attitudes that still existed within the upper echelons of the DCMS. Theodore hoped to correct the DCMS issues through marginalization and reassignment but gave new ISF Director Ninyu Kerai-Indrahar carte blanche in cleaning the agency's house.

As efforts to cleanse the realm of the rising Black Dragon scourge began, the Coordinator authorized his younger son Minoru to venture into the Clan Occupation Zones on a mission of diplomacy. Theodore perceived a shift in Clan Nova Cat's behavior; the mission was a gamble that the Coordinator's more spiritually sensitive son could open up a shift in the region's balance of power.

At the same time, the first Whitting Conference, born of the efforts of an interstellar coalition on Coventry within the now-sundered Lyran half of the Federated Commonwealth, bore interesting fruit. The gathering of leaders, the first in a generation, saw the unanticipated rebirth of the Star League. Central to this agreement was the understanding of a unified effort to take the fight back to the Clans before the Tukayyid truce expired in 3067.

FALL OF THE JAGUAR

The Clans' twilight began with the Star League's restoration on Tharkad, though the military actions to follow were still in the theoretical stage. Before much groundwork could be laid, however, the Black Dragons struck again. An assassination attempt, sponsored and carried out by a fanatical *Kokuryu-kai* cell on Luthien, targeted Archon Prince Victor Steiner-Davion. The son of Hanse Davion, he was a key leader of a future campaign against the Clans. Black Dragon agents slipped into the compound where he was visiting with the Coordinator's daughter Omi Kurita, Keeper of the House Honor. The Archon Prince was taking steps to immerse himself in the Dragon's culture, to better understand its people before leading the charge to remove the Clan threat from the Combine's worlds. The assassination attempt failed, prompting Director Kerai-Indrahar to order another purge of the ISF.

Operation BULLDOG launched in 3059, utilizing nearly forty DCMS regiments and a smaller military coalition from around the Inner Sphere. Thirsting for vengeance, the Dragon's forces led the assaults to reclaim worlds seized by both the Smoke Jaguars and the Nova Cats. The Combine soldiers performed admirably. Seeds planted by Minoru a few years before bore fruit as the Coordinator's son convinced Clan Nova Cat's leadership to join with the SLDF coalition. The Clan's defection accelerated the Jaguars' collapse, leading to a rout that the SLDF pursued all the way back to the Clan Homeworlds. Few of the Dragon's troops went the distance, instead remaining to restore order to liberated systems. Unsurprisingly, every one of the thirty-nine regiments assigned to BULLDOG returned in some manner. The First Genyosha, which accompanied Hohiro Kurita and General Steiner-Davion to the Clan Homeworlds, covered themselves in honor by convincingly winning one of the honor duels that brought an end to the Clan's stalled invasion. No more would the threat of a renewed invasion hang over the Dragon.

As the Clan war wound down, Theodore ordered the creation of Irece Prefecture and offered these worlds as havens for the Clan Nova Cat defectors. The move was calculated to minimize tensions, which had not abated despite the Nova Cats' change of allegiance. Minoru, a bondsman to the Clan by choice, continued his efforts to help the cast-out Clan turncoats integrate with Combine civilization.

In 3061, as the SLDF returned victorious from the Clan Homeworlds, the second Whitting Conference saw the election of Coordinator Theodore Kurita as First Lord of the Star League. Though such a lofty goal had been the dream of the other Great Houses, Lord Kurita assured the Combine citizenry that the Dragon's true goals and founding principles would not be abandoned. First Lordship was only the next step in the continuation of the Dragon's plan.

SINISTER CONFLICT

Any hopes of a long-term peace for the Dragon were shattered in 3062 when the Combine came under assault from multiple fronts. The Coordinator's annexation of the worlds in the Lyons Thumb may have been the catalyst for what was to come. With the worlds under assault by mercenaries masquerading as Lyran and Combine troops, Lord Kurita used his power as First Lord to absorb the troubled systems. Investigations conducted by the ISF have since shown the mercenaries carrying out the attacks were hired by individuals with strong ties to the *Kokury-kai*. The subversive society managed to force the Combine's hand and nearly started another war in doing so. Such a war the Combine was not yet ready to undertake.

Escalating the situation, mercenary forces and a few Kuritan support regiments commanded by Black Dragon sympathizers struck several worlds in the Draconis March. These troops fought with uninhibited zeal, hitting Robinson, Markab, and Doneval II. The units perished to the last man, adding fuel to the powder keg along the Federated Commonwealth border. With the former Commonwealth on the cusp of civil war, the former countrymen would inevitably set upon each other, and the Black Dragons attempted to light the fuse early.

More disturbing was the sudden, simultaneous departure of four Alshain Avengers regiments. The fanatical troops reappeared at Clan Ghost Bear's capital world of Alshain and initiated a bloody assault that ended in the regiments' annihilation. Provoked and led by Black Dragon subversives, the assault brought about a swift and brutal response from the Ghost Bears. The Clan surged across the underdefended Combine border as DCMS forces were quickly reassigned from the Periphery and FedCom borders.

Draconis March Duke James Sandoval took advantage of the sudden surge of troop movements and launched his own reprisal war into the Combine. By the end of 3062, nearly every region bordering the Ghost Bear Dominion and the former FedCom states became hot zones. Minor raiding or full-scale assault threatened all of the Dragon's worlds within jump range of the borders.

The heaviest fighting of 3062 occurred along the Ghost Bear front. *Tai-shu* Teyasu Ashora, Warlord of the Pesht Military District, fell battling the Clan's saKhan on Schuyler and was immediately replaced with the Coordinator's wife, *Tai-sho* Tomoe Sakade. The Coordinator sent out execution orders for all surviving members of the Alshain Avengers, but the offer failed to curb the Clan assault. The Dragon braced for another brutal wave at the start of 3063, but none materialized. Clan Hell's Horses had

FALL OF THE CHERRY BLOSSOM

Tai-shu Tomoe Sakade entered the Combine-Dominion war through less than auspicious means. Reassigned to the position by her husband the Coordinator, she faced not only the ferocity of the Ghost Bear assault but also lingering prejudices inherent to the Combine's culture. A woman had never before been promoted to the prestigious position of military district Warlord, and many under her command did not know how to take the promotion.

Sakade was a capable commander and a superb tactician. She was also very outspoken but played the part of the Coordinator's wife well. She was previously the military commander of Kagoshima Prefecture, a position Theodore had given her partly to assuage her warrior spirit. The honor of being entrusted with Luthien's protection was not lost on the former *tai-sho*. By several accounts, she actually resisted Theodore's command to step into the *tai-shu's* role after the death of Teyasu Ashora.

The Ghost Bears penetrated into the Combine in their initial wave, striking Schulyer and ten other worlds in Albiero Prefecture. With limited defensive forces available, Sakade knew another push by the Bears would easily swallow the rest of the district. The *tai-shu* proposed a daring plan, one the Coordinator was intimately familiar with: strike back into the teeth of the Clan's assault and fool the Bears into thinking the Combine was stronger than it was. This plan was identical in theory and operation to the one Theodore had carried out in the War of 3039.

Sakade targeted several Dominion worlds for the counterattack, using ISF and O5P data to select areas where sizable manufacturing centers or military depots were located. On 25 December 3062, most of the forces assigned to the Pesht Military District jumped out and struck twelve Dominion systems. The DCMS units were to hold their assigned targets for as long as they could and then retreat before receiving more than twenty-five percent losses.

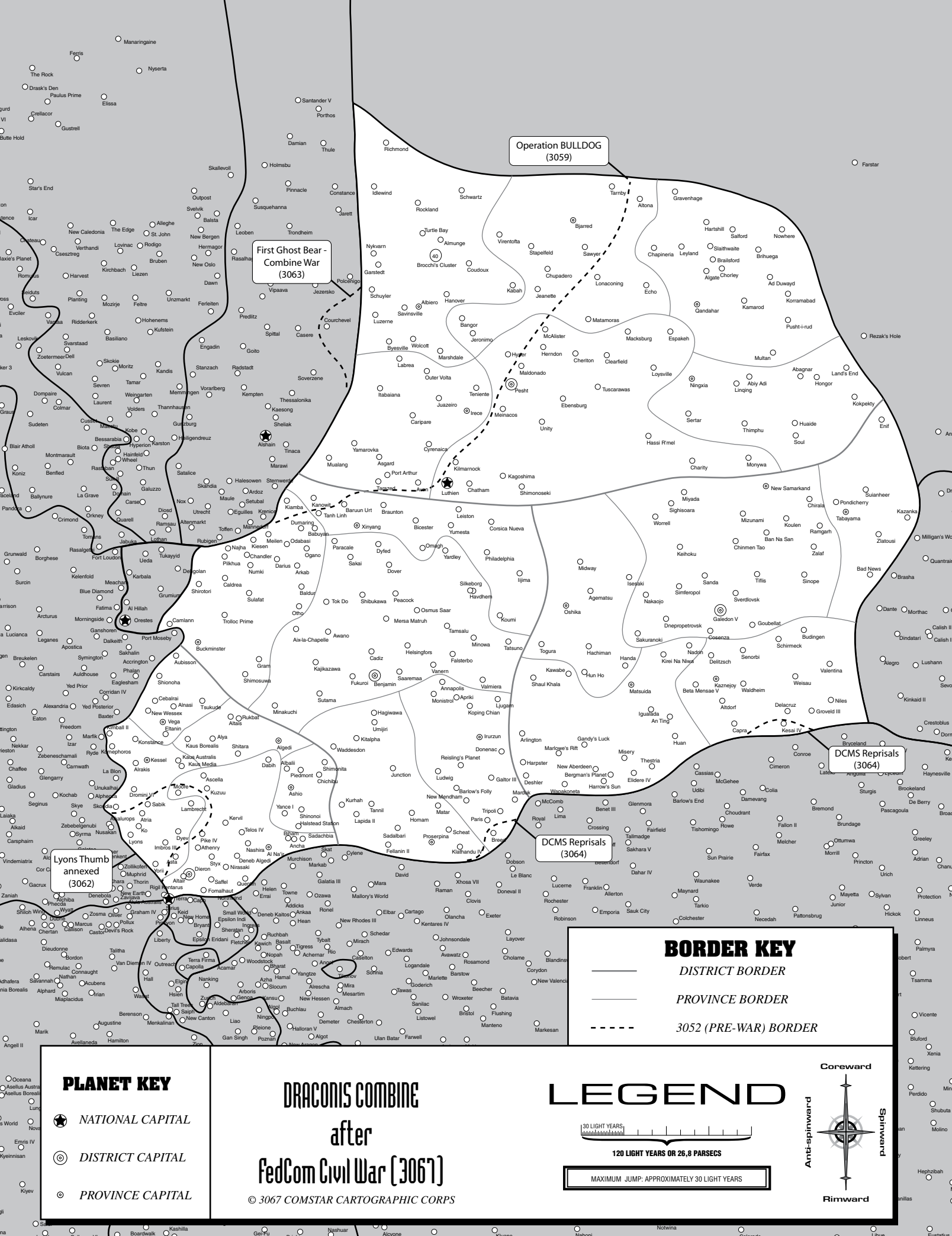
The plan was solid and could have succeeded, save a few critical factors. Many of the commanders under Sakade believed her plan was flawed. As such, they took liberties to amend their assaults—including timing—to incorporate what they deemed more "honorable elements." Others refused to believe a woman could come up with any type of strategy and found ways to stall or circumvent their orders.

Whatever the reason, only half of the operation went off as planned, leaving several regiments without appropriate support or needed firepower. Those forces that did follow orders were not enough to stop the Ghost Bear advance cold, though it did contribute to the Bears' reconsideration of launching the second wave. Nonetheless, *Tai-shu* Sakade's forces were severely damaged by the botched operation, which her enemies used as evidence of her unfitness for command.

Shamed by the actions of her subordinates, Sakade returned to Luthien to discuss the situation with the Coordinator. The Courchevel Challenge was the *tai-shu's* idea, along with several other small mini-offensives designed to keep the Bears in stalemate. Knowing she could not return to her command without the full respect and honor due her as Warlord, she opted to take the samurai's path out. By committing *seppuku*, she opened the way for the Coordinator to salvage the situation with a new Warlord at the helm. Her honorable death also proved her detractors wrong; shamed, they were awarded the Honor of the Wakizashi at the end of the conflict.

The Coordinator named *Tai-shu* Tomoe Sakade as the first female recipient of the Glory of the Fallen Samurai in 3064.

—*The Dragon's Tears Flow in Many Forms;* Imperial Press, 3065


Operation BULLDOG (3059)
First Ghost Bear - Combine War (3063)
DCMS Reprisals (3064)
DCMS Reprisals (3064)
Lyons Thumb annexed (3062)
Manaringaine
Ferris
Nyserta
The Rock
Drask's Den
Paulus Prime
Elissa
Crellacor
Gustrell
Butte Hold
Santander V
Porthos
Damian
Thule
Skallevoll
Holmsbu
Star's End
Pinnacle
Constance
Outpost
Susquehanna
Svelvik
Jarett
Balsta
Alleghe
New Caledonia
The Edge
St. John
Verthandi
Lovinac
Rodigo
Bruben
Kirchbach
Liezen
New Bergen
Leoben
Trondheim
Hermagor
New Oslo
Rasalha
Dawn
Harvest
Romulus
Vipaava
Jezersko
Polcenigo
Unzmarkt
Mozirje
Feltre
Ferleiten
Planting
Predlitz
Ridderkerk
Hohenems
Kufstein
Basiliano
Spittal
Casere
Engadin
Goito
Courchevel
Luzerne
Savinsville
Albiero
Hanover
Schuyler
Kabah
Jeanette
Echo
Qandahar
Kamarod
Korramabad
Pusht-i-rud
Matamoras
Bangor
Jeronimo
McAlister
Macksburg
Espakeh
Rezak's Hole
Byesville
Wolcott
Marshdale
Labrea
Outer Volta
Hyder
Herndon
Cheriton
Clearfield
Multan
Loysville
Ningxia
Abiy Adi
Linqing
Abagnar
Land's End
Hongor
Maldonado
Pesht
Tuscarawas
Ebensburg
Kokpekty
Itabaiana
Juazeiro
Irece
Meinacos
Caripare
Unity
Sertar
Thimphu
Huaide
Soul
Enif
Hassi R'mel
Yamarovka
Asgard
Cyrenaica
Mualang
Port Arthur
Kilmarnock
Kagoshima
Shimonoseki
Charity
Monywa
Tegared
Avon
Luthien
Chatham
Alshain
Tinaca
Marawi
Sheliak
Kaesong
Thessalonika
Soverzene
Goltzo
Radstadt
Stanzach
Memmingen
Vorarlberg
Kempten
Kandis
Skokie
Moritz
Tamar
Severn
Weingarten
Laurent
Volders
Thannhausen
Guntzburg
Heiligendreuz
Karston
Hainfeld
Wheel
Thun
Satalice
Skandia
Halesowen
Sternwerda
Ardoz
Setubal
Egguilles
Krenica
Kiamba
Kanowit
Baruun Urt
Braunton
Tanh Linn
Xinyang
Bicester
Corsica Nueva
Yumesta
Leiston
Dumaring
Babuyan
Mannedorf
Toffen
Rubigen
Najha
Kiesen
Meilen
Odabasi
Paracale
Dyfed
Omagh
Yardley
Philadelphia
Chandler
Darius
Arkab
Sakai
Dover
Midway
Iijima
Silkeborg
Havdhera
Isesaki
Agematsu
Oshika
Nakaojo
Simferopol
Sanda
Titlis
Sinope
Sverdlovsk
Galeodon V
Goubellat
Dnepropetrovsk
Sakuranoki
Cosenza
Budingen
Schirmeck
Nadrin
Delitzsch
Senorbi
Kirei Na Niwa
Hachiman
Togura
Tatsuno
Minowa
Tamsalu
Koumi
Mersa Matruh
Osmus Saar
Peacock
Shibukawa
Tok Do
Otho
Trolloc Prime
Camlann
Orestes
Al Hillah
Fatima
Morningside
Ganshoren
Port Moseby
Dalkeith
Sakhalin
Accrington
Phalan
Eaglesham
Auldhouse
Symington
Apostica
Leganes
Arcturus
Morchac
Dante
Morthac
Dindatari
Calish II
Calish I
Lushann
Alegro
Valentina
Weisau
Waldheim
Beta Mensae V
Kaznejoy
Altdorf
Delacruz
Groveld III
Niles
Igualada
An Ting
Capra
Kesai IV
Crestoblus
Bryceland
Conroe
Cimeron
Latexo
Anguilla
Lyceum
Haynesville
Sturgis
Brookeland
De Berry
Pascagoula
Broadmoor
Brundage
Bremond
Choudrant
Damevang
Colia
Udibi
McGehee
Cassias
Thestria
Elidere IV
Misery
Harrow's Sun
Bergman's Planet
New Aberdeen
Deshler
Harpster
Marlowe's Rift
Gandy's Luck
Arlington
Huan
Iruruzun
Donenac
Reisling's Planet
Junction
Ludwig
Galtor III
Barlow's Folly
New Mendham
Matar
Tannil
Kurhah
Lapida II
Homam
Tripoli
Paris
Scheat
Proserpina
Sadalbari
Fellanin II
Klathandu IV
Breea
Marduk
Wapakoneta
McComb
Benet III
Lima
Royal
Crossing
Fairfield
Tallmadge
Sakhara V
Belendorf
Dahar IV
Glenmora
Barlow's End
Tishomingo
Rowe
Fallon II
Melcher
Ottumwa
Morrill
Princton
Urich
Fairfax
Sun Prairie
Adrian
Greeley
Waunakee
Verde
Maynard
Tarkio
Junior
Mayetta
Sylvan
Protection
Hickok
Pattonsbrug
Necedah
Linneus
Colchester
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Sauk City
Robinson
Rochester
Allerton
Franklin
Lucerne
Le Blanc
Dobson
Doneval II
Clovis
Raman
Xhosa VII
Mara
Mallory's World
Elbar
Cartago
Olancha
Exeter
Kentares IV
New Rhodes III
Hean
Ankaa
Ronel
Ozawa
Addicks
Towne
Errai
Helen
Quentin
Saffel
Fomalhaut
Dieron
Altair
Muphrid
Zollikofen
Thorin
Rigil Kentarus
New Earth
Graham IV
Keid
Sirius
Terra
Capra
New Home
Bryant
Procyon
Pollux
Oliver
Devil's Rock
Castor
Callison
Marcus
Chertan
Liberty
Epsilon Eridani
Fletcher
Sherstan
Ingress
Small World
Epsilon Indi
Deneb Kaitos
Northwind
Deneb Algedi
Nirasaki
Styx
Murchison
Markab
Galatia III
David
Waddesdon
Algedi
Albalii
Dabih
Piedmont
Shimanita
Chichibu
Ashio
Kurhah
Tannil
Lapida II
Homam
Sadalbari
Fellanin II
Scheat
Proserpina
Sadachbia
Ancha
Skat
Cylene
Nashira
Al Na'ir
Deneb Algedi
Ruchbah
Basalt
Tybalt
Mirach
Schedar
Johnsondale
Layover
Tigress
Achernar
Rio
Edwards
Awawatz
Rosamond
Cholame
Corydon
Blandinsville
Palmyra
Tsamma
Xenia
Kettering
Bluford
Perdido
Shubuta
Molino
Hephzibah
Vicente
Casteldon
Logandale
Barstow
Marlette
Goderich
Beecher
Batavia
Wroxeter
Sanilac
Tawas
Mesartim
Mira
Almach
Algol
Buchlau
Halloran V
Demeter
Chesterton
Ulan Batar
Farwell
Algot
Gan Singh
Poznan
Liao
Pleione
Ningpo
Zurich
Aldebaran
Genoa
Arboris
Slocum
Arescha
Azha
Hamal
Yangtze
Nanking
Elgin
Hsien
Waset
Tall Tree
Saipi
New Canton
Berenson
Menkalinan
Augustine
Marik
Avellaneda
Hamilton
Zion
Angell II
Oceana
Asellus Australis
Asellus Borealis
Lung
Nova
Emris IV
Kyeininsan
Kiyev
Kashilla
Boardwalk
Gei-Ru
Nashuar
Alcvone
Kwong
Notwina
Nehoni
Galestalus
Libue
Eustatius
Farstar
Rezak's Hole
Milligan's World
Quantrain
Brasha
Bad News
Zlatousi
Kazanka
Pondicherry
Tabayama
Suianheer
Chirala
Ramgarh
Zalaf
Ban Na San
Chinmen Tao
Koulen
Mizunami
Worrell
Sighisoara
Miyada
New Samarkand
Enif
Huaide
Soul
Thimphu
Sertar
Hongor
Land's End
Abiy Adi
Linqing
Ningxia
Loysville
Multan
Pusht-i-rud
Korramabad
Kamarod
Qandahar
Ad Duwayd
Chorley
Algate
Brihuega
Brailsford
Slaithwaite
Nowhere
Salford
Hartshill
Gravenhage
Altona
Tarnby
Bjarred
Stapelfeld
Sawyer
Chapineria
Leyland
Virentofta
Almunge
Turtle Bay
Rockland
Schwartz
Idlewind
Richmond
Farstar
Rezak's Hole
Milligan's World
Quantrain
Brasha
Bad News
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Kazanka
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Tabayama
Suianheer
Chirala
Ramgarh
Zalaf
Ban Na San
Chinmen Tao
Koulen
Mizunami
Worrell
Sighisoara
Miyada
New Samarkand
Kokpekty

struck the Ghost Bears' opposite border, and the Bears repositioned their forces to account for the new threat. With no new forces to carry out their next wave, the Bears maintained lower-intensity warfare as the front lines turned into slugfests that ground up troops on both sides.

Newly promoted *Tai-shu* Kiyomori Minamoto, Warlord of the Pesht Military District, issued the Courchevel Challenge in late 3063, a plan designed to end the conflict with honor and without further bloodshed. The Ghost Bear khans accepted the terms of the challenge—a series of one-on-one warrior duels in the style of the Star League Gunslingers—which would restore the pre-Alshain borders. Courchevel, where the Trial would take place, would go to whichever side won. Representatives from all surviving units that took part in the conflict met for the battle. While the Bears carried the day, the sixteen other contested worlds were returned to Combine control.

Freed from the Clan threat, the Dragon turned its attention back to the Federated Commonwealth in preparation to oust the Draconis March invaders. The ISF carried out another purge of Black Dragon sympathizers, targeting local ISF and DCMS personnel situated along the Dominion border.

BRINGS TO ALL DARKNESS RISING

Troops were relocated from the Ghost Bear front and plans drawn up for a counterstrike into the Draconis March. Without warning, Keeper of the House Honor Omi Kurita was slain by an assassin on 15 March 3064. The Black Dragons were suspected of the deed, but the ISF never discovered incontrovertible evidence. Efforts to locate the assassin and prevent word of the horrific tragedy from leaking became top priority, as the Imperial Court did not want her death to be capitalized upon. All HPG traffic and JumpShip transit beyond Kagoshima Prefecture's borders were heavily monitored as no effort was spared to find the killer. When found, there was no fanfare; the borders were simply relaxed and normal traffic resumed.

Honor demanded more than the mere recapture of planets assaulted by Duke Sandoval. Rather than declare open war on the Federated Commonwealth, the Coordinator instead gave broad discretionary powers to his generals along the front. Eager to exact just punishment for the damage inflicted upon the Combine from the ambitious Sandovals, several DCMS regiments struck Draconis March worlds in a series of reprisal raids and assaults. The Dragon's forces landed and smashed through the AFFC defenders. Though a few assaults failed, the Combine found success over the next two years. The Draconis March sued for peace after Tancred Sandoval succeeded his father as duke. The Combine retained the important industrial and resource worlds of Breed and Kesai IV but released the remaining contested worlds after March forces withdrew from the assaulted Combine systems. Though peace has settled across the border, tensions remain high as the rechristened Federated Commonwealth settles from its recent civil war.

EVER THE DRAGON TRIUMPHS

The brutal fighting on both borders destroyed or damaged many DCMS regiments. Kurita forces faced a more highly organized and determined opposition than they had during Operation BULLDOG with little backup. Many regiments remain depleted below operational capacity, though efforts continued in restoring them back to fighting strength.

More importantly, the ISF maintained its focus on locating as many threads of the *Kokuryu-kai* as possible. Evidence on numerous worlds pointed to Black Dragon involvement in the recent conflicts. A propaganda campaign was initiated to reinforce the cultural integrity of House Kurita, with a return to using ancient Japanese feudal titles and more accessible cultural programs for the working classes. The majority of the Dragon's citizens knows only that some renegade elements operated in their midst. While the full magnitude of the Black Dragon's involvement remains concealed from view, much of the blame for the recent conflict has been heaped upon Theodore, a burden the Coordinator bears with Kuritan honor.

As the decade continues to unwind, new threats emerge and old ones resurface. Maintaining honor and duty in the midst of so many adversities—great and small—is a common cycle of life for the Kuritan. Until the universe understands and submits to the glory of House Kurita, it will ever remain a constant. Such is the way of the Draconis Combine.



The Draconis Combine is second in size to the neighboring Federated Suns, containing 323 inhabited star systems. Going simply by the Combine's stellar borders, the Dragon easily swallows all of the Periphery nations as well as the Capellan Confederation—though it would not match the sheer number of populated systems. Cutting through the heart of Kurita's realm lies the Draconis Rift, a swath of empty space devoid of habitable systems. Popular Kurita mythology describes the Rift as the location of the Dragon's heart; guarded in mystery and unreachable by mortal men.

The vast arms of the Dragon's realm requires a significant commitment from its district bureaucrats as they journey from one system to another. Throughout his lifetime, a typical mid-level inspector can accumulate a minimum of twenty years in travel time just between worlds within their district. With such heavy dependence on interstellar transportation, the Combine is always in need of experienced crews and techs to maintain the Dragon's expansive commercial fleet.

Systems located along the Combine's border typically see heightened security, and non-Kuritan travelers are scrutinized thoroughly. Border patrols are more lax with those planets located further within, but the ever-vigilant ISF maintains a strong presence to discourage the more curious—and possibly "accidental"—tourists.

HOW TO READ THIS ATLAS

The following section reviews many of the Combine's key worlds, arranged by military district—Pesht, Benjamin, Galedon, and Dieron—and containing statistical, cultural, and historical information. Each world description contains a block of statistics, including world name, noble ruler, primary star type, and JumpShip recharging time in hours. Planetary position, DropShip travel times to standard jump points with normal acceleration, number and names of moons or other satellites, planetary gravity, atmospheric quality, surface water, and highest type of native life are listed as well. In addition, the classification of local hyperpulse stations is provided, along with the most recent estimate of planetary population.

The final statistic listed is the Universal Socio-Industrial Index Rating (USIIR), a five-letter code that uses an A through F grading system to represent (in order) a settled world's level of technological sophistication, industrial development, dependence on imported raw materials, industrial output (relative to population) and agricultural dependence (relative to population). The USIIR Table below explains these gradations.

UNIVERSAL SOCIO-INDUSTRIAL LEVEL REFERENCE TABLE

TECHNOLOGICAL SOPHISTICATION

Rating	Description
A	High-tech world. Advanced research centers and universities; best medical care; cutting-edge microelectronics industry.
B	Advanced world. Access to new technologies; hosts universities; good medical care available (though lacking the most cutting-edge medical tech); basic microelectronics industry.
C	Moderately advanced world. Average local education and medical care; minimal microelectronics industry (must be imported for sale).
D	Lower-tech world. Poor educational system; medical technology equivalent to 21st-22nd century level; nonexistent microelectronics industry (excepting possible isolated regions run by private concerns).
F	Primitive world. Inhabitants live without dependence on technology; no advanced education; medical care equivalent to 20th century level (at best).

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Rating	Description
A	Heavily industrialized. Capable of manufacturing any and all complex products.
B	Moderately industrialized. May produce a limited quantity and range of complex products.
C	Basic heavy industry. Equivalent to roughly 22nd century tech; fusion technology possible, but no complex products (including BattleMechs).
D	Low industrialization. Roughly equivalent to mid-20th century level; fusion technology must be imported.
F	No industrialization.

RAW MATERIAL DEPENDENCE

Rating	Description
A	Fully self-sufficient. System produces all needed raw materials and may export in large quantities.
B	Mostly self-sufficient. System produces all needed raw materials and may export a small surplus.
C	Self-sustaining. System produces some of its needed raw materials and imports the rest.
D	Dependent. System is poor in raw materials and must import most of its material needs.
F	Heavily dependent. System utterly reliant on imported materials to maintain industry and population.

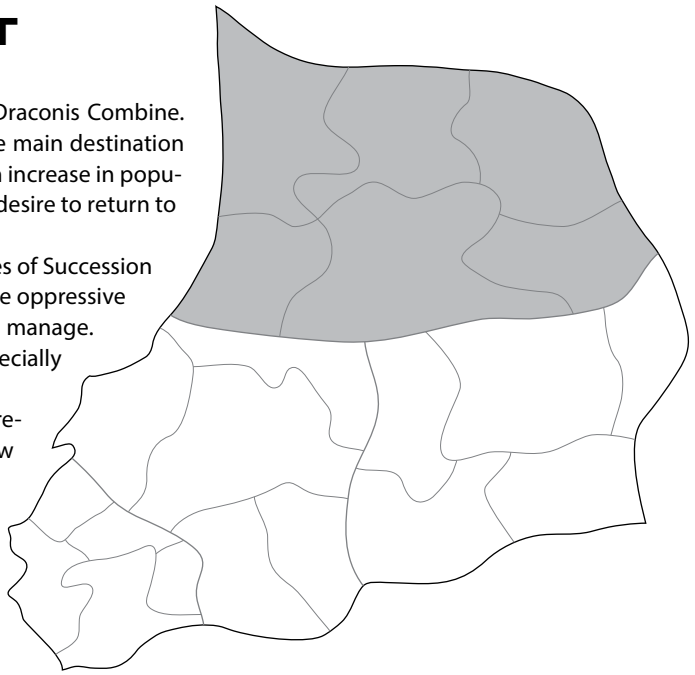
INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT

Rating	Description
A	High output. World has wide industrial and commercial base capable of exporting most of its products.
B	Good output. World's industrial and commercial base is sufficient for modest product export.
C	Limited output. World has a small industrial base that limits exports; imported goods are common.
D	Negligible output. World's industrial base is insufficient for major exports. Reliant on imported goods.
F	No output. World must import most—if not all—of its heavy industrial and high-tech needs.

AGRICULTURAL DEPENDENCE

Rating	Description
A	Breadbasket. Planetary agro industries meet all local needs and sustain a thriving export trade.
B	Abundant world. Rich agricultural environment sustains local needs and permits limited exports.
C	Modest agriculture. Most food is locally produced, though some agricultural needs rely on imports.
D	Poor agriculture. Minimal agricultural output forces heavy reliance on off-world imports to sustain the local population.
F	Barren world. World's agricultural output cannot sustain the local population without continuous off-world imports.

PESHT MILITARY DISTRICT (THE DRAGON'S SPINE)



The worlds of the Pesht Military District are the backbone of the Draconis Combine. Economically stable and removed from hostile powers, these were the main destination for refugees of the Clan Invasion. Periphery border worlds have seen an increase in population and industry from these relocations, and few refugees have any desire to return to their native systems.

The Clan Invasion brought to Pesht the violence of war that centuries of Succession Wars failed to do. Seeing their homes and livelihoods crushed under the oppressive Clan heel inspired many citizens to resist in whatever form they could manage. As such, the people of the Pesht district are proud, fierce, and loyal, especially those worlds freed from a decade of Clan tyranny.

Industrial expansion is high throughout the district. An abundance of resources, especially in the worlds of Qandahar Prefecture, has provided new growth opportunities for the Combine's military industry as the DCMS takes advantage of the Second Star League's cooperative spirit. The Imperial Court liberally grants support and autonomy to Pesht, which has boosted citizen confidence and loyalty to the Coordinator.

Irece Prefecture remains a singular source of concern. The Nova Cat "experiment" is less than a decade old, and already fissures are noticeable between the Clan and the resident Kuritan population. Relocation services are backlogged with requests, though the ISF has worked diligently to reduce interactions between Draconians and the Clan. Public sentiment towards the Clan is somewhat reduced in hostility, though it will take only a singular instance of perceived perfidy to stoke the fires of animosity once again.

LUTHIEN

Planetary Ruler: Coordinator Theodore Kurita
Star Type (Recharge Time): GoIII (181 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 10.43 days
Number of Satellites: 4 (Tsu Shima, Orientalis, Hikisaku, Occidentalis)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Tainted–Pollution)
Equatorial Temperature: 35° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 70 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Amphibian
Population: 7,939,000,000
Socio-Economic Levels: A-A-C-A-C



Chosen as Coordinator Sanethia Kurita's industrial project in 2619, Luthien transformed from a sleepy backwater farm world into the Combine's largest manufacturing center in less than two centuries. The construction of Imperial City secured Luthien's place as the Combine's new capital.

The crown jewel is the sprawling Imperial City, home of the ruling Kurita family. Its north side is a virtual fairytale of a city, surrounded by verdant gardens and hectares of natural forest. The impressive Unity Palace, the seat of Kurita power, appears to hover on the horizon. Each of the five towers that form the palace is distinct, built along the aesthetics of a different architectural period from ancient Japan. The Coordinator's private sanctum, which dominates the palace complex, evokes the graceful lines and swells of Himeji. The Chrysanthemum Throne Room's simple elegance is a direct nod to Tōdai-ji. Imperial courtiers and their staff reside in the Kinkaku-ji-inspired rear southern tower. Those guests whom the Dragon deems worthy are given rooms in the heavily protected westernmost tower, a twenty-third century version of the ancient Matsue. The Audience Hall, which every visitor to the palace enters, evokes the imperial styles of Tokuma Katayama.

Scattered throughout the palace complex are nearly one hundred gardens of various sizes and forms. Traditionally, each Kuritan Coordinator—from Sanethia onward—designs and cares for their own personal garden. Such activity provides the Dragon a place of privacy and intimacy necessary to the burden of leadership.

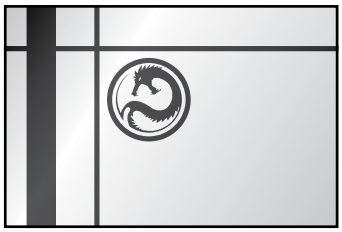
The largest industrial complex on Luthien resides less than ten kilometers from the center of Imperial City on a small chain of manmade islands strung along the Unity Plateau. Guthry Island, which can be seen from the parapets of Unity Palace on a haze-free day, boasts the massive Luthien Armor Works OmniMech production plant. Tokyo Island hosts the company's headquarters complex and LAW City. Covering ten square kilometers above and below the surface, the industriplex produces a sizable percentage of Luthien's gross domestic product and employs millions scattered among the many satellite facilities on the planet.

The ancient Fortress Sanethia on the continent of Sakura is the sole Castle Brian on Luthien. The fortress is heavily guarded with highly restrictive access. The massive complex was the site of Coordinator Sanethia's rule until the completion of Imperial City and oversaw much of the planetary construction project instituted by Lady Kurita.

Scattered around the planet are memorials and museums that honor the First Star League, the origins of the Combine, and the Dragon's fallen. One of the largest and most popular is the Dragon's Tears Plaza, boasting a three-meter stone samurai replica for each warrior who fell on Luthien during the Clan Invasion in 3052.

PESHT

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Erasmus Watanabe
Star Type (Recharge Time): F7V (178 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 12.89 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Buda)
Surface Gravity: 1.04
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 33° C (Tropical)
Surface Water: 64 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 6,353,000,000
Socio-Economic Levels: A-A-A-B-B



Discovered in 2212 by a group of Ozawan merchants, Pesht was not settled for a hundred years due to predators that lurked in the vast forests. All eight colonization attempts by the Ozawa family were wiped out. The mercantile dynasty gave up and the world was relegated to a safe resupply point.

The Ozawa clan later relinquished all rights to the planet to the Alliance of Galedon, though they failed to inform the Kuritans of their colonization problem. The first colonization attempt disappeared, though not without leaving evidence of their demise. Determined, the Combine burned large swaths of the ancient forests and within a decade had driven the predators to the brink of extinction. Once the predators were contained, the Combine established a large military base. Fortifications reminiscent of feudal Japan sprang up as soldiers from every branch of the military arrived. Pesht became the main launching point for forays into the Draconis Rift. During the restructuring of the government under Coordinator Martin McAllister, Pesht was named the new capital of the Pesht Military District.

Though Pesht commands considerable prestige as the capital world of the district that includes Luthien, the world was considered too close to hostile borders to be home to the Kurita family. It remains a major military supply depot and training command, a key component in the ever-expanding Procurement Department's role in the DCMS.

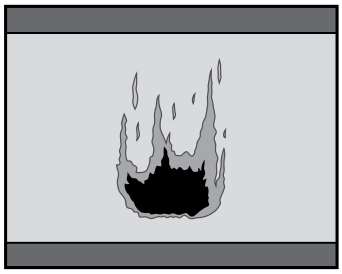
The DEST Tactical Command Center on Pesht boasts security features similar to those of the ISF command centers. Originally built by the Combine military as a prototype installation based upon Star League Castle Brian designs, the project was abandoned when the Combine capital moved to Luthien. Recognizing the base as perfect for its training needs, DEST took control of the facility. Hidden deep within Pesht's forests, the Tactical Command Center is the central training college for DEST members. As with the ISF installations on New Samarkand, it can only be reached by underground shuttle car. A sophisticated motion and heat-tracking surveillance system monitors the woods surrounding the center and is linked to an arsenal of hidden weapons and booby traps. In addition, DEST commanders have saved the population of ferocious simian predators that originally inhabited the planet from extinction, encouraging their breeding behavior to discourage intruders. A complex system of anti-aircraft weapons mounted on the complex's buildings and on several weapons platforms in geosynchronous orbit above the site shoot down any unidentified aircraft venturing into the area.

Venerable Pesht Motors is located just outside Vrydolyak, the planet's first successful settlement. The industrial site is responsible for manufacturing a wide variety of economic vehicles for the lower classes; nearly ninety percent of the city's population works in the factory's artificial mountain.

Dominating the continent of Ruhr is the enormous LAW bureaucratic complex. Employing just over ten million citizens, the facility boasts its own mass transit system. High-level managers can traverse from one side of the complex to the other in just under seven hours. Ruhr is also the name of the continent's largest city and the planetary capital.

BJARRED

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Lynette Yokoshima-Stuart
Star Type (Recharge Time): F4V (175 hours)
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 16.10 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Bereich)
Surface Gravity: 0.91
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 42° C (Arid)
Surface Water: 39 percent
Recharging Station: Nadir
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: Amphibian
Population: 1,341,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-C-A-C-D



Bjarred is a rather small world beneath a large hot sun. Though it has little open water on its surface, huge underground rivers run through catacombs below the surface. Lush grasses, bushes, and trees cluster above these subterranean waterways. As a result, vast lines of vegetation crisscross the planet. Bjarred's barren mountains are rich in minerals and metals, which attracted the first colonists, an Ozawa scout group, in the early twenty-fourth century.

A prefecture capital before the Clan Invasion, Bjarred resumed that status after the world was reclaimed from Clan Nova Cat in a famous coin toss. The continent of Icefall was so named for a disastrous ice asteroid crash that occurred in an attempt to provide comet water to early colonists who were wiped out by the impact. The crater from that strike still dominates the landscape of the small continent.

The planet was the home of the last of the Ozawa line. True to their nature, the Ozawan nobility was deeply entwined in corruption with Metals of the Earth when the Clan Invasion snatched the world from the Dragon. By the time Bjarred was returned to the Combine, the Ozawa line had been snuffed out and the corporate changeover in Metals of the Earth (and its subsidiary, Deep Ores) provided a discreet distance.

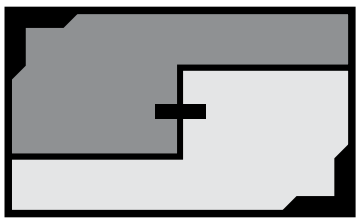
Fortunately for the citizens of Bjarred, the Clan occupation did little to change the planet's infrastructure. Other than reassigning exports to Jaguar facilities within their Occupation Zone, the occupiers left the docile population alone. Because very little rebellion or uprising occurred during the planet's captivity, the ISF questioned whether the citizenry of the system was worthy or even loyal enough to regain its status as a prefecture capital.

During the subsequent investigation, the ISF discovered that though the citizenry had not rebelled in the manner of other Combine worlds such as Turtle Bay, Schuyler, or Port Arthur, the Draconians did not roll over and submit. Evidence showed that although exports were rerouted to Jaguar worlds, those raw materials were of much lesser quality and quantity. More importantly, a high percentage of smelted metals and manufactured steel contained numerous defects and weak spots. This created substandard products that increased breakdowns and other trouble spots in Clan equipment and materials fashioned from Bjarred exports.

With the facts revealed, the Coordinator applauded the citizens of Bjarred for their dedication to the Dragon and declared an extra week of celebration during the planet's official reinstatement as a prefecture capital. The system was declared one of the three destination worlds for those relocating from Irece Prefecture, and the resultant boom has made Bjarred an economic powerhouse in the Pesht Military District.

IRECE

Planetary Ruler: Khan Santin West
Star Type (Recharge Time): F8III (179 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 12.01 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Bahia)
Surface Gravity: 0.99
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30° C (Warm-Temperate)
Surface Water: 44 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 3,230,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-A-A-A



Though Irece is home to significant manufacturing activity, this is all under Clan Nova Cat's control. However, the Combine does still assert authority over the prefecture command facilities located here, which is more of an oversight operation since the Nova Cats handle the defensive duties across this region. The Nova Cats raised a new capital city—New Barcella—from the plains of Santana when they relocated their people to Irece after the Great Refusal.

New Barcella stands also as the capital city of the Nova Cat enclaves throughout Irece Prefecture. The city is a magnificent metropolis that bears remarkably little resemblance to its origins. When first seized by the Clan in December 3051, it was a minor township—albeit one with a spaceport to handle traffic from nearby LexaTech Industries (a now-obliterated Star League-era production facility). In the years following the Cats' occupation, however, the renamed and redeveloped city has become the administrative and spiritual heart of the Nova Cat Clan.

At the center of the city, just north of the hundred-square-kilometer expanse of Rosse Spaceport, stands a high wall that encircles the Ways of Seeing Park. Hallowed ground to the Nova Cats, this park includes a circular, waist-high hedge that forms a ring two hundred meters in diameter. The grounds are carefully kept, and none may tread upon the lush grasses here, for this place hosts the annual Oathmaster Grand Melee.

On the northern end of the park, perhaps the most important structure in all of Nova Cat space rises almost three hundred meters. Designed in the style of a neo-Gothic cathedral and ringed by eleven smaller limestone chapels, this complex is the home of the Nova Cats' genetic repository. Surrounding the Ways of Seeing Park are the various administration buildings necessary to govern the Clan's affairs in the prefecture.

Nearly two-thirds of the planet's population resides on the central continent of Santana, and most are employed in bureaucratic and administrative duties. The smaller, mountainous landmass of Salvador dominates the southern hemisphere and is the current home of a pride of transplanted nova cats. Fewer than one hundred survived a hurried relocation from the Clan Homeworlds. Five years later, that number has quadrupled through the patient oversight of a joint Nova Cat-Combine zoological task force.

When the Nova Cats were granted the worlds of Irece Prefecture, Kuritan civilians were given the option of relocating to other Combine systems. The response was overwhelming; the Bureau of Friendly Interior Comfort and Concerns constantly processes requests and handles the transport of citizens to designated worlds in Bjarred and Qandahar Prefectures. Because of the situation, the Bureau formed "resident zones" on all other systems in the prefecture. These zones are nothing more than large, self-sufficient enclaves under the domain of the Clan. Combine citizens are not permitted on the grounds unless they possess proper documentation and authorization. Those Combine nobles who govern these planets work side by side with the Clan's labor and merchant castes to assure a peaceful coexistence, though the inevitable gaps in authority has created a thriving yakuza culture and black market.

MATAMORAS

Planetary Ruler: *Tozama Daimyo* Yuri Voskoboynikov
Star Type (Recharge Time): G1V (182 hours)
Position in System: 1
Time to Jump Point: 9.75 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Anastasia, Anatoly)
Surface Gravity: 1.46
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 50° C (Desert)
Surface Water: 20 percent
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: Microbes
Population: 3,100,000
Socio-Economic Levels: B-C-A-B-D



Matamoras is one of the Combine's major resource worlds, producing millions of tons of rare, defense-critical metals a year to feed the Dragon's military machine. At one time, the world supported three major manufacturing centers that produced a number of vehicles and armaments for the Combine's conventional regiments. The last of these factories was destroyed during the Third Succession War by a Lyran deep raid in 2942.

The planet is the windiest world in the Draconis Combine, with wind speeds at times exceeding four hundred kilometers per hour. These constant and fierce winds have molded the rocky landscape into dramatic shapes that dot much of Matamoras' desert landscape. Its fierce beauty has inspired countless works of art and literature in Combine culture and has become a mecca of sorts for Azami artisans.

Founded during the twenty-seventh century, Matamoras has never been considered more than a collection of mines and heavy industry. Few choose to travel to the world; fewer still remain to eke out a living. For a time, the DCMS maintained a prison facility on Siberia, the southernmost continent. Notorious for its small guard detail and highly corrupt administration, the complex was abandoned in the mid-2700s—with over three thousand male and female prisoners still locked down within. A New Samarkand Metals shuttle made an emergency landing at the prison in 2913 and discovered a small but thriving community. The citizens of Krasnogorsk were welcomed back into the fold; the Red Clay yakuza clan made its presence known shortly thereafter.

NSM is the primary employer on Matamoras, with more than two million workers scattered across fifty mines and processing sites. *Tozama Daimyo* Voskoboynikov is the CEO of NSM's Matamoras operation and is known to be fair and partial when carrying out official state business. He recently awarded a major contract to Deep Ores, which struck a large gold vein in the Black Urals in 3065. Rumors of Voskoboynikov's affiliation with the Red Clay yakuza are still under ISF investigation.

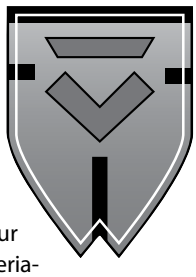
Vladivostok, the planetary capital, is unusual in that it has been built primarily underground. More than sixty percent of the city is located deep within The Brothers, a twin peaked mountain located not far from the sprawling Matamoras spaceport. The city's builders took advantage of a series of large caverns carved by an extinct underground sea. Near the center of the city is a massive stalagmite formation known as the Bloody Tsars, as its red-tinged stone resembles the heads of several ancient Terran Russian leaders.

Because of the world's heavy gravity and cruel wind, NSM rotates its workers from Matamoras every five years. The other two mining conglomerates operating in the planet's expansive mines have similar policies, though the expense of transporting so many workers keeps their rotation periods to a decade or longer. DCMS troops cycle through the system roughly every year to train in the dense gravity and extreme windstorms.

Within the last seventy years, the fad of "wind skirmishing" took root. Typically enjoyed by younger Draconians, the sport involves a lightweight bodysuit that contains strengthened glider webbing similar to those used in BASE jumping. Participants arm themselves with a paint pellet gun and set out to score the most hits while avoiding taking the same. Matches involve upwards of ten to twelve players and, depending on the wind speed and current, can last from five to fifteen minutes. The DCA has taken an interest in the sport's popularity; in 3026 they began sponsoring the annual Matamoras Melee. The top scoring individual earns an automatic entry into the Aerospace and Interstellar Institute. The Melee was put on hold during the Clan occupation. *Tozama Daimyo* Voskoboynikov officially reopened the contest in 3064 and awarded the top five finishers with a substantial cash prize.

PORT ARTHUR

Planetary Ruler: *Tozama Daimyo* Rutherford Ellis
Star Type (Recharge Time): G8V (189 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 6.19 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Mordred)
Surface Gravity: 1.1
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 20° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 50 percent
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Reptiles
Population: 5,600,000
Socio-Economic Levels: D-B-B-C-A



One of the district's breadbasket worlds, Port Arthur is also one of the few to have avoided heavy fighting during the Succession Wars. Before the Clan Invasion, it had been raided twice by Steiner troops, both times destroying several agrodomes, processing centers, and valuable water purification facilities. Until the Helm Core discovery, Port Arthur had been without means to process its bacteria-heavy waters and relied on its neighbors for water.

The capital city of Affendale is one of the prefecture's jewels. No building stands taller than thirty meters, and local foliage adorns every avenue. Tourists walking the downtown shopping and administrative districts often comment it is difficult to believe Affendale is a bustling metropolis of nearly two million people. Sadly, much of the city's beauty was ravaged during the Smoke Jaguar occupation when several Clan DropShips used various parks as landing zones.

Less than a decade after liberation, Osaka has strongly rebounded. Erasing the scars of the brutal occupation is a planetary obsession. The Heir-Designate Hohiro Kurita, on a visit to the world in 3066, complimented the citizens on their hard work, as little damage remains to be seen. He also unveiled the Veteran's Memorial in Yokohama, dedicating it to the planet's fallen samurai during Port Arthur's occupation by Clan Smoke Jaguar.

One of the benefits of the mass rebuilding has been the change in construction patterns. For centuries, expansion of Port Arthur's cities was conducted by taking over additional land space and sprawling outward. After being subjected to the horrors of the Clan occupation, architectural designers explored an underground expansion effort, increasing a building's capacity by going deeper underground. This has maintained the beautiful minimalist aesthetic aboveground while keeping the population's growth centrally located. The redevelopment has also sparked a wave of underground passages and even a large commercial district in Serpent Bay. The nobility on Port Arthur has applauded these latest efforts, as it helps preserve the planet's natural beauty. Recent pollution-control laws were passed to slow down a rise in industrial expansion. The move was, according to *Tozama Daimyo* Ellis, "to keep Port Arthur as the prefecture's Zen garden within the Dragon's den."

QANDAHAR

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Paul Markov
Star Type (Recharge Time): GoIV (181 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 10.43 days
Number of Satellites: None
Surface Gravity: 1.05
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Toxic)
Equatorial Temperature: 19° C (Cool-Temperate)
Surface Water: 71 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 1,707,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-A-B-D



As a prefecture capital, Qandahar houses the typical government apparatus, which employs roughly half the population. Compared to other prefectures, however, the tight confines of the four large domed cities housing the Combine bureaucracy ensures that visits from High Command authorities are rare.

Qandahar is a dimly lit world, perpetually enshrouded in heavy, low-hanging clouds. All of the planet's large water bodies are mildly toxic due to longstanding pollution issues. (Early colonists and industries dumped enormous amounts of toxic waste into the waters.) Though much of the planet's water supply is drinkable after a heavy filtering process, fresh water is a major luxury import to the planet, as are other items produced by Combine firms. Light industry continues to flourish, selling and manufacturing subassemblies for small fusion power plants used to power environmental domes and space-borne facilities elsewhere in the Combine.

More than forty percent of Qandahar's population can trace its roots back to the Muslim nations of ancient Terra and includes several hundred Azami communities. Because of the tendency of Combine government officials to overlook the system, proper Kuritan societal decorum is looser here than on other prefecture capitals. Such attitudes breed contempt and rebellion, which Qandahar experiences every generation.

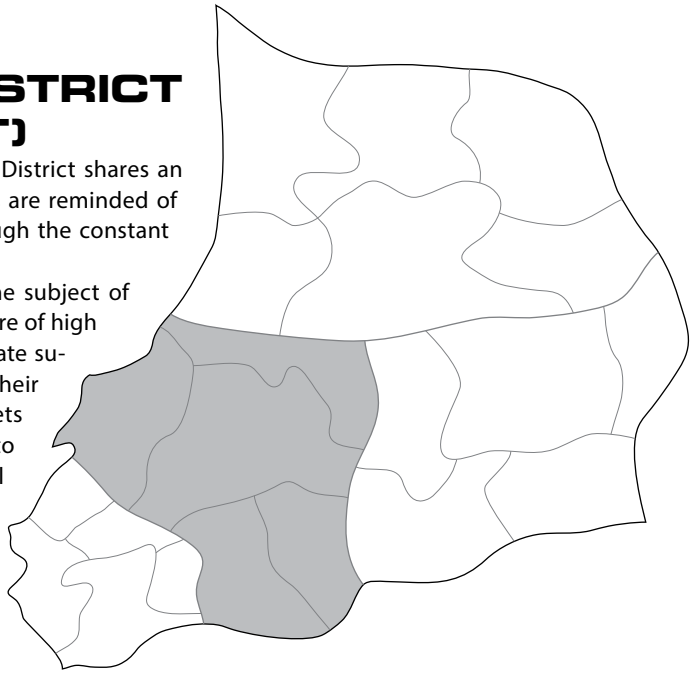
The last major uprising was during the 3020s when the Holy Struggle attempted to shut down the Dow-Nexus turbine factory in the domed city of Mistiq. The Holy Struggle's impetus was the company's notorious disregard for worker safety; a record four hundred people were killed in 3019 after a poorly maintained conveyor system seized and collapsed. (The company settled 1,358 wrongful death claims between 3018 and 3022.) The protesters carried out a series of sabotage events that escalated in 3028 when armed conflict broke out between mercenaries and Dow-Nexus security. The ISF, which had been covertly investigating both sides, arrested several hundred. The protesters were put to death; the company suffered several million K-bills in fines, and Dow-Nexus reduced their operational footprint on Qandahar in 3042.

Life outside the domed cities is harsh, as the planet's ecosystem is in slow decline. Kuritan scientists estimate that more than half of the planet's original indigenous life forms are extinct.

BENJAMIN MILITARY DISTRICT (THE DRAGON'S HEART)

Constantly in a state of rebuilding, the Benjamin Military District shares an important border with the Ghost Bear Dominion. Draconians are reminded of the imminent Clan threat only a few short jumps away through the constant and heavy DCMS presence on all the district's worlds.

These worlds have seen centuries of constant warfare, the subject of Steiner raids and Clan invaders. Social and political concerns are of high importance here, leading many nobles to believe in their innate superiority over the rest of the Combine. Many industries have their largest factories and concerns scattered among these planets and maintain a high state of alertness due to their proximity to Combine enemies. These systems are considered the industrial heart and soul of the nation; without them, the Combine's military and interstellar infrastructure would collapse.



BENJAMIN

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Trevor Coleson
Star Type (Recharge Time): M1V (202 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 2.96 days
Number of Satellites: None
Surface Gravity: 1.08
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Tainted)
Equatorial Temperature: 30° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 51 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 5,410,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-C-B-B



Benjamin is a large world orbiting a dim star. To augment the amount of sunlight on the planet, Star League engineers built and placed into orbit twenty massive "semi-sun" constructs. Circular in shape, these *taiyou ranpu* are made of paper-thin mirrored fabric that resembles the collecting sails on a JumpShip. The slowly orbiting *taiyou ranpu* reflect enough sunlight down onto the planet to lengthen Benjamin's daylight hours and provides a twenty percent increase in luminosity.

Fair in climate, Benjamin supports hardy crops and livestock to abundance, providing the DCMS with a large number of freeze-dried materials for its ration program. Spotting the hills and deep valleys are massive deposits of petroleum and coal for the system's voracious manufacturing appetite. Centuries of heavy reliance on these fossil fuels has polluted the ecosystem. The district governor has enacted several anti-pollution measures modeled on those found on Luthien. Nonetheless, these heavy sanctions have not deterred Benjamin's heavy parts and vehicle manufacturing centers.

The capital of Benjamin—and the center of the military district's power—is Deber City. Distinctly modular and segmented, Deber City is a Hugai-era architectural innovation copied on five other Combine worlds which also use the same name. Dominating the center of the capital is Political Park, a six-hundred-acre swath of administrative buildings that handle the prefecture's bureaucracy. Surrounding Political Park are the five operating sectors: commercial, residential, industrial, recreation, and military.

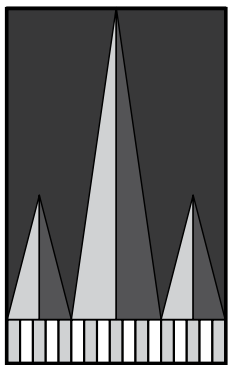
Governance of the military district occurs one hundred kilometers north of Deber City at Judah. This sprawling facility serves as the planet's military DropPort, headquarters of the Benjamin Regulars, and command center of the Benjamin Military District. The Warlord's residence is Shotugama Castle, located just outside the base on the edge of the sapphire waters of Lake Jordan.

Benjamin is the prefecture's most prosperous world and one of the top three in the district. With several military and research academies located here, it has been a dynamic source of scientific research for the Dragon. The testing grounds on Osaka, the second-largest of the planet's three continents, is a popular destination for nobles and retired military officers in search of blood sport. Live-fire exercises using prototype designs and weaponry are often recorded for later distribution via the Voice of the Dragon, extolling the Combine's military prowess and technology. Every year, Osaka Fields, located nearby, sees thousands of military applicants who try to elevate their station in life by entering the way of the warrior.

Tucked away on the Yamato Peninsula on Osaka is an area devoid of industry. Among the pristine and ancient forests and highlands are large farms that grow everything from rice to apples to dragonstar fruit. These farms operate with minimal machine impact to preserve a way of life that appeals to those in need of "civilization detoxification."

AIX-LA-CHAPELLE

Planetary Ruler: Planetary Chairman Elizabeth McAllister
Star Type (Recharge Time): A2V (163 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 43.02 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Wester, Julich, Burtscheid)
Surface Gravity: 0.90
Atmospheric Pressure: High (Tainted)
Equatorial Temperature: 43° C (Tropical)
Surface Water: 81 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: None
Population: 469,500,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-A-B-D



An inhospitable world with an atmosphere barely tolerable to humans, Aix-la-Chapelle is dominated with one large landmass that sprawls across the northern hemisphere. Aachen, the primary continent, is rich in dense ores and volcanic ash. Within a century, Aix-la-Chapelle was strewn with gaping mineshafts and billowing refineries.

The long transit time motivated Diplan to build a components factory

that incorporated locally processed materials rather than wait for supply shipments. Other corporations followed suit, and by 2600 the system was completely self-reliant in producing locally built exports. Conversely, the planet must constantly import large quantities of foodstuffs outside of agricultural products. All attempts to raise livestock have met with disaster due to a combination of high atmospheric pressure, chemically tainted air, and harsh weather patterns.

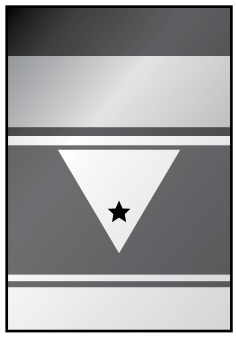
Nearly all of Aix-la-Chapelle's domed cities are situated on or near deep pockets of magma. Star League-era thermodynamic reactors provide a steady source of power. Located underground, these power stations are protected from the brutal surface conditions, which has kept them in good operating condition. Volcanic activity is common on Aachen; underwater eruptions are a frequent occurrence at a rate of one to two every five years. The last eruption in 3063 formed a tsunami that wiped out Old Lyons, killing 30,000 people and erasing the last port city on Aachen.

With frequent windstorms and tornadoes crisscrossing Aachen, few industrial concerns survive outside the domes. Those that do are built like fortresses, utilizing the granite and iron escarpments that wind through the central center of the continent. The most famous is the Diplan 'Mechyards near Belnet. The factory uses an architectural design and construction similar to a Castle Brian and easily holds up against Class 9 storms with winds upwards of 425 kph. Such facilities were built with typical Kuritan foresight, as they easily serve as defensive bulwarks during times of crisis.

The harsh conditions and ragged landscape of Aix-la-Chapelle make it an ideal location for the Combine's venerable Kensai Kami. The original school remains in use in the remote wilderness of Aachen. Located more than a thousand kilometers from the nearest domed city, the Kensai Kami occupies an Age of War-era fortress and is constantly updated with the latest in electronics and technology. Such modern gadgetry coexists with the ancient traditions of the samurai and *bushido* and the hellish environment surrounding the school, creating a milieu that brings out the absolute best in its students.

BUCKMINSTER

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Cantor Hasegawa
Star Type (Recharge Time): A9III (170 hours)
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 23.75 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Geodesia)
Surface Gravity: 1.01
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 29° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 62 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Insects
Population: 2,770,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-A-B-A



Originally a light industrial and agricultural world, Buckminster became an important world in the Kuritan empire in the mid-thirty-first century. Due to a power play between the noble families Hasegawa and Baek, the Coordinator shifted borders around and declared Buckminster as the new prefecture capital, taking the prestige away from nearby Sulafat. The two systems maintain a rivalry that continues today.

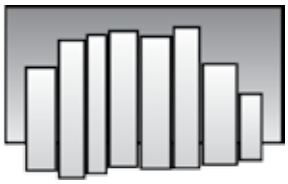
Once known for its agricultural products and light machinery, Buckminster saw swift changes once it was given the responsibility of a prefecture capital. A massive influx of military garrisons and heavy industry converted much of its arable farmland into training grounds and toxic dumps. The ecological damage has sparked protest at times, giving rise to an anti-government movement in the 3040s. The ISF infiltrated many of these groups in short order, which turned out to be fortunate after the world succumbed to Clan Smoke Jaguar. These rebel groups rallied around several ISF and Kuritan patriots, turning their energies on the Clan oppressors.

When the world saw liberation, the Coordinator granted amnesty to the surviving rebels for their fervor during the occupation. Though on the surface the populace appears tranquil enough, the ISF has maintained its grip on the pulse of the underground, noting a slow rise in anti-Kuritan rhetoric. At least two incidents have been traced back to Lyran Intelligence Command activity on the planet.

Despite the massive spread of government facilities necessary to govern a prefecture, the Hasegawa family has done much to reclaim Buckminster's former beauty. In 3066, the governor announced the establishment of several green zones called "Dragon Gardens." These plots of land—the smallest being five hundred hectares—are open to the public to cultivate, using low-technology tools and ancient Asian traditions. The governor's edict has been widely accepted, and many DCMS troops stationed at Buckminster have petitioned their commands to participate.

DOVER

Planetary Ruler: *Daimyo* Thomas Rous
Star Type (Recharge Time): G2V (183 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 9.12 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Citrine)
Surface Gravity: 0.93
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 43° C (Arid)
Surface Water: 34 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: Reptile
Population: 590,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-B-B-C



The silica and titanium sands covering this bright world proved to be excellent resources two centuries after its settlement in 2390. The Silane Sea near the center of the main continent Quartz is a geochemical marvel, a source of a variety of pure chemicals and compounds suitable for export to electronics manufacturers throughout the prefecture. DropShips often arrive at the Silane DropPort, fill their cargo tanks with waiting loads of sand, and lift again with the crew never debarking.

Dover experienced its peak during the days of the Star League. Several research and industrial labs dotted its three continents, taking advantage of the rare metals and abundant raw materials to fuel breakthroughs in chemistry, physics, medicine, and metallurgy. In the skies above, the system boasted an elaborate naval factory and shipyard capable of servicing the constant stream of Admiralty and Star League ships that visited Dover.

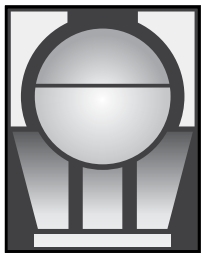
The First Succession War claimed most of Dover's surface labs and destroyed nearly half of the large mining complexes. The DCMS garrisoned several dozen conventional regiments on the planet and augmented the planet's defenses with small mercenary BattleMech forces. As raids became less frequent, the Combine began using the mercenaries as training commands, rotating through many of the district's conventional line units to keep them in fighting trim. By the end of the Second Succession War, Dover's importance greatly diminished, as the massive shipyards were reduced to small maintenance stations capable of servicing DropShips and the odd JumpShip.

During the reign of Coordinator Shinjiro Kurita, Dover experienced a small renaissance. In 2910, the surviving faculty and equipment from the Ashio PRE University was relocated to the planet, revitalizing the ruins of the Dover PRE destroyed nearly one hundred years before. By order of the Coordinator, the new Dover Institute for Higher Learning was established in the planetary capital, Wairdel. With the renewed attention, several military industrial concerns such as Diplan and Hinsdale Electronics opened new facilities nearby.

After the Clan Invasion, Dover experienced another renaissance as Stellar Trek Enterprises began expanding one of the older orbital yards. The company then expanded in 3063 as new asteroid mines were opened near the system's fifth planet. With the influx of expansion and industry, Dover is well on its way to reclaiming its status as the prefecture's industry and research powerhouse.

GALTOR III

Planetary Ruler: Planetary Chairman Eustace Pevensy
Star Type (Recharge Time): F8V (179 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 12.01 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Temos and Froma)
Surface Gravity: 1.00
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 45° C (Jungle)
Surface Water: 70 percent
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 54,700,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-C-B-C-B



For centuries, the Galtor system suffered the privations of Davion rule. Liberated during the Third Succession War in the early thirtieth century, Galtor became a sheltered world in the Dragon's grip. In 3022, Prince Hanse Davion stole the world back from the Dragon and granted gubernatorial powers to one of the leaders of the partisan forces. The liberation came at a heavy cost: over a third of the population died in the fighting, most of them Kuritan transplants.

The Fox then conceived a plan to lure Combine forces into an ambush. Spreading false news of the discovery of a Star League depot that had remained unspoiled during Kuritan rule, Hanse presented too tempting an apple for Coordinator Takashi to resist. Kurita dispatched forces to capture the spoils of that depot in numbers not seen in decades. Matters worsened when a real Star League depot was discovered just prior to the invasion. Between the DCMS assault force and the Federated Suns defenders, a total of twenty 'Mech regiments faced off on Galtor. Such massive troop concentrations had not been seen since the Second Succession War. The destruction wrought by the AFFS's three-month campaign stalled the Federated Suns' programs begun a scant three years earlier. Casualties among the civilian population climbed to ten percent as Davion troops repelled the Dragon's assault.

The Combine retook the world in the Fourth Succession War, a scant six years later. With no major combat occurring in the decades since, the population managed to rebound from the tremendous casualties suffered in those battles. Primarily a subsistence-level agrarian world, Galtor's Naval Yards represents the only industrial facilities that export product off-world.

More Kuritans were relocated to Galtor under the Court's continuous Civilian Relocation and Revitalization program. Both Luthien Armor Works and New Samarkand Metals were given grants to construct facilities on-planet, sparking a surge in growth and a softening of the brainwashed Davion expatriates. The ISF retains a heavy presence on the planet, though rebel activities have tapered off in the last decade.

Galtor Naval Yards is located at New Derry on the Eire continent. These yards produce traditional wet naval vessels that can be found on many Kuritan planets. The factory is built in a utilitarian military design, as it is the headquarters of those DCMS units assigned to protect the planet. Extensive training exercises are done on the sparsely inhabited continent of Samphire. Galtor sees a heavy DCMS rotation, both line and conventional forces, to constantly remind its citizens they are no longer on a Davion world. Galtor became a designated location for refugees fleeing the Clan front. The influx of Kuritan citizens—and ISF agents—has diluted support for the now-distant Davion throne.

PROSERPINA

Planetary Ruler: *Shogun* Perrine Irragang
Star Type (Recharge Time): K2V (193 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 4.85 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Taikata)
Surface Gravity: 1.00
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Tainted)
Equatorial Temperature: 25° C (Warm-Temperate)
Surface Water: 67 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Reptile
Population: 2,173,050,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-B-A-B



Proserpina is one of the Draconis Combine's most prized worlds. Housing industry and an important military academy, Proserpina also serves as a prefecture capital in the Benjamin Military District. Originally home to the Proserpina Hussars brigade (of which but two regiments remain) this world has seen vicious combat between the Dragon and the Federated Suns, including a chemical agent attack that renders the Amerigo and Greater Harpago continents uninhabitable even to this day. The world's proximity to the FedSuns border justifies a constant defense force and a significant logistical network for repair and refit.

Rich mineral and petrochemical veins on this world, have fueled a variety of minor industries covering the three habitable continents of Bragadin, Darwan, and Lesser Harpago. These industries produce everything from children's toys to electronics, civilian automobiles, and aircraft. Even a few noteworthy military corporations, such as Bulldog Enterprises, a well-known tank manufacturer, and Guided Technologies, proven producer of short-range missile systems, call Proserpina home.

Proserpina's capital city, Conqueror's Pride, is located on the eastern shore of Bragadin, which is also home to the famous University of Proserpina. The planet's other claim to fame is the native blood limpet, a hard-shelled quasi-reptilian that resides in the planet's swamps, where it waits for any warm-blooded prey. Capable of astounding speed, this small, six-legged beast is a constant threat to unwary travelers in the planet's swamps.

A series of industries centers around the study, capture, processing, and research of this tenacious predator. The blood limpet is indirectly responsible for scientific breakthroughs in such technologies as battle armor, MASC systems, genetic therapy, synthetic fabrics, and anesthetics. Regardless of industry, civilians who work with the blood limpet undergo a year's worth of intensive training on the reptile. Such training has benefited the Combine in other ways, as these civilians tend to move onward into positions of responsibility within the research, academic, and medical communities.

XINYANG

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Frederick Neidlander
Star Type (Recharge Time): F0V (171 hours)
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 21.94 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Henan)
Surface Gravity: 0.98
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 70 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: Amphibian
Population: 1,520,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-C-D-C-C



Lying close to Luthien and somewhat distant from hostile borders, Xinyang is a large world with plenty of water but few natural resources. As a result, it is little more than a major rest and recuperation base for the Arm of the Dragon.

The planet often plays host to battalions from other units as they rotate off the front lines for rest and resupply. A superabundance of industries have sprung up around the comings and goings of DCMS soldiers. At one time Xinyang had a large supply depot and the largest and best-equipped military hospitals in the Draconis Combine. Nearby is a major ISF facility which debriefs officers, nobles, and notable warriors coming off the front lines in search of new information about the enemy. The *ukiyos* in Xinyang are large and well staffed with men and women of pleasure for the soldiers' enjoyment.

As the planet cannot support the food needs of its large population, the five spaceports across the continent of Beijing remain busy. Xinyang is one of the few well-populated planets to which the Dragon devotes many JumpShips for food deliveries. Innumerable warehouse and storage facilities sprawl across the landscape, broken up by towering fuel and coolant refineries. The unofficial authority on Xinyang is the yakuza.

Several competing Slavic mob families originally started Xinyang's underworld as they spread out from the Terran Hegemony. The competition was set aside after a few centuries as the Combine began using Xinyang as a staging world for its military and merchant fleets. Capitalizing on the various vices common to such places, the *vory v zakone* grew in strength, unity, and power, reaching as high as the office of the planetary chairman.

In 2893, one of the mafia bosses murdered the son of the Fuji Snow *oyabun*, who was serving with the Fifteenth Benjamin Regulars. The *oyabun*, Sean O'Clannahan, declared a vendetta against Robert Ivankov. The conflict escalated out of hand very quickly. For the next fifty years, several yakuza clans—headed by the Fuji Snow-*gumi*—invaded Xinyang and systematically pushed the *vory v zakone* from power. By 2960, the yakuza dominated the Xinyang underworld and remained in control despite two subsequent attempts from outside mafia families.

With Coordinator Theodore's new reforms in testing and accepting yakuza soldiers into the DCMS, Xinyang has been a major recruitment center. The Fuji Snow-*gumi* runs an unofficial testing series on interested parties; those who pass the clan's stringent requirements are then recommended to the DCMS's unofficial liaisons. Through this process, the *gumi* weeds out all but the most ardent supporters of the Kuritas and siphons the rest into its own ranks to teach them the meaning of *ninjo* and *giri*.

THE GALEDON MILITARY DISTRICT (THE DRAGON'S SOUL)



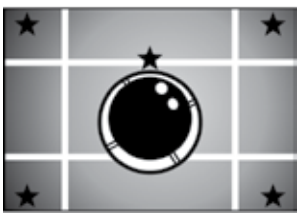
The worlds of the Galedon Military District are among the Combine's oldest. From here came Shiro and Urizen Kurita, as well as countless other heroes and figures of Kuritan history. This sense of place in the universe, along with the bloody sufferings at the hands of the Dragon's enemies, has instilled a form of fierce, competitive pride in each citizen.

The prefectures of Galedon were hardest hit during the Third and Fourth Succession Wars. Many families are just now finding their way back to their ancient homelands after a century or more of relocation to prefectures in the Pesht Military District. These relocations and returns have sparked an economic mini-revival as additional civilians add to the ever-growing workforce.

These worlds never forget their place in Combine history. Some of the most thought-provoking and inspiring art and literature comes from worlds such as Galedon V and New Samarkand, two key historical systems. The citizens know what role their ancestors played in bringing about the Kuritan empire, and they choose never to forget—and to remind their enemies every chance they get.

GALEDON V

Planetary Ruler: *Tai-shu* Li Dok To
Star Type (Recharge Time): K5III (196 hours)
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 4.12 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Shiro)
Surface Gravity: 1.2
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 25° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 65 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 1,708,000,000
Socio-Economic Levels: A-A-A-A-A



This lightly settled planet has little industry but abundant high-grade industrial diamonds. Settled in the late twenty-third century, Galedon V's vast resources and large quantities of uncontaminated water brought colonists in by the droves. The common hatred against the Ozawa Mercantile Association led to an alliance with Shiro Kurita and ultimately birthed the Draconis Combine. Nevertheless, the citizens of Galedon V reacted bitterly to Shiro's "usurpation." In 2332, waves of revolt swept the planet, but even though Shiro Kurita's armies were occupied with the Principality of Rasalhague, enough forces arrived to slaughter the rebellion and its leaders. They left behind

ruined cities and starving civilians. Shiro's Colonial Board then helped rebuild the planet, all the while praising Shiro for his benevolence and charity. The starving civilians soon became grateful to Shiro for providing them with food and shelter, and the planet Galedon V has been a staunch supporter of the Kuritas ever since.

A verdant garden world, Galedon offers much to the citizens of the Combine aside from its place in history. The rich, volcanic soil of Crete is the primary source of the system's thriving agricultural trade. Through strict farming practices and traditions, Galedon's ancient farmland remains fertile. The Galedon pear is the planet's most valuable harvest; its three-year growth cycle and demanding maintenance makes it an expensive commodity. Typical Galedonian prices for a shared plate of this fruit runs in the hundreds of K-bills, well out of reach of most working-class citizens.

The hills of Paphos are renowned for its wine industry, often preparing vintages served in the Imperial Court. The volcanic chain that borders the eastern coastline of the continent—known as the Steps of the Dragon—is the source of valuable Galdeonian black and red diamonds. Strict security measures keep a tight grip on the production and export of these gems, making them one of the most rare and expensive diamonds in the Inner Sphere.

A prefecture and military district capital, Galedon maintains a strong DCMS presence. The southern continent of Luzon houses the *tai-shu*'s administrative and headquarters complexes, as well as two dedicated military DropPorts and extensive garrison facilities. The famed Galedon Military Academy lies outside the capital city of Galedon City. The academy occupies over five thousand hectares of land, which includes live-fire ranges, an officers' school, naval station, and expansive BattleMech repair and refit facilities. In geosynchronous orbit above the academy is the Galedon Naval Warfare Station, which opened in 3037. The DCA also maintains a shipyard complex in a polar orbit. The *Galedon Ring* services the planet's aerospace defense units and resupplies the occasional visiting WarShip.

AN TING

Planetary Ruler: Planetary Chairman James Şahin
Star Type (Recharge Time): G1V (182 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.75 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Null)
Surface Gravity: 0.8
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 26 percent
Recharging Station: Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 95,500,000
Socio-Economic Levels: D-C-C-B-D



An Ting was colonized early in humanity's spread to the stars, but due to its dry and barren landscape, the planet maintained a few small settlements. Not until the later part of the twenty-seventh century did An Ting gain limited importance with the founding of An Ting University. Originally dedicated to teaching mechanical and industrial arts, the university instituted a DCMS BattleMech training program geared towards common civilians who possessed some skill at warmaking. The city of Tule Mod, designed for the purpose of supporting the nearby university, eventually took over as the planetary capital.

Davion raids during the Second Succession War reduced this once-prosperous world to a barely self-sufficient rock. Its vast farmlands were scarred by battle and heavy industry destroyed by precision strikes. By 3039, An Ting partially rebuilt and began producing agricultural and other simple exports for nearby systems.

Lake Hails, the northern continent Hotei's largest body of water, is the location of Singpan. This city is a large mining community and also the planet's oldest surviving settlement. Most of An Ting's university candidates come from this region, due to the constant use of old IndustrialMechs and exosuits in the expansive ore tunnels beneath the lake. A Davion raid in 3063 destroyed the ancient refinery and half the city; the conflagration also set the polluted lake on fire, which took more than two months to extinguish.

The planet's main attraction, aside from the university, is the beautiful Algonquin Island. A caldera partially submerged in the Sea of Taiwan, the island is the central breeding location for Ting whales. The stark, treeless landscape of the rocky island exudes a Zen-like calmness to its visitors. A Buddhist temple was built here in 2530 and has hosted many Kuritan nobles and Coordinators desiring a few hours, days, and even months of peace and contemplation.

Kini-Mai sits along the Hiroshima Plateau, near the An Ting DropPort. This is the primary headquarters of the An Ting Legions and the local militia. The plateau, which peaks at six thousand kilometers above sea level, offers wide panoramic views of Hotei's interior. The DropPort has been destroyed and rebuilt fifteen times, a testament to the citizens' perseverance and dedication to the Dragon.

ENIF

Planetary Ruler: Planetary Chairman Yvengi Perera
Star Type (Recharge Time): F8V (179 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 12.01 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Wold)
Surface Gravity: 1.45
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 20° C (Mild-Temperate)
Surface Water: 72 percent
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 6,810,000
Socio-Economic Levels: D-D-B-C-C



Enif is a world known for its strategic location as a staging world for DCMS assaults on the Periphery. For more than three centuries since the first colony attempt in 2600, the world supplied only large grain harvests for neighboring systems. Korban Foods sponsored the initial colony effort and built an expansive footprint on Cotswold, the planet's main continent. The agricultural corporation remained the primary employer and provider for Enif's small population until Luthien Armor Works built a smelter and armor sheeting facility in 2982.

After the Clan Invasion, a mining expedition to the system's distant asteroid belt discovered large deposits of germanium. The precious ore, a vital component in building K-F drive cores, flipped the planet's fortune practically overnight. Within ten years, the population tripled as New Samarkand Metals, Stellar Trek, and LAW built and expanded facilities to handle the new discovery. Chairman Perera has done well in maintaining Enif's identity as a sleepy backwater, restricting new developments to Cotswold and allowing native Enivians to relocate to the smaller, isolated continents of Scotswold and Potswold. The Chairman's strictures have rankled several of the newly arrived nobility, but their petitions to the district governor and the Imperial Court have gone unanswered.

If Enif is known for anything, it is the extreme simplicity of its citizens. Enivians dislike "the Newcomers," as they feel their pace of life is challenged and belittled. Loyal to the Kurita family and steadfast supporters of the Dragon, these citizens are nonetheless mocked by the Newcomers for their simplistic lifestyle and nonconfrontational attitudes. Because of Enif's chronically poor educational system—even by lower-class standards—Enivians are rarely accepted into military academies, and few find their way past the lower ranks of the DCMS.

Though its society is low-key and simple, the planet is not without its charms. The broad, flat plains of Cotswold are home to wild Enivian mustangs. Traveling in groups of two hundred or more, their wheeling patterns across the plains has inspired artwork that is prized throughout the prefecture. One painting, *Woldrise at Dawn*, hangs in a guest room in Unity Palace on Luthien.

HACHIMAN

Planetary Ruler: Planetary Chairman Graham Fillington
Star Type (Recharge Time): G8IV (189 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 6.19 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Benkei, Yoshitsune, Sorrow)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 25° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 70 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 3,672,000,000
Socio-Economic Levels: A-A-A-A-B



One of the Dragon's rare self-sufficient systems, Hachiman contains plentiful resources and ideal planetary conditions. It is considered the center of the district's computer and advanced electronics industry. Containing several major corporate-owned industrial parks, warehouses, and manufacturing centers, the primary continent Ōjin is a collection of glittering gems when viewed from the gallery of *Daibosatsu*. This massive orbital station, opened in 3066, houses the DCMS's largest military electronics research centers.

The principal city on Ōjin is Masamori, the planetary capital, best known as the central headquarters for Tanadi Computers. The electronics firm's twenty skyscrapers dominate the city skyline. Their bronzed finish reflects sunlight at all hours of the day, giving rise to the moniker "City of Bronze Towers."

Masamori is also known among many Kuritan nobles as a prime example of a city seduced by foreign culture. Items and services not easily acquired elsewhere in the Combine can be found in abundance here. Partly due to the influence of its unofficial lord Chandrasekhar Kurita, Hachiman is considered the place to find everything from forbidden Steiner entertainment chips to shadowy mercenary assassins. The Coordinators of the Combine have allowed this well of depravity to exist within the Combine's borders primarily as a funnel for foreign spies and malcontents. With the superior electronics produced by the planet's hardworking citizenry over the centuries, the Kuritas have permitted Masamori's existence as a form of stress relief. Still, the Kurita family maintains its presence on Hachiman. For the last four hundred years, at least one Kurita family member—usually a distant relation to the throne—has kept a residence on Hachiman. Chandrasekhar has a vast estate on the southern continent of Deolali and keeps abreast of planetary politics. Many of the policies handed down by Planetary Chairman Fillington started out as suggestions from the resident Kurita.

Because of its more open nature, Hachiman is a seething mass of espionage. The ISF's presence rivals that on Luthien. Corporate espionage is considered a product of daily life; the mercenary security trade remains lucrative despite the Combine's historic viewpoint on the industry. The Dragon may allow looser conduct, but it keeps an observant eye on what comes in and goes out from the three main DropPorts.

Asking a Hachiman citizen what the planet's greatest offering is to the Dragon invites a long discussion on the variety of natural wonders scattered across the four continents. Deolali's ancient forests and deep river canyons are an outdoorsman's mecca. Jingū's extreme north latitudes house virgin snowfields and the rare Bodhisattva violet, prized for its beauty and natural perfume. Nashik's varied tropical terrain hosts annual DCMS war games and more secretive ISF training operations. Scattered throughout are small and simple Buddhist and Hindu villages, reminders of the planet's Gujarati and Mahratta founding colonies. Hachiman is the last world to contain genetic relatives to refugees from the United Hindu Collective. These villagers honor their ancestors through simple living and are exempted from the Combine's standard societal laws and taxes.

ISESAKI

Planetary Ruler: *Shugo* Sophia Franklin
Star Type (Recharge Time): Close Binary MoV (196 hours)
Position in System: 1
Time to Jump Point: 5.89 days
Number of Satellites: 5 (Hoshide, Yui, Furukawa, Onishi, Yamazaki)
Surface Gravity: 0.80
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 25° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 80 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 9,320,000
Socio-Economic Levels: B-A-D-A-D



A single world orbiting a close binary star system, Isesaki was surveyed in 2281 and then promptly ignored, as it was deemed of little value to the resource-hungry Combine at the time. Though its surface is primarily water, the oceans contain a heavy amount of poisonous bacteria and alkaline compounds. Fluctuating tides caused by the small, close moons made coastal settlements extremely difficult and costly. The small amount of fresh water on the continental surface comes from underground springs and is difficult to access in large quantities.

In 2612, Isesaki Shipping sponsored and built the first colony on the surface of the lone planet. Taken by the world's vast aquatic beauty, dazzling views of the binary and moons, and the hundreds of rich, verdant forest islands and atolls, Isesaki's founder Uchio Randolph, petitioned the Coordinator for corporate possession of the entire system. Within two centuries, the corporation built two JumpShip yards, several microgravity manufacturing facilities, and converted an entire island into a small spacecraft manufacturing complex. The system became a major transportation hub for Combine traffic traversing the Draconis Rift and vaulted Isesaki Shipping into the top tier of commercial corporations in the realm.

The main continent of Uchio is home to all of the planet's residents. The two smaller continents, Isoroku and Matsubushi, have remained unsettled and wild to provide a peaceful retreat for Isesaki employees. Both located along the equator, these continents are covered in verdant forests, rolling hills, and sparkling springs. Several lodges peak through the landscape, most crafted in a minimalist style to keep the focus on the natural beauty of the area. The more magnificent palatial compounds are hardwired to the planetary network. Security protocols keep these locked down so that executives are forced to spend time away from their workplace, refreshing their body, mind, and spirit.

Due in part to the spectacular solar display in the sky, citizens of Isesaki are obsessed with spaceflight and exploration. One of ComStar's major Explorer Corps administrative hubs was located on the outskirts of the Toyohiro Akiyama Spacecraft Complex. With ComStar's recent abandonment of the site, Isesaki employees have petitioned that it be converted into an astronomical observatory and historical library.

The capital city of Ukonsoi dominates the central plains of Uchio. Its architecture is a blend of Rasalhagian, Shōwa, Buddhist, and neo-Qing designs centered around the four towers of Isesaki headquarters. The entire eastern sector of the city contains rows upon rows of massive warehouses. These facilities hold products and shipments from across the Inner Sphere under heavy security. Bulk items are stored here for varying durations as determined by the Isesaki Transportation Control Division. (Items of perishable or critical importance are transferred at one of the two spacedocks located near the system's recharge stations.) Roku Royal trains steadily crawl through the sector in a complicated but efficient balancing act; despite the intense traffic flow, only two collisions have occurred in the last fifty years.

Several Combine and corporate administrative clusters dot the rest of Uchio's surface. Each cluster is surrounded by residential and commercial districts, laid out in concentric patterns. At night, the lights from the continent's surface give the impression of perfectly placed scales, symbolic of the Dragon's ever-present influence on Isesaki and its employees.

NEW SAMARKAND

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Namichi Sato
Star Type (Recharge Time): FoIV (171 hours)
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 21.94 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Jimmu, Kōshō, and Chūai)
Surface Gravity: 1.05
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 35° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 70 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 3,246,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-B-C-B-B



The birth world of Shiro Kurita, New Samarkand was the original capital and administrative hub of the Draconis Combine. With vast shipyards in orbit and millions of kilometers of office buildings to house the immense bureaucratic network necessary for the nation, the planet enjoyed immeasurable success as the center of the Dragon's power. All of that changed when Coordinator Sanethia developed and groomed Luthien as the new capital.

New Samarkand went into a slow, heavy decline. More than half of the planet's population transferred to Luthien, creating a crushing economic recession that brought in an influx of malcontents and vagabonds. Organized crime skyrocketed as yakuza *gumi* and mafia families fought for power. The decline had a positive side, however. The situation opened opportunities for two essential Combine establishments: the ISF and the Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy.

While much of the upper levels of the Combine's functionary apparatus relocated to Luthien, the ISF retained its headquarters on New Samarkand. The planetary decay saw several agitators set up shop among the crumbling mansions and abandoned administrative enclaves. These run-down urban areas created the perfect environment for the ISF to train its agents. Much of the criminal element was allowed to persist, providing fertile ground for exercise operations in infiltration, deep cover, intelligence, and other more unsavory activities. In return, the ISF kept a finger on the pulse of the Combine's underworld as New Samarkand became known as a criminal and black market haven.

The decaying cities and abandoned zones also provided a fertile ground for Sun Zhang cadets to train in urban environments. The large-scale live-fire battlefield has given many graduates an edge in their careers serving the Dragon. Both aerospace and ground forces train among the crumbling ruins of once-vast bureaucratic monoliths and ruined towns. On occasion, cadet teams partner with ISF attack squads to take down a crime syndicate that has grown too large.

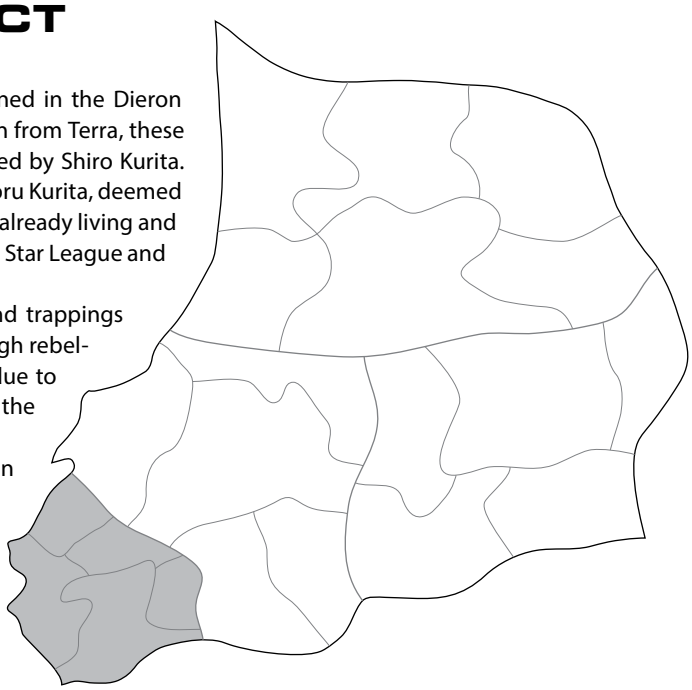
Much of the northern continent is flat, peppered with several hundred quarry pits that extract valuable germanium and other precious metals from the planet's crust. New Samarkand Metals' sole germanium processing facility is located between the coast and Shiro Kurita Memorial Spaceport, which also contains the vast Isesaki Shipping cargo vaults.

The Internal Security College is the ISF's formal education academy. Also reachable only by underground shuttle, the college is surrounded by a sixty kilometer circle of diacetylsilicate, a synthetic sand developed by a motivated Combine research team. The sand eats through rubber, flesh, and even ferro-fibrous armor plating in seconds. Unauthorized aircraft approaching within two hundred kilometers are shot down without warning.

The ISF headquarters is a massive ferrocrete bunker with reinforced walls stretching four kilometers a side. The facility predates the Star League's Castle Brian project, though it was later certified as one. The fortress stands at the mouth of the polluted Di-Sho Delta. In the event of an NBC assault, the entire structure can be environmentally sealed in less than two minutes.

The bunker accommodates more than fifty thousand people, not including the regiment of BattleMechs housed nearby. The ISF is proud of the base's ability to survive independent of support from the rest of the universe for more than a decade. Within one of the many underground bunkers, huge banks of logistical battle computers constantly process data, surveillance, and communications records to predict hotspots within the Combine and along its outer borders. No roads lead to the facility; the main approach is through a guarded system of underground shuttle cars that link headquarters, Internal Security College, and Shiro Memorial.

DIERON MILITARY DISTRICT (THE DRAGON'S SPIRIT)



Of all the holdings of the Draconis Combine, the worlds contained in the Dieron Military District are the oldest. Part of the initial waves of colonization from Terra, these worlds were also part of the Terran Hegemony, despite being courted by Shiro Kurita. When the Star League fell, they were among the first targeted by Minoru Kurita, deemed valuable to the Combine. Many of these systems had Kuritan civilians already living and working there thanks to the various exchange programs between the Star League and the Draconis Combine.

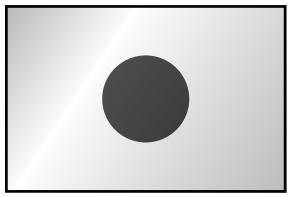
By and large, these worlds shed their Hegemony allegiances and trappings long ago, fully embracing the ways and means of the Combine. Though rebellious activity is high at times, the heavier presence of the DCMS—due to the proximity of several of the Dragon's enemies—gently reminds the population of who remains owner of the world.

Because of heavy Hegemony activity, many of these worlds within Dieron had been industrialized in some fashion. Their importance to the rise of the Dragon following the failure of the Star League cannot be overstated. Without key industries, research labs, and other industrial breakthroughs, much of the Combine's dominance in the Succession Wars would be nonexistent. Many civilian dissenters know this and continue their ancestral traditions, trying to disrupt the Combine long enough for a sympathetic force to arrive and seize control. Very few of these attempts have ever been fruitful.

DIERON

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Edward Nakamura
Star Type (Recharge Time): G3V (184 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8.53 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Bemer, Nebulos)
Surface Gravity: 1.02
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 27° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 54 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Amphibian
Population: 2,952,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-A-B-C

One of the original worlds colonized during the initial exodus from Terra, Dieron was one of the most highly developed worlds in culture and industry. Shiro Kurita and his successors attempted multiple times to badger, threaten, bribe, sweet-talk, and court the world into the Draconis Combine. Ultimately, the planet and its associated allies were forced to follow James McKenna into the Terran Hegemony, an insult that the Kuritans never forgot. The world benefited greatly from the Hegemony and then the Star League's presence, becoming a thriving administrative and research center.



As the Great Houses scrambled to grab former Hegemony worlds, Dieron was a prime target for Kuritan forces. Minoru Kurita fulfilled Shiro's original plans and seized the world, naming it a military district capital. The Dragon's prestige increased a hundredfold with the possession of one of the sundered League's prominent technology worlds. Excavations flecked the surface for decades as the Combine sought to uncover rumored Star League bunkers and reopen the massive Castles Brian.

Many consider the world cramped due to the limited space available in the narrow valleys between the planet's huge mountain ranges. The prestige of being a military district capital more than makes up for the harsh conditions, however. Even with constant low-level earthquakes and occasional political dissent, the Dieronese are a content people.

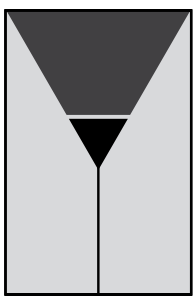
Dieron is rich in natural minerals and ores. Several deep mines scar the bulk of the Scales of the Dragonet, the longest mountain chain on the planet. Nestled in the long, shallow Sükhbaatar Valley is the capital of San Martin. While not the largest city on Dieron, it is one of the most scenic as the ancient Oriental architecture enhances the beauty of the valley. The same cannot be said for the two well-known Castles Brian that can be seen on the distant horizon from the capital.

To the southwest lies Fortress Dieron, built into the summit of Mount Shanyu. It is the center of the DCMS's military power, housing the Warlord of Dieron and his entire command staff. Much of the Fortress remains in perpetual lockdown, sealed tight when Kerensky abandoned the planet centuries ago. Northwest of San Martin is the smaller fortress known as the Dragon Roost. This bunker complex weaves in and around Tatsuyama Mountain and is the primary residence of the planetary chairman, the district governor, and the upper levels of civilian government.

The continent-spanning Atacama Desert girdles most of Dieron's equator. The gray volcanic sand hides numerous chasms and sinkholes, many of which are old Star League exploratory mines. A series of large lakes crisscrosses a large portion of the Atacama, connected to each other by the fast-flowing Khoomei River—so named from the constant low rumble of the river as it runs from the top of the Chiloe mountain range to the Tibet Ocean, an elevation change of 12,587 meters. Most of Dieron's cultural and administrative centers reside in the valleys and ridges along the Khoomei, including the Iznakki Interplanetary Spaceport and nearby Deber City, one of the five "modular cities" of the failed program conceived by Coordinator Hugai Kurita.

AL NA'IR

Planetary Ruler: *Shogun* Quentin Parnell Tormark
Star Type (Recharge Time): A9II (170 hours)
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 23.75 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Taliswan)
Surface Gravity: 0.6
Atmosphere Pressure: Low (Tainted)
Equatorial Temperature: 35° C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 30 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: None
Population: 653,665,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-A-A-D



Al Na'ir offered nothing when first surveyed, making it a perfect world for Azami colonists in search of a quiet world to settle. Tainted with high levels of sulfur, the planet was too inhospitable for standard colonization. A small research and observation colony—Homai-Zaki—was put in place in 2191. Star League terraforming technology permitted a larger dome and increased viability, and Azami citizens began an extensive study of the system's asteroid belt. The Combine quietly took control of the world after the Star League's collapse.

In 2743, vast deposits of rare metals were discovered on several of the belt's more distant asteroids, which led to additional colonization efforts. A joint venture by Luthien Armor Works and Alshain Weapons formed several mining and construction communities. These domed cities were of lesser manufacture than those of the original colony, and workers often required filtered masks when outside of buildings for long periods of time. Despite the domed refuges, large Azami communities formed in the wilds of Al Na'ir, a landscape that mimicked the hot desert wastes of Terra and distant Arkab.

The Kuritan Court authorized the establishment of the School for Cultural Investigation (SCI) in 2890. Despite the extremely inhospitable locale, many Combine researchers and academics flocked to the school for a chance to study the benefits and drawbacks of Azami culture. As the community around the school grew, so did the potential workforce.

Yori MechWorks, a manufacturing facility built into the largest asteroid between Al Na'ir and its planetary neighbor Al Abila, benefited from the influx of citizens. The ground-based assembly center expanded near Homai-Zaki. The Scarborough Manufacturing facility doubled in size. As the SCI waned in popularity, the military and industrial importance of Al Na'ir flourished. By the time of the Clan Invasion, the system's population neared 800 million.

Al Na'ir's status as a prefecture capital required considerable redevelopment to accommodate the large bureaucracy that comes with such government. Excavations of numerous mountain plateaus formed several underground cities with access to the outside atmosphere. These cities consisted of a blend of expensive domes and rare terraforming technology. They used a series of sealed airlocks and kilometers of air recycling tubes to provide a more normal environment for the influx of government workers. The largest of these plateau cities is New Petra, which houses fifteen million people and stretches nearly four kilometers below the surface.

After Operation BULLDOG, the Coordinator requested some resettlement of the reclaimed worlds with model Kuritan citizens. Valuable incentives were offered, and many citizens of Al Na'ir chose to relocate, leaving the harsh atmosphere and landscape behind.

Al Na'ir's two continents are separated by Micah's Sea, the planet's sole ocean. Cedar Rock, the larger of the two land masses, is home to Homai-Zaki and the majority of the planet's population. Scarborough, named for the corporation that established several processing and assembly plants dotting its surface, is the smaller of the two. The Sahara Sea is located under Scarborough's surface and is the main source of the planet's fresh water.

ASHIO

Planetary Ruler: *Shogun* Nikolai Jansma
Star Type (Recharge Time): G6IV (187 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 7.01 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Kauner, Rossi, Hyde)
Surface Gravity: 1.00
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 35° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 80 percent
Recharging Station: Nadir
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 1,998,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-C-B-B



Initially discovered in 2179, Ashio was marginally settled and mostly forgotten for nearly two hundred years. Its primary claim to Star League fame was Mount Vesuvius Major, a ten-kilometer tall volcano—the largest in the Inner Sphere. It is estimated that if the volcano ever erupted, Ashio would experience a thousand-year ice age. A few settlements were placed, but the system, with such few mineral resources available, was largely bypassed.

Ashio's settlers encountered huge cattle-like herbivores migrating across the vast plains. These Ashio mammoths were domesticated and used as beasts of burden and a food source. When the Terran Hegemony re-discovered the system, a rough agrarian society was found. The Hegemony took advantage of the situation and Ashio experienced a steady increase in population and production. The University of Ashio opened its doors in 2543 and became the center of genetic research in the region. Their first success was in developing a more robust beef-producing animal, the bullard mammoth.

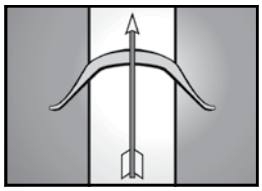
Two of Ashio's three continents—Rhodesia and Zaire—support the planet's beef industry. The continental soil is exceptionally fertile, producing huge yields in the agricultural co-ops. Vesuvius Major is the main source of mining on Ashio; the island continent's ancient lava flows are a rich source of metal ores and minerals. Razor-straight roads cut ferrocrete swaths across all three continents, with straightaways extending for thousands of kilometers. Land trains and other massive cargo containers are a constant sight on these roads, inevitably making their way to the planetary capital Iscariot. Engineers completed the four-thousand-kilometer tunnel under the Great Silas Sea in 2953, a 124-year project that employed nearly half a million citizens.

The main source of urban sprawl is Iscariot. The city exploded when Ashio was designated a prefecture capital by Coordinator Taragi. Iscariot is also the largest city on Ashio. Some of the Combine's top Zen garden architects designed the city's layout, creating a peaceful oasis amidst the vast plains of Rhodesia.

In 3034, Kuritan scientists discovered a rare fish breed deep in the canyons of the Madagascar Sea. The Ashio Eel, measuring more than four meters in length, is remarkably sweet when lightly cooked. More significantly, its glands contain enzymes that are beneficial in curing neurological disorders such as Parkinson's. Though heavy restrictions were placed on harvesting these fish, they were pushed to the brink of extinction due to a culinary fad among the nobility. Few of these eels remain in the wild. Their use in cuisine is banned, but they can occasionally be found in Ashio's black market, despite the punishment of death for possession.

KAUS BOREALIS

Planetary Ruler: Planetary Chairman Mark Thompson
Star Type (Recharge Time): K1IV (192 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 5.18 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Blufisch)
Surface Gravity: 0.87
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Tainted)
Equatorial Temperature: 55° C (Desert)
Surface Water: 71 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class Type: None
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 35,370
Socio-Economic Levels: F-F-F-D-F



Many astrophysicists and planetologists consider Kaus Borealis as "a world on death's door." It is a hellish planet of continuous volcanic activity that is attributed to severe tectonic shifts of unparalleled magnitude. More than three hundred volcanoes have formed in the last three centuries alone, erupting with increased intensity. Lava flows freely over nearly ten percent of the planet's surface at any given time. Observers find it hard to believe the world was once lush and verdant.

When first discovered in the early twenty-third century, Kaus Borealis was a serene world of deep emerald oceans, fertile soil, ancient woodlands, and abundant wildlife. The early colonists made their paradise a home and established it as an agricultural center. Scientists thought little of the planet's seismic disturbances until three new volcanoes emerged on the northern continent of Lucynda in 2803. More eruptions followed, swallowing entire towns and farming regions. The Combine began moving its citizens a decade later, spreading them across Algedi Prefecture.

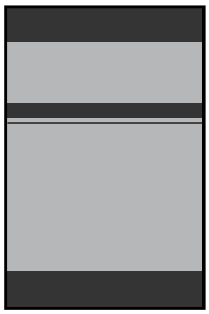
By 3013, enough sulfur, methane, and ash were in the atmosphere that the ozone layer collapsed. Breathing was impossible without respirators and acid rain was the norm. Gone was the paradise known to its few remaining inhabitants. Replacing the beautiful and serene wilderness were turbulent, poisoned seas and barren wastes. Those who remained were volunteers from various government departments and the operational staff of the Borealis Halo. The large, semi-circular polar orbital station had once served as a weather and observational platform. Now it hosts a variety of scientists and researchers watching a world slowly collapse. The largest ground city is the capital Iamda, where the central headquarters of the Planetary Evacuation Command remains in control.

Kaus Borealis still serves the Combine as a major waypoint in interstellar travel. Its two recharge stations have been extensively modified and contain temporary living quarters, a substantial cargo holding area, and minor repair facilities. New Samarkand Metals maintains a small asteroid mining facility on the far edge of the system with bimonthly cargo runs to waiting JumpShips. The ISF stays busy, working alongside the Admiralty as arriving merchant vessels from Rasalhague and independent concerns from Terra are inspected.

A comprehensive research report delivered to the Imperial Court in 3065 indicated that the situation on Kaus Borealis was slowly reversing. Toxicity levels in the atmosphere were in sharp decline, as was the average ocean temperature. Seismic activity had abated substantially; the last volcanic eruption occurred in 3053. Experts suggested that the Combine begin the rebuilding process and recommended opening the world to surveys by heavy industry.

KESSEL

Planetary Ruler: District Governor Julius Astankov
Star Type (Recharge Time): GoV (181 hours)
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 10.43 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Kiev and Svoboda)
Surface Gravity: 1.21
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Tainted)
Equatorial Temperature: 42° C (Sauna—Tropical)
Surface Water: 81 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
HPG Class Type: B
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Population: 1,478,000,000
Socio-Economic Levels: C-A-C-A-D



Captured centuries ago during one of many conflicts with House Steiner, Kessel was a hotbed of simmering revolt and underground rebellion. At the start of the Third Succession War, the Dieron district governor named Kessel as a prefecture capital world. The move was done to reassert the Combine's domination of the planet and a

systematic crackdown of rebel cells and traitorous citizens began. ISF investigations found that much of Kessel's restiveness stemmed from clandestine support by the Lyran Intelligence Command.

Kessel was a valuable manufacturing center well before its inclusion in the Lyran Commonwealth. The Combine coveted the world when the Star League collapsed. During a drive into the Federation of Skye, a side operation snapped up the system. The Combine quickly saw the untapped potential in this mineral- and metal-rich world, already possessing a multitude of mines, refineries, manufacturing centers, and other heavy industry. The Combine brought looser industrial regulations, allowing Kessel's factories to increase their output and fulfill the DCMS's needs.

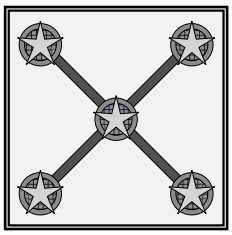
Strip-mining and chemical dumping became commonplace and attracted the attention of several nearby yakuza clans. Taking advantage of new labor pools, unions, and associated vices, the yakuza solidified its grip on Kessel's underworld. The crime syndicates developed labor parity in the planetary economy, attracting new manufacturers and corporations to the system. Several industrial giants from outside the Combine applied to form Kuritan divisions on Kessel, paving the way for Earthwerks, Federated-Boeing, Independence Weaponry, and others to enter the Combine markets.

Sverdlovsk is the planetary and prefectural capital, located on the northern continent of Novgorod. Gershtad, which covers most of the southern hemisphere, is home to the massive Kessel Imperial Spaceport. Lobopov, the smallest of the three landmasses, remains empty and barren, the result of mass strip-mining operations in the twenty-eighth century.

The newest industry boom on Kessel is that of incarceration. Several prison complexes mark Novgorod, housing political dissenters, captured spies, and other malcontents. A new facility is being built on Lobopov; when it opens in 3070, it will house more than two hundred thousand inmates.

QUENTIN

Planetary Ruler: *Tozama Daiymo* Andreas Repin
Star Type (Recharge Time): K9IV (200 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 3.31 days
Number of Satellites: None
Surface Gravity: 0.74
Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Tainted)
Equatorial Temperature: 56° C (Desert)
Surface Water: 53 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Amphibian
Population: 992,461,000
Socio-Economic Levels: B-A-B-A-C



The first colonists on Quentin were employees of Terran corporations seeking to exploit natural resources. During the Age of War, many of these industries turned to military applications, and the planet's economy thrived. With such prosperity came the desire by various neighboring governments to secure Quentin and its industries for themselves. The rise of the Star League saved Quentin from the worst ravages of war. The League's rule brought even more wealth to the world when a major BattleMech manufacturing facility was built in the Steel Valley region. This factory became the centerpiece of Independence Weaponry's flourishing within the Combine. Multiple expansions allowed the company to produce several heavy and assault class BattleMechs.

When the Star League collapsed, Quentin became a target of the Combine, Federated Suns, and Capellan Confederation. The planet still retains scars from the various engagements, the most visible being the caustic atmosphere, a result of a massive biological weapon attack unleashed as a scorched earth tactic. Several nuclear warheads were detonated at the arctic polar ice cap, destroying a key water purification facility and several deep mining operations.

The majority of Quentin's population resides in and around Steel Valley on the equatorial continent of Morandi, which is also home to the capital Prosperity Point. El Largo, Gladius, and El Minoro are far less populous due to extremely cold temperatures and the gradual decline of several heavy industries on these continents. Gladius is also home to the planet's most curious geographical feature, the Bloody Gash, a hellish canyon stretching tens of kilometers through the Okopo Mountains. The bottom of the rift is an active lava flow, and intense thermals rising from the canyon create severe turbulence in the atmosphere above the area.

During the FedCom Civil War, Davion troops started a colossal fire in the Elroy Forest on El Minoro. The fire raged for months, consuming millions of hectares of primeval forest and killing off several endangered species. The smoke and ash from the blaze could be seen from the multitude of orbital facilities, as can the now-blackened landscape.



THE SANCTUM ARCANUM

Five symbolic pillars are said to support the society of House Kurita: the Pillar of Gold, signifying the ruling Kurita dynasty and its governing apparatus; the Pillar of Steel, symbolizing the military; the Pillar of Jade, representing the economic productivity and the flow of wealth and commerce; the Pillar of Teak, standing for the culture and art of the Combine; and the Pillar of Ivory, exemplifying faith, philosophy, and codes of conduct.

Deep within the recesses of Unity Palace on Luthien is a complex of small apartments called the Sanctum Arcanum. The innermost room is a low-ceilinged chamber dimly lit by indirect lights. Most of the chamber is taken up by a raised platform covered with an ancient, richly colored carpet woven with the design of an intricate Asiatic dragon. In the center of the rug is a black-lacquered sword stand holding the well-worn katana of the dynastic founder, Lord Shiro Kurita. The figure of the dragon twines around five columns that rise from platform to ceiling. Each pillar, standing in a collar of filigreed gold at the base, is carved from a different kind of ivory.

To the right of the sword stand is a smooth, cream-colored column of soft ivory, a huge elephant tusk from the eastern coast of Africa on Terra. Its strength is self-evident, but its relative softness, which makes it the easiest for ivory carvers to work, is symbolic of the adaptability of Kurita doctrine within its basic shape. To the left of the stand is a column that looks like clear glass but is actually a gigantic fire hippopotamus tusk from the tropical world of Thimphu. It is extremely dense, hard ivory—so hard it gives off fire when struck with steel. It symbolizes the strength and rigor of the unbending Kurita codes.

Slightly behind the sword stand and to the right is a column of vivid turquoise. This is also the shaft of a single tusk from an ancient mammoth recovered from deep within the Siberian tundra on Terra. During the tens of thousands of years the tusk was buried, the metallic salts that gave it its color slowly penetrated the tusk's pores. This mammoth tusk is symbolic of the deep roots that Kurita ideology has in the ancient doctrines of Terran Asia.

Behind and to the left of the sword stand sits a rough-looking ivory column that is streaked and unevenly colored but nonetheless massive in its strength. Unfinished, with the bark still on, this tusk came from the same elephant as the soft ivory pillar in the front. It symbolizes the Kuritan people, rough and unfinished themselves, needing the hand of the artisan but at heart willing to be shaped.

Directly behind the sword is the last ivory column, carved into the serpentine body of an Asian dragon twisting into a left-handed spiral. Another fossil, the pillar was made from the single, sword-like horn of the extinct monodon, once native to the ancient seas of the arctic wastes of Labrea. Until it was uncovered during a twenty-seventh century mining operation, this huge trunk of ivory had spent millennia buried in the permafrost, leaching radioactive isotopes. When the lights in the Sanctum Arcanum are turned off, this fifth pillar seems to hang in the air like a glowing dragon, filling the chamber with its own soft illumination.

ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE IDEAL CITIZEN

The highest ideals to which the subjects of Lord Kurita can aspire are Purity and Harmony.

By Purity is meant freedom from all that might come between the citizen and their duty to their Lord and government.

[*Commentary:* Purity does not mean avoidance of bodily functions such as sex. Rather, it refers to using those functions to increase one's contribution to the Dragon. To combine with one of the opposite sex to produce a child is therefore praiseworthy if the new life is dedicated to the service of House Kurita. Purity does not mean all avoidance of uncleanliness. If one must immerse oneself in uncleanliness in work or combat for the Lord Kurita, this is praiseworthy and no violation of Purity.]

By Harmony is meant synchronizing life, action, and thought to the higher purposes of one's society and one's Lord.

[*Commentary:* Birth is painful, sickness is painful, wounds in battle are painful, old age is painful, death is painful. This is the noble truth that leads to the cessation of all pain: the meaning of life will not be found through individual striving but by becoming part of the web of society. One's life, one's happiness, and one's strength are really the strength, the happiness, and the life of the whole. Likewise, one's pain, one's wounds, and one's sickness are the sickness, the wounds, and the pain of the whole. If one craves life, happiness, and strength for oneself alone, then one's pain, sickness, and wounds must also attach to oneself alone, and one's death takes on the terror of the end of all things. In reality, one is not single. One is part of the whole, and when one dies, one knows that the whole never dies but goes on always to serve and increase the glory of Lord Kurita.]

—Dictum Honorium, v. II, 17–23

The figure of the Dragon pervades and sums up much of Kurita mythology. At times, it is taken to mean the First Lord, Shiro Kurita. At other times, it stands for the entire Draconis Combine. The fifth pillar symbolizes the sea and the land, the past and the present, the people and the society, all united in the body of the Dragon of House Kurita.

Built into the floor directly in front of the platform in the Sanctum Arcanum is a section of straw tatami mats covered with tightly stretched, brilliantly clean white canvas. Of the same length as the room—just under five meters—and one meter wide, this area resembles a miniature judo or aikido practice mat. At each end of the mats, two hooded figures sit on their heels, facing each other at attention. With hands on knees, they remain perfectly still but always alert. Each wears a wide-sleeved robe of rough brown cloth. What appear to be starched linen wings cover their throats and shoulders, but the material is actually a flexible ceramic that is impervious to weapons. The figures' heads are hooded, and darkly tinted shields obscure all but the lower part of their faces. Blue, metallic-looking sashes tied around their waists hold their robes shut. These monkish guards are Adepts of the Order of the Five Pillars (O5P).

OVERVIEW AND HISTORY OF THE O5P

The origins of O5P date to the mid-2300s when it was little more than a clerical staff intended to assist the Keeper of the House Honor. Omi Kurita, daughter of Shiro Kurita, first compiled these codes, known collectively as the Dictum Honorium. The Dictum was conceived as both homage and warning to future generations of Kuritas. The warning was especially pointed after Omi's younger sister Shada shamed the family's honor so badly that Shiro ordered her execution.

Assisted by her parents, Omi spent her life maintaining and amending the Dictum, becoming the first to hold the title "Keeper of the House Honor." Though the title afforded her no real power, the position entitled her a special degree of respect. With her death, the title passed to her niece, Shiragi Kurita, and ever since the Keeper has been a member of some branch of the ruling Kurita line.

Evolution

Sanyu Kurita, third Keeper of the House Honor, is largely credited with the formation of today's O5P. A controversial Keeper, she was known for making revisions that did not always cast the Kurita family in its best light. Sanyu's independence eventually became reflected in the Order itself. Claiming a monopoly on all ivory trade within the Combine as a means to fund her office, Sanyu used a series of alliances and brute force. She then expanded her influence to cover all artisans who worked with the prized commodity. The result was the formation of an unofficial government bureaucracy with the trappings of a Kurita-sanctioned guild.

Over time, Sanyu's agents spread out along trade networks and expanded their search for new ivory sources. Although these agents once functioned as mere business agents, the influence of Sanyu and her Dictum gradually transformed these operatives into a corps of ideological inspectors, and eventually these inspectors assumed the trappings of a monastic order. This transformation, including the assumption of a quasi-spiritual chain of command, provided them with better coordination and the protection of mystique and anonymity, much the way ComStar's own Order evolved.

The organization picked up its name in reference to the five facets of Combine society. Meshing well with their self-assigned responsibility to uphold the principles of House Kurita, the O5P's new form made it both the spiritual core of the realm and a potent intelligence apparatus. The transformation was so gradual it caught the ISF completely by surprise. With the Order's sanction from the ruling House Kurita, there was no way to eliminate it.

Underground

In 2459, upon Sanyu's death, Nihongi Von Rohrs decided to abolish the Keeper of the House Honor position. He declared the Von Rohrs were of pure morals and ethics and had no need for such a position. To emphasize his point, Von Rohrs had the Abbess of the Order, Jamila Benhashemi, summoned to the inner parts of the palace and executed. With this act and the follow-up executions of many agents, the position of Keeper was abolished, and the Order fled underground.

The Order's lower-ranked adepts and neophytes, taking advantage of their contacts in the ivory trade, dropped out of sight. They blended in with the populations of planets as far removed from the Von Rohrs military as possible. While in hiding, they continued to recruit and induct new members and maintained their network through clandestine contacts and secret meetings.

Even when Marika Von Rohrs reestablished the office of the Keeper in 2509, the O5P remained in hiding. The majority of the Order remained distrustful of the Von Rohrs. Only when Martha Kurita became Keeper did the Order exit the shadows; with the ascendance of Siriwan Kurita, the O5P made their full network available to the Keeper once more.

Restoration

Under Siriwan's rule, the Order's power and prestige increased dramatically. She encouraged the Order's evolution into an intelligence agency rivaling the ISF in scope and power. The Order's income increased as Draconian law reinforced the sale of ivory to the people. The Pillarine headquarters on Luthien was constructed on Siriwan's orders—including the Sanctum Arcanum in Unity Palace.

Furthermore, Siriwan laid down directives that all DCMS officers were required to study martial arts under O5P instructors. This allowed the Keeper a view into the state of the Kuritan officer corps and gave the O5P a measure of influence in military affairs. Some officers—those with the right state of mind or proper loyalties—were invited into the Order and became agents of O5P.

The Order's powers never diminished from the days of Coordinator Siriwan and Keeper Martha Kurita, though the O5P remains relatively quiet. They maintain their intelligence apparatus, working in tandem with the ISF at times and on their own agenda at other times.

Modern Day

The ISF remains wary of the Order's infiltration of all aspects of Combine society, a situation that rivals the secret police's own machinations. Agents have attempted to infiltrate the O5P and compete with the quality of its training. Because of the ISF's lack of women—many O5P adepts and illuminati are female—and the Order's own counter-penetration of the agency, ISF success has been limited. This rivalry continues unabated, lasting more than five centuries, but neither side will openly admit to such disharmony. Such an admission could have disastrous ramifications on the Combine, a situation neither agency wishes to see occur.

Nonetheless, during the Keepership of Constance Kurita, efforts to reconcile differences between the two agencies were initiated. The détente continued under the Keepership of the Coordinator's daughter Omi, who tested both sides when she asked them to relay a message to the Dragon's enemies during the Clan Invasion. Her request sought help in freeing the Heir-Designate trapped on Teniente. Emboldened by the mission's success, Omi continued to build on that alliance of expediency through the rest of her years.

Tragically, Omi's death at the hands of an assassin in 3064 seems to have shattered the fragile alliance. While the two agencies might have cooperated individually with the Coordinator's son Minoru in tracking Omi's killer, such reports cannot be independently verified. It remains unclear at present exactly how Minoru found and executed the assassin and avenged the Dragon's loss.

The current head of the Order and Keeper of the House Honor is Miyako Kurita, daughter of Isoroku Kurita, the Warlord of the Dieron Military District. The Abbess is Tomade Yamiro, who was recently under rigorous investigation by the ISF for possible links to the Black Dragons. Ultimately proven innocent, the Abbess has since cut the Order's ties with the agency, forming a crack in the already tattered alliance that neither group can afford at this time.

—A Brief Survey of the O5P; ISF Report 14-9-245, 14 June 3067

> The essence of religion is faith, a belief strictly independent of intellectual comprehension. Your religion, then, provides a complete ideological apparatus that is devoid of content. The content must come from elsewhere, from the reality of man's interaction with the material universe. And because the state is the means mankind uses to mediate this interaction, the content of religion in every era must reflect the ideological requirements of the state that rules in that era and the leading class that controls that state.
>
> —*Analects and Commentaries of the Fifth Era*; Sacred Works (05P), 2817

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

As in all essential matters, the Draconis Combine took its lead in religion from its founder and First Citizen, Shiro Kurita. Understanding the Combine's First Coordinator is essential to grasping the philosophical and religious underpinnings of the Dragon.

The household of Shiro's father Kamaro was based on the ascetic samurai culture of seventeenth-century Japan. Though it has never been clear that the Kuritas could trace their lineage back to this early warrior class, Shiro identified strongly with the thought and culture of that era. Exactly which thoughts and what aspects of the culture he identified with most depended on his needs and goals at any given time. This is not to say that Shiro was consciously cynical about his beliefs. Rather, the harsh focus of his will tended to channel all aspects of his life toward achieving his goals.

Stoic and hardworking, Shiro strongly encouraged these qualities among his subjects. He also possessed a remarkable talent for concentrating on a single objective until it was attained, whether a stubbornly defended world or an important decision in a family matter. Some attribute his military prowess to this firmness of mind rather than to his skill as a strategist.

From an early age, Shiro and his brother Urizen trained extensively in the martial arts of jujutsu and aikido and learned combat techniques for knives, swords, staffs, and other personal weapons. Before they reached their teens, they also came under the tutelage of masters in the rigorous study of *go*, *shogi*, and variations on the strategy roleplaying games that flourished off and on over the centuries.

Shiro was drawn to Taoism in his youth, absorbing deeply and early the principle that all things change into their opposites. For example, he could change a headlock by an opponent into his own hold by capturing the other man's elbow, or he could turn withdrawal from the enemy's advance into his own encirclement and attack. His appreciation of the Taoist dialectic, the principle of constant change, served him well as he made his way from a lesser household on New Samarkand towards the seat of power as founder of an interstellar dynasty.

As Shiro concentrated power on New Samarkand under his rule, consolidated the Alliance of Galedon, and formed the Draconis Combine, his interest shifted from the Taoist principle of change toward the ancient Confucian principle of stability.

Early in his reign the First Coordinator established the principles of a highly stratified society in which every citizen is assigned a rigorously defined position. Each person had very clear expectations and prohibitions placed upon them; their loyalty and energy were to be directed to the higher social classes and ultimately to the state. The collective was emphasized and individualism discouraged; the belief system of each class and caste was as rigidly prescribed as its position in society.

The harshness of Kurita control kept innovations in thought to a minimum over the centuries. Nevertheless, it was the tightness of this grip that created exotic cults and practices around the edges of society, cults which tend to be as short-lived as they are fascinating. The Principality of Rasalhague, a major portion of House Kurita for several centuries, had its roots in a form of Scandinavian Christianity and did not fully integrate into the Combine until after the McAllister Rebellion in 2510, two hundred years after Shiro's death.

Rasalhagian society originated from Scandinavia on Terra. The original settlers of the Principality tended to be free-thinking individuals who wished to avoid being dominated by the troubles of a larger neighbor. The Rasalhague ethic was self-containment and independence rather than conquest. The religious underpinning of Rasalhagian belief nurtured the individuality of its believers by fixating them on their personal relation to God. Such individualistic thought ran contrary to the collective culture of the Combine, creating strong rifts between both peoples. Not until the reign of Siriwan McAllister-Kurita did the ideologies between the Combine and the Principality finally integrate. The process was no small endeavor and required concessions that had ramifications across all elements of both societies.

THE DOCTRINES OF SHIRO

Less than ten years after Shiro Kurita became First Coordinator, he had taken the role of spiritual and governmental leader of the Combine. Once he had demonstrated that strength of character could achieve sweeping victories over formidable enemies, his people responded enthusiastically. They believed Kurita's successes owed much to a sustained effort and a certain set of mental attitudes—something Shiro actively implied—and his followers could produce similar, if less spectacular, results. His ability to capture the people's imagination was no accident. Shiro had learned as a talented, young kendo student that the strength of the sword came from the *ki* of the fencer extended through the length of the blade. His intention was to weld together the people of Yamashiro Prefecture, then all the people of New Samarkand, and eventually all the people and resources of the galaxy into one mighty weapon. The *ki* controlling that mighty blade would be his own.

To control and channel the people, Shiro realized that he must mandate a person's ideology, his view of the universe, and how he related to it. Shiro laid down the fundamental values that would inform all of Draconis society: Purity and Harmony. These principles appeared, in one form or another, as part of Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism—the religions of ancient feudal Japan. Though purity and harmony may seem benign and transcendent in the abstract, what they came to mean in Draconian practice was harmony with the interests and intentions of the Kurita state and purity from any thoughts that contradicted those of the First Coordinator.

MYTHOLOGY OF IVORY IN THE COMBINE

Historians or social scientists of other Great Houses might suggest that the dynastic line derives its existence from the larger society. In the Draconis Combine, however, no one ever questions the truism that everything originates with Kurita. Without Kurita, there would be nothing. Long ago, in the twenty-sixth century, one of the wiser and more capable Coordinators, Lord Hehiro Kurita, was asked which of the institutions of society he would keep if the ruling House were to lose all but one. Without hesitation he replied, "The Pillar of Ivory. As long as the people remain united in their ideology, the dynasty would eventually be able to regain all the rest; without the faith of its people, all would be lost."

Why, then, ivory, as the substance of the Pillar that signifies the thought and conduct of the Kuritan people? Of the Five Pillars, only ivory and teak represent living materials, and only ivory comes from ambulatory beings like ourselves. Starting in earliest youth, the animal's tusks continue to grow during the whole of its existence; the tusk is built up in layers, the innermost layer being the last produced, while the outermost eventually becomes a hard and impervious protection. In like manner, the Pillar of the people's consciousness continues to grow with the expansion of House Kurita. As in the layered tusk, each stratum of society is assigned the mode of faith and conduct most suited to its position. As with the protective outer bark of the tusk, all is kept safe by the strength of character of the First Lord and the diligence of the Keeper of the House Honor.

—*Commentaries*, by Constance Kurita, Keeper of the House Honor; Luthien, 3007

THE DICTUM HONORIUM

The society of House Kurita is regimented, and in many ways, stultified. To maintain the desired degree of order among the populace, the Combine leaders depend on one document: the Dictum Honorium.

The Dictum Honorium is a detailed set of conventions, first compiled and published by Omi Kurita—daughter of Shiro Kurita—upon the death of her sister, Shada. The Dictum contains strict guidelines on procedures for offering and accepting surrender, ways of behaving honorably while in an enemy House, and other related protocols. It is the original reference source in the Draconis Combine for the increasingly complex web of obligations that circumscribes the lives of everyone, from top to bottom. Frequently, the Dictum spells out these interrelationships as tables or as interconnected line charts. It is maintained as a ready reference on every Combine world. Several senior House Kurita advisors are reputed to have memorized the entire document.

The Dictum—also referred to as the Code—has been heavily amended over the years, and now appears in its twelfth revision as a set of seven volumes. It is significant to note that over the centuries, no deletions have ever been made to the document, only additions. None of the punishments recommended for violations have ever been lessened or commuted in subsequent revisions. The text contains many anecdotes, historical examples, and lengthy monologues. Due to lack of proper editing, the document is somewhat disjointed, making it difficult to read. Nevertheless, it provides clear substantiation of House Kurita's reputation for xenophobia.

ORIGIN OF THE CODE

Before Shiro Kurita became First Coordinator of the Combine in 2319, he took time to raise a family, assuring himself a line of descendants. Shiro sired two sons and two daughters. Shada, the youngest daughter, was born in 2312 and in many ways considered his favorite. Even in her youth, she shared Shiro's strong jaw, love for life, and zest for adventure. In 2333, Shada broke her father's heart and wounded his spirit when she announced her desire to attend the University of Pesht. Shiro knew the need for formal education and acknowledged the quality of that institution's curriculum. He reluctantly permitted his daughter's request.

Four months later, Shada met Charles Klein, a social parasite from an undistinguished family. Klein's presence in Shada's company was barely tolerated by her elders and not condoned. Despite the numerous warnings, both fell in love and less than eight months after leaving her father's home, she was pregnant.

Shiro did not take long to learn of this nearly unforgivable transgression. Alternating between fury and despair, the eldest Kurita ordered his daughter's immediate return to the capital. She came under armed escort but refused all of the solutions her father presented. Shiro declared she had disgraced her own honor and the honor of the Kurita family. By her affair with a person of no family and the resulting pregnancy, she had violated the principle of Purity. By her refusal to abide by the dictates of her father, she had violated the principle of Harmony. If she were to go ahead with the birth, the resulting child would carry the impurity and disharmony into the very heart of the Kuritan realm.

Shiro had no recourse. He ordered her to the palace courtyard early one morning, where she found a firing squad. After offering one last opportunity for Shada to cleanse her dishonor—and her steadfast refusal—Shiro pulled the trigger himself. Later that morning, he announced the untimely death of his youngest child and then proceeded with the daily affairs of state.

The First Keeper

Less than a week later, Omi—Shiro's other daughter—began to compile notes on correct behavior. Shiro and Urizen Kurita and more than two dozen other leaders served as her primary sources of counsel. Less than four months after Shada's death, the first version of the Dictum Honorium was verified for accuracy and released for publication. Since then, it has remained the most produced publication in Combine space, eclipsing *The Kuritan Art of War* by more than double.

For the remainder of her life, Omi devoted her time to maintaining and amending these documents and speaking publicly in support of the new moral regulations. Her role evolved gradually into an established, if unofficial, position that became known as "Keeper of the Family Honor," or "Keeper of the House Honor." The holder of the position was entitled to a special degree of respect despite no official authority. Every Keeper since Omi has been a member of some branch of the Kurita family.

When word of Omi's death reached New Samarkand in 2375, Omi's niece Shiragi accepted the position. She filled the role effectively and without controversy until her own death in 2410.

KURITA CODES OF RELATIONSHIPS AND CONDUCT

"On Enemies"

The only friends a Draconian has are those who are born in, are totally committed to, and will die in service to the Draconis Combine. Members of any other political government, family, or party not actively loyal to House Kurita are enemies. They must be treated accordingly. All other Houses are deceptions, false pretenders to the throne that is rightfully Kurita's, and thus are enemies. All people can be classified either as friends (and fellow loyal Kuritans) or as enemies. There is no such thing as a truly neutral or disinterested party, though the Coordinator can declare an enemy as neutral for a time, as dictated by the needs of the Dragon. Such declared neutral forces cannot be trusted beyond the circumstances required, and citizens are encouraged to distance themselves from so-designated parties.

Not all enemies offend House Kurita equally. The lowliest MechWarrior or technician does not displease the leaders of the Draconis Combine as much as would a pretender to the throne. Many underlings do not realize what wrongs they commit. All else being equal, the lesser the enemy's rank, the lesser the offense. Do not judge an enemy out of proportion to his failures. It is always possible that some enemies not overly evil or afflicted may be salvaged, especially if the enemy has skills that could be useful to House Kurita.

"On the Relations of Citizens with Enemies"

Citizens of the Draconis Combine are prohibited from having personal relations with enemies. To do so would deteriorate the moral fiber and strength of conviction that is so crucial to House Kurita. The Coordinator is the sole authority on defining the Dragon's enemies. For a time and purpose, forces that have been in strife with the Combine may be declared a neutral power due to non-aggression pacts. While contact with such neutral powers is allowed, citizens are encouraged to refrain from relations unless they are vital to the Dragon's welfare.

"On Proper Behavior of the Warrior"

The proper business of the warrior is death. The warrior cannot enter a contest with any thoughts of his own survival. His only concern must be to destroy the enemy or else die fighting, unless his death would bring further harm to the Draconis Combine. In such situations where actions such as a withdrawal is deemed necessary to the continued honor and survival of the Dragon, the warrior must choose to uphold the Combine's honor and postpone his death until a later time.

"On Proper Behavior Toward Enemies"

The opposing fighter must be presumed to have the same code of death or victory as the Kurita warrior. It would be disrespectful to the enemy to hold him to a lesser standard than we hold for ourselves. In the face of the enemy, our objective is to destroy him utterly, and there must be no hesitation or lack of resolve in this regard. It is true that fighters from other Houses hold to weaker standards than do the warrior of House Kurita. Nevertheless, we deal with them in battle as we expect to be dealt with ourselves, even though they may not actually deserve this honor.

The Clans are generally treated with respect equal to that of a Kurita warrior, unless the situation demands tactics and decisions that will work for the benefit of the Dragon. On the battlefield, honor is extended to the Clan enemy as best can be provided. The honor and standards of the Combine are to be upheld above the Clan enemy, which may mean an abandonment of the enemy's strict code of warfare.

"On Proper Behavior When Among Enemies"

Draconians from time to time find themselves in the presence of enemies without being in a state of war. This occurs when they serve as diplomats, delegates, traders, or as exchanged hostages. Such individuals must never allow enemies to learn of House Kurita's strengths, as these lessons must come as surprises on the field of battle. Enemies must not learn of House Kurita's secret plans for the future, for a premature revelation may bring an end to the plans.

It is too much to expect of enemies that they follow the proper path of virtue. Even animals and the Clans have their own diluted forms of honor, inferior though they may be. Draconians must always be conscious of preserving and maintaining honor when possible. This means that enemies should also be treated as if they were people, unless there is evidence that they are not worthy of such treatment or they swear allegiance only to the Clans.

"On Accepting Surrender in Wartime"

Enemy fighters who offer to surrender on the field of battle either have no code of honor or else their code is completely unsuited to the situation. They should be killed immediately unless they appear to provide some intrinsic value to further Kuritan conquest.

Enemy fighters who fall into our hands because of wounds, surprise, etc., become a decisive tactical burden on Kurita forces because of the need to care for, guard, feed, and transport them. They also represent the potential to transform into combat units in our rear. They should be killed promptly unless they appear to provide some intrinsic value to further Kuritan conquest.

To give death to enemy fighters in these situations is to give them the honor that is appropriate to warriors, even though they may neither understand this honor nor deserve it.

The Rule of Five applies: death is the one appropriate way of dealing with enemy surrender; there are four exceptions.

1. When enemy prisoners possess technical skills needed by the Draconis Combine, it should be determined if their state of mind is such that their loyalties can be reattached to House Kurita. If they can be salvaged, tactical circumstances permitting, they should be kept as prisoners.

2. Before enemy prisoners are killed, they should be surveyed to determine which ones might possess information valuable to Kurita forces; these should be kept alive long enough for the information to be extracted.

3. Before enemy prisoners are killed, they should be surveyed to determine if any might be useful as hostages; tactical situation permitting, these should be preserved and returned as quickly as possible to rear areas.

4. A Kurita commander may find himself in a situation in which the surrender of an entire enemy force may be possible. In these cases, prisoners taken early can be preserved so as not to discourage the surrender of others. When the engagement is complete, the usual rules for accepting enemy surrender apply.

—Dictum Honorium v.XII, 40–78

Shiragi's term, however, included preparing the first full revision of the Code after Robert Kurita assassinated Werner Von Rohrs in 2395. The second version, dated 2397, reemphasized the need for discretion in personal relationships, particularly in dealing with outsiders—anyone not of the Kurita family.

Sanyu Kurita

Shiragi's successor was Sanyu Kurita. The violent assassinations and exiles of various family members prompted a second revision, which came out in 2413. This revision reflected some of House Kurita's activities in less than the best possible light, and Sanyu found herself the center of controversy for her decisions.

With the deaths of Jason and Saigo Kurita, Coordinator Parker Kurita strongly encouraged Sanyu to enact a third revision of the Code, in order to include particular details and soften the previous revision's aggressive tone. Sanyu declined, citing that "the need was not yet great enough." Despite an unpleasant investigation, her word was accepted and the decision stood.

A third revision was released by Sanyu in 2422 after Nihongi Von Rohrs seized power and sold her younger sister Lenore into slavery. Sanyu considered a fourth revision in 2426 after her nephew Philip was exiled, but she dismissed the idea after being threatened with prison and slavery. Sanyu kept a low profile from then until her death, though her strong convictions and independence of mind established the autonomy of the role. Her successors have since strived to preserve that independence.

THE ART OF VENDETTA

The concept of vendetta (and the related concept of the revenge assassination) is old and predates current times by at least four thousand years. During these millennia, many military strategists, philosophers, and even religious leaders have agreed that violence is often the only appropriate response to violence or other grievous affront. This does not imply that there are no guidelines for conduct. On the contrary, in vendetta societies throughout history, the account books for blood debts have been kept as carefully as the financial records of the moneychangers, and the rules and conventions surrounding revenge have been more punctilious than even the strictest commercial code.

It should be pointed out that a vendetta killing differs from a political assassination in that the purpose of the vendetta is to settle accounts, to balance carefully that which is out of balance. This requires great precision so that the old imbalance is corrected without a new imbalance being introduced. A political assassination, on the other hand, is much more straightforward, for it removes by the most efficient means available a person who has become inconvenient. Assassinations are not bound with all the rules and formalities of vendettas, though they do draw heavily on the expertise of the vendetta killers.

The dissolution of the Terran Alliance in the twenty-fourth century left many societies unhinged. The rules of many things, including revenge, fell into confusion and chaos. The highly structured and formalized Ares Conventions of 2412 went a long way toward establishing a workable set of proposals for limited but effective warfare. Though not specifically covered in the Ares Conventions, similar codes of conduct evolved for administering vendettas.

House Kurita, a culture rooted in military tradition, has employed the art of vendetta more than any other Great House or Periphery nation. As a result, the techniques, tactics, and regulations for vendetta are more fully developed here than elsewhere. Only one publication available within the Draconis Combine contains any information on vendettas. This single manual is *The Assassin's Handbook*. It is used primarily as a reference for poisons, weapons, and other tools of the trade, rather than as a sourcebook for tactics. (*The Assassin's Handbook* is required reading in many of the Combine's prestigious academies.) There are also the unwritten rules, followed by all agents of House Kurita when conducting vendettas, which are not codified in written form but taught by the appropriate societies and organizations that survive on the ancient art.

The Kurita rules of vendetta vary, depending on whether the vendetta deals with another House or with other families within the Draconis Combine. What follows is only a sample of the Kuritan rules for revenge. The guidelines described here are specific to the Draconis Combine under the rule of House Kurita; other Houses operate differently and with less elegance and honor.

VENDETTA ACROSS CLASS LINES

In the Combine, there are no vendettas across class lines. If a person of lower class injures or affronts a family of higher class, this is a public offense against the Harmony of Lord Kurita and will be dealt with by the ISF or other civil authority. Persons of higher class are authorized to chastise those of lower status at their own judgment, and no rights of vengeance attach to the chastised party.

The only exception is if the aggrieved party is a member of Clan Nova Cat. As such, the aggrieved may choose to either react in accordance to this vendetta rule or enact the Clan's Trial of Grievance.

VENDETTAS WITHIN A CLASS

The right of vendetta operates only within the aristocracy and within the military. Within the merchant class, the workers, and the Unproductives, individuals do not possess such a level of personal honor that can be offended or require the satisfaction of revenge.

Among the lower orders, however, individuals do retaliate for insults or injuries. These actions tend to be impulsive. The middle class, obsessed with upward mobility, parodies with deadly seriousness the customs of its betters. As financial and trading dynasties have gained more clout within the Combine, House Kurita has tolerated these "plastic" vendettas without granting them official recognition. Middle-class vendettas tend to fall into two categories: the socially pretentious aping of noble honor codes and the serious elimination of business competition.

Again, exceptions apply when the situation is dealing with members of Clan Nova Cat. The Clan's labor, technician, and scientist castes are seen as common Kuritan laborers in this regard. The Clan's merchant caste apes that of their Kuritan counterpart; if a Clan merchant is the aggrieved party, they may choose to con-

duct a formal Trial of Grievance against the aggressor or simply ignore the situation, which is then turned over to the proper authorities. Warriors of Clan Nova Cat in the position of the aggrieved are required to conduct a formal Trial of Grievance, though if the affronting person is not of military position, the warrior is disallowed the option of augmented combat.

Nobles and warriors have an obligation to maintain their personal purity unsullied. They have a higher calling to preserve the Harmony of their relation to the will of Lord Kurita. The obligation of purity must never be allowed to interfere with that of harmony. When a family or an individual requires satisfaction to cleanse their honor, the vendetta must first be registered with House Kurita and cannot proceed without permission. If the vendetta would contradict the interests of the Coordinator, the impurity can be removed by royal decree.

If an offended one puts personal purity ahead of the obligation of Harmony, they must not trouble the Coordinator further once the impurity has been removed. Rather, they must take the initiative in restoring the Harmony of the Dragon by permanently removing themselves from the Coordinator's sight. The best guide for resolving these dilemmas continues to be the *Chushingura* (Tale of the Forty-seven Ronin) from medieval Terran Japan.

The rules of vendetta do not apply to civilian women. (Only recently have the rules of vendetta been opened to women serving in an active DCMS command.) A woman has no right or obligation of revenge for a slight from another woman. If a man of one family offends a woman of another family, the offense is not to her but to her husband, father, or older brother. Though a man might be obliged to kill the woman in his own family, he cannot restore balance by killing a woman in the other family. Vengeance must be directed against the offending male. If a younger brother of the offending male is killed, balance is not completely restored. If an older brother or the father of the offending male is killed, a new imbalance is created.

Inasmuch as the impurity attaches to the persons of family members, they alone can cleanse it. Others, especially hired strangers, cannot accomplish revenge. This rule has given rise to the practice of "adopting" honorary members into a family unwilling or unable to exact the blood price personally. The adoptee is given a "gift of obligation" for carrying out the unpleasant duty. Thus, the lowest levels of society came to contain more and more "members" of the noblest Kurita families. Competition for these lucrative gifts was soon monopolized by three guilds of professional assassins: one predominantly Rasalhagian Nordic, another from Sverdlovskian Russian roots, and a third of largely Dover Irish descent. (It is assumed without question that noble Kuritan Asians would not stoop to such work.) Members of these populations had spread throughout most of the Combine, and that gave them the freedom of anonymity on practically any world held by the Dragon.

Within the military, no distinction is made in terms of balance between junior officers. Balance can be restored by a duel to the death between the two principals. The same holds true among senior officers, with the proviso that vendettas must be registered with the Coordinator, who can choose to restore balance by decree.

THE ALLURE OF THE FORTY-SEVEN

The *Tale of the Forty-seven Ronin* is a popular subject across the Combine, spawning countless words, documentaries, topical programs, and more. In the tale, forty-seven samurai became masterless *ronin* when their lord committed suicide following a slight from a high advisor to the *shogun*. It was not acceptable to the *shogun* that his advisor be killed in revenge. After elaborate deceptions, the forty-seven did kill the advisor, resolving the impurity of their master's death, but violating the harmony of the Shogunate. They restored harmony by gathering at their master's grave and committing mass suicide.

Within the DCMS, if a junior officer is offended by a senior officer, the junior must remove the impurity by killing someone appropriate of his or her own rank; he must, in essence, commit *seppuku*. Because of the strong pull of the *Tale of the Forty-seven Ronin*, many junior officers began by killing the senior officer who caused the offense before carrying out their own death. Senior officers caught onto this alarming trend, and the DCMS High Command instituted another practice outside the formal rules, wherein the offended junior officer met in combat with another junior officer from the senior's staff to conform to the rules of dueling. This began a practice that is still carried out today more from tradition: senior officers often assigned to their aide staff a junior that was highly skilled in the martial arts. This aide had no other functions or duties except to stand in if a duel materialized.

—*Little-Known Traditions of the Dragon*; Gymnasium Press Ltd, 3042

VENDETTA LINES OUTSIDE THE COMBINE

Citizens of other Houses and nations can in no way compare with Draconians in terms of purity of character. Between a Draconian noble or officer and a person of comparable station from another nation, the other is always in some way inferior to the Combine citizen. Therefore, no offenses to purity or obligations of vendetta can arise between Draconians and others of equal station. For a Draconian to take blood offense, the other person must be at least one rank or class level higher. If the person is of the same or lower rank, the Draconian can simply chastise them with death, without any of the obligations of formal vendetta.

The primary obligation of formal vendetta remains harmony with the Lord Kurita. All vendettas with persons or families of other Houses must be registered with House Kurita and cannot proceed without permission.

Concerning agents or representatives of ComStar, the obligation of harmony and longstanding tradition overrides the obligation of purity. ComStar operatives cannot be killed under any circumstances unless decreed by the Coordinator as a matter of state and not of honor. It is acceptable, however, to exile the offending operative from the Dragon's borders. Such action is often accompanied with a promise by the Coordinator to restore any future imbalance caused by the agent's re-entrance into the Combine through the deliverance of death.

WISDOM OF THE DRAGON

Over the centuries, the citizens of the Draconis Combine have developed an almost personal relationship toward the symbol of the Dragon. An image borrowed from the ancient mythology of Terran Asia, the Dragon figures prominently in clichés, epigrams, and other phrases of speech in Kuritan society. From the very beginning, Shiro Kurita fastened on the Dragon as a symbol of godlike powers because it would ensure his people's identification with the ruling House, rather than to some free-floating, undefined, and unpredictable god-figure. No other House identifies as completely with a single symbol, or accords it so much esteem, as does House Kurita with its Dragon.

The court sage Tango, a student of the subject, compiled a book of sayings. He entitled his book of parables *Wisdom of the Dragon*. The volume was first published in 3011 and is still widely available today. (It is the third bestselling book in the Combine.) The examples below are only a small sampling of the contents, but they are among the most common. All references come from the mythology of the Draconis Combine. The meanings of many, if not all, of the phrases would be completely unknown in the territories of the other Great Houses, save those waiting to be reclaimed by the Dragon.

Arm of the Dragon

The combined military forces, particularly the BattleMech regiments, of the Draconis Combine.

The Yellow Bird

The Dragon has only one dangerous enemy: a very small yellow bird possessed of a fierce demeanor and a sharp beak. Strangely unafraid, this bird searches for the sleeping Dragon throughout the land. If it were to find the Dragon, the bird would poke out its eyes—the Dragon's only vulnerable points. In common usage, this expression refers to the fact that any enemy can be dangerous, no matter how insignificant in appearance.

Claws of the Dragon

There are five claws on each of the Dragon's forelimbs. In common usage, each claw refers to one military district in the Combine: Galedon, Benjamin, Pesht, Dieron, and the spirit of Alshain.

Dragon Days

The period of time when, due to physical location and seasonal changes, a portion of a world experiences extended darkness.

Dragon's Blood

Another name for jewelblood, a rare and precious gem found on the Combine worlds of Sighisoara and Coudoux.

Dragon's Breath

The Dragon is capable of killing many opponents merely by breathing on them. In common usage, this refers to the concept that death may come from less-than-obvious sources. It is also used as a collective reference to agents of the Internal Security Force.

Dragon's Dove

The Dragon has only a single friend: a small, pale blue dove. This bird often serves as a lookout during the day in exchange for the Dragon's warmth and protection at night. In common usage, it is a reference to any valuable services rendered by a lesser subject or needed assistance from an unexpected source, such as Clan Nova Cat.

Dragon's Eternal Enemy

This phrase originated as a euphemism for the Federated Suns during the Succession Wars. Since the 3050s, this phrase has been shifted in usage to describe the Clans, though many career troops still use it when discussing the Dragon's more ancient enemy.

Dragon's Joy

This is the feeling of ecstasy that the Dragon experiences when a citizen fulfills his routine duties for the benefit of the Combine.

Dragon's Seeds

Places that were once barren but now permit the Virtues of the Dragon to grow and flourish. In common usage, any new worlds conquered by the Combine.

Dragon's Tears

The Dragon cries a single tear for every wound it suffers. In common usage, any DCMS personnel killed in combat is referred to as a "Dragon's tear."

Dragon's Teeth

This is an informal name for the Draconis household guard protecting the incumbent Coordinator. In 2510, Martin McAllister, commander of the household guard, led a palace coup in which the entire ruling Von Rohrs family was exterminated. This gave rise to a spate of quips among the lower ranks of the military, all of which related the Dragon's Teeth to certain parts of the Coordinator's anatomy. Martin McAllister ordered severe punishment for anyone overheard referring to him so disrespectfully.

Heart of the Dragon

The sum of manpower, resources, and facilities possessed by the Draconis Combine. This is often used in reference to the Dieron Military District, which contains the majority of the Combine's military industrial power.

Pillars of the Dragon

A set of five columns located in the Dragon's lair. Before sleeping, the Dragon positions his body so that each of the five pillars supports either a limb or the tail. This also refers to the Five Pillars of the Draconis Combine.

Sons of the Dragon

In common usage, this refers to any loyal and faithful followers of the Draconis Combine. Within the ISF, it refers to the Director's elite assassins.

—*Wisdom of the Dragon, Fourth Edition*; New Samarkand Press, 3052

THE MYSTICISM OF FIVE

There are myriad examples in Draconian culture of the special significance of the number five. House Kurita court sages and others have deliberately encouraged the mysticism surrounding this number.

While the origins of this attachment are unclear, it is certainly not unprecedented. Other cultures often attributed special meanings or powers to various numbers. For example, the number ten developed a certain importance due to the Arabic system of numbers and decimal mathematics. Special characteristics were ascribed to certain small prime numbers, squares, and multiples, with the pseudoscience of numerology supporting these beliefs.

(Despite what Federated Suns backwater denizens insist, the number five was not chosen because that was as high as Shiro Kurita could count. Especially since they can barely count past three—conveniently the average number of teeth they possess.)

The Draconis Combine was divided into five military districts for centuries; each of these districts was further divided into five prefectures. After a series of steady conflicts that began with the Clan Invasion in 3050, the Combine has not yet had time to restructure its holdings into the traditional divisions. A Ministry of the Court and Ministry of the Interior task force is currently drafting up new district and prefecture borders to be presented to the Coordinator after his return from the Fourth Whitting Conference. The more superstitious citizens bemoan the imbalance as the cause of the Combine's ills of late, from the death of the Coordinator's wife to the recent struggles with the Federated Commonwealth and Clan Ghost Bear.

The number five also has importance with regard to the Dragon, and much of Draconian society revolves around the central concept of five pillars. The Dragon possesses five claws and respects five virtues.

Some writings indicate there is only one correct choice and four incorrect choices for each action. Though this statement is mathematically suspect, it does serve to remind Draconians to take care when performing a duty. It also indicates how straight and narrow a path citizens are encouraged to maintain and how delicate their balance must be along this path.

The importance given to the number five makes it prominent in the people's superstitions. The winning combinations in the various dice, cards, and pick-up sticks games that keep currency circulating among the lower orders are all multiples and combinations of five. Citizens sometimes let important decisions depend on who is the fifth person to walk through a door or to call on their communications device. Clan Nova Cat's usage of five in their society and military has helped remove some suspicion of the refugee Clan.

It is considered good luck to be in a military unit with the number five in its designation. Kuritan parents frequently use clout, cash, or both to get their offspring assigned to such units. This superstition occasionally works to the disadvantage of the Kuritan military. In one infamous example, a Steiner commander on Hesperus II correctly guessed his Kuritan opponent would launch an attack at 5:00 a.m. on May 5. Using darkness to move out of position, the Steiner defenders crashed into the Draconian rear as the Kuritans overran the empty perimeter. The attack utterly failed and brought shame upon the Kuritan commander for such obvious predictability.

Five-year birthdays are especially significant in Kuritan culture. Because of the high rate of infant mortality—when compared to the other Great Houses—babies are given only affectionate nicknames upon birth. On their fifth birthday they receive their full, official names as permanent members of the family. The tenth birthday is a child's "coming out" celebration and is celebrated through either a boy's *gempuku* or girl's *quinceañera.* These parties are considered the end of childhood. In the middle and upper classes, ten-year-olds usually begin intensified courses of training or education. In the lower classes, they begin full-time work if they haven't started.

Boys at the age of fifteen leave home for extended military training. Girls are considered on the verge of marriage at the same age. The twentieth birthday marks the beginning of a male's career; a young woman should already be approaching the fifth birthday of her first child. The twenty-fifth is considered one of extra-lavish feasting for both sexes, due to the significance of five times five. The fiftieth is considered the prime of a male's power—and when a woman celebrates her status as a wise and fruitful grandmother.

BELIEF SYSTEMS OF THE FIVE CLASSES

The First Coordinator decreed that the work, social structure, and personal life of the citizen would be rigidly decreed in advance for each of the five classes of Combine society. Being conscious of the need to control his people's ideology, Shiro was not going to leave a matter of such importance to chance. The religious beliefs of each class were also to be determined by the state.

NOBILITY

The very small class of *kuge* constitutes the leadership and the brains of the Combine. Thus, it needs the greatest possible breadth and flexibility of thought. It is also the most likely source of possible challenge to the ruling House; as such, it must be kept under close watch and tight control. Theoretically, every sort of Asian-inspired thought from ancient Terra is appropriate to this class, though the pull of contradiction is resolved mainly through the rigidities of Confucianism and the flexibility of Taoism. The Coordinators have always given great attention to keeping the minds of the nobility focused on the Confucian chain of obligations: of younger sons to older sons, of sisters to brothers, of wives to husbands, of children to parents, and of everyone to the Coordinator. At the same time, the give-and-take of warfare and politics require a fluid ability to take advantage of opportunity, a capacity to yield when softness is necessary, a hardness when it is necessary to crush enemies, and an alertness to the flux of nature to know which course is appropriate.

Kuritan nobility is also charged with responsibility for maintaining an apparatus of Shinto priests, temples, and ceremonies. The *kuge* are discouraged, however, from actually believing the superstitions of this ancient religion. Shintoism is the designated belief system of the lower orders. The purpose of the priesthood is to keep control of these beliefs firmly in the hands of the nobility.

At the time that Rasalhague—founded on a Scandinavian form of Christianity derived from Eastern Orthodox Catholicism—joined with the rest of the Combine following the McAllister Rebellion, a political compromise allowed these citizens to preserve their religion. This provision would only work if the Rasalhagian use of "the Lord" meant only the Coordinator (at the time also referred to as First Lord) in all public ceremonies. This reflected the suspicion and antagonism that the Coordinators have shown since the time of Shiro towards any religion where the believer's attention is focused on some form of "god" instead of the Lord of the realm. The old beliefs were allowed to continue in private and were to remain more or less out of the public eye. There was less tolerance for this kind of thought among the nobility than in the lower classes precisely because doctrinal disloyalty among the nobles was more likely to lead to coup attempts.

WARRIOR

Confucianism, *bushido*, and Zen Buddhism are the belief systems assigned to the warriors of the Dragon. Followers of Confucianism rigidly attach their loyalties to their Lord by way of their commanding officers. *Bushido* defines that that duty is death, whether the enemy's or their own. Their meditations in the Zen manner are directed toward clearing their minds for the direct experience of reality.

Tenno Kurita said "the mind must be wiped clean of all dust of emotion, all thought of oneself. When an enemy attacks, he is answered by the counterblow just as he would be answered by the reflection if he had attacked a mirror." Kurita fighters strive to attain this state of *mu-shin* ("no mind") during battle. One who attains it is truly a remorseless killer. Once the act is done, he does not dwell on it but leaves his mind free for the next decision or the next attack. Kurita officers with more ambition than ability tend to memorize the terminology as a substitute for the real thing.

Those who are not born into the warrior class but choose to enter the Dragon's military service are strongly encouraged to espouse Confucianism, *bushido*, and Zen upon formal acceptance into the DCMS. Clinging to the beliefs of one's upbringing and refusing to embrace the established tenets of the warrior class will greatly impede one's military career or end it altogether.

Honor and duty are the touchstones of life for a House Kurita MechWarrior: the honor of the House he serves and his duty to serve it well. In discharging that duty, he finds his personal honor inextricably linked with the good of the Kurita dynasty that has ruled the mighty Draconis Combine ever since that realm's inception. Steeped in the culture of medieval Japan, trained in the ancient samurai code of bushido, the Kurita MechWarrior knows that his deepest value lies in his dedication to the Kurita dynasty. He will risk whatever its scions may require of him, including his life, without question or fear. That same loyalty, carefully nurtured throughout Combine society and concentrated in its military, will preserve it for generations to come.

The armed forces have always represented the pinnacle of service to House Kurita, from the early days of conquest to the Combine's battle for survival against the invading Clans. Even during the realm's darkest period, the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery kept the Combine alive until a true Kurita appeared to redeem it. DCMS units played a major role in the Inner Sphere's ultimate victory over the Clans and serve with distinction as peacekeeping troops under the banner of the reborn Star League. Each individual MechWarrior, whether a graduate of the finest military academies or a product of the rough-and-ready proving grounds, knows this proud history and is determined to add to it. He does not seek mere personal glory but the infinitely greater distinction of having offered his best to the Dragon.

THE BONES OF THE DRAGON'S TEETH

A Kurita MechWarrior is more than a fighting machine. Martial prowess goes hand in hand with such gentler arts as *haiku*, *origami,* or *bonsai*, reminding the warrior of the deep connection between them. Only the willingness to fight and die makes peaceful pursuits possible, and the warrior values them all the more for their contrast to the battlefield. No blade stays permanently honed to a razor's edge, and Combine warriors are no exception. By offering a brief respite from the brutal demands of warfare, artistic pursuits and intellectual studies enable a MechWarrior to face the next battle with renewed dedication.

From regular line units to elite commands like the Genyosha to the Ghost regiments—many of whose members hail from the lower classes and even the yakuza (the Combine criminal underworld)—the MechWarriors of House Kurita cover the entire spectrum of Combine society. A MechWarrior from the middle or noble classes may proudly serve in a district unit like the Third Benjamin Regulars, whose members cost the Smoke Jaguars so dearly during that Clan's conquest of the planet Asgard in the Clan War.

Elite units draw fighters of exceptional talent; even those with the best connections cannot hold a place in a unit like the Genyosha without the ability to back them up. First formed by the legendary MechWarrior Yorinaga Kurita after his unprecedented defeat in single combat, the Genyosha units stand along with the Sword of Light regiments and the famed Otomo as the ultimate embodiment of the Combine's warrior soul. As for the Ghost regiments, these creations of the visionary Theodore Kurita offer less fortunate Combine citizens a rare chance to serve their House and nation in battle. Though initially suspect because of their ties to criminal elements, many Ghost regiments have proven their skill and loyalty since their formation in the wake of the Fourth Succession War. Units like the Sixth Ghost, which fought Clan Smoke Jaguar to a temporary standstill on Marshdale in 3051, are living proof that every citizen of the Combine may aspire to fight for House Kurita.

—*Primer on the Warrior's Path for the Aspiring Child*; Benjamin Academic Press, 3064

No matter what world he or she hails from, a Kurita MechWarrior embodies the values of *bushido*. Like the samurai of old, they dedicate themselves to the art of war as the only means to achieve true peace. On the thirty-first century battlefield, the legions of House Kurita are legendary for their skill, courage, and tenacity in the face of overwhelming odds. They believe House Kurita is destined to rule over all of known space, and they take pride in doing whatever is necessary to further that goal.

MIDDLE CLASS

Draconis rulers are particularly attentive to the ideological state of the middle classes. Even if some faction within the nobility or the military were to seize control, the result would be a continuation of Kuritan society with new faces at the top. However, if the trading class, with its devotion to accumulating capital, were to gain control, a revolution in Draconian mores would take place.

An intensified Confucianism, defined during the hectic days of the Age of Colonization, is established for the middle layer of society. The merchants, manufacturers, and moneylenders find this satisfying because it reinforces their positions as the heads of families and corporations. In this way, the focus on the chain of loyalty passes up through children, wives, and employees to themselves at the top.

Professionals and intelligentsia among the middle classes also tend to be drawn to the "one God" religions or to cults that reinforce individuality. As a rule, these types will give public lip service to the required beliefs while rummaging privately through a wide range of ideologies until they find one that suits them. They will then meet in secret, hiding away by themselves or with a few friends during their off hours.

By Kuritan law, a man is supposed to spend a year in seclusion at the time of his father's death, which usually occurs sometime in the son's forties or early fifties. This obligation is customarily waived, usually for a bribe. If a middle class individual gives evidence of being drawn to some unauthorized ways of thinking, this year requirement will be strictly enforced. He will spend the year at a government center so he may rededicate himself to the principles of filial piety.

If an individualistic cult takes root in the middle class, the leaders of House Kurita will spare no pains to eradicate it. These things are not tolerated in the middle class the way they often are among the Unproductives. A popular (and true) tale demonstrates their intolerance. In the late twenty-ninth century, a scholar of ancient Terran gaming practices, Professor Gerald Gore, wrote clandestine science fiction material based on scenarios from early strategy games. He invented a fictional "Maximum Universal Personality," claiming a simple combination of computers and microwave cookery could determine and enhance each person's "MUP Quotient." When the authorities on Luthien realized an interstellar cult had grown up around Gore's notions, the professor was microwaved and hundreds of his believers were either executed or sent to Filial Piety Centers.

WORKERS

The function of the working class is that it work. The brutal grind of sixteen-hour days leaves little time for religious study or discussion. A basic principle in every class is Confucian loyalty up the chain of obligation, with all chains leading to Lord Kurita. The special religious form assigned to the workers is Shintoistic superstition.

The Shinto hierarchy is firmly controlled by the nobles. Shinto priests drill workers and their families from the time of birth in the notion of a world filled with spirits and devils. The natural creativity of the workers has given rise to a rich lore of ghost stories. Every aspect of nature is endowed with a good or bad spirit that needs constant flattery. Workers are encouraged to keep small shrines in their homes and workplaces. Their minds are continually occupied with giving these spirits the necessary attention without the need for any unproductive time away from the job.

UNPRODUCTIVES

The leaders of the Combine want the Unproductives, the "passively rotting mass" in the sump of society, to be drawn into Shintoistic superstition in the same way as the workers. The Unproductives are a mobile class, however. On some planets, they consist of masses of refugees from other places and other classes. On other worlds, they may be forced labor gangs rounded up across a whole arc of star centers. Everywhere this class catches the falling breakage of the rest of society, people marginalized—usually permanently—from the full range of belief systems,.

To gain something as basic as an evening meal and a mat to sleep on at an Endeavoring to Assist Shelter (ETAS), an Unproductive is required to listen to a homily on Confucian loyalties and perhaps pray to a Shinto shrine. But as everything else in the lives of these beggars, criminals, rejects, refugees, and assassins, their religion is rootless and adrift.

It is these layers of society mingled on the common ground of hopelessness that breeds fanatical and dangerous cults. While these may occasionally be harnessed to the needs of this or that noble family or politician, they are routinely exterminated without much thought by the military.

MINORITY RELIGIONS

Despite the all-encompassing grip on Combine society dictating how each class should worship, the very nature of humanity opens up other belief systems and faith constructs. The Combine officially prohibits worship structures that do not run in conjunction with the tenets of Confucianism, Zen, *bushido*, and Taoism. Of special note are two "one God" religions with roots in ancient Terra and the more exotic cults that appear from time to time among the worker and Unproductive classes.

JUDAISM

Non-Asian religions, especially those of the "one God" concept that the Coordinator considers competition, are generally not tolerated in the Draconis Combine. The official exception is Christianity, which is only semi-tolerated because of the ancient alliance with the Rasalhague worlds—and even then, adherents to this faith tend to keep their celebrations muted. (A widely regarded exception is the Yuletide season on Luthien, where the Christian holiday is used in part as an annual government program to help beautify the city.) The practice of Judaism is officially prohibited.

Judaism should not be confused with "being Jewish," a common misconception among the Unproductive and worker classes. Many Combine citizens consider themselves Jewish as defined culturally with none of the religious trappings that intertwined the term up through the twenty-first century. Following the incorporation of the rabbinate by the Terran Roman Catholic Church following the defeat of a fanatical Israeli state in the mid-2000s, many people have divested the cultural significance from the religious. Jews can be found across the Draconis Combine; nearly every world possessed by the Dragon before the Succession Wars contained at least one major city with strong colonial roots to Jewish culture. Since severing their connections with the more scholarly traditions of the religion, today's modern Jews do not concentrate in the learned positions but exist in equal numbers among workers and the military.

A fair number of *minyans*—congregations of ten or more Jewish men—do meet clandestinely on many worlds. These groups follow the more ancient forms of Judaism, which have been forced into the underground countless times throughout its history.

The strictest sect of Judaism, considered a cult by Kuritan leaders, is that of Hasidim. Ultra-orthodox and unrestrained followers of the most ancient form of the religion, they believe that before the prophesied state of Israel can exist, a messiah (Moshiach) must first come. In their view, no such messiah has yet arrived. In the twenty-fourth century, one of the sect's rabbis interpreted a text to the effect that when the Moshiach arrived, he would come from the direction of space occupied by House Kurita. Not content to wait, the Hasids moved coreward across the Combine, hoping to meet their messiah halfway.

ISLAM

Officially, Islam is another of the prohibited "one God" religions. Unofficially on Azami worlds or within Azami-centric cities, the Dragon turns a mostly blind eye to the practice. In other areas of the Combine, however, its prohibition is strictly enforced. As such, most citizens practicing the Islamic faith tend to remain within Azami communities.

It was nearly 350 years after the beginning of the Terran exodus that Muslims began moving to other worlds. Those who came into the Draconis Combine were mostly Tuaregs, Hausas, and Fulani. Their immigration took them to a dozen or so worlds scattered along the borders with Houses Steiner, Davion, and Liao.

Before their departure from Terra, their faith had been irrevocably altered by two great events in Africa during the early twenty-first century. Viral epidemics swept the continent from south to north, followed by a mass wave of Shi'ite Muslim evangelism out of the ancient Persian lands.

Divisions within Islam mostly stemmed from a struggle for succession among the immediate descendants of the Prophet Mohammed in the seventh century. The Shi'ites attached their allegiance to Caliph Ali, the lesser of the two powers involved. They created a myth of future redemption and taught that the twelfth Khalif of that branch of the family, the Imam az-Zaman, would return as a messiah.

The North African Muslim tribes adopted this vision with a twist of their own. Being of Hamitic stock, the Tuaregs, Hausas, and Fulani were despised by other branches of the faith—even as racism was technically forbidden by the scriptures. They brought to their new Shi'ism a tenet from the Khawarij, a minor Islamic sect. This tenet stated that the Caliphate could be held by any believer whom the faithful might consider fit, even if he was a slave.

The devastated survivors of famine and epidemic pinned their faith on the long wait for the Imam az-Zaman. Time only convinced them he would be one of their own. As they lost their tribal identities and merged as one people, they took on the name "Azami." When the Islamic scriptures were finally reconciled with interstellar travel in the twenty-fifth century, the Azami were among the first Muslim people to leave Terra.

The Azami settled on Kuritan worlds close to Terra, such as Rukbat, Shitara, Algedi, Albalii, Dabih, and Markab. Within fewer than a hundred years, the Von Rohrs sent out military expeditions to break the Azami and integrate them into Kuritan society and ideology. Instead, the Terran viruses that lay latent in the Azami bloodstreams wiped out the Kuritan invaders. Though the problem could be easily overcome in subsequent campaigns, such actions never took place as the Von Rohrs line was overthrown and exterminated by the McAllister Rebellion.

The Azami had a realistic appreciation of their position. In 2516, an Azami delegation arrived on Luthien. In return for formal autonomy, they agreed to allow Kurita exploitation of their mineral resources. They also agreed to act as border units for the Draconis military and to serve when required as cross-border raiders. House Kurita would provide BattleMechs, JumpShips, and DropShips for such actions.

The question of religion and ideology among the Azami within the Combine proved more difficult to resolve. In the end, the Azami decided that the Dictum Honorium was not dissimilar to their own strict desert codes. The ancient Islamic principle of *taqiyya*—caution—allowed a Shi'ite to pass himself off as a mainline

Muslim if it mean saving his life. Azami leaders saw the wisdom of *taqiyya* in this situation and agreed to adopt the Dictum as their ideology if Kurita agreed to not inquire too closely into their adherence of it. After Hehiro Kurita assumed the Coordinatorship from his mother Siriwan, the male-supremacist Azami found it convenient to replace their Imam az-Zaman messiah with the Kurita Coordinator—if only to blur the lines when dealing with Combine emissaries.

Though the Azami are given a liberal berth with regard to their religious beliefs, the Azami are strict in stamping out other Islamic sects from their communities. Such actions rarely catch the eye of the ISF or Kuritan authorities.

Off-Brand Sects

Any society with a rigid, state-controlled central religion is bound to generate a crop of exotic cults along its fringes. The Combine is no exception. House Kurita takes the people's ideology seriously and polices any off-brand religions carefully. This enforcement is especially severe for any cult that puts up an individual as guru or prophet, as this is considered a challenge to the Coordinator. Between the ISF and the O5P, there is a gray area as to which agency is responsible for controlling the people's thoughts. In this gray area the cult-like movements flourish, especially within the middle class and among the Unproductives.

It would be impossible to describe all the exotic cults in this work. In the time it takes to read this document, half a dozen new cults will die off and another half dozen will surface on Luthien alone. A few of the more esoteric cults are provided here for context.

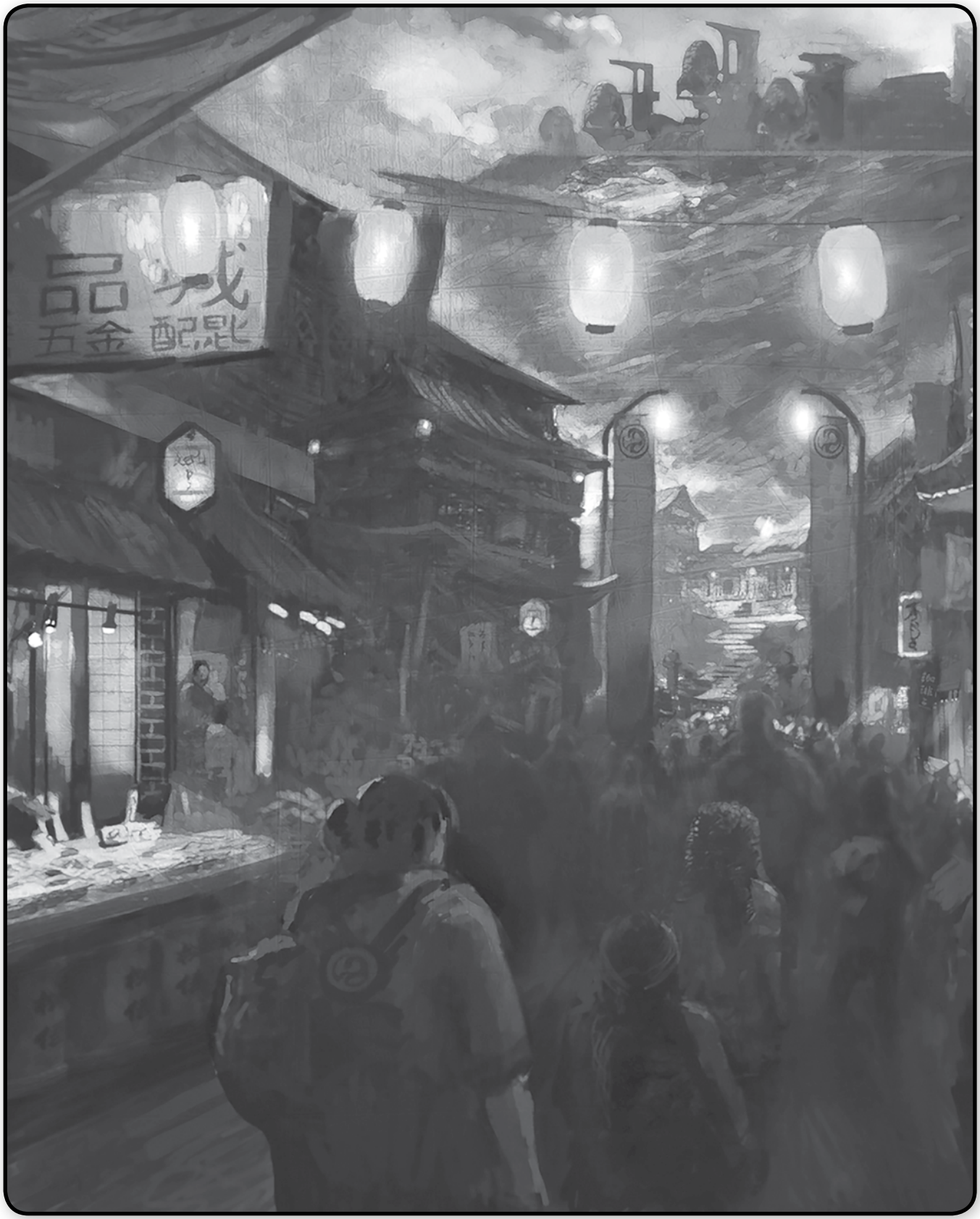
One cult from the thirtieth century that exterminated itself before even taking a name was a movement that convinced its followers to attempt interstellar travel by releasing their thoughts into space. In order to facilitate the process, the converts decided to engage in amateur trepanning—drilling a hole in the skull—and the cult was wiped out in one week after infection set in among the survivors.

Another is a cult loosely based on the principles of Scientology, an extinct cult from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These "Scientos" believe that microscopic aliens known as "thetans" ultimately manipulate the body while communing with the spirit as they discover their true selves. Not classified as a "one-God" religion, Scientos instead revere the alien life force inside them and strive to do its bidding regardless of societal mores. Progressive Scientos have built enclaves in remote regions on several Combine planets, subsisting on primitive technology and communing with their inner alien and its master, the spirit of the planet. The members live in a collective lifestyle, giving everything they own to help build these Thetan Cities; Scientos claim that when a certain number is built upon a planet, the planetary spirit will awaken and reclaim its territory in this dimension. The number of enclaves varies from system to system and often from person to person. The ISF tends to use discovered enclaves as training exercises for their DEST troopers.

A cult with roots far back in pre-exodus Terra is the Chanters. These cultists believe that endlessly repeating certain mantras improves their luck and brings various rewards of their own choosing. The Chanters are tolerated by Kuritan authorities, as their beliefs focus on the desires of each individual. Chanting for luck is popular in the military, especially during combat. Kuritan commanders have had problems with Chanters using open mikes to jam tactical communications. Mantras using numbers have been outlawed in the military because they are too often confused with artillery fire coordinates.

One cult that surfaces from time to time, despite repeated (and violent) eradications carried out by the ISF and O5P, is the Church of Starry Wisdom. The cult takes various forms depending on what world it surfaces, but its core tenets are the same. Each group has what they call a "Shining Trapezohedron" used to summon a dark being called the Haunter of the Dark. Because the cult requires a number of human sacrifices in order to receive the "limitless knowledge of the universe," it is the first suspect by Kuritan authorities when a rash of mysterious disappearances crop up in a Combine community. The cult's bloody practices prey upon the average Combine citizen's Shintoism and belief in the supernatural; rumors of a group surfacing in an area has been known to paralyze a community for weeks. As such, the ISF has a small bureau of agents tasked to deal with the Church of Starry Wisdom when they receive news of its reappearance.

PILLAR OF GOLD (GOVERNMENT)



SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE

Gold has been considered the most precious of metals since the beginning of civilization. Aside from its glowing beauty, it is prized for its malleability and resistance to corrosion. Gold can be beaten very thin and still retain its cohesiveness, and it does not readily combine with most chemical elements or compounds.

In the same way, the political workings of House Kurita are like a veneer of gold over the Draconis Combine. Politics must be a golden sheen, bringing value and décor, not a heavy burden. These workings should also resemble the gold in electrical connections, precious because of the gold's utility as well as its invisibility. Thus do the Kurita leaders maintain order in the Draconis Combine by subtly manipulating the psychology of their people. To do this, they use a combination of restricted information, a rigid social order, and constant military presence rather than obvious legal and police restraints. People oppressed by a tyrannical ruler will overthrow that ruler; people oppressed by themselves and their neighbors will have a more difficult time even discovering the roots of their discontent.

The mode of thought that maintains the Kuritan social order is a sense of communality. "No man is an island until himself," the old teaching goes, for we need one another to exist. One person is not important: the *society* is important. If a man should sacrifice himself so the society can live on, he does not perish. He survives in the greater life of the society.

The center of this society is the Coordinator, who controls the government and the military. With the military as his strong arm—the "Arm of the Dragon"—the Coordinator is able to spread the glory of the Combine into the farthest reaches of space and protect it from enemies both foreign and domestic. The military serves the Combine and its people by establishing and protecting the social order, and the people serve the military by placing the military's needs first. Those in the military may have to give their lives for the state. No service is more honorable than that, so the military commands the greatest respect from the civilian population.

THE COORDINATOR

The ruler of the Draconis Combine is the Coordinator. He—and in rare cases, she—is all-powerful. Though not literally considered divine, he might as well be for the privileges and respect he enjoys. The Coordinator *is* the Combine, embodied in one person. The Coordinator's entire life is service to the Combine. He is burdened with the responsibility for the welfare of the entire system and has no other interests. This combination of the physical embodiment of the spiritual ideal and the monastic devotion of the Coordinator to his service produce the reverence his people feel for him. The people of the Combine, constantly exhorted to serve the Dragon, are thus able to focus their energies on a single symbol. In time, the ideal came to be expressed as the maxim, "Serve the Coordinator, as he serves the Combine and its people."

THE GREATER QUINTADOCS

Honor all leaders of House Kurita.

Accept authority and responsibility and the dictates of those with authority and responsibility above you.

Use all talents and abilities to the benefit of House Kurita.

Work towards the destruction of all enemies.

Promote a single, unified Star League under the banner of the Dragon.

—Dictum Honorium VII, 23–29

OBEDIENCE IS THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE DRAGON; FAIL IN PART AND THE DRAGON WEEPS

Obey the one with power and authority, but know you will not strive to serve the cause of the Dragon unless you respect and care for it, as you do for the ones whom you serve.

Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity; as does failure to serve sap the vigor of the Dragon.

The authority of the Dragon does not stop at its citizens' skin. It stops only unto death.

—Dictum Honorium VII, 180–188

The Coordinator is the hub of the wheel of state, or more accurately, the space at the center of the wheel. To those with an understanding of *kü*, a wheel is useless without such space; therefore, this space *is* the wheel. With the Coordinator as the Combine's hub, everything comes back to him, and everything flows from him. Yet it seems as though he is not even there or at least is not perceived. The all-powerful Coordinator rarely commits any action directly, yet he sees all and pulls all the strings.

THE ESSENCE OF KÜ

Kü translates as nothingness, though it might be described as negative space that defines positive space. For example, a vase is a shape of clay with an opening in the middle: clay surrounding space. It is the empty space that defines the vase, which otherwise would be only a shape of clay. That space, that emptiness, is *kü*.

In the Kurita emblem, the dragon is a silhouette within the red disc. The absence of detail on the dragon keeps the balance equal as the dragon's shape is defined by the solid red color. As such, the *kü* of the dragon defines the rest of the disc, and the disc's internal shape defines the essence of the dragon. The Kurita emblem becomes a representative unifier of the people and the realm, each reliant on the other in complete symbiosis. Without the people, there is no Dragon. Without the Dragon, the people fade away.

—*Heraldry of the Inner Sphere Nations*; University of Geneva Press, 2972

In another respect, the hub is empty because it is the central authority of the Coordinator—not the man holding the office—that is crucial to his power. Each individual Coordinator leaves his mark on the office, but the position takes precedence over the man. A bad Coordinator attracts attention to his personal deeds, which draws honor away from his office. A good Coordinator guides the Combine toward a better future, and his deeds speak for him when he is gone.

Some Coordinators are strong and take a very active interest in all that is taking place, but these are often the least successful rulers. Those who do less and observe more, making their presence felt as an invisible hand guiding the actions of others, have been the better rulers. What is important is the respect others have for the rank, not the exercise of that rank's power.

The Coordinator may make suggestions to others, or he may speak in parables or haiku. He is skilled at making his will known indirectly. In this way, the blame for any problem will fall on the one who "incorrectly pursued" the Coordinator's wishes. Most Coordinators prefer small audiences. Formal Court, when the Coordinator receives his nobles, is an important ritual full of beautiful spectacle but of no meaning for affairs of state. It serves merely to satisfy the aesthetic demands of the nobility.

Jinjiro Kurita, although strong, was not an example of a good Coordinator, as he allowed himself to be too closely identified with a particular event, the Kentares Massacre. It would have been better to allow the massacre to take place in his name rather than to lead it directly. To the people of the Combine, a good Coordinator is like a spider sitting in a web and feeling the vibrations. Ultimate decision and direction comes from him but not action or meddling in minor affairs—not overt intervention, at least. The Coordinator's declarations would be statements of general intent or carefully disguised statements on specific affairs and should rarely be proclaimed. A popular saying among courtiers in Unity Palace is that "the Coordinator should speak once in each moon."

THE NOBILITY

The nobles are the real movers, the doers, in the Combine government. Their job is to implement the will of the Coordinator. The most powerful figures in running the Draconis Combine are the military commanders. Far behind them in real influence are the ministers, and behind them are the provincial leaders, and then the land- or corporation-holders. These last are noble in title, but rarely appear at court.

All figures in the court, down to the lowest latrine cleaner, have some kind of title. This is because the Coordinator cannot be directly served by, or risk coming into unplanned contact with, mere mortals. Higher positions in the court bring high titles, but the nobility who work only at court are seen as "*kuri*," or leeches. They provide useful contacts for those wishing to address a general or minister or attract the attention of the Coordinator himself. As they have no real function in the life of society, no matter how well they serve the Coordinator, they are *kuri*.

The Coordinator can overrule any decision or action by a noble. No one wishes to offend the Coordinator, so most of the nobility are circumspect enough to wait until they are sure they have their ruler's approval. A corollary to this is that someone's extreme activity around court is a sign that he covets or usurps another's function or is guilty of deliberate fawning.

The nobles do have a difficult time maintaining their position. At Imperial Court on Luthien, intrigue and backstabbing are as common as gnats. At times it can be difficult for a noble to tell who might be conspiring against him. Even if he senses something, the nobleman must keep his fears to himself to avoid being branded a paranoiac—a label that can have him sent to a Contentment Home or mental hospital.

A noble's task is to "present the face of House Kurita to the lesser worlds of the Inner Sphere." This means that his every action is scrutinized, down to his grooming and how he chooses to furnish his house through *fusui*. The Dictum Honorium provides reasonable guidance for major questions of behavior, but there are many unspoken rules about domestic behavior that must be understood and respected.

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LION

The concept of "The Sufferings of the Lion," or the tormented lives of the nobles, has some truth to it. According to this teaching, the nobles serve the Coordinator and are responsible to those beneath them. This double burden entitles the nobility to physical pleasures to relieve their minds of the heavy burdens of responsibility. It is certainly true that the nobles suffer different pressures than workers, but the Sufferings of the Lion seems to be a philosophy invented to justify the trappings of wealth.

Some lowly worker in a factory or 'Mech maintenance center might say that this noble suffering is news to him. Supervisors and the Neighborly Patrol constantly monitor him. He must not sneeze at the wrong time lest he harm the Combine and disgrace himself or his family. He may hope to cadge a few extra food rations for his ailing mother but would not dare.

A nobleman, however, would dare. It would be justified due to his burdens. But the Lion dares knowing he is still watched more closely, by more people, with more reason. Such transgression, should it be pursued, carries risk of dishonor, and that is the Suffering of the Lion.

—*The Writings of the Exile Pappas*; Robinson Publications, 3011

COURT RITUAL

Unity Palace, in Imperial City on Luthien, is the center of the Draconis Combine government. The major public areas are the Courtyard and the Throne Room. The Courtyard is a central area, open to the heavens. It is ringed with balconies and paved with red brick made from Dieron's Scales of the Dragonet mountains. Various ceremonies and military reviews take place there. The Throne Room is a large, elegant hall. The Coordinator's throne is on the north wall, and the only obvious entrance is the massive door directly opposite the throne to the south. Except for the throne, there are no other seating arrangements. Beautiful tapestries hang in the room, and luxurious rugs cover most of the floor. On the ceiling is a map of settled space inscribed in gold inlay.

Court functions are highly ritualized. Everything from serving the Coordinator's dinner to the annual *Shizoku-kotai*—the Pageant of Noble Loyalty—is performed according to a set order of behavior. Court behavior has so many rules that a Bureau of Protocol is required to oversee planning for ceremonies. Each prefecture and military district capital has a Bureau of Protocol attached to the ruling noble's estate to handle the intricacies of these minor courts' protocol.

RULE 2832.10

If conducted at Unity Palace, *seppuku* can only be performed in the Courtyard. A raised dais of teak, measuring ten meters square, is placed seventy meters from the north end of the plaza border and can be no closer than eighty-eight meters to the Throne Room entrance. The dais is to be one meter in height, and the front faces to the east.

Thirty minutes before the ceremony, four one-meter wide *fusuma* panels made of Imperial rice paper are placed around the dais at a distance of ten meters; they are placed at the cardinal points of direction. The south panel contains the name and flag of the recipient's homeworld. The west panel contains the emblem of the recipient's service unit or government branch. The north panel contains the recipient's family crest. The east panel contains the emblem of House Kurita. Behind each panel, a single stick of incense is to be lit.

The implements used are placed on the dais fifteen minutes before the start of the ceremony. At the single stroke of a bronzed gong, witnesses and other participants enter the Courtyard from the east entry arch. The gong is struck with an ivory staff no larger than fifty centimeters in length.

The honored recipient enters the Courtyard from the west entry arch. His body, after the ceremony, will leave through the east arch on a steel bier covered in a white cloth. His head will exit the Courtyard through the north arch, to be placed in a location to show the wisdom of the Dragon. Witnesses and other participants will exit through the east arch, after the honored recipient.

The ceremony will be conducted at the appointed hour with no delay.

—*Written Guide to the Court and the Servers, Volume I*; Unity Palace, 2714

Among the great court rituals are Military Honors, Cleansing of the Spirit, Celebration of the Coordinator's Birth, Celebration of the Birth of the Coordinator's Heir, and the Pageant of Noble Loyalty.

Military Honors

The most loyal and brave men and women of the Draconis Combine are honored in ceremonies at court. Most of the Military Honors rituals are variations on one theme, although each medal and decoration calls for a slight difference in the ceremony. An armed honor guard lines the Throne Room and the path to the Coordinator, with a variety of nobles in court robes and officers in dress uniforms in attendance.

The samurai to be honored enter and bow deeply before the Coordinator and the company. The honoree(s) lays his weapons down—weapons are permitted provided they are without power packs or ammunition clips and fully inspected beforehand by the Otomo (the Imperial bodyguard unit)—and prostrates himself before the throne. The honoree repeats the phrase *watashi no jinsei no anata no tame ni* ("my life for yours") until he becomes hoarse. When the recipient is finished, he rises to his knees. The court chamberlain hands the Coordinator a steel shield bearing the decoration, and the Coordinator then bestows the award.

Cleansing of the Spirit

Once a year on Luthien, the Cleansing of the Spirit ceremony takes place. This ritual reinforces the idea of the nobles as servants to both the Coordinator and the common people, and so it cleanses the nobles of false pride. At daybreak the nobles, dressed in their finest robes, assemble in the Courtyard. They solemnly proceed to the Throne Room, where they remove their outer robes to show themselves dressed in simple worker's clothing. Next, they clean the Throne Room, thus displaying their willingness to serve the Coordinator.

After this, the nobles compete in fencing and jousting matches to show their readiness to defend those they protect. They play a war game called the *hushiyo*, in which small mock villages are erected, populated with actual workers, and defended by nobles against capture by a force of troops. This often has unfortunate consequences for the workers, but a good noble will theoretically defend the "village" with few casualties. The Coordinator observes approvingly from a convenient balcony. At sundown, the nobles again don their formal clothing to enjoy a sumptuous banquet, where they can congratulate each other on just how humble they can be.

Celebration of the Coordinator's Birth

The Coordinator's birthday is usually the greatest feast of the year, and the ceremony lasts three full days. The Throne Room is decorated in flowers suitable to the Coordinator's birth season—provided he is not allergic to them, as was in the case of Hehiro Kurita. (In such a situation, suitable facsimile plants are acceptable for use.) All nobility who can safely leave their assignments travel to Unity Palace. Any who cannot send greetings or an authorized representative to stand in their place, typically an heir or protégé. This celebration period is the busiest time of the year for ComStar HPG stations across the Combine.

On the first day, the nobles arrive, bearing tribute for the Coordinator. Each gift reflects the progress and production of the noble's military unit, district, land, or industry over the course of the previous year. Each noble greets the Coordinator, presents his gift, and reads a poem praising the Coordinator and the past year's glories. At this time, the Lord Chamberlain and the Court Poet read the greetings of absent lords who have not sent a proxy.

The second day—the Coordinator's actual birthday—is the Great Celebration. The Coordinator appears at Unity Palace to the assembled throng of commoners. All workers who can be spared are given some time off from their jobs. If possible, they receive the entire day off, but a half day is more typical. Coordinator Theodore Kurita opens the Courtyard for select civilians from the working classes, often chosen by lottery or personally selected by the Coordinator. These commoners, a mix of workers from across the Combine (though the majority are from Luthien), are treated to a special poem by the Coordinator and hear his speech given in real time.

During the Great Celebration, the people not invited to hear the speech in person assemble in common areas or at their homes to hear the transmission of the Coordinator's greeting as it is received. (The Combine pays ComStar an exorbitant rate to send the recording as a Priority-A message to all systems of the Dragon at this time.) Extra food rations are granted and every home celebrates as best it can.

Ten children—one orphan from each military district, one orphan from Luthien, and five war orphans—are adopted into the Royal Court staff and given jobs and titles. In the highlight of the evening's feast at Court, the Coordinator sings a song praising the Draconis Combine and vowing its eternal rule over all the stars.

The third day of the celebration is the Honor of the Past and Future. Statues of past Coordinators are lined up in the Courtyard and decorated with flowers, though those connected to the Von Rohrs are draped in black sashes and void lilies. The Heir-Designate leaves flowers and food at the Monument to Fallen Draconis Heroes. In the Throne Room, the Coordinator bids farewell to the nobles, who reaffirm loyalty and love for the Coordinator and wish him a long life.

Celebration of the Heir's Birthday

This celebration is a smaller version of the Coordinator's birthday celebration. Nobles are not required to attend this one-day ceremony, though any who are on the capital at the time are strongly encouraged to do so. Nobility off-world receive a traditional invitation to the event; these invitations subtly indicate whether their attendance is expected or not. The nobles bestow gifts and a poem on the Heir-Designate and attend a feast in the Throne Room. The only acknowledgement to the population is a general proclamation by the Coordinator, which praises the heir and vows his continuing education in the ways of serving the Draconis Combine and its people.

Pageant of Noble Loyalty

The most stylized ceremony at Court, the Pageant has lost much of its intrinsic meaning. The event is appreciated now more for its aesthetic appeal. The nobles of the Court, the ministers of the Five Branches, the heads of the four military districts, and the head of each military branch are expected to participate. In reality, many of these send a delegate instead, with no loss of prestige.

Dressed in special ceremonial garments and elaborate headdresses representing their form of service, the attendees perform a traditional dance among the five actual pillars symbolizing the Pillars of the Dragon in the Throne Room. This first dance is the Celebration of Nobility and Service. At the end of this dance, the nobles group together and form a dragon, performing another dance that snakes through the public sections of Unity Palace. This second dance is the Dance of Loyalty, presumed to discover any activity taking place behind closed doors in the Palace.

The event is more perfunctory than celebratory, done as an extension of tradition more than substance. In 2981, Minister of the Treasury Duke Paul Southern fell from under the dragon costume after the Dance of Loyalty. His body was covered in stab wounds; none of the participants had noticed anything unusual, and his death was ultimately ruled a suicide.

PRIVILEGES

The wealth and position of the nobility entitles them to material benefits and a few intellectual ones as well. Through the teaching of the Sufferings of the Lion, many nobles justify their luxurious lifestyle; a growing movement of late portrays a more "compassionate" nobility. These few elites choose to take a portion of their wealth and return it to the Dragon in some manner, such as donating to charity foundations, reinvesting into Combine industry, or providing extra food or goods rations to the citizenry in their sphere of influence.

Most noble wealth is in the form of land holdings and/or businesses. Those who serve as military leaders or administrators also receive a generous salary from the government. Just as most people with a position of authority have some noble title, so most nobles have some form of official title, which allows them to dip their fingers into the government pot.

Because of government control of commerce, anything a noble wants can be acquired one way or another. The only concerns are whether obtaining the desired object will create a scandal. For example, trusted nobles are allowed to own volumes and holovids from other Successor States, but they better have a good reason why they do. Some nobles may travel to other realms for business or pleasure (disguised as business) as long as they act extremely loyal back home. The ISF is known to send agents along on these trips, specifically for gauging the nobility's activities and determining their loyalty to the Dragon. Nobles who go over the line soon find themselves on a restricted travel list or will see their appointments carefully screened for appropriateness.

Nobles often use their influence to help one another, whether to procure some rare item or to cut through bureaucracy in a government office. These favors may be performed in exchange for similar favors or a cash gratuity. A little economic corruption is not seen as evil—as long as it does not deprive the military. Even commoners can persuade a noble to cut through the bureaucracy for them, in exchange for a similar gratuity. The practice is known as *kitashu-ro-kuge*, or "feeling like a noble." It is often said, under the breath, that *kitashu-ro-kuge* is the real reason the Draconis government is known as the Pillar of Gold.

WOMEN AND TITLES

Through centuries of continued veneration of males and the subservience of females, titles and other practices use the male pronoun or imply the male gender. Even as these attitudes are slowly changing, centuries of tradition preclude any instant change of title structure. As such, though a planetary chairman may be a woman, she is still referred to as "chairman."

—*Kurita Etiquette Primer, Appendix A-2*; Benjamin District Press, 3061

NOBLE TITLES

Nobility in the Draconis Combine use distinct titles, analogous to the standard titles created by Cameron's Peer List. They are listed with approximate equivalents below. The proper Kuritan titles are used in most ceremonial and formal occasions; the Cameron usage is used in more common situations.

Some title variations have come into use only recently. Where once only a smattering of dukes and Warlords existed, a change in 3057 enacted by Coordinator Theodore Kurita—perhaps to salve the wounded egos of those in the nobility who had come to resent his ongoing reforms—has moved toward more traditionally Japanese terms.

Daimyos and *shoguns* now preempt those generic titles in a growing part of the Combine.

Generic	Kuritan
Knight/Lady	Lord/Lady*
Baron/Baroness	*Shugo*
Count/Countess	*Tozama Daimyo*
Marquis/Marquessa	*Daimyo*
Duke/Duchess	*Shogun*

*If the title holder is a MechWarrior, samurai is the proper term.

KURITAN NOBILITY

House Kurita began with Shiro Kurita and has led the Combine for most of the realm's existence. While the Von Rohrs line is technically related by blood to House Kurita, it is proper to exclude the mention of this line of madmen when discussing the Kuritan lineage. As the Dragon lives with the lifeblood of House Kurita, it is assumed the Dragon remained dormant during the dark years of the Von Rohrs until it could rise again.

The Kurita bloodline has two distinct branches: that of the First Coordinator Shiro and his brother Urizen, the First Warlord. Shiro's line is considered the line of ascension; when determining eligibility, those with a traceable lineage to Shiro are considered higher in rank than Urizen's descendants. All members of the Kurita family are held in high regard and carry considerable clout; those closer to the Coordinator by blood are revered more than distant relations.

For matters of state security, the ISF often hides important heirs of the Kurita family after their birth. Rumors abound of distant blood relatives being suborned by enemies of the state. Heirs to these nobility, especially among the Coordinator's family, are typically raised in a different prefecture and under an assumed name to avoid preferential treatment. When the father feels his heir is ready to assume the duties of Heir-Designate, the heir is revealed to the public at large, usually during a major festival or celebration. It is customary to also announce Heir-Designates at the Pageant of Noble Loyalty.

Theodore Kurita

The only son of Takashi and Jasmine Kurita, Theodore has lived in the Coordinator's court since birth. During the remainder of Takashi's reign, he lived a contentious life under his father's rule. Takashi appointed the young and impetuous youth as *Gunji-no-Kanrei* in 3030, looking to distract the Heir-Designate and provide him with conflict to build character.

As the DCMS Deputy for Military Affairs, Theodore refused to be bound by traditions he considered harmful to the realm he would one day lead. In 3034, he made an agreement with ComStar to recognize an independent Rasalhague Prefecture in exchange for Star League-era BattleMechs. Though he weathered a storm of criticism for his action from the conservative quarter, the advanced machines proved decisive against Federated Suns assaults just five years later during the War of 3039. Theodore similarly showed himself a man of vision on many subsequent occasions by rescinding his father's prohibition on mercenary units and launching far-reaching military reforms. Ranging from unit reorganization and tactical innovations to the creation of the famed Ghost Regiments, these reforms would become one of his principal legacies.

When the Clans struck the Inner Sphere in 3050, Theodore was among the first Great House leaders to recognize that this threat made old enmities irrelevant. He swiftly agreed to an unprecedented nonaggression pact between the Combine and the Federated Commonwealth, which he proposed during a gathering of Inner Sphere leaders on Outreach in 3051. He then accepted aid from mercenary units in defending Luthien against a Smoke Jaguar/Nova Cat assault. Six years later, when FedCom Prince Victor Steiner-Davion proposed creating a unified Inner Sphere force to take the war to the Clans, Theodore Kurita was among its most enthusiastic backers.

At the First Whitting Conference in 3058, Theodore helped found the new Star League and plan the assault that would drive Clan Smoke Jaguar from the Inner Sphere. In December, he symbolically repudiated the historical hostility between his own realm and the Federated Commonwealth by welcoming Prince Victor on a precedent-setting visit to Luthien and publicly giving his blessing to the attachment between Victor and his own daughter Omi. Theodore was elected first Lord of the Star League in November 3061.

In 3062, mercenaries masquerading as DCMS units forced Theodore to annex the worlds of the Lyons Thumb in order to safeguard the region from further destabilization. The war with the Ghost Bear Dominion, precipitated by Theodore's detractors in the Black Dragon Society, caught the DCMS unprepared, as did the sudden strikes from the Federated Commonwealth's Draconis March. To further the Dragon's grief, the Coordinator lost his wife Tomoe Sakade in 3063, and his only daughter Omi was killed a few months later.

Theodore saw the Dragon's honor redeemed somewhat with the surrender of AFFC forces in 3065. His term as Star Lord ended a short time before; the Combine benefitted greatly from the Coordinator's tenure in both the economic and technological marketplace. Theodore brought elegance, honor, and dignity to the position, which infused his people with confidence and strength, bettering the Dragon as a whole.

Hohiro Kurita

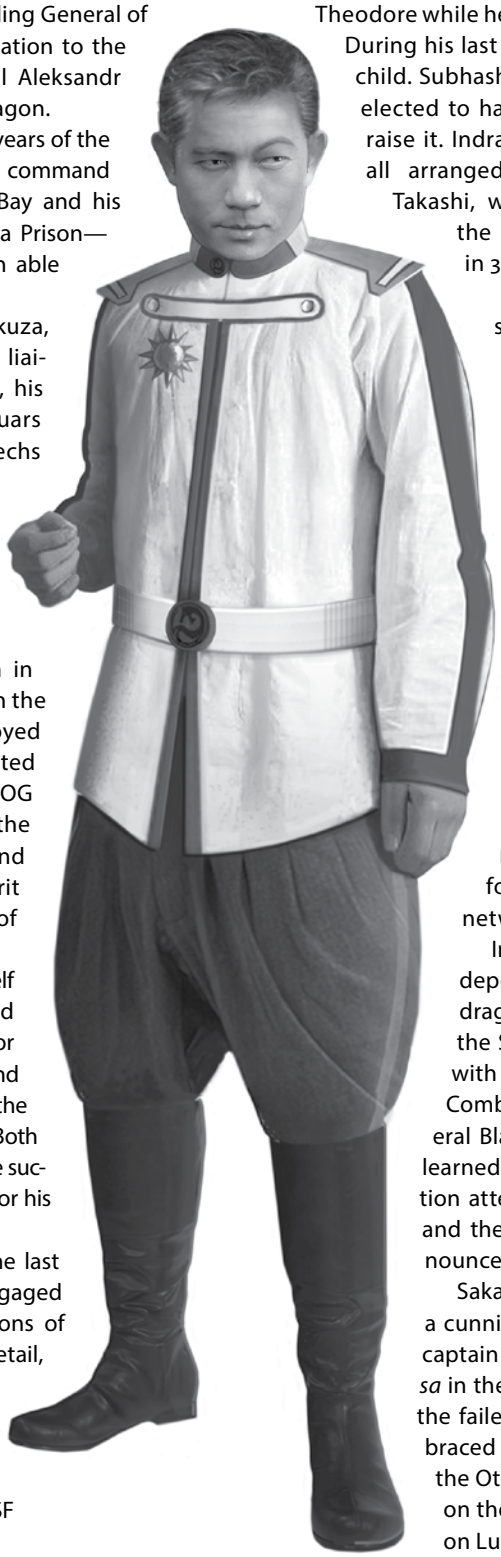
The eldest son of Theodore and Heir-Designate to the Coordinator, Hohiro commands the prestigious first Genyosha Regiment and was selected as Commanding General of the Star League Defense Force. His elevation to the position, on par with the great General Aleksandr Kerensky, has continued to honor the Dragon.

Hohiro's experiences during the early years of the Clan Invasion—particularly the loss of his command in the Smoke Jaguar assault on Turtle Bay and his subsequent incarceration in Kurushiiyama Prison—turned him from a green soldier into an able military commander.

Freed from Kurushiiyama by local yakuza, Hohiro was reassigned to Wolcott as a liaison to the First Genyosha. On Wolcott, his *batchall* to the attacking Smoke Jaguars included a demand for four OmniMechs and a Star of battle armor suits if the Combine's defenders won. The subsequent defeat of the Jaguars earned the Dragon its first pieces of intact Clan battle technology, jumpstarting the realm's military research and development. During the battle for Luthien in 3052, Hohiro again fought alongside with the First Genyosha and personally destroyed more than five Clan 'Mechs and assisted in a dozen other kills. During BULLDOG less than ten years later, Hohiro led the First Genyosha to victories on Kiamba and Schuyler and defeated Clan Blood Spirit in the Great Refusal on the Clan capital of Strana Mechty in 3060.

Like his father, Hohiro has shown himself capable of overcoming old hostilities and adapting to new realities. He counts Victor Steiner-Davion among his close friends and shares the common goal of maintaining the Star League against any threat it may face. Both politically and militarily, he will make an able successor to Theodore when the time comes for his ascension to the Chrysanthemum Throne.

Rumors have swirled in Court over the last decade that the Heir-Designate is engaged or married; often included are suggestions of children. The rumor varies in form and detail, from an arranged marriage to several illicit liaisons, but none have ever proven true. If Hohiro is married, the identity and lineage of his spouse are considered state secrets enforced by the ISF and O5P.



Franklin Sakamoto

Franklin Sakamoto is the illegitimate son of Theodore Kurita and Kathleen Palmer. The ISF agent was assigned to watch Theodore while he attended the military academy on Pesht. During his last few weeks there, Kathleen conceived his child. Subhash Indrahar, Director of the ISF at the time, elected to have Kathleen carry the child to term and raise it. Indrahar feared Theodore, who had shunned all arranged marriages proposed by Coordinator Takashi, would not produce a legitimate heir to the Combine throne. Franklin was born in 3019.

Theodore soon married in secret and sired several children. As such, Indrahar now viewed Franklin and his mother as liabilities and ordered their assassination. Palmer recognized the danger and sent Franklin to Marcus Kurita, Takashi's cousin. Kathleen was killed in 3033 alongside another child, who was mistaken for Franklin. A year later, the ISF eliminated Marcus Kurita and his shadow organization for their plot to overthrow the Combine government.

Franklin was sent to an orphanage and adopted by Pierre and Sophia Sakamoto. The childless couple were high-ranking corporate executives in Isesaki Shipping. Franklin received a classical and military education. He rose rapidly through the ranks of Isesaki before stepping aside to oversee a smuggling network for Hachiman Taro Enterprises.

In the midst of the Clan Invasion, a small independent FedCom unit led by Adam Steiner dragooned Franklin. During his brief year with the Somerset Strikers—an ad hoc partnership with Steiner and unofficially sanctioned by the Combine—Sakamoto was abducted by several Black Dragon subversives. He subsequently learned about his true parentage as the rebel faction attempted to use him to discredit Theodore and the Coordinator. Sakamoto escaped and renounced his birthright.

Sakamoto is a man of abstemious taste. He is a cunning warrior, having served as a smuggling captain and subsequently rising to the rank of *chusa* in the DCMS. After defending Theodore during the failed 3058 coup, Sakamoto was publicly embraced by the Coordinator and given a position in the Otomo. He and Hohiro Kurita often brush up on their kendo skills when the Heir Designate is on Luthien.

Minoru Kurita

The youngest of the Coordinator's children, Minoru spent most of his life out of the spotlight of the royal court and remains an enigma to most Combine citizens. More a mystic than a warrior, Minoru is known for his extensive expertise in *kempo karate*, *juujutsu*, and similar martial arts. He served as an informal instructor to several O5P adepts, teaching even the Pillarine masters techniques previously thought lost to antiquity. His consuming interest in these disciplines, along with his less prominent position as a second son, makes him a relatively minor player in House Kurita politics.

In late 3058, Theodore began making serious peace overtures to Clan Nova Cat. Due to the Cats' vastly different societal culture, Theodore sent Minoru as an envoy to help guide the Clan in their new role as a Combine "protectorate" within the Dragon's borders.

Minoru took matters one step further after his arrival sparked talk among the mystical Cats. After spending some time among the Clan's leadership, he divested himself of his Kuritan nobility and became a bondsman of the Clan. Soon after, he challenged and fought his way through the Clan's ritual system to become the Oathmaster, keeper of the Clan's lore and a guide for those who seek to walk in visions.

Since then, Minoru has immersed himself into the role as the soul of the Clan. He is sought for his wisdom and expertise when warriors conduct visions, and he has been at the center of many of the Clan's recent decisions regarding the future of the Nova Cats and their Combine overlords.

Constance Kurita

The daughter and eldest child of Marcus Kurita, Constance was born and raised in Unity Palace on Luthien. Not eligible for university studies (being female), she performed so well on her secondary school exams that her father persuaded a Court lawyer to train her to think as a lawyer. She eventually became Chief Aide to Keeper of the House Honor Florimel Kurita. Constance was named Florimel's successor in 3024. For the next forty years, she successfully juggled the demands of the Coordinator and those of the Order of Five Pillars.

Constance has the cool, uninflected speech of an abstract thinker and the perfect composure of a trained legal mind. She is infinitely patient, a model of grace and decorum, and never reveals her thoughts or plans before their time. A staunch ally of the Coordinator and his kin, she named Omi Kurita as her successor. With Omi's murder, she has taken Miyako Kurita under her tutelage and recommended her to the Coordinator as the new Keeper of the House Honor.

Isoroku Kurita

The only son of Miyamoto Kurita, brother to Takashi, Isoroku was the overall commander of the prestigious Sun Zhang Academy Cadres for nearly four decades. The academy's youngest commander, he retired in 3042 and was named professor emeritus, teaching off and on until Takashi named him as Prefect of the Kessel Prefecture in 3054. In 3057, he was named by his cousin Theodore as Warlord of Dieron, where he remains to this day.

A staunch advocate of the more rigid strictures of *bushido* in his younger years, Isoroku has since softened his stance. Many close to the Warlord believe he has done so not from old age but from his increasing respect for Theodore's rigid stance and refusal to back down in the face of dissent. Isoroku is well known for his stubborn pride, a characteristic that often put him at odds with former ISF Director Subhash Indrahar.

Typically, Isoroku tends to side with the Coordinator in matters facing the DCMS High Command. While this is not entirely indicative of a recanting of Isoroku's viewpoint, the Coordinator values the quiet support of his cousin.

Miyako Kurita

The only child of Isoroku Kurita, Miyako was born in the mid-3040s. With her mother dying during childbirth, she was shunned by her father and spent her initial years under the care of the Order of Five Pillars. Within the last decade, she caught the eye of Constance Kurita, who—along with Omi Kurita—advanced her training and education. Keenly intellectual and possessing a natural grace, she became the obvious choice to replace Omi as Keeper of the House Honor after the woman's death in 3064.

Miyako has stumbled little in her position, relying heavily on continued counsel from Constance and her lifelong friend, Mara Selencia. The older girl formed a tight bond with Miyako when she was turned over to the Order; the two women were a force to be reckoned with in their younger years.

Isoroku has recently reconnected with his daughter, though many tongues within Imperial Court suggest it is only to gain additional prestige due his daughter's recent appointment.

Chandrasekhar Kurita

Born on Luthien near the end of the thirtieth century, Chandrasekhar Kurita grew up surrounded by plots and intrigue. The court of Coordinator Takashi Kurita was a dangerous place, as fourteen-year-old Chandrasekhar learned when his parents were murdered amid the convoluted intrigue of court life. Understanding that his own survival would hinge on persuading the powerful and ambitious that he was no threat, the young Kurita strove to appear stupid and harmless. Growing to manhood, Chandrasekhar artfully constructed a caricature personality, which the Draconis Combine came to know as the fat and foolish "Uncle Chandy." Chandrasekhar's antics scandalized the court, and Takashi banished him from Luthien in 3020. Free to act without arousing suspicion, he used his inheritance to found an economic empire and—working behind the scenes—masterminded the creation of Hachiman Taro Electronics.

Members of the Kurita clan have always been ruled by two seemingly conflicting passions: desire for power and loyalty to the Draconis Combine. In Chandrasekhar's place, any other

Kurita might not hesitate to use his wealth and influence to pursue the absolute power of the throne. But Chandrasekhar denied himself this last and instead has used his economic empire in the service of the Combine. Free of the xenophobia that permeates his native realm, he closely studied the other Great Houses. He is not afraid to borrow ideas and apply them with great success in domestic markets.

In addition to overseeing his far-flung business concerns and continuing the scandalous lifestyle that exiled him from court, Chandrasekhar Kurita maintains a primary interest in the activities of a group known as Interstellar Expeditions. This interest appears to be personal, as one of his mother's ancestors helped form a part of the explorers' organization. Chandrasekhar's family maintained close links with the group through the years. Chandrasekhar funds an increasing number of IE projects using HTE profits.

Behind the comical persona he shows to the universe lurks a quick and cunning mind that has repeatedly gotten the better of some of the most powerful people in the Inner Sphere. Anyone who has had personal dealings with him quickly discovers that for all his apparent foolishness, "Uncle Chandy" is still a Kurita—as ruthless and determined as any who have borne the name.

Graeme Kurita

Son of deceased Donal Kurita and grandson of the treacherous Marcus Kurita, Graeme is the planetary chairman of Multan in Qandahar Prefecture. Graeme was dishonored when the Black Dragons manipulated his son Angus into a failed plot to assassinate Theodore in 3057. By decree of the Coordinator, Graeme's bloodline is no longer eligible for the throne. The governor has opted to remain celibate as an act of penance for his son's choices.

Mitchell Kurita

Born in 3002 to Elija Kurita, Mitchell is a distant relation to the ruling Kurita line and has no chance to ascend to the throne unless the rest of the Kuritas in Combine space were wiped out. Considered a weak child from birth, his formative years were not kind: Takashi banned him from the Imperial Court for nearly two decades "until that sickly whelp grows a spine and amounts to more than an Unproductive." Severely punished in his father's court on Tarazed, Mitchell strove to excel in the one field he had affinity for: economics.

Under an assumed name, the young Kurita spent several years as an apprentice to Chandrasekhar Kurita. The elder Kurita divined Mitchell's identity soon enough and treated the young man like a son. Mitchell rose to head Amau Electronics for two decades, steering the beleaguered company through the Clan Invasion until Tanadi took ownership of it. Rather than remain under his mentor's shadow, Mitchell stepped aside. Chandrasekhar made some suggestions within the Imperial Court, resulting in the Coordinator appointing Mitchell as head of Nissan General Industries in 3063. By all accounts, Mitchell is content in his new position and remains aloof from court politics, earning him much respect from the Coordinator.

GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

The Draconis Combine government gives apparent autonomy to the individual worlds. In theory, the Coordinator makes all major governmental decisions. The military district commanders, working through the district governors and planetary chairmen, often make the critical decisions by interpreting the Coordinator's will and then implementing them. A planetary chairman who decides to rule solely as they see fit will soon be overrun by government troops—assuming he or she is allowed to live that long.

Individual planets frame and enforce their own laws, as long as these laws meet with the Coordinator's approval. This gives prefecture heads and rulers of individual worlds the ability to solve the problems unique to their worlds. It also cuts down on cultural divisiveness by allowing the semblance of self-rule. This semi-autonomy increases the stature of the military as the one united force of the Draconis Combine, both in the public perception and in running the State.

There is very little central government structure. Each prefecture and district sends one representative to the Committee of Planetary Unity, which supposedly sets unified policy for the Combine. Any resemblance between the Committee and a parliament is strictly on paper, however. The representatives are selected by the district governors, who are also dukes of the districts, with the Coordinator's approval. The Committee may discuss minor difficulties between individual planets but may not enact any laws. The function of the representatives is actually to report the Coordinator's wishes—and court gossip—back to the prefects and district leaders and other representatives. Most committee meetings consist of a few representatives drinking tea while they plot against absent members, trade favors, or throw around the minuscule power they do have for appearance's sake.

The district and prefecture heads are the real administrators of their areas. Each area has a military and a civilian noble leader. The civilian is the actual administrator; the military leader is the decision-maker. The prefect heads are the persons most likely to have to tangle with the extraordinary complexities of Draconian bureaucracy.

MINISTRIES

There are five ministries overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the Draconis Combine: the Ministries of War, Interior, Treasury, Justice, and the Court. Each ministry has responsibilities to different aspects of the Combine, but it is never obvious which ministry covers a specific issue, much less what bureau and subcommittee of a ministry is responsible. Even lifelong members of the bureaucracy or those who have spent their lives working with (or despite) the ministries have a hard time figuring it out. For example, having a tooth pulled might seem to fall under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Health and Happiness, a division of the Ministry of the Interior. First, though, the patient must go through the Treasury to acquire one voucher for the dentistry work and others for any materials that might be necessary to

HOW MANY KURITANS...

How many Kuritans does it take to change a light bulb?

If it's a noble's light bulb: five. One to notice the light bulb's condition, another to file the request with the Bureau of Procurement, a third to receive the light bulb after its long journey, a fourth to replace the light bulb, and a fifth to inform the noble of the change.

If it's a commoner's light bulb: two. One to purchase the bulb on the black market, the other to watch for the ISF while the first one replaces it.

If it's a Warlord's light bulb: none. A true samurai will sit in the dark and wait for the light bulb to honor him by relighting itself.

If it's the Coordinator's light bulb: five hundred. The first five as if it is a nobleman's light bulb, and 495 nobles to applaud the wisdom of the Coordinator for replacing such an obviously defective bulb.

If it's a foreigner's light bulb: four. Because that is the number of troopers in a standard DEST unit that assassinates a suspected spy.

—*The Big Book of Jokes for the Spacer's Wasteroom*; New Avalon Press, 2791

complete the work—one voucher for each category of material. Then, if the individual must take time off the work, he must obtain an excuse form from either the Treasury or the ministry under which the worker's employer falls, or both. He may also need an excuse form from the local military authority, especially if the individual works in a military industry (as many do). If any travel is involved, forms are needed from the War, Justice, Treasury, and Interior ministries.

The best local administrators are skilled at *Rensikuro-bu* (the Dance of Waiting and Smiling) and *Rurdu-Koba-tsö* (Finding the Cheese in the Maze). A large part of the problem is the bureaucrats themselves do not know their responsibilities and would rather err on the side of omission than commission. Working with the bureaucracies, like other Kurita businesses, is a matter of waiting patiently to see who will break and make the first move. Usually, the supplicant makes the move and the bureaucracy triumphs.

A minister heads each ministry. The head of each bureau is also known as the minister of that particular bureau, though they are also known as subministers. Below these are the committeemen, the heads of subdivisions of bureaus. All ministers and subministers are titled. Committeemen are generally also titled, but exceptions are frequent. The formal names of the ministries and their component bureaus, while sometimes charming, often obscure the actual function of the department.

WAR

The *Hyöbushö*, or the Ministry of the Expansion of the Glories of the Draconis Combine, covers all aspects of the Pillar of Steel. A full discussion of this most important of ministries is discussed separately.

INTERIOR

The *Minbushö*, or Ministry of Well-Being of the Land and the Peoples (also known as the Ministry of the Interior), is responsible for the living conditions of all Combine inhabitants, the environment, and settlements of the various planets. Anything that does not fit into the responsibilities of any other ministry usually finds its way into the *Minbushö*'s convoluted structure.

Among the major divisions of the *Minbushö* are the Bureaus of General Indoctrination (education), Shelter (housing), Health and Happiness (medical care), Human Growth (worker assignments), Conservation and Salvage of Resources (environmental and recycling), Domesticated Plants and Animals (agriculture), Natural Plants and Animals (forestry), and Bureaucracy. In 3060, the Coordinator authorized the new Bureau of Friendly Interior Comfort and Concerns (interior cultures) to handle the addition of Clan Nova Cat and the growing restlessness from the Azami worlds.

TREASURY

The *Ökurashö*, or Ministry of Wealth and the Disbursing of Assets (the Ministry of the Treasury), governs the economy, including trade and working conditions. The divisions of the ministry are the most convoluted of all the bureaucracy. For example, the Bureau of Nourishment (food allocation) would logically belong to the Ministry of the Interior, whereas that ministry's Bureau of Human Growth should belong in the Ministry of the Treasury. The Bureau of Interstellar Trade covers customs and tariffs, and the Bureau of Economic Exchange and Expansion covers interstellar trade development and control.

Other departments include the Bureaus of Control and Distribution of Symbolic Assets (money circulation), Symbolic Assets (the mint), Just Reward for Labor (worker pay scales), Worker Protection (occupation safety), Returns from Outsiders (foreign currency exchange), Development and Treaty Brothers (trade liaisons with member nations of the Second Star League), and Development of Untapped Lands (Periphery trade liaison). The most important bureau within the ministry, the Bureau of the Bursar, is often confused with the megalithic Bureau of Bureaucracy. The Bursar allocates funds for all other ministries and bureaus.

JUSTICE

Kakun, the Ministry of Peaceful Order and Honor (the Ministry of Justice), dictates law and order for civilians and has charge of the court system. In Draconian courts, the accused is allowed a show of civil liberties: the right to counsel, the right to confront the accuser(s), and the right to cross-examination. The excessively close relation between the police and the courts forces the accused to prove their innocence and precludes any chance of a truly fair trial. Also, any case with military implications goes to Military Court, where civil liberties are unknown. A criminal case or civil suit involving a noble automatically goes to Noble Court, where more credence is given to the noble's side.

THE NOVA CAT PENNED

It has been less than a decade since my people have been placed within these "reservation zones." I am not like my fellow Clansmen: I do not believe we share a spiritual heritage with these Kuritans or that they have any desire to embrace us as kinsmen. We are, at best, tolerated by our wardens—and a sop when the Ghost Bears come raging across the border again.

Our enclaves feel more like prison barracks than refugee enclaves. In most cases, we were thrust into harsh terrain among the open areas of worlds within our Irece Prefecture. In some instances, such as ready-made industrial zones, Kuritan civilians were removed and as such despise us for taking their homes. View a Nova Cat enclave alongside a Kuritan city and the differences are obvious. Armed security watches our every move. Suspicious eyes avoid our gaze. Kuritan police and ISF bureaucrats demanding to see identification at any time. All this, despite the claim by the Combine that the Clan has nearly autonomous control over the prefecture.

While the Combine's society is very similar to our own, it is not compatible. With so much of our lower castes ravaged from our flight, we are heavily dependent on the Kuritan civilian to provide us with infrastructure, support, labor, and a multitude of other services that we, as Clansmen, have taken for granted. Our situation has laid bare our predicament and possibly sown the seeds for our destruction.

The warriors do not see the plight of their lower castes.

Those who were Clansmen were transported to these enclaves and distributed among the systems of Irece Prefecture. Many, many more of our "caste" were suborned Combine citizens, most of whom were happy to remove the yoke of "Clan oppression" from their shoulders. Because so few of our people escaped from the Homeworlds, citizens of the Combine surround our Clan. Citizens who well remember the oppression and abuse of the Clans not so long ago. To them, it does not matter who their captors were. Nova Cat, Smoke Jaguar, Ghost Bear—we are all still "the Clans" to them. And as such, worthy only of their scorn, hatred, and derision.

Indeed, the only Combine citizens who seem genuinely happy we are here are the nobles. Why not? Clan governance is different from the harsher extremes of the Combine. To them, we are downright lenient in our dispensation, which is an advantageous situation to them.

Our warriors ignore this. They do not see the difficulties placed upon our lower caste brothers and sisters. High prices for common goods. "Missing" shipments. Outright refusal of service. Mockery. Even if the Dragon's citizenry is polite, you can simply look into their eyes and see their mistrust, their anger, their disgust.

Therefore, we stay within our designated zones, among our own people. We avoid the confusion, the culture clashes, the misunderstandings that might lead to beatings or incarceration. We find protection behind the shield of being Clan. It saddens me that these downtrodden citizens cannot see beyond their xenophobia and paranoia to all the good the Clan brings to their lives. Better technology. Higher standard of living. An open and honorable way of governance not dissimilar to their own. And most importantly, we respect and observe the rule of the Coordinator, to whom we owe our very existence.

As I understand it, this is not what the Coordinator wanted when he first proposed this arrangement with our exalted khans. However, it has become our reality. With corporate agents, ministry officials, and military officers carrying out the "will of the Coordinator," using and abusing us for our technology and treating us worse than the Combine's own Unproductives, we have no reason to believe the Coordinator has our best interest in mind. It is as if the Dragon did not wish to waste further resources on destroying another Clan, opting instead to let us wither on the vine. The addition of the Coordinator's freeborn son into our ranks is an insult to the Way of the Clan. Our warriors may think it is an honor, but we of the lower castes know the truth: he is simply another weapon to kill our culture.

Our situation deteriorates. Only our Clan's honor props us up. And I fear our warriors will soon kick that prop out from under us. We will wither and die, ground under the heavy bulk of the Dragon's scales until we are but dust.

—*Personal Notations, 041667*; Technician Factor Jarvis Novacat

Despite the separate rule of each planet, the police and courts all fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice. Police are trained together and are prepared to act in concert. The same is true of the courts. Information on suspect individuals and groups, as well as new techniques for control, are passed freely among the planetary forces. Prisoners are often passed around to prevent former associates or family members from contacting them.

Included in the Ministry of Justice is the Civilian Guidance Corps, also known as the Friendly Persuaders. This local constabulary is easily recognizable due to their pink-and-white striped uniforms. Also falling under the umbrella of the ministry is the Neighborly Patrol (civilian neighborhood watch and vigilantes), the Halls of Swift Justice (criminal court), Guaranteed Honor for Kurita's Servants (noble court), Machine of Peaceful Conflict Resolution (civil court), Bureau of Confined Persuasion (prisons), and the Bureau of Official Information (news and propaganda).

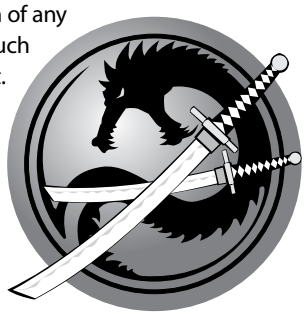
While the BOI is the official source of news and information of the Kuritan government, most of its material is supplied by or vetted through the ISF. The bureau's true power lies in the unification of all media concerns within the Combine. All programming requests, ideas, and production must carry official BOI certification before it is released to the public.

COURT

The *Kasoku*, or the Ministry of the Servants of the Draconis Combine (the Ministry of the Court), includes those bureaus directly concerned with the nobles, the court, and some others with a less obvious connection. Among the more obscure inclusions are the Bureau of Hospitality Toward New Lands—which assigns governors to recently conquered planets—and the Committee of Planetary Unity.

The Keeper of the House Honor is the most powerful section of the Ministry of the Court. Other sections include the Watchers of the Household, who run Imperial Palace; the Interior Staff of the Coordinator, managing the Coordinator's cooks and physicians; and the Committee of Special Events, which plans court ceremonies.

INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE



The ISF is not under the jurisdiction of any ministry. Its doings are shrouded in such secrecy that it officially does not exist. No one branch of government can claim control over the ISF, as its agents are everywhere, and their first and only allegiance is to the Coordinator.

Subdivided into five main branches, all of which operate independently of one another, the ISF has no central administration outside the director. This arrangement helps foster internal security among the various branches by compartmentalizing operations.

Currently, the ISF's primary mission is to locate and destroy the surviving elements of the Black Dragon Society while simultaneously protecting the Combine against external threats. The Clan and Federated Suns fronts remain hotbeds of activity for the latter activities, which suggests that Theodore does not fully trust his neighbors.

It should be noted that recent efforts by the Coordinator to strengthen Japanese culture among his people has led to an influx of new Japanese names for agencies previously tagged with generic labels. Curiously enough, the ISF and DEST entities have not received this treatment, most likely because their names are recognized and feared even in foreign space.

Mononokete



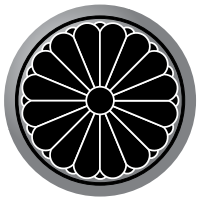
The *Mononokete*—Ghost Hands—is the covert operations division and forms the active intelligence branch of the ISF. Though trained along similar lines to the DEST, *Mononokete* operatives work in smaller groups and often receive more deep-cover assignments. Their missions run the gamut from assassinations and sabotage to spreading misinformation among rival intelligence services, all directed against external threats to the state. Within the Combine, *Mononokete* operatives watch over foreign visitors, particularly as attachés and liaison officers. Rarely are the talents of these operatives used to resolve internal matters.

Mokonete



The Guiding Hands is the internal security division and is the most feared and persuasive division of the ISF. Directed to confront threats on the home front, this agency has built a reputation for brutality against even the mildest anti-government sentiments, but its "guiding hand" is only as harsh as the Coordinator's. The *Mokonete* is responsible for identifying and reeducating dissident citizens as well as detecting and eliminating foreign agents operating within the Combine. Currently, this mandate is primarily directed at ferreting out members of the *Kokuryu-kai*, who continue to pose a threat despite three major purges launched by this division.

Koe No Ryu



Commonly referred to still as the "Voice of the Dragon," the *Koe No Ryu* is the Combine's propaganda division. While the Bureau of Official Information within the Ministry of Justice is the Combine's formal arm of communication, most of its material comes from the *Koe No Ryu* offices. This group puts the official spin on events both within and without House Kurita's borders. Thanks to the widespread acceptance of state-run public media, this division holds considerable power and influence in the Combine. At least one of its operatives sits on the board of every media concern operating in Kurita space, serving as an "advisor."

Metsuke



Though the term *metsuke* (all-seeing eyes) once applied to the entirety of the ISF, the *Metsuke* is the ISF's intelligence gathering and analysis section. *Metsuke* agents are infiltrators, sleeper agents, and observers who take no action but can broadcast what they know and see to friendly agents at any time. It has been presumed that the Black Dragon Society maintains its own *metsuke*-like organization; this is believed to include many otherwise legitimate members of society who have given their allegiance to the *Kokuryu-kai* after first earning sensitive positions in government or military life.

Draconis Elite Strike Teams



The DEST are by far the most well-known of the Combine's active covert operations divisions. More a part of the DCMS than the ISF, the ranks of the DEST are composed entirely of cross-trained MechWarriors, producing fearless soldiers whose skills allow them to pursue almost any military objective. Under Theodore's rule, the DEST are primarily employed as counter-Clan operatives engaging in infiltration of hostile territories, espionage, assassinations, and even frontal assaults. As the most exposed branch of the ISF with wide recruitment options, the DEST is the most likely to be compromised by Black Dragon agents.

Musukosan No Ryu



An unofficial branch of the ISF, the Sons of the Dragon are relatively new to the security agency. Formed by ISF Director Subhash Indrahar as something akin to a secret society in the early part of the thirty-first century, members are loyal to the Combine above all else. Headed by the current ISF Director, Ninyu Kerai-Indrahar, the society is trusted with the most critical of missions. Though the *Musukosan No Ryu* allegedly counts the Coordinator as one of its members, rumors spoken in dark corners suggest that the Black Dragons have even infiltrated this most secret of secret societies.

THE KOKURYU-KAI

The ancient Black Dragon society, with roots as far back as Richard Kurita, is considered the greatest internal threat to the stability of the Combine since the Shadow War of the previous century. The *Kokuryu-kai* has always moved in the shadows, influencing nobles and other officials as needed to protect the Dragon from harming itself. Only in the last few decades has this society moved in a more overt manner, bringing bold violence into the realm.

The Black Dragons' first blatant militaristic move was an attack on the Davion world of Towne, launched after the FedCom split apart in the face of a Marik-Liao invasion. Although hoping to bring back the Combine's glory days with this unsanctioned invasion, the Society found its plans thwarted by mercenaries employed by the Coordinator's cousin, Chandrasekhar Kurita. After the incident, a purge of the DCMS was believed to put an end to the secretive sect, but two months later, the *Kokuryu-kai* struck again with an assassination attempt on the Coordinator.

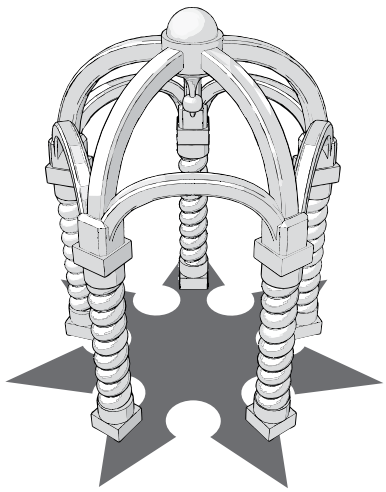
The 3058 incident was aided by a large number of sympathizers within the ISF and Otomo, including General Hohiro Kiguri, head of DEST. A second, more widespread purge, including within the ISF, attempted to destroy the Black Dragons for good. The ISF's vital role in the operations to destroy the Smoke Jaguars and end the Clan crusade showed few indications that any of the *Kokuryu-kai* had survived. One incident, an attempt on Victor Steiner-Davion's life during his visit to Luthien, has not been officially linked to the Society, though many among the nobility believe it to be so.

After the Clans' defeat, much of the ISF assisted the reclamation of the worlds liberated by BULLDOG. Nearly a decade of rebellion against the occupying Clans produced planetary populations grown accustomed to resistance, which made it nearly as difficult for the ISF to assimilate these reclaimed worlds as it was to bring the remains of Clan Nova Cat into the Combine. The resource drain on both the agency and the overall economy of the Combine created a great deal of internal dissent that once again awakened the Black Dragons, who moved forward a few years later with their most ambitious plans yet.

In just a handful of isolated incidents, the latest actions attributed to the Black Dragons have provoked some of the hardest fighting and the most terrible tragedies in recent years. With the renegade attack on Alshain by the Alshain Avengers in 3062, the Society instigated the biggest conflict on the Clan front since BULLDOG. Along with the DCMS seizing worlds in the Lyons Thumb after Lyran and mercenary troops struck Combine garrisons, the Federated Suns's Draconis March launched their own assault over the border.

These conflicts savaged the Combine military and stretched thin the already-depleted ISF resources. To save face among his people and forestall any more "renegade" adventurism, the Coordinator annexed territories along the Lyran and FedSuns borders and redistributed the DCMS among several hostile borders. Tensing for the next dissident attack, the Combine stands on the verge of losing most of the reforms the Coordinator has spent his life putting into effect for the nation's own survival.

—*Star League Intel Briefing 53-1*; Office of the Star League Intelligence Command, 3065



ORDER OF THE FIVE PILLARS

The O5P is a curious agency, neither officially part of the Combine's intelligence apparatus nor technically opposed to it. The Order is a self-sufficient organization that maintains the dual roles of protecting the spiritual honor of House Kurita while at the same time keeping watch over its people. This quasi-agency falls under the purview of the Ministry of the Court but answers directly to the Coordinator. The Order's ministry ties exist so it can requisition materials and work with the various Court bureaus to provide assistance as needed.

In order to facilitate its own goals, the O5P has evolved its own bureaucracy and intelligence network that pervades all of Combine space and possibly beyond. They have the ear of many of the Dragon's officials.

GOVERNMENT DISTRICTS

The four government districts are analogous to the military districts. The district and prefecture names are the same, and the borders are generally the same. A few systems are in one military district and another governmental district, a situation that produces only problems for that planet. Between simple bureaucratic mishaps and deliberate sabotage by one prefect against another, everything is hard to accomplish in a split-district system.

A s*hogun*, also referred to as a District Governor, works in conjunction with the military commander in charge of that district and leads each government district. The military commander always has final say but usually prefers to leave administrative details to the *shogun*. A Planetary Chairman runs individual planets.

BENJAMIN GOVERNMENTAL DISTRICT

The Benjamin Governmental District gets much of the Combine's attention these days. The district is in a seemingly endless cycle of rebuilding, no thanks to the Clan Invasion, a brutal border war with the Ghost Bears, and Davion aggression during their recent civil war. Many of these district worlds have a continual, heavy DCMS presence.

The Irurzun and Proserpina Prefectures have seen centuries of war and destruction, a constant threat with the Dragon's hostile neighbors on both prefecture borders. Social and political concerns within these prefectures are typically pushed aside in favor of more immediate military problems. Paranoia about the government and ISF, the looming threat of invasion, and the nervous fear of living on a border world all combine to make living on these worlds exceptionally difficult.

Buckminster Prefecture is known for its extensive industrial sprawls, all of which lie in striking distance of Clan Ghost Bear. The Clan threat continues to loom large among the population, spurring record numbers of military academy applicants and proving grounds candidates over the last two decades.

In contrast, Xinyang Prefecture's small border with the Clan gives these worlds a bit of psychological relief. Many of these systems lie in close proximity to the capital, and citizens here are comforted knowing the elite regiments of the DCMS are only a jump away.

The Benjamin Prefecture is an amalgamation of the other four within the district. Responsible for defending against the first waves of any attacks by nearby enemies and considered the industrial heartland of the district, planetary chairmen of these prefecture worlds tend to defer to the District Governor and the Warlord for direction. The DCMS trains extensively across all of the prefecture's systems, providing a sense of security and power to its residents.

DIERON GOVERNMENTAL DISTRICT

The closest district to Terra, the nobles here believe they are the most important district to the Combine. Residents tend to point to the early signs of Terran history and the Star League relics that dot many world landscapes. Because of the strategic importance of the planets in the region, constant warfare has reduced many of these historic and priceless relics to rubble and ash.

The Algedi Prefecture holds the lion's share of Hegemony and Star League relics. The DCMS, present in abundance due to the proximity of three major stellar powers, is on constant watch for pirates and unauthorized lostech prospectors. Citizens and certified foreigners can be found combing the landscapes for relics, antiques, and historical items. As long as every item is registered with the Ministry of Well-Being of the Land and the Peoples and the appropriate taxes are paid, prospectors are welcome within the prefecture. Taxes tend to be more than the item is worth, so the relics are often turned in to the ministry as payment.

The Al Na'ir Prefecture sees constant military activity within its borders, due to its shared border with the Federated Suns's Draconis March. Most of the citizenry are tired of the constant military presence, especially those of the Azami worlds. There are few people of Asian descent in the Dieron district as a whole and Al Na'ir in general. The age of the first settlements of the systems within gives many of these worlds a deeper loyalty to Terra than to the Combine. More than most Combine citizens, the residents here would prefer to see the constant border conflicts and interstellar war cease. Unlike most Draconians, the people here do not care who rules this section of space as long as the fighting ends.

Conversely, the worlds within the Vega and Kessel Prefectures live under the continual threat of raids, invasions, and spontaneous violence. Faced with a long history of intense conflict with the neighboring Lyran Alliance (née Commonwealth), prefecture residents look upon the current peace with suspicion. Fear of invasion has spread the view that the enemies of the Combine should be stopped by any means necessary.

Ashio Prefecture boasts strong agricultural worlds that see a large amount of exports to other Combine systems—and limited, ISF-monitored trade with those in the nearby Federated Suns. The planetary chairmen spend their time focused more on what their neighbors are doing economically while the nobility plays petty politics.

GALEDON GOVERNMENTAL DISTRICT

As the birthplace of the Draconis Combine, the Galedon Governmental District had its days of glory but now suffers the lingering aftereffects of the Succession Wars. This combination of special history and bloody suffering has instilled great pride in the Galedonians. No district is truer to the Combine and none, save the former Rasalhague District, has so much pride in its own region.

The Tabayama, Kaznejoy, and Matsuida Prefectures have only recently begun receiving back former citizens who were relocated into Pesht due to the severe Davion assaults of the Third and Fourth Succession Wars. Citizens from Alshain and Benjamin were also relocated back into these three prefectures, providing a small boost to local economies and general well-being. With rumors of Clan Snow Raven taking over the Outworlds Alliance, many citizens are nervous—not from imminent attack, but from another round of relocations.



The New Samarkand Prefecture maintains a not-so-friendly rivalry with the Kagoshima Prefecture. Many citizens of the New Samarkand worlds hold fast to their place in Combine history. Claiming both Shiro Kurita's birthworld and the home of the Combine's beginnings within their borders, the people of New Samarkand believe their prefecture is the jewel of the Combine. Residents in Kagoshima, of course, believe they are deserving of the honor because of Luthien's presence. Several planetary chairmen have used this rivalry to great effect by pitting militias against each other in yearly war games on several prefecture proving grounds. The more emotional contests occur on Miyada, Sighisoara, and Worrell ever since they were reabsorbed within the Pesht Governmental District.

Of the district's five prefectures, Oshika is the tamest. Several longstanding industrial facilities remain operational within the prefecture. The recent boom in naval construction and technological developments have made this prefecture a more appealing location for the Combine's brighter minds.

PESHT GOVERNMENTAL DISTRICT

Pesht, the site of Luthien and the furthest removed from hostile powers, is the most economically stable of the four districts and thus was the destination for those fleeing the Clan Invasion. These refugees resettled along the Periphery border worlds. The resettlement has been an economic boon for those less-populated systems; many who relocated have not opted to return to the recently liberated worlds once held by the Smoke Jaguars and Nova Cats.

The Clan invasion made the Pesht District one of the hottest battlefields in the Inner Sphere. Wolcott, the site of one of the Combine's earliest victories against the Clans, remained a major staging area for anti-Clan operations for more than a decade. The system still acts a major DCMS depot that supplies many of the units posted within the district.

The Qandahar Prefecture in particular has been the location of much of the Combine's industrial expansion over the last century, thanks to an abundance of resources and its naturally sheltered stellar position. The Bjarred and Ningxia Prefectures have harbored the bulk of refugees over the last few decades; their swift development has provided a strategic reserve of manpower and industrial capacity for the Combine in case of extreme duress. The biggest problem in these three districts is the suspicion held between the established citizenry and the newly arrived (within the last hundred years) upstarts.

The Albiero Prefecture contains several productive agricultural worlds and is often left out of major political wars between nobles. The biggest threat facing these citizens tends to be roving pirate bands, which have dropped off dramatically since the arrival of the Clans.

The jewel of the Pesht Governmental District is the Kagoshima Prefecture, home of Luthien and the important world of Pesht. Since this prefecture is considered the center

of the Combine, the nobility of Kagoshima have an unspoken elevated status among their peers. All planetary governments take special pride in their association with the Combine's capital and are considered the most loyal to the Coordinator. The recent reacquisition of Miyada, Sighisoara, and Worrell from the New Samarkand Prefecture has brought additional honor to the region. These three worlds, traditionally part of the Pesht District, were "lost" in a bureaucratic war during the late 2900s. The late Duchess Tomoe Sakade was instrumental in bringing the three back into the fold.

The Irece Prefecture is the location of the Combine's current experiment in cultural symbiosis. What remains of Clan Nova Cat has been distributed among the systems within, though the Clanspeople do not have full rights as Draconian citizens. Each planet has a designated "reservation zone" that the Clan is allowed to occupy and carve out its version of civilization. Some displacement did occur, which has infuriated some populations and created a disproportionate amount of unrest in the region.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Few Draconians travel, unless they are part of the military. Those who trade with other nations are watched carefully for signs of cultural weakness—and they are aware of the surveillance. A common saying among corporate travelers sums up their attitude well: "The eyes of the Dragon are like a mother watching a child in the street." Those who are tempted to stray too far from fealty to Kurita and the Dictum Honorium should be thankful for the reminder not to stray and for the chance to return to the Dragon's protection. Those who are ungrateful flee to the other Houses and are considered dead by their fellow citizens. Such actions put a fugitive's family under heightened ISF scrutiny, often with the patriarch being invited to see his ancestors for failing to instill proper decorum and integrity in his progeny.

Travel under such tense circumstances—the slightest interest in another culture is often reported as treasonous—is not conducive to understanding other cultures and is not meant to be. Military duty will rarely afford any true understanding of the worlds invaded. Even mercenary units who have served other states are segregated from DCMS troops to prevent the spread of confusing ideas about other worlds and cultures. This lack of contact keeps most Draconians ignorant about the other stellar nations and receptive to whatever propaganda the government wishes to spread.

The official descriptions of the other nations in the Inner Sphere are caricatures emphasizing the worst possibilities of each culture. For example, the Federated Suns is described as a collection of licentious perverts who wish to spread their seed across settled space, corrupting all humankind with their lazy, immoral ways. Such behavior would cause civilization to collapse from the "cult of the individual" and mindless self-indulgence. The Lyran Alliance is described as a group of greedy sensualists and capitalists, concerned only with acquiring wealth and its poisonous trappings. Lyrans secretly wish to conquer the Combine to see the Dragon's worlds stripped of their natural wealth and the populations enslaved to do the work Lyrans refuse.

Though the Combine's higher levels of nobility recognize the differences between the various Clans, not so the common citizen. To many, the Clans are an alien civilization, perverted from the ideals of the Star League. They feast on babies and the youth of the Combine so they can destroy the Dragon through poisoning its honor and integrity. Their worship of various animal totems shows their barbarism and love of senseless violence. These ideals stand as a direct opposite to the tenets and pillars of the Dragon and must be resisted.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The major strength of the Draconis Combine is the loyalty and devotion of its people. Having always lived under a tightly disciplined system, most of its citizens do not imagine an alternative system as desirable. They are obedient and loyal, ready for service. The people of the Combine rejoice in victories for the Dragon as unto themselves. They feel a deep sense of belonging, a sense that an injury to one is an injury to all; a triumph for one is a triumph for all. This selfless attitude is especially important in a state low on resources and with a deeply scarred industrial base, a state dependent on military conquest for development.

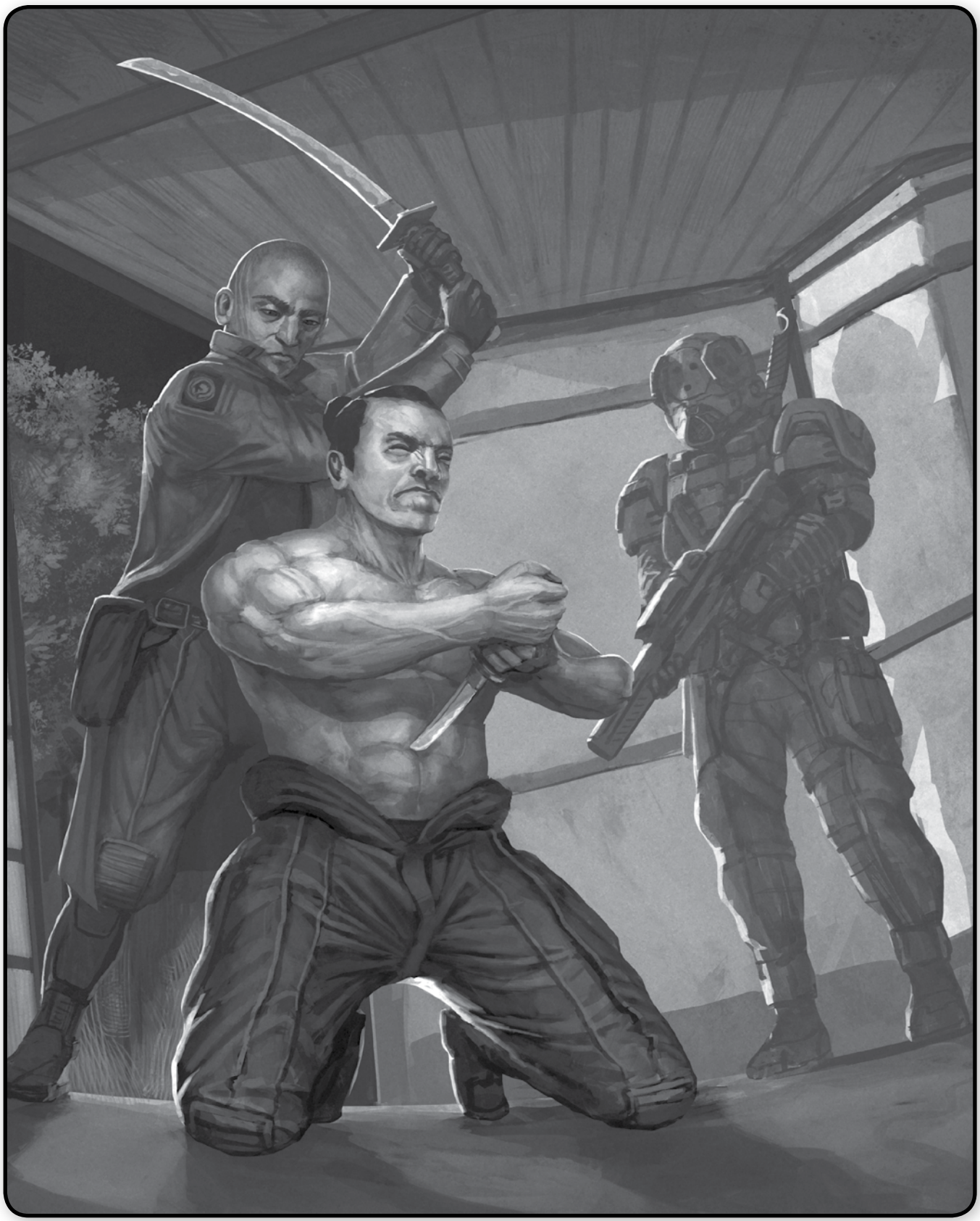
The major weakness of the Dragon is, ironically, its militarism. A society structured around service to the military must maintain a precarious balance. If the military is woefully unsuccessful, the people will lose faith. If the military is wildly successful and achieves total conquest, the society will have to be radically restructured to accommodate the change in status.

More important, the emphasis on the military is sapping the free will and thought of the people and draining the economy. Once the creative spirit and resources are exhausted, there can be no growth in the community.

The other weakness of the Combine is the concentration of power in the hands of the Kurita family. Sooner or later, a dynasty ends—whether by lack of descendants or by assassination. Concentration of power in a tightly closed circle leaves no provision for running the Combine without a Kurita on the throne.

The concentration of power is even more dangerous because of the government's dependence on one person's judgment. A bad leader does far more harm in a monarchy or dictatorship than in a system with distributed powers and clearly defined responsibilities. Also, if all power is in one person's hands, subordinates will spend their time jockeying for position near the leader and neglect what duties they could be performing for the general good.

The people of the Dragon expect strong leadership from the Coordinator and look to him for guidance. If anything were to finally loosen the grasp of the Kurita family, the Combine would be ripe for takeover by another strong leader. If none emerge, the disciplined, group-minded people of the Combine would either plunge into the greatest anarchy ever seen or unite in a true, communal combine.



DAILY LIFE AND CULTURE

Among the five pillars of the Draconis Combine, the Pillar of Teak represents the daily life and culture of its people. Though this precious wood flourished in the hot, moist climates of Terra, it was successfully transplanted to only one world in the Combine during the founding years: Jabuka, located in the former province of Rasalhague. (It has since been found to thrive also on Pusht-i-rud and Cylene.)

The structure of Draconian society is symbolized by this valuable timber because it was one of the strongest and longest-lived building woods ever used by man. Unity Palace, home of the Coordinator on Luthien, is constructed from and decorated primarily with this beautiful, durable wood.

Just as the royal palace is built from teak, which is practically imperishable if not exposed, so the structure of Kurita society must be durable, dependable, and strong. These qualities correspond with the ideals of duty, honor, and obedience that rule every member of Kurita society, from the Coordinator at the apex to the lowest of the Unproductives.

Aside from those few demonstrating military, technical, or professional brilliance, the average Combine citizen will encounter difficulty in attempting to rise beyond his or her station at birth. However, each man and woman sees how his place and function fit into the whole. This stratification does not generally create dissatisfaction among the masses.

THE PEOPLE OF THE DRAGON

Ever since Shiro Kurita first forged the Draconis Combine, its people have believed they are destined to rule the known universe by dint of their greater bravery, virtue, and intelligence. Even the rebirth of the Star League and disassociation with the title of "succession lord" has done little to stem this traditional belief. While the role of conquest through military might has been reduced due to renewed cooperation between Inner Sphere leaders, many Kuritans believe that the Combine can still rule through other means, including influence, corporate and economic savvy, and technological achievement. Draconians understand that most of the Dragon's people firmly believe their rigid adherence to honor and duty already elevates them above the rest of humanity. It is a question of time when other people in the Inner Sphere accept it.

Reverence for the ruling family, especially the godlike Shiro—who first envisioned the goal of extending Combine sway over the Inner Sphere—has made the Kuritans believe it is their moral imperative. This doctrine underlies every aspect of life—and death—in this realm.

The people of the Dragon are perhaps the most contented of all the Great Houses, not because their daily lives are particularly pleasant but because theirs is a collective identity based on a shared vision of society. This vision gives purpose and meaning to their lives. The people believe their Coordinator rules by divine right and that their own place in the scheme of things is part of the same divine plan. Each person has their duty within the divine order, giving a transcendent quality to each existence, no matter how spartan. This collectivity also prevents ordinary citizens from missing the luxury, leisure, or sensual pleasures that are found in the surrounding decadent Great Houses.

LIFE IS TO CONFLICT AS DEATH IS TO ISOLATION

Life consists in conflict. So long as man remains a social animal he cannot live in isolation. All individual hopes and aspirations depend on society. Society is reflected in the individual, and the individual in society.

[*Commentary: The balance of life is as fine as a sword's sharpest edge. The more an individual sharpens himself against the whetstone of fate, the more improved an edge becomes. Denying the maintenance of the sword invites dullness and dust, burying duty and honor beneath the filth of society.*]

The more one secures new pleasure, spiritual or material, the more one incurs pain not yet experienced. One evil removed only gives place to another; one advantage gained soon proves itself a disadvantage. One's own reason is the cause of doubt and suspicion; the intellect, with which one wishes to know everything, declares itself to be incapable of knowing anything in its real state; one's finer sensibility, which is the sole source of finer pleasure, has to experience finer suffering. The more one asserts oneself, the more one must sacrifice.

[*Commentary: Life's whetstone is a jagged work, varying in its grain as fate curls inward along paths undefined. Suffering and pleasure are irrevocably linked, creating a passion and understanding of all sides and revealing at times the wisdom of ancestors.*]

—Dictum Honorium, v. VIII, 145–147

CODES OF CONDUCT

To maintain order and discipline among the vast populace of the realm, the rulers of the Combine enforce the venerable Dictum Honorium, which now numbers seven volumes. These Codes of Conduct emphasize that there is one correct way of conduct and four incorrect ways. The false paths are known as Oblivion of Spirit, Sorrow from Weakness, Ignorance of Order, and Pain of Failure.

Combine citizens learn the Code intimately, from the first day of First School at the age of four. The Dictum Honorium pervades every institution of Kurita society and has done so for more than seven hundred years. Its essence is second nature to Kuritans. They see the universe and their place in it through the prism of the Code and interpret all events according to its precepts. When faced with discord, the true Kuritan follows the path of the Code and eschews all else, even if such a path leads to their passing.

STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

At the head of Combine society is the Coordinator, who is revered as the dynastic father of his people. Under him come the nobility, or *kuge*, and the military class, the *buke*. In the center is the middle class of professionals and corporate managers. Next down the line are the commoners, or *heinin*, who perform most of the society's actual work. Lowest of the low are the Unproductives, an underclass composed of criminals, disgraced members of other classes, beggars, and other undesirables. They are often assigned to undertake suicide missions, serve on cleanup crews in toxic atmospheres, work in unsafe mining operations, act as test subjects for research and experiments, and so on.

The basic unit of society is the "nuclear family" concept. This family unit consists of father, mother, and their offspring. In daily life, this group overlaps with the extended family, a two- or three-generation collection that includes grandparents, their married children, and their numerous grandchildren. Because of tradition and the crowded conditions of ordinary Combine housing projects, these extended families often share a residence on more populous worlds, living an almost communal existence.

Historically, few women who entered military service would achieve a measure of equality. That has begun to change over the last several decades, thanks to Coordinator Theodore Kurita's late wife, Tomoe Sakade. An intelligent and fierce samurai in her own right, she rose to the position of Kagoshima Prefecture commander through her own merits and honorable actions. Her choice to commit *seppuku* for the failure of her forces to defend the Dragon's border against the neighboring Clan Ghost Bear indicated that women were equally capable of serving the Combine over filial obligations.

In most Kuritan households, however, women fulfill traditional time-honored roles. The male is the undisputed head of his household, while the women are responsible for taking care of the home, feeding and clothing their families, raising the children, and overseeing their daughters-in-law. Because Kuritans are universally indulgent of very young children, one might see a three-year-old cry and rail in tantrum with his mother, but that child would never display such behavior in the presence of his father or other important male figures. To do so is a severe dishonor and worthy of strict and proper discipline.

At the higher levels of society—among corporate management, for example—wives rarely see their husbands. The men are expected to spend after-hours with their colleagues. Much business is transacted during these seemingly casual get-togethers, which is one reason the wives are often excluded. As in the military, this glass ceiling is slowly changing through the efforts and honor of sharp Combine businesswomen.

Marriages are often arranged, particularly among the upper classes. Parents send holos and life histories of their daughters to the families of marriageable sons. There are many reasons why a girl may be rejected by the boy's family. She might have unsuitable friendships, for example, or be too bold in expressing herself in company. If a marriage is arranged, the courtship period lasts at least two years, during which the betrothed couple will rarely spend time together unless in the presence of a chaperone.

Perhaps because of this antiquated tradition, the institution of the geisha is still strong wherever there are large populations of nobility, military, or professional men who can afford the services of these elegant companions.

MILITARISM

The traditional ruthlessness of the Kurita ruling line has filtered down into the society at large. Many Kurita citizens are conscripted for military training and indoctrination. Because of their training and culture, House Kurita soldiers are fearless and coldblooded, preferring combat duty to garrison, protection, militia, or other special duties. Indeed, Combine officers will spare no cost in lives, either of their opponents or their own men, in order to meet an objective. Life is cheap; honor is everything.

Draconian culture is rooted in a military tradition that dates from the days of Shiro Kurita, influenced by the samurai ways of his Japanese ancestors. Because of his success in forging the Combine through military strategy and sheer determination, Shiro became revered as godlike by his soldiers, who transferred such reverence to their families. The warrior qualities he embodied represented the ideals of honor, duty, and devotion.

Furthermore, Shiro's dedication to creating an empire under a single ruler expanded to become a manifest destiny. Believing that the Combine is destined to rule all of human space, its leaders will seek to achieve this goal through any means necessary. This militant obsession, however, served the Combine well in ejecting Clan Smoke Jaguar from the realm and subjugating Clan Nova Cat during Operations BIRD DOG and BULLDOG. The reclamation of these worlds took less than most analysts' projected timeframes, returning the Combine to a stronger position of industrial and military power.

The propaganda machine continues to feed the Kuritan people images of military glory and dominion, while also assuring them that all things come to he who has patience. The Dragon may not be fully roused, but when awakened it can be nigh invincible.

XENOPHOBIA

Another means of ensuring discipline and unquestioning obedience from the populace is the Combine's well-known xenophobia. To maintain the political purity of their House, the rules of the Combine have always sought to limit contact between their people and those of other realms. Most Kuritans will never venture beyond their own borders unless involved in a military action. Marrying anyone who is not a citizen of the Combine is also considered an act of treason. The Dictum Honorium states that the Combine was born in struggle, and this state of affairs will continue until the Dragon rules all of known space.

In the early days of the Combine, its leaders even resisted the idea of trade with other realms, because they feared that their spartan society would be undermined by the availability of luxury items. They also feared exposing themselves to possible economic sabotage from their opponents. Trade was highly restricted to Coordinator-authorized merchant visits on a case-by-case basis that included a full disclosure of inventory, massive amounts of red tape, and high dock tariffs. During the time of the Von Rohrs, any trading vessels attempting to enter the Combine were seized, boarded, and either stripped or turned back after a levy of stiff fines. Neighboring realms quickly learned to avoid Combine space for over a century.

At the time of the Star League's formation, the Combine opened its doors wide to trade. Today, the realm must trade to obtain both necessities and revenue. Nevertheless, the Minister of Indoctrination continues to strictly regulate what is suitable for import, to whom it will be made available, and how much intercultural contact is healthy. In the current era, some resource-poor worlds of

the Dragon are almost totally dependent on simple foods imported from nearby worlds of the Federated Suns. Among the upper classes, there is always money to buy the gourmet specialties, antique weapons, or frivolous luxury items currently in demand.

Since House Kurita lacks the resources of its House Davion neighbor and maintains a closed border with Clan Ghost Bear, its xenophobia has strengthened. The Kuritan people have had to learn to conserve what they have and do without, if necessary. (Ironically, civilians from the liberated Smoke Jaguar worlds got by with even less, living in poverty that made the lower class Kuritan family seem as nobility.) This perpetual belt-tightening has created a strong *esprit de corps* among the people. Sharing hardships has imbued them with a feeling of spiritual strength that reinforces the belief in their superiority over the other, "softer" peoples of the Inner Sphere.

MODERNIST HAIKU

Currently, the haiku styling of Tomas Ferrel is in vogue among the courtiers of the Imperial Palace.

In this world, we walk
Daintily along hell's roof
Gazing at flowers.

One last time, I think, I will brush the dying flies from my father's face.

Sick on a journey
My lurid dreams wander the withered fields afar.

This autumn evening
Why must I grow old?
A bird vanishes into clouds.

Children imitating cormorants are the wonderful cormorants!

—*Life in the Dragon's Palm*, by Tomas Ferrell; Luthien Imperial Press, 3066

EDUCATION

In any society, education is the most powerful propaganda tool, with control of the media as a close second. The Kurita regime uses these two information agencies to continually reinforce in its people unquestioning loyalty, courage in battle, and devotion to order.

Kurita education is based on the principle that knowledge, like any other aspect of society, must serve. The Ministry of General Indoctrination rejects the philosophy that children should be encouraged to reason out matters for themselves in order to draw their own conclusions. Instead, the Kurita system is based heavily upon rote learning and the principle that all students be thoroughly indoctrinated with the obedience and loyalty prescribed by the Code of Honor. Though the Kuritan system stresses science and technology, the rote training tends to discourage any real advances in these areas because indoctrination stifles creativity and original thought, even among the intellectual elite.

Loyalty and obedience begin at home, of course. There the child learns to revere his parents, his ancestors, and the supreme authority of the Coordinator, who embodies the soul of the Kuritan people.

The Kuritan educational system has numerous methods for drilling these attitudes and beliefs at all levels of education. For example, courses in history and even geography interpret facts and events according to state ideology. Also, every student is drilled in *sushin* (ethics), which teaches patriotism and reverence for the Coordinator. The school system has also become the central propagandist for Draconian militarism, and Regular Army officers attached to each secondary school teach special courses of military instruction.

The Unity of Indoctrination

The Draconis Combine's educational system borrows widely from other systems but includes some distinctive features.

Primary education is compulsory for all children; secondary and higher education are reserved for a select few. This means the majority of children of First School age do get a rudimentary education; the Dragon's literacy rate consistently averages above ninety percent. First School begins at age four and lasts until age ten. During their final year, each child must face a battery of tough achievement and aptitude tests.

Only sixty percent of students will pass these stringent exams, and that is intentional. The Ministry of Indoctrination's Bureau of Skill Development moves those who succeed to the appropriate trade or technical Middle School (*koto gakko*). At this point the remainder will most likely leave the education system forever and enter the workforce.

The vast majority of people are content to end their formal education after First School. Because the masses will never engage in anything but rote duties or manual labor, they share the official belief that higher education might well spoil a good artisan by making him discontented with his fate.

The Middle School curriculum generally lasts five years and offers a solid course of study in mathematics, science, geography, history, language, and literature. The students wear uniforms and are subject to a semi-military discipline, all while continuing their deep immersion in Combine ideology. Students are encouraged to study the martial arts, particularly kendo or *kudo*—fencing or archery, respectively—as relaxation.

At age fifteen, students submit to another round of examinations that will determine who is suited for higher education, or *dai gakko*. At the university level, a student is assumed to have mastered the preparatory general subjects and will devote most of his time to his own special field. Having completed his higher education, the student receives his *gakushi* (learned gentleman) degree. Those selected for postgraduate study and ultimately produce an acceptable dissertation will receive the covered title of *Hakase*, or doctor.

Women are not barred from Middle School or higher education programs. They do face immense pressure to perform equal to their male peers and fight traditional prejudices regarding a woman's role in the Combine. Nonetheless, women who succeed despite such obstacles blossom into a vital resource for the Dragon. Many of these successful women tend to be even more dedicated in their honor and duty to the Combine than their male counterparts.

Some students who do not survive the weeding-out process that leads to the *koto gakko* and then the *dai gakko* do have one other option. Those whose tests show the necessary aptitude may attend one of the many *semmon gakko* (specialty school). Some *semmon gakko* teach higher-level commercial or technical courses, while others specialize in subjects such as mining or agriculture. Though higher education is reserved for males, women may attend *semmon gakko*. The course of study usually lasts three years, with graduates earning a diploma rather than a formal degree.

Even at the highest levels, Kuritan students receive special or vocational training rather than a broad general education. As always, the principle is a pragmatic one: the study of liberal arts would not make a student more useful to the society. Also, the theory is that such broad, general training would encourage radical and dangerous tendencies of thought.

Although the Kuritan educational system borrows more knowledge than it develops, the state is determined to combine high technology with traditional values and ideals. During the expansionist Star League era, the founder of Luthien University was a broad-minded scholar who appreciated what Kuritans could learn from the discoveries of scientists and scholars from other realms. Dr. Paul Edwards spoke for many when in 2780 he stated: "Knowledge shall be sought throughout the galaxy in order to promote the welfare of the Draconis Combine."

At the same time, leaders insist that even the most advanced knowledge must not interfere with maintaining the Dictum Honorium. A corollary of this is that the entire system is operated by and for the state. The principle permeating every phase of Kurita education is that education is to teach and investigate the sciences and studies that are of practical service to the Combine. Private First Schools are non-existent, though there are a few religious-based Middle Schools. Before the devastation of the Succession Wars, some private universities did exist. A few were outstanding, but most could not compete with government institutions of higher learning. Indeed, both government and private industry gave preference to graduates of state schools. Currently, no private universities exist in the Combine.

As might be expected from such a single-minded system, Kurita education is highly centralized. The Ministry of General Indoctrination dictates all aspects of schooling and rigidly supervises schools. The offices of the ministry compile most of the compulsory textbooks in use. According to Yorito Hale, the Combine's most influential Minister of General Indoctrination during the thirtieth century, the task of Kurita education is to "transform the school into a weapon of Draconian society."

UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

Because of the severe damage that the Dragon suffered during the four Succession Wars and the subsequent Clan wars, most of its universities were destroyed or overrun. This included New Samarkand University, the first ever established in the Draconis Combine. Many First Schools and Middle Schools were also destroyed, but with the lessening of hostilities in recent decades, the Ministry of General Indoctrination has begun returning these to pre-Succession War levels.

Just as with its industrial efforts, however, House Kurita's native education would be seriously lacking if their spy system did not supply much of the up-to-date science and technology. These technical subjects, along with military science, are prestigious courses of study.

The Imperial Institute of Technology

This is as high-level as Kurita technology studies get, though for three centuries it played catch-up to its counterparts in Houses Davion and Steiner. Over the last few decades, IIT has benefited greatly from the data recovered from the Helm Memory Core along with the large amount of Clan salvage and technology recovered from former Jaguar and Nova Cat worlds. The influx of technology requires an increase of scientific and technical minds and instructors, a position IIT officials are more than happy to find themselves in.

Only the best and brightest, with high science and math aptitudes, will be tracked through the Draconian school system to arrive at the institute's main campus on Xinyang. Cadets at a few academies may elect to spend a year at IIT before graduation if they pass the institute's stringent application battery of tests.

Luthien University

Located on the capital world, this university offers a more traditional spectrum of education, suited to those headed for civil or diplomatic services. Studies range from history and astrography to languages and art history. These graduates are not being primed for the high-paying jobs that graduates of IIT or Kurita's NAIS will land. Instead, they will be the bureaucrats or lower-level members of diplomatic missions. These students have been chosen more for their ability to engage in cultivated discourse with outsiders or the less educated than for possible contributions to the ever-present goal of Kurita military dominion.

Noius Archipelagus Institute of Science

Military science and technology are the focus of education at NAIS, founded specifically—down to the name and acronym—to compete with the New Avalon Institute of Science. Located on the Noius Archipelagus on Kaznejoy, the NAIS has yet to distinguish itself beyond some minor combat vehicle prototypes and a new algorithm for battle armor communication encryption.

Students of the NAIS are typically those rejected from IIT and other prefecture research institutions. In many academic circles, the NAIS is considered a "last chance" facility for those who are better than the average citizen worker but not intelligent enough to find traction in other institutions of higher learning.

NON-JAPANESE CULTURE IN THE DRACONIS COMBINE

Although the general Kurita culture is closely based on that of Terran Japan, the majority of Combine citizens are not of Japanese ancestry. Especially on planets where one non-Japanese people predominates, there are definite strands of other cultures discernible.

The official Kurita tolerance for "foreign" cultures varies. At this time, under Jasmine Kurita's advocacy of the arts, multicultural study and display is actually encouraged. The School of Cultural Investigation on Al Na'ir is dedicated to exploration of the different cultures "from which we took the best elements, to forge together the superior way of living known as Kurita culture," according to Dean Hamin Gemal. Students of cultural investigation apply history, geography, anthropology, sociology, art history, and other disciplines to discover the hidden heritage of the non-Japanese Draconis Combine. The school even formed a task force in 3064, sending several instructors and researchers to observe and live in the Clan Nova Cat reserve areas.

While most cultural aspects—education, class structure, titles, and modes of address, for example—display the mainline Japanese-influenced culture of Kurita, arts and crafts on different planets still reflect the individual spirit and local cultural influences. For example, the architecture of the School of Cultural Investigation shows distinct references to the building style of the Terran Middle East and northern Africa.

Artists studying at Cultural Investigation, or influenced by its philosophy, follow their interests in one of two ways: reproducing the artistic forms of past times or adapting these forms to the present. Examples of the first include Philip Valenzuela's translations of ancient Spanish authors—such as Marquez, Neruda, and Borges—and Marion Tsevernasky's popular renditions of Russian, Ukrainian, and Martian folk music.

Examples of the adaptive school rank among the most exciting artistic work being done in the Combine today. The broad, cliff paintings of Bruno O'Leary are directly influenced by the Renaissance works of Monet, da Vinci, and Renoir. The neon *kabuki* performances by Isolde Gunnedottir reflect the mid-twenty-second-century, three-dimensional operatics of Jurgid and Tommes. Michi Kirosawa's extremely popular trivid action cinema are directly influenced by the ancient monster telefilms of the Shōwa period.

The only major gap in the wave of interest in other cultures is that of the Azami people. Because of their unique status as allies of the Dragon rather than subjects, they are often viewed with a veil of mistrust. Some inroads have been made in trying to understand and elevate the Azami culture—especially to Kurita enclaves on Azami worlds and neighboring systems—but their own reluctance to open up their closed culture to outsiders has hampered efforts. The epic *Sands of Fire*, a harrowing tale of the Azami wildegort herders who helped the DCMS defend against a Davion raid on Dabih, is one of few current exceptions. Director Mohammed Lakhdar's Second Succession War-era biopic has met critical success on several worlds, including Luthien and New Samarkand.

In the xenophobic atmosphere of House Kurita, the only way to sell the studies of other cultures is by stressing the superior way of the Combine and the benefits of incorporating the best of other cultures. It is likely that if Kurita suffers a major setback either internally or on the battlefronts, these foreign elements will be banned. Those studying these cultures know they are taking a great risk and, more than most, truly suffer for their art.

—*The Struggle of Culture Amongst the Dragon's Stars*; Proserpina Press, 3066

ARTS

Though Kuritan society is serious, hardworking, and dutiful, its people retain a keen sensitivity to beauty. They maintain an artistic tradition that is heavily indebted to the traditional arts of ancient Japan. For example, the intricate maze of buildings and chambers that make up the Royal Residence at Unity Palace is filled with the finest of ancient and modern paintings, sculpture, pottery, tapestries, rugs, and other examples of Kuritan art.

Commoners are not encouraged to practice the arts, however, nor have they the time even if they did have the inclination. Their tastes run more to the "soaps" on state-controlled holovision or to the televised sporting events in which men and machines fight to the death. (Up until the mid-3050s, Solaris VII footage was banned from the Combine, sparking a huge black market for match holovids. That market deflated when Theodore lifted the ban and encouraged the Kuritan people to support Combine-affiliated gladiators.)

Though military training takes up much of a warrior's time, many soldiers are serious students and practitioners of haiku, the classic poem of seventeen syllables. Often, they compose special battle haiku before entering combat and place these in their neurohelmets or cockpits, in case they are killed or taken prisoner.

Where the arts truly flourish is among the nobility and the warrior class. This is particularly true in the present era because the members of the Kurita family are passionate connoisseurs of many different art forms. Constance Kurita, in particular, has become an active patron by sponsoring many theater productions and events at Unity Palace on Luthien, using the theater built by Jasmine Kurita.

The government heavily sponsors Nohkabu performing troupes. Nohkabu is a blend of ancient and modern theatrical techniques to create a theatre that appeals to and instructs the ordinary people. The themes of these traveling troupes are mostly historical and portray events in the life of the dynastic line or the history of the House. Only those who have been trained in the National Treasures School may be assigned as a performer or creator of these events. Nohkabu has been especially popular in the Irece Prefecture among the reserve camp cities of Clan Nova Cat.

National Treasures School

Located in Imperial City on Luthien, the National Treasures School is staffed by the most accomplished masters of traditional and contemporary fine art forms. Unlike ordinary advanced-level schools, the NTS admits women and men.

Just as in ancient Japan, instruction in these arts includes serious meditation training, because many believe only mental training—*shuyo*, or self-discipline—can lead a man or woman to the experience of *muga*. *Muga* is the state where nothing separates the doer from the doing. The deed is effortless and masterful. This goal applies to all military, artistic, religious, and secular endeavors.

THE YAKUZA

The Combine's biggest known secret is the presence of the yakuza on every system in the realm. The organized crime clans (*gumi*) have their roots deep into Terran Asia's past and found a home early in the Dragon's history. These cartels have adopted and merged pockets of Russian and North American mafia, pan-Asian Triads, and European mob groups that found themselves in Combine space. Though many of the merges were peaceful, far more resulted in brutal territory wars. Membership remains slanted towards males with an Asian or Combine descent, though of late, powerful females have begun climbing the ranks of acceptance.

The rank structure of a *gumi* is generally styled along feudal lines. Each *gumi* is led by a *kumicho* (supreme boss) who rules with the aid of his *koman* (advisors), *shingiin* (counselors), a *wakagashira* (number-two man), and a *so-honbucho* (headquarters chief). The senior officers, collectively known as *shatei* (younger brothers), take orders from the *kumicho* and in turn rule over the *wakashu* (young men), who serve as lesser officers. Enlistees and apprentices round out a *gumi*'s manpower, which are often known collectively as the *kobun* (child figures) to the *kumicho*'s more popular, informal title of *oyabun* (father figure). Lesser *kobun*, used as foot soldiers by the clan, are also occasionally referred to as *teppodama* (a term often translated into "bullets," in reference to their expendable nature).

Yakuza operations cover a wide range of criminal enterprises, including gambling, blackmail, racketeering, and smuggling of contraband items such as narcotics and weapons. Operating on a chivalric code of honor very similar to *bushido*, the yakuza avoids street-level crime—such as muggings—out of respect for the common man. Less competitive than mafia, the yakuza handle inter-clan conflict in a more civilized fashion. Rival *gumi* usually work out conflicts with a meeting of *oyabun*.

The yakuza code of honor extends to the way internal discipline is handled. *Seppuku* is the final act of atonement for a major breach of honor, much as it is for a samurai. Minor infractions are punishable by *yubitsume*, a ritual in which the offending party severs a fingertip in atonement. As a reward for successful service, yakuza operatives receive *irezumi*, or ritual tattoos, which grow more elaborate and cover a person's torso and arms as his career progresses. Thus, yakuza with missing fingertips and exotic tattoos peeking out from the collars and sleeves of their jackets are a common sight within the organization.

Many *gumi* believe the yakuza have been given a certain level of legitimacy by Coordinator Theodore's reforms that allow yakuza soldiers to enter DCMS service. Rather than elevate their operations on the surface of society, the yakuza prefer to remain as they have for centuries. The honor given to them has increased their level of loyalty to the Kuritan throne. The *gumi* see themselves as the pulse of the Dragon, maintaining the invisible heartbeat of the realm. This fanaticism has spread to *gumi* outside the Combine's borders, providing the ISF an additional avenue to exploit in foreign intelligence operations. Kuritan citizens that find themselves trapped on occupied worlds know they can find comfort and aid from those yakuza clans operating among the criminal underworld.

Ironically, the acceptance and fervor of these clans has sparked an increase in *Kokuryu-kai* operations. Believing that criminals are incapable of honor—and therefore, incapable of adherence to duty and the Dragon—the organized rebels use this as a recruitment tool to further fill their ranks.

—*The Dragon's Loyal Underworld*; University of Pesht, 3064



THE GEISHA TRADITION

Geisha are members of an honorable tradition of entertainment dating to ancient Japan. Geisha translates loosely as "person of pleasing accomplishments." These artisans, mostly women, are trained to entertain patrons in a number of pleasant, artistic ways. A geisha learns several different entertainment arts such as singing, dancing, poetry writing and recitation, and hostess arts—massage, food serving, and flower arranging, among others. Outside of serving in the DCMS, the position of geisha is one of the most honorable available to a Kuritan woman. Contrary to popular opinion outside of the Combine, geisha are not prostitutes but are closer to bards or court jesters in the entertainment niche. Some women, such as courtesans, are trained in the erotic arts, but this is not the function of the geisha.

The geisha is revered as an artist-server. Most work in special houses, to which patrons go in small groups or alone. One or more geisha will entertain a patron or group, depending on how much the patron paid. Businessmen frequently bring their associates to a local house. The geisha serve food, tea, and wine in an especially artistic way and entertain with their performing art specialty. Sometimes, a patron will take over one geisha, setting him or her up in a separate house for his benefit.

—*A Businessman's Guide to the Draconis Combine (Revised)*; Commonwealth Press, 3015

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

The Draconis Combine is a tightly controlled, almost fanatical society. Because their system of education tends to dictate the fate of the common people and shape their beliefs, very little social unrest exists. Every now and then, a Davion or Outworlder ship will jump into Kurita space, make a wide-beam broadcast, and then jump out again, but very few of these ships get beyond the border. Even those that do cannot persuade the Kuritans of the trappings and luxuries of their supposedly wealthy neighbors—an illusion shattered by the recent FedCom Civil War. Such material goods and riches pale in comparison to the spiritual treasures and devotion to the cause of empire that Draconians hold so dear. A thriving black market provides electronic entertainment equipment and trivids from other Houses, but only the richest nobles can afford any of those.

Theodore's more lenient policies—compared to Takashi, some seem downright scandalous—still maintain the Kuritan tradition of promoting the loyal and eliminating the ambitious. Such policies are necessary to maintain the ancestral grip on the realm and prevent anyone from getting enough power or support to stir up things at home. Theodore has re-evaluated some of his looser policies after intense pressure from ISF Director Kerai. The ISF, having undergone its own violent purge in the wake of the 3058 assassination attempt on the Coordinator, continues to ferret out troublemakers.

Summary executions are commonplace on most worlds, and trials are more often kangaroo-court affairs than true workings of justice.

Life for the ordinary man or woman is quite similar across all the planets that House Kurita claims for itself. This state of affairs best serves the Dragon's political aims, just as it has served in the past. Little street crime exists because the concept of honor promotes cooperation between people, and most seek to behave in an ideal manner. Stealing would be dishonorable because this would imply that the thief was unable to fulfill his family obligations.

Even organized crime—unofficially recognized, if not tolerated in certain circles—follows a code of honor. The yakuza walk the fine line between serving the Dragon through their own devices and profiting their own clan.

The increased personal freedoms outlined in the 3043 Pillar Reforms brought a steady increase in crime and the expression of dissident political opinions. The introduction of even harsher punishments for lawbreakers has deterred neither criminals nor dissidents. Some within the government—notably the ISF and the O5P—might be provoked to take action against these trends without the Coordinator's permission. Such actions, however, could upset the balance of power and seriously weaken the Combine's position.

Everyday life in the Draconis Combine, although drab by the standards of many other nations, is satisfactory. Basic physical needs for food, shelter, and clothing are met in as comfortable a manner as the economy permits. As there is virtually no social mobility, most people content themselves with their lot in life and look to their family and friends for joy. People adjust to their circumstances, and the average Draconian would say that their life was good.



The origins of the modern DCMS can be traced back to the personal troops of Shiro Kurita, the founder of the Draconis Combine and the First Coordinator. Though those forces may seem ragged and inconsequential compared to today's DCMS, their conquests of New Samarkand, Galedon, and the other worlds that formed the fledgling Combine displayed the same tenacious fighting spirit that continues to characterize DCMS troops. These early DCMS warriors also possessed the devotion to tradition and to the Draconis Combine that has become a DCMS hallmark.

Many civilians and military personnel believe that any fighting force in possession of modern military technology is a modern army. However, a truly modern fighting force also employs modern strategy and tactics. While superior technology can give a military force an advantage over its opponents—a considerable advantage at times—the edge provided by faster machines, stronger armor, and more-powerful weapons can be lessened or even lost quite quickly as an opponent's war technology improves. This phenomenon is vividly illustrated by the Combine's recent successes in narrowing the technological gap between its armies and those of the Clans.

Furthermore, the use and rapid adoption of modern strategies and tactics can often enable a technologically inferior force to hold its own or even triumph over an opponent. Indeed, the history of human warfare is rife with examples of armies that triumphed over their enemies by employing innovative tactics. Nevertheless, we need look no further than the Combine's successful defense against the Clan invasion to find evidence of this truth. No military observer can deny that the Clans possessed a clear technological advantage over the Dragon's forces throughout the invasion. However, the Clans' rigid adherence to their traditional tactics enabled Combine forces to stop the invaders by rapidly developing and employing new strategies and tactics designed to exploit this important Clan weakness.

Coordinator Theodore Kurita's continuing efforts to reform the DCMS represent an explicit recognition of this important truth and an effort to mold the DCMS into a truly modern army.

STRUCTURE OF THE DCMS

The Pillar of Steel is the largest and most powerful organization in the Draconis Combine. Among many of the Unproductives, this pillar is also jokingly considered the nation's biggest employer. The Pillar of Steel is the undisputed central pillar on which the Combine rests. As the DCMS provides the backbone of the Kurita government, it is also the undisputed protector of the realm. To the average Combine citizen (and enemy), as the DCMS goes, so goes the Dragon.

The DCMS's central role stems largely from the Combine's unwavering devotion to the philosophies and culture of ancient Japan. Our dedication to these virtues and principles has made the Kuritan citizen one that values honor, duty, and loyalty in all aspects of our lives. Our lives are dedicated in service to the Draconis Combine. No citizen of the Dragon's realm can serve more fully than as a warrior of the DCMS, the greatest—and among the most feared—instruments of Combine policy.

PROPER LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE DRAGON

While service to the Dragon is expected of all men and women of the Combine, those who are truly worthy of advancement and promotion are the ones who can understand the people around them. Leadership is the ability to take the wants, desires, and cultural roots of their followers and mold them into an effective force, no matter the arena.

To ignore the basic ideals that define a person is to court disaster for the leader and quite possibly his followers. Conversely, grasping these basic precepts is one of the few keys to success. By understanding where one has come from, a leader can help one find the path that follows the course the leader sets. Many times in our history, our leaders have forgotten this basic understanding, and disaster inevitably follows.

Coordinator Siriwan Kurita once said, "One may forgive lack of knowledge for one's mistakes, but ignorance is only the excuse of the dishonorable." Future Combine officers would be wise to remember that though they lead men and women into battle for the Dragon, the Dragon is made of many scales, each brilliant in their own right. To deny one's individual beauty is to tarnish the Dragon as a whole.

—*A Treatise of Leadership*; Luthien Press Publications, 3043

THE SAMURAI CODE

The "way of the warrior"—known intrinsically to Combine citizens as *bushido*—lies at the heart of the Dragon's philosophies. No segment of Kuritan society has embraced the ideals embodied in *bushido* more fully than the DCMS. Though certain modern developments have tempered and challenged this ancient code of conduct, devotion to *bushido* has kept the Dragon strong through more than three hundred years of Succession Wars and the Clan invasion.

Traditionally, the precepts of *bushido* were passed down verbally from generation to generation. Over the centuries, descriptions and teachings of the code, along with examples of its practice and application, have graced the printed and electronic page. However, no author has ever succeeded in producing an accurate and complete definition of *bushido*.

Devotion to the code of *bushido* served the founder of the Combine, Shiro Kurita, particularly well. Most historians agree that Shiro Kurita developed remarkable self-discipline and clarity by practicing the principles of *bushido*. These traits were strengthened during his conquests of New Samarkand, Galedon V, and the other worlds that formed the foundation of the Combine. Though centuries would pass before the Dragon saw another leader as skilled as the First Coordinator, the DCMS remained steadfast in its devotion to the main principles of *bushido*. During the interim years between Shiro and Urizen II, the DCMS's observance of the code's traditions and precepts acted as beacons, guiding its members through the dark times of ineffective and often erratic leadership. This stalwart adherence made the DCMS able protectors of the realm.

When one is serving officially or in the master's court, he should not think of a hundred or a thousand people but should consider only the importance of the master. Nor should he draw the line at his own life or anything else he considers valuable. Even if the master is being phlegmatic and one goes unrecognized, he should know that he will surely have the divine protection of the gods and the Buddha … One should rely on neither age nor youth. But he who reveres the master and protects the people may be called a sage.

—Hōjō Shigetoki, *The Message of Master Gokurakuji*; 1256

First, a man whose profession is the use of arms should think and then act upon not only his own fame but also that of his descendants. He should not scandalize his name forever by holding his one and only life too dear. On the other hand, in the light of this, to consider this life that is given to us only once as nothing more than dust and ashes, and lose it at a time when one should not, would be to gain a reputation that is not worth mentioning. One's main purpose in throwing away his life is to do so either for the sake of the Emperor or in some great undertaking of a military general.

—Shiba Yoshimasa, *The Chikubasho*; 1383

It is hardly necessary to record that both Learning and the military arts are the Way of the Warrior, for it is an ancient law that one should have Learning on the left and the martial arts on the right. But this is something that will not be obtainable if one has not prepared for it beforehand.

—Hōjō Nagauji, *Precepts*; approx. 1503

Again, what is called cherishing the Way of the Warrior is not a matter of extolling the martial arts above all things and becoming a scaremonger. It is rather in being well-informed in military strategy, in forever pondering one's resources of pacifying disturbances, in training one's soldiers without remiss, in rewarding those who have done meritorious deeds and punishing those who have committed crimes, in being correct in one's evaluation of bravery and cowardice, and in not forgetting this matter of "the battle" even when the world is at peace. It is simply brashness to make a specialty of the martial arts and to be absorbed in one's individual efforts. Such is certainly not the Way of the Warrior of a provincial lord or military commander.

—Kuroda Nagamasa, *Writings*; 1622

Know the smallest things and the biggest things, the shallowest things and the deepest things. As if it were a straight road mapped out on the ground … These things cannot be explained in detail. From one thing, know ten thousand things. When you attain the Way of strategy there will not be one thing you cannot see.

—Miyamoto Mushashi, *Go Rin No Sho (The Book of Five Rings)*; 1645

With these circumstances, the renewed interest in *bushido* and other ancient Japanese traditions that spread across the Combine during the latter part of the twenty-seventh century seemed inevitable. The officers and soldiers—and to a lesser degree, the nobility—enthusiastically embraced this awareness of "the old ways." Many recognized that *bushido* provided a convenient philosophical justification for their claims of elite status.

As a result, the other Great House armies learned to fear the fanatical warriors of the DCMS. Opponents learned their Combine enemy would neither request nor grant quarter. Every opponent learned that a Combine warrior would continue to fight even as all hope was lost, sacrificing his 'Mech and even his life for the Dragon.

Politicians also saw opportunity to gain greater control within the Combine by popularizing the ancient code. Chief among them was Urizen Kurita II, who introduced through mass reform the "Japanization" of Kuritan society. Urizen II recognized that *bushido*'s intimate association with Shinto, the native religion of ancient Japan that stressed the veneration of nature spirits and ancestors, could be used to instill even greater loyalty and obedience in the populace. Under ancient Shinto doctrine, the Japanese emperor was venerated as a descendant of the sun goddess. The Coordinator and like-minded leaders worked diligently behind the scenes to establish the philosophy as an essential Combine institution—a goal that eventually succeeded.

The spreading influence of *bushido* enabled the Dragon's leadership to consolidate greater control over the nation, directing it on the course they wished. Despite the firm acceptance of the philosophy among the warrior and nobility, *bushido* was not fully accepted among all levels of Combine society until the next generation came of age. These scions of the ruling caste were raised in the warrior traditions as befitting the Combine's new culture and completely accepted the old ways. In turn, these warriors passed on the traditions to their own children, establishing a firm cultural foundation that continues to flourish in the Draconis Combine today.

The New *Bushido*

Throughout the Combine's history, its military might has heavily relied on the core precepts of the *bushido* code. This adherence to an ancient philosophy provides the DCMS with singular vision and wisdom, giving them a fierce reputation throughout the Inner Sphere. Unfortunately, oftentimes a rigid reliance on the code brought a narrow-mindedness to the battlefield in both officers and soldiers, bringing results that were less than victorious. Those of the Dragon's warriors driven by such slavish devotion strove to sacrifice themselves for their misguided actions, stripping the DCMS of experienced fighters. This rigidity forced troops to blindly follow unreasonable orders that were often counterproductive and resulted in disaster.

The most well-known example of such blind devotion occurred on 9 September 2796, when Coordinator Jinjiro Kurita ordered the DCMS to slaughter the entire civilian population of Kentares IV. Though the order was carried out to the letter, many of the participants took their own lives, unable to live with the inhumane acts they committed in the name of duty. The massacre bolstered the Combine's reputation as a bloodthirsty and unyielding force. Kentares IV has since become the Dragon's worst act of barbarism and remains a stain on the Combine's honor as a nation.

Perhaps the most damaging aspect of *bushido* has been the strict adherence to the code that has fostered a close-minded re-

sistance to change among many DCMS troops and officers. As a result, the DCMS has repeatedly failed to incorporate innovations or effectively adapt to new battlefield developments. No doubt that many warriors throughout the Dragon's history have recognized this weakness, but the same strict traditions prohibited discussion of reform. Warriors believed only one individual in the Combine commanded enough respect to implement reforms: the Coordinator. Until Theodore Kurita, none of the Combine's leadership showed the willingness or inclination to effect change.

Theodore Kurita began to advocate reforms within the DCMS shortly after being appointed *gunji-no-kanrei* by his father, Takashi Kurita. Theodore's new ideas received little acceptance among the nobility and the DCMS until his ascension to the throne. Assuming the mantle of Coordinator gave him the authority of the office to enact his directives. Even so, Theodore knew his ideas would not find acceptance if his soldiers and citizens believed those ideas abandoned centuries-old Combine traditions.

Anticipating the resistance, Theodore presented the reforms as reinterpretations and applications of *bushido*, showing that a warrior's own devotion to the code would require acceptance of new ways. Using this approach, the Coordinator set in motion a reform of the DCMS that continues even today.

MINISTRY OF THE EXPANSION OF THE GLORIES OF THE DRACONIS COMBINE

The *Hyōbushō*, known more simply as the Ministry of War, covers all aspects of the military. As the Arm of the Dragon pervades all aspects of Kurita life, it is easiest to point out that this ministry handles everything not covered elsewhere.

Among the divisions of the Ministry of War are the Department of Indoctrination, Bureau of Substitution, Assembly of the Grand Inquisitor, Procurement Department, Draconis Port Authority, Bureau of Administration, Combine Military Coordination Office, Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery, Draconis Combine Admiralty, Professional Soldiery Liaison, Physicians of the Dragon, Combine Support and Engineering, the Draconis Combine High Command, and the Internal Security Force. The Warlords of each military district have authority over all the military elements in their district.

DEPARTMENT OF INDOCTRINATION

This department is charged with educating youngsters to become soldiers within the Dragon's army. The most prestigious schools in the Combine are under its purview. Not only do students in military academies and universities learn the ways of the samurai and the specialized skills for their branch in the military, but they also undergo three weeks of propagandizing in a wilderness retreat each year. This training session is designed to both reinforce unquestioned fealty to House Kurita and the Combine and teach skills necessary for wilderness survival.

Undoubtedly, devotion to the code of *bushido* has provided our troops with clarity of purpose, wisdom, and the tenacious ferocity renowned throughout the Inner Sphere. At certain times, however, devotion to these precepts has clouded the judgment of our troops and military leaders, hindering the Dragon. Far too often, warriors driven by ancient concepts to duty and honor sacrificed their lives in losing battles, reducing the DCMS's supply of experienced fighters. At other times, the willingness of DCMS troops to blindly follow the orders of their leaders—no matter how ill-conceived or unreasoning—has produced counterproductive and even disastrous results. Strict adherence to *bushido*, especially in rigid interpretations of the code, created a close-minded resistance to change among many of our troops and officers. As a result, we have repeatedly failed to incorporate innovations or effectively adapt to new battlefield developments.

Throughout our illustrious history, many of the Dragon's warriors have recognized this weakness. Tradition dictated, unfortunately, that our troops and officers prohibit any discussion of reform. In retrospect, it is clear that only one individual in the Combine commanded enough respect to implement reforms—the Coordinator himself.

It is in the Dragon's best interest that we look at our ancient and honored code of *bushido* in a new light; a new perspective. *Bushido* itself stipulates that a warrior's devotion to the code requires him or her to accept such new ways.

The precepts of *bushido* encourage us to experiment with new strategies and tactics, not strand ourselves within the confines of outdated methods. A warrior can best serve the Combine by becoming the most effective fighter he or she can—a goal that requires being open to innovation. Furthermore, an effective warrior must cultivate tolerance for others—even less-experienced warriors or those of inferior social station. By developing open-minded attitudes, commanders are more likely to recognize brilliant ideas no matter who suggests them. Tolerance also demands that warriors of different branches cooperate to maximize their potential worth to the Dragon.

Service to the state is paramount. One can best serve the Combine not by sacrificing themselves in a glorious but ultimately fruitless death, but by learning from his failures and accepting his weaknesses. Intentionally sacrificing one's life for an abstract principle such as personal honor brings shame to one's family and dishonors the Dragon for which he has set aside in a quest of selfishness. It is better to persevere—even retreat, if prudence demands it—and live to claim victory for the beloved Draconis Combine another day.

As such, failure or retreat will no longer be considered an automatic disgrace punishable by transfer and demotion. Harsh penalties will be enacted upon those troops guilty of premature or cowardly failures and retreats, however.

Also imperative to the strength of the Combine and to the honor of *bushido* is that commanders and leaders display a flexibility in tactics. Those who can replace traditional but outdated practices with strategies and tactics designed to accomplish more limited goals will find themselves humbled and honored by the Dragon for their courage and devotion. These tactics may not immediately yield as much personal glory as the traditional, but they increase the likelihood of eventual victory for the Combine.

We serve the Dragon, not our personal honor. *Bushido* demands we act in service beyond ourselves. Only with this approach will all people of the Dragon lift the Draconis Combine to the heights it deserves.

—Coordinator Theodore Kurita, *Edict 49-B, personal notation*; 3055

BUREAU OF SUBSTITUTION

This bureau is responsible for sending replacements to units that have suffered heavy casualties. Many units that have been decimated are simply disbanded, and the soldiers transferred to other units.

In addition, the Bureau handles all transfers of soldiers from one unit to another for any reason. Many fear the arrival of a *shuga-to-hama* (letter of joyous celebration), which announces an individual's transfer to another unit without promotion and often with lower pay and decreased status. Some of these letters transfer the individual to another branch entirely. Soldiers who display unsocial or mildly treasonous tendencies (such as grumbling about the food or posting station) are likely to receive such letters, but poor battlefield performance alone rarely earns one.

When a soldier receives a transfer and a promotion, that notification comes from the Bureau of Administration.

ASSEMBLY OF THE GRAND INQUISITOR

The Grand Inquisitor is the one who judges all infractions committed by soldiers against the Draconis Combine, House Kurita, or the Dictum Honorium. Few called before the Grand Inquisitor survive; those who have never talk about the experience. The accused is not provided with legal counsel but is expected to personally defend his honor and actions. The atmosphere within the courts is that of intimidation, and those deemed guilty simply disappear. Nobles and senior officers are "invited to dine with their ancestors at their earliest convenience." It is not uncommon for the accused to commit unauthorized *seppuku* after receiving a summons to report to the Grand Inquisitor's court, rather than face public execution.

The Grand Inquisitor has more power than the courts of the Ministry of Justice. The Assembly may override the decision of those courts or may notify them that the Assembly is taking over adjudication of a dispute. The Assembly does not judge individual disputes, as their authority only extends to cases between an individual and the Draconis Combine. As such, cases heard by the Grand Inquisitor are a rare affair.

PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT

The Procurement Department is the quartermaster for the Kurita military, handling all supply requisitions for the armed forces. The warehouses of the department are gigantic; on some worlds, the entire planet contains nothing but such warehouses. The locations of these warehouses are considered a state secret.

Just because a unit needs supplies does not mean it will receive them. The Procurement Department reviews the unit's loyalty and current battle record to determine if it is worthy to receive supplies. When a unit is on a "losing streak," it will get fewer supplies, and the problem often snowballs. Well-placed bribes can circumnavigate the mountain of red tape surrounding the process. Even the worst House unit will still get supplies before a mercenary unit does.

Shoddy equipment is of little problem within the Ministry of War. The military gets the cream of all production, leaving the rest of the citizens with second-rate articles. This department is responsible for setting up defense contracts with various corporations to ensure that the firms are working in the Dragon's best interests.

A disproportionate number of senior officials within the department are graduates from the Pagoda of Luthien Officers.

DRACONIS COMBINE PORT AUTHORITY

The Port Authority handles the transport of supplies and reinforcements via a vast network of JumpShip and DropShip freighters and space stations. The department is not responsible for transporting troops into combat. The DCPA handles the timetables for transport, coordinates space traffic around planets, and is known for its ninety-eight percent on-time rating.

Labor strikes and work stoppages are unknown in the DCPA, because a strike in 3021 resulted in the Coordinator ordering the deaths of all the striking dockworkers.

BUREAU OF ADMINISTRATION

Every requisition, letter from home, and communiqué goes through the Bureau of Administration. The warehouses and building complexes that make up the bureau exceed those of the Procurement Department. Every system in the Combine has at least one "Administrative City," where a vast network of buildings, warehouses, and worker housing handles the bureau's workload for the planet. Prefecture and district capitals dedicate entire islands or small continents to the bureau's endless march of red tape.

The Bureau of Administration is also in charge of censoring unfavorable battle reports, letters from home that contain "untruths," and any material that contains references disrespectful to the Draconis Combine, House Kurita, or the Dictum Honorium. Contrary to popular thought, the Bureau also scans messages transmitted through ComStar before they reach their recipient; this operation was put in place by the O5P in the early 2900s. Only recently did ROM discover Operation EARWAX but has allowed it to remain in place. Publicly, the Bureau of Administration maintains it has no influence over message sent through ComStar.

COMBINE MILITARY COORDINATION OFFICE

This office carries out the war orders from the Draconis Combine High Command and sends units to planets. In its role as advisor to the High Command, the Military Coordination Office is staffed with members from all branches of the Combine Mustered Soldiery, Admiralty, Support and Engineering, Port Authority, and the Internal Security Force.

In recent times, the office has also been responsible for coordinating the integration of Clan Nova Cat within the Irece Prefecture, as well as the DCMS and Clan military structures.

DRACONIS COMBINE MUSTERED SOLDIERY

The DCMS is the main body of the Combine's armed forces and receives by far the greatest proportion of the Kurita budget. The DCMS contains the Dragon 'Mech Force, the Dragon Armored Force, the Dragon Artillery Force, the Dragon Air Force, the Dragon Infantry Force, and Special Forces.

Special Forces is a catchall for the various kinds of units used for special missions. One well-known example is the Draconis Elite Strike Teams (DEST). This elite corps of commandos is trained in every branch of the military, from piloting a BattleMech to commanding a JumpShip. Its members are used mainly to infiltrate enemy installations. Members of a DEST force follow the tenets of the ancient ninjas; they practice stealth and combat maneuvers constantly. Like samurai, they will commit suicide rather than be dishonored or captured.

At times, the Special Forces branch may have other line units or floating regiments assigned to it on a temporary basis. Most commonly are specialized mercenary commands or dedicated-role units such as the Amphigean Light Assault Groups. To accomplish the Dragon's goals, the ISF has the power to command a Special Forces unit as needed.

DRACONIS COMBINE ADMIRALTY

Like its sister branch, the DCA contains fighting forces of the Dragon, embracing the aerospace element of the military. All WarShips, combat DropShips, JumpShips, aerospace fighters, their pilots, and support crews are part of the Admiralty. Rivalry between the DCMS and DCA is intense, from the top brass to academy recruits. Each branch believes that it is the most important element in the Ministry of War, and therefore in the whole Combine. Previous Coordinator's have fostered this rivalry, as it tends to improve morale and performance.

Theodore's reforms have tempered this rivalry somewhat, especially when aerospace forces are directly attached to a regimental command. Assignments, promotions and such are all handled by the DCA, but the units are considered part of the DCMS command structure, including their use of ranks. Despite the reforms, the centuries of antagonism can still erupt into internecine violence, both off the field and on. The most common enlisted-personnel infraction in both commands is "aggressive behavior towards honorable equals of the Dragon," an elegant way to state "physical altercations between service members" at off-duty recreational sites.

The DCA also commands the military naval yards in the Combine, though the day-to-day operations fall under the various corporate interests under contract to the Bureau of Procurement.

PROFESSIONAL SOLDIERY LIAISON

This corps of diplomats and bureaucrats is in charge of recruiting and supervising mercenaries. Traditionally, the best negotiators are recruited and trained by the PSL to work our contracts with mercenaries. The Dragon is unwilling to allow these units independent command and will often make concessions on other points in order to integrate mercenary units with district and prefecture commands. The Dragon recognizes that it needs these professional soldiers; Theodore is more lenient concerning such stringent contracts even if many of the veteran commanders are not.

Until recent years, PSL negotiators would extend large amounts of credit to fledgling mercenaries with the intent of putting the unit further and further into debt. The Combine has absorbed many small units as regular troops because of these tactics.

Mercenary liaisons—staff officers who work with both the mercenaries and Kurita command officers— also come from the PSL. Usually, such officers are also members of the ISF, and mercenaries should ensure that these officers never suspect the unit of treachery. The ISF has been known to judge and exterminate the leaders of suspected units.

PHYSICIANS OF THE DRAGON

In the past, medical personnel were looked down upon because their profession was considered worthy only for the weak or women. To combat such discrimination, doctors in the Combine founded a society known as the Physicians of the Dragon. By no means mystical—though they do embrace such trappings for show—their schools are as good as any in the Inner Sphere and use top-of-the-line technology. The general populace views the Physicians with awe, helping swell the numbers of Kurita doctors and persuading Takashi Kurita to allocate more funds to society.

Before, during, and after surgery, the Physicians use many rituals, including blessing stethoscopes, speaking to wounds and incisions, and purifying the patient with singing and dancing. Most in the upper classes of Combine society recognize these acts for what they are; the average commoner takes comfort in the rituals, seeing it as a connection to his ancestral past.

On the battlefield, Kurita soldiers view MASH units with the utmost regard. Combat doctors are assigned living accommodations on par with senior officers. Even Warlords treat Physicians of the Dragon with respect, as these doctors have absolute power in the operating room. Stories still abound regarding regimental commanders during the Succession Wars losing a limb due to an ingrown nail.

COMBINE SUPPORT AND ENGINEERING

This department used to encompass all the combat engineers and technical personnel in the Arm of the Dragon. As various regimental forces absorbed most of the CSE's engineering teams, the department became more bureaucratic in nature. In 3043, Takashi Kurita authorized the reorganization of the department. The revamped CSE now administers bureaucratic support to all technical and combat engineers in the DCMS and DCA, with the other support services under the Bureau of Administration's jurisdiction.

DRACONIS HIGH COMMAND

This group of staff officers is headquartered in the Royal Palace and works with the Coordinator to determine military strategy. Warlords from the four military districts and other high-ranking generals constitute the High Command. They study battle reports, planetary terrain, and enemy strengths gathered by the Combine Military Coordination Office and the ISF. Often, High Command meetings dissolve into furious arguments over which district is the most powerful. Whenever the Coordinator is present, however, such displays are kept to veiled threats and insults. A Warlord often gains the Coordinator's favor by constructively agreeing or disagreeing with strategy or wisdom, rather than cutting down or undermining his peers.

INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE

Citizens of the Draconis Combine rarely mention the ISF, but they all think about it constantly. Responsible for many abductions, killings, and interrogations, the secret police fosters fear, paranoia, and devotion to the state. Those who follow the way of the samurai have little to fear from the ISF, however, unless their honor conflicts with the honor of the Draconis Combine.

Few visible members of the ISF are visible to the general public. Most agents belong to other groups or governmental departments, and few know about these operatives' affiliation with the secret police. The ISF has infiltrated every organization in Kurita space and many others in the other Great Houses. Its reach is even longer, as citizens may collect a reward for reporting treasonous activity or talk by others. When military operations are called for, the ISF can take command of any Special Forces unit as needed, even without notifying that district's Warlord.

Inside the secret police is an even more secret society. Called the "Sons of the Dragon," the society is a group of agents who are more loyal to the Director of the ISF and the Coordinator. Few beyond the ISF, high-ranking officials in the Order of Five Pillars, and the Coordinator's family are aware of the existence of the group, though many rumors persists in varying form among the common people.

[*Please refer to the more extensive information on the ISF in the Pillar of Gold section, as the agency does not fall under the command or purview of the DCMS. —MK*]

DCMS CHAIN OF COMMAND

The DCMS acts under the direct command of the Coordinator, which makes it the ultimate instrument of Combine policy. All DCMS officers and troops pledge to serve the Draconis Combine as embodied by the person of the Coordinator. The DCMS's close relationship to the Coordinator provides it with enormous power. Any abuse of such power is severely punished, even if it occurs among the DCMS's highest-ranking officers. The purges after the failed Black Dragon coup in 3058 are but a recent example.

Traditionally, the Coordinator commands through the four *tai-shu* (Warlords), who oversee DCMS operations in the Combine's military districts. Each Warlord, in turn, exercises authority over the military commanders of the prefectures that compose his assigned district.

The Coordinator is attended by the High Command, a small assembly comprised of the four *tai-shu* and their advisors. This body helps the Coordinator manage the DCMS and the Combine. The High Command is directly responsible for the general coordination of DCMS forces and for bringing any important information pertaining to the Combine's military or government to the Coordinator's attention. These men (and more recently, women) implement the Coordinator's will by relaying his orders to the appropriate military officers, prefecture authorities, and planetary governments. Past Coordinators have often been content in issuing general or even vague orders, trusting their *tai-shu* to interpret their desires correctly. Coordinator Takashi Kurita was well known for veiling his orders in haiku or subtle remarks. Any Warlord acting under such vagaries risks censure or even *seppuku* for failing to interpret properly the Coordinator's wishes.

Theodore Kurita does abide by such long-established tradition, but after the attempted coup and subsequent purges in the late 3050s, he has taken a more active role in the direction of state and military affairs. Many warriors from the old school of thought view the Coordinator's actions as heavy-handed interference; however, the successful results of the DCMS testify to Theodore's sharp political and military acumen.

GUNJI-NO-KANREI

Properly entitled the Deputy for Military Affairs, the position of *kanrei* was largely one of ceremony. Considered ranking between the Warlords of the district militaries and the Coordinator, the position has been only intermittently filled. Theodore Kurita, appointed to the post in 3030 after receiving the Order of the Dragon, shaped and molded the position into one of power and prestige. In his capacity as *kanrei*, Theodore introduced his new interpretations of *bushido* and how the DCMS should approach post-Succession Wars warfare. Theodore successfully became a brake between Takashi's rigidity and his Warlords' increasing power struggles.

When Theodore became Coordinator in 3054, the position remained vacant.

MILITARY DISTRICTS

The Warlords of the Draconis Combine's four districts—Benjamin, Dieron, Galedon, and Pesht—command considerable power within the DCMS and district politics. Each *tai-shu* is a member of the DCMS High Command and has authority over the regular DCMS regiments stationed in their district. The Warlords answer directly to the Coordinator.

Though this arrangement has often enabled Warlords to quickly implement the wishes of the Coordinators, the position tends to attract ruthless, power-hungry individuals. At some point, most of these leaders become more concerned with advancing their own fortunes and agendas over those of the Combine. The Coordinators have often appointed Warlords of differing attitudes and ambitions to play these opposing personalities against one another. Such strategy prevents any single Warlord from consolidating enough influence or power to threaten the well-being of the Dragon. As a result, High Command meetings would often

ALSHAIN AVENGERS

The Alshain Military District was swallowed up during the Clan's Operation REVIVAL between 3050–51. Out of the district's fourteen original regiments, only five remained. The Bureau of Substitution capitalized on the anger of the Alshain Regulars at the destruction of their district, and the Regulars were renamed the Avengers. Though a few worlds remained free of Clan occupation, they could not be feasibly administered as an independent district. Theodore Kurita ordered them to be incorporated into the neighboring districts of Benjamin and Dieron, a measure hoped to be temporary until the Clans could be removed.

In 3062, all four remaining regiments of the Avengers went renegade and were destroyed in the first actions of the Ghost Bear War. Due to their shameful and dishonorable actions, the Avengers colors and insignia were struck from the DCMS rolls, and all surviving personnel were removed to the place of their ancestors. There are no plans to replace the Avengers; to the public, they were simply casualties of war.

devolve into arguments over the relative strengths and importance of various districts. Such pettiness tends to undermine the ability of the Coordinators to lead effectively the DCMS.

Theodore Kurita has attempted to correct such a weakness by cultivating and maintaining close, working relationships with DCMS *tai-sho* (generals) and other commanders. This reduces his dependency on the *tai-shu* for information and provides an alternative chain of command that can be used to implement his wishes. By somewhat reducing their importance, the *tai-shu* have found their personal ambitions tempered. Additionally, this approach has enabled Theodore to benefit from the skills and experience of competent advisors and generals who might otherwise be denied access to the Coordinator. The new approach has also helped Theodore defuse tensions among the Warlords and better unite his realm against the outside threats surrounding the Combine.

Most importantly, Theodore's weakening of the district Warlords has increased the Coordinator's own power and freedom to act. Without such freedom, Theodore would have encountered difficulty in maintaining a calm, if not peaceful, border with the Federated Commonwealth before it twisted in the throes of civil war.

PREFECTURES

Each military district is divided into several prefectures. In theory, a military commander and civilian noble jointly rule each prefecture. In reality, prefecture commanders enjoy little autonomy. District Warlords exert tight control over the military units stationed in each prefecture and are known to bypass commanders by relaying orders directly to those units. This arrangement enables Warlords to prevent prefecture commanders from challenging their power.

The true purpose of the prefecture system is to exert control over planetary governments. Individual planets in the Combine retain much independence on paper with civilian nobles holding administrative power. The prefecture commander makes all major decisions pertaining to planetary governance and is given enough military support to cow planetary governments. The district Warlords carefully prevent them from mustering enough strength to mount ambitious plans of their own.

DISTRICT COMMANDS

Benjamin Regulars



With a reputation for resourcefulness, the Benjamin Regulars have been used repeatedly by the DCMS as reserves among the neighboring districts. The ability to learn and adapt on the fly is a primary trait that regimental commanders look for in potential recruits. Three regiments were wiped out in raids and reprisals carried out by the Federated Suns Draconis March during the recent FedCom Civil War. The remaining four regiments are stretched thin, and rebuilding will take some time.

Dieron Regulars



For centuries, the district shared a long border with the Federated Commonwealth—and the Steiner and Davion states before it—offering constant opportunities for glorious battle throughout history. After the Clan invasion turned the district into a prime source of reserve troops, it has also become the breeding ground of new DCMS MechWarriors. Highly experienced, the eight Dieron Regulars regiments rarely care for politics, though some officers have taken advantage of such simple pragmatism in their quest for personal power.

Galedon Regulars



A district with the longest and proudest history in the Combine, it comes as little wonder that the troops raised from its worlds are among the most venerable and skilled. With two of the most prestigious military academies to draw upon, great things are expected of the soldiers in the Galedon Regulars. The seven regiments have excellent relations with the Procurement Department and the Bureaus of Substitution and Administration, meaning they have little trouble keeping themselves adequately supplied.

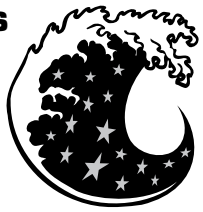
Pesht Regulars



Once a quiet region where local troops had little more to worry about than staying in parade formation and repelling the odd bandit raid, Pesht became a massive hot zone after the Clans invaded. Over the next fifteen years, a majority of the Regulars were reassigned to the expanding Clan front, virtually stripping bare the coreward Periphery defenses. This burden was doubly heavy as the district is also home to the Combine's capital world of Luthien.

FLOATING COMMANDS

Genyosha



The Genyosha—Black Ocean—traces its roots and heritage through Yorinaga Kurita, who formed the unit in 3027. Fifty personally selected men were trained to Yorinaga's exacting standards and then transferred into various DCMS line units with the expectation to train their new comrades. Well-supplied and composed of elite troops fiercely loyal to the Coordinator, these two regiments have been a major adversary to all of the Combine's foes since the Fourth Succession War.

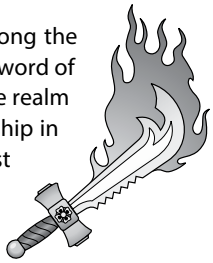
Otomo and the Dragon's Claws





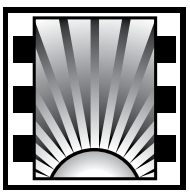
The primary duty of the warriors of the Otomo and the Dragon's Claws is to preserve the Coordinator's life. The Otomo has a long and honorable history as personal bodyguards to countless Coordinators over several centuries. Their brief foray into disfavor and dishonor after the attempt on Theodore Kurita's life in 3059 was redeemed after being staffed with members of the dissolved Ninth Ghost regiment. Coordinator Takashi Kurita created the Dragon's Claws, also known as the Izanagi Warriors, in 3051.

Sword of Light



Raised, trained, and equipped to be among the Combine's best and most loyal troops, the Sword of Light regiments have fought valiantly for the realm since the days of the Star League. Membership in any of the five regiments is among the most prestigious and difficult postings to attain, with harsh restrictions that only the holocaust of the Clan invasion could relax.

Sun Zhang Cadre



The Sun Zhang Military Academy's brutal but effective cadres operate on similar protocols to the Sword of Light regiments and are answerable only to the High Command and the Coordinator rather than to any district Warlord. Like the Swords of Light, the four ultra-loyal Sun Zhang Cadres are kept well supplied with the best equipment the Procurement Department can offer, yielding top-notch warrior-students with technology to match.

Amphigean Light Assault Groups



The brainchild of Jinjiro Kurita, the Amphigean LAGs were considered expendable shock troops, trained to soften up an enemy's tough spot. No samurai were incorporated into the units, a standard that remains today. The two remaining LAGs are expected to stand ready to further the goals of the Dragon at any cost.

An Ting Legions



Initially birthed from An Ting's success in forming the An Ting Academy, the Legions contributed to Jinjiro Kurita's war effort during the Second Succession War. A string of later defeats mirrored the regiments' decline of the once prosperous planet. The Legions have struggled ever since to rebuild their honor and experience, and their two regiments are more a commoners' cadre than an elite DCMS fighting force.

Arkab Legions



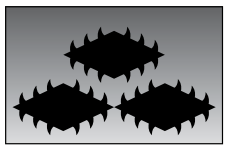
Born from a forced negotiation between the Azami people and the Dragon's will, the Arkab Legions serve the Combine under an oath of loyalty. Though this oath has been sorely tested over the last five hundred years on both sides, the three regiments of the Arkab Legions remain loyal as allies to the Combine.

Night Stalkers



Formed in 3020 from funding provided by various commercial enterprises, the Night Stalkers were retired *Tai-sa* McGavin's pet project authorized by the High Command. The two light 'Mech regiments consisted of retired DCMS officers, proving grounds graduates, and lesser-skilled academy graduates. The Night Stalkers have done much to serve the Dragon in every way possible, even at the cost of their personal honor.

Proserpina Hussars



The elite of the floating regiments of the DCMS, the Proserpina Hussars have served the Kurita family since before the birth of the Draconis Combine. Public records show that a tank division known under the same name fought for Shiro Kurita in the early years of his reign. The Hussars are unquestionably loyal to House Kurita and put little stock in politics or doctrine. On occasion, the Coordinator has personally defended their attitude toward political correctness.

Ghost Regiments



The Ghost Regiments, formed from undesirables—the lower classes and the criminal elements of our society—were the brainchild of Theodore Kurita in the days following the Fourth Succession War. Some Ghost regiments remain true to their members' origins, with various yakuza *oyabun* exerting influence over these units' affairs. Such activities have kept the seven Ghost regiments under the watchful eye of the ISF.

Legions of Vega



The Legions of Vega, once the undisciplined and dishonorable dregs of the DCMS, have turned around since Theodore Kurita commanded the regiments in 3024. Since these units are no longer considered worthless but merely fallen from grace and capable of redemption, MechWarriors sent to one of the three regiments may find themselves able to return to the ranks of the District Regulars or equally prestigious assignments.

Ryuken



The legendary Wolf's Dragoons trained the elite, highly mobile Ryuken, an experiment conceived by the late Coordinator Takashi Kurita. When political machinations put the Dragoons and the Ryuken at each other's throats, the failure of the Ryuken became a stain on their collective honor that continues to color the five regiments' interaction with other DCMS troops.

Clan Nova Cat



The Abjured Clan took refuge within the Combine's Irece Prefecture, an arrangement proposed by the Coordinator. The Clan fields six galaxies of troops across the prefecture and has recently received permission to absorb any civilians wishing to join the Clan's castes. So far, few Combine citizens have taken up the offer.

UNIT TYPES

The DCMS recognizes four categories of units: Regulars, floating commands, planetary militia, and mercenaries.

REGULARS

The Regulars are the standard regimental combat unit of the DCMS. These receive the majority of the appropriations from the Bureau of Substitution and Appropriation and the Procurement Department. They are considered the backbone of each district army, though they can be reassigned to other theaters as needed. The bulk of academy and university graduates are assigned to one of the district Regulars regiments. These frontline units are under the command of their home district Warlord but can be temporarily detached to another Warlord as necessary.

FLOATING COMMANDS

While the bulk of the Combine's defense rests on the shoulders of the Regulars, the Dragon looks to its floating commands for offensive strike capabilities. Many of the DCMS floating commands were formed for a particular mission or purpose, such as the Genyosha's training under Yorinaga Kurita or the Amphigean Light Assault Groups' mission as expendable shock troops. Floating commands answer to the Warlord of the district where they are currently assigned.

PLANETARY MILITIA

The Combine's planetary militias nominally fall under the DCMS High Command on paper but in reality find themselves under the authority of the planetary and prefecture governors. Militias typically consist of two to three regiments of infantry, one to three battalions of armor, and attached aerospace assets. Half of these forces operate on a reserve status, with many civilians stepping into a militia role only as the situation dictates. Militia soldiers are usually conscripted from the local populace through either compulsory enlistment or a draft process, often dictated by the prefecture administration. On occasion, some militias will cross-train with neighboring systems; these are typically worlds along the Periphery border. Such engagements, which occur once every four to five years, can be several months in length and are often heralded as national competitions.

MERCENARY UNITS

The Combine has had a love-hate relationship with mercenaries over the last several decades, stemming from Takashi Kurita's infamous "Death to Mercenaries" edict during the Fourth Succession War. The reality is that the Combine needs these hired soldiers to augment DCMS operations and bolster defenses. With Theodore's ascension to the throne, Takashi's edict was relaxed, and the Combine resumed hiring. Many mercenary commands remain leery of the Combine, however, no thanks to the DCMS's more ignorant officers trying to absorb these commands through the "company store" syndrome.

Conversely, mercenaries have a more comfortable relationship with the Combine's corporate entities. Several interstellar companies have given generous contracts to mercenary commands, using them for garrisoning important resource sites or providing facility defense in case of pirate or raider attacks. Often, mercenaries hired under corporate auspices remain under the corporation's command, though in some cases the contract may stipulate participation in whole-world defensive operations as necessary.

MAJOR TRAINING CENTERS

Like all militaries throughout history, the DCMS requires a steady supply of fresh warriors to maintain its strength. Combat, accidents, and age claim the veterans of every generation, and with every new battle, green troops must take their turn. The inexperienced and unlucky are weeded from the ranks through attrition until today's untried soldiers become tomorrow's veterans.

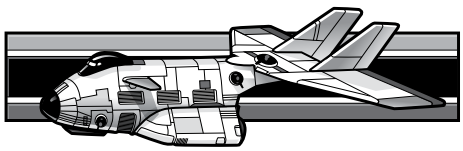
Military academies and universities are the DCMS's primary sources of recruits. These institutions prepare individuals for life in the DCMS by teaching them military routine, rigorous discipline, and the specific skills they will need to succeed in the military.

Generally, military academies and universities use batteries of academic and psychological tests and other diagnostic tools to measure every applicant's aptitude for various subjects. However, individual applicants usually receive broad leeway to determine their own courses of study. As a result, a certain number of poten-

tially gifted soldiers are never used to their full potential, because individuals may choose to study fields for which they are not well suited. Additionally, when selecting new students, academy and university admission boards often give applicants' social standing and political leanings as much consideration as their aptitudes and skills—another practice that prohibits the DCMS from fully utilizing the talents of its potential troops.

DCMS regulations require all military academies and universities to offer a standardized basic training package during the first few months of instruction. After completing the program, every student must satisfactorily complete at least one military occupational specialty (MOS) before entering the DCMS. Each MOS provides a student with the knowledge and skills needed to perform at the minimum level of proficiency in the selected specialty, as defined (and adjusted periodically) by the DCMS Academy Board.

AEROSPACE AND INTERSTELLAR INSTITUTE



Based on the planet Midway, the Aerospace and Interstellar Institute (AII) trains its students to serve in aerospace units, DropShips, and JumpShips. The DCA assisted the AII in creating a WarShip program in 3056. The slow turnover among the DCA's DropShip and JumpShip vessels over the last several decades created little demand for those crews. As a result, nearly all of the AII's cadets receive aerospace fighter training. Just over a third of each year's cadet class is selected for WarShip training.

Though the AII obtains most of its enrollees from proctor recommendations, the academy also accepts a limited number of independent petitions. Depending on the course curriculum, the AII's training programs can last anywhere from six months to two years. The academy graduates approximately 140 fighter pilots a year and only a handful of DropShip and JumpShip pilots. Conversely, the academy's WarShip facilities are churning out more trained personnel than vessels to be crewed. Several of these graduates go on to universities for training as line officers who will command vessels larger than a fighter.

AN TING UNIVERSITY

ATU closed in 3015 after a band of Sun Zhang Cadre alumni staged a retaliatory raid for the cadre's losses in the Kensai Kami. Excessive damage to the main education center and the Star League-era machine shops forced prefecture officials to shut down the university and send its current crop of students to other academies in the Combine. Restored to full operational capacity in 3055 after Combine researchers assimilated the Helm Memory Core, ATU has since turned out several hundred fine warriors. The university receives funding from the DCMS, the government of An Ting, and the An Ting Legions. The Legions supply instructors and much of the equipment—decommissioned or replaced materiel—for the university's MOS programs. Cadets are required to spend two years serving in the Legions after graduating.

Residents of An Ting and primary school graduates are given preference in admissions. The university has a more lax atmosphere when compared to other academies within the Combine, though the high-stakes rivalry with the Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy often creates pressure to excel. Competition between the two schools is fierce and often crosses the line from rivalry to personal offense. The university loses few enrollees, however: instructors and advisors take a personal interest in every student under their authority. They spot most potential failures in time, turning these students' talents toward specialties at which they can succeed.

DIERON DISTRICT GYMNASIUM

Turning out an average of twenty highly trained MechWarriors every year, the DDG emphasizes combat training and prides itself on bringing out a warrior's personal drive to excel. This instruction comes with complete disregard for a student's political and philosophical leanings.

The DDG has one of the easier enrollment processes. The academy accepts any applicant who meets the physical and mental requirements. Students progress at their own pace; those who work harder excel faster. The DDG only offers MechWarrior training, with advanced courses scheduled as necessary. Many students treat the Gymnasium as a workout center with the added bonus of occasional simulator runs. Classes are typically impromptu gatherings held in various areas around the compound. Because the DDG emphasizes preparation for combat, political doctrine and loyalty to House Kurita are never an issue.

DOVER INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER LEARNING

Raised from the ruins of the Ashio People's Reconstruction Effort (PRE) University, the Dover Institute for Higher Learning was officially opened in 2910 by Coordinator Shinjiro Kurita. The school has trained technicians, doctors, engineers, and even MechWarriors for the past 160 years. The historical Roweena Hall, originally built in 2480, still bears the scorch marks from when the university suffered catastrophic damage during the Shadow War in 2865.

Applicants must meet basic physical and mental requirements. They must also demonstrate the ability to build on what they learn through scholastic records and a thesis paper. For many students, proving or disproving the theories in these entrance essays becomes the focus of a student's four-year course of study. The Dover Institute also allows MechWarriors to try

their hands at all levels of combat, giving them an appreciation for every position on the battlefield. The only combat-oriented training available is the institute's MechWarrior program; the academy is primarily noted for its excellent technical and scientific courses.

The intense atmosphere at Dover causes a certain amount of stress. Instructors analyze and review every test, simulator, and research abstract down to the most insignificant detail. The theory is that only such intensive scrutiny will teach cadets to make the most intelligent choice in every decision. Graduates of Dover tend to be thoughtful and precise, from scientist to technician, economist to MechWarrior. All MechWarrior cadets and much of the student body subscribe to the code of *bushido*, often conducting lively debates on the proper emphasis to be placed on it and its value on both the mercantile and military battlefields.

GALEDON MILITARY ACADEMY

Originally founded on Galedon V after the formation of the Alliance, the Galedon Military Academy is the oldest Combine academy. The primary campus occupies the majority of the southern continent of Luzon, complete with six live-fire fields and a proving grounds that is second only to Osaka Fields.

GMA doctrine slowly evolved to one that venerated physical strength and endurance as being vital to a warrior's role. Academy life grew progressively more brutal until training procedures were modified to prevent unnecessary deaths. Half of a cadet's term now takes place on the inhospitable world of Matsuida, which challenges a student's mental and physical capacities through a series of long campaigns and war games, along with extensive physical workouts and competitions. Advanced studies in non-military disciplines are conducted on Galedon V, where the GMA's main administrative offices are located.

In spite of the abuse and exhaustion—or perhaps because of it—GMA instructors instill strong loyalty to House Kurita and to the academy. A poor performance reflects on a cadet's loyalty and is punished by the nearest instructor.

HACHIMAN TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Birthed from an idea by Coordinator Hugai Kurita, HTI is a school dedicated solely to battlefield technology skills. Students get hands-on training in the repair of BattleMechs, aerospace fighters, DropShips, and conventional armor. In addition, this school maintains a special certificate course in scrounging and extreme field repairs. This one-year program is a joint project with ComStar's Explorer Corps and is located on Ningxia.

Because the school focuses more on repairs and technical expertise than direct combat skills, students may apply only if they have been rejected from another academy. A small number of students are automatically accepted if they have excellent recommendations from trade school administrators, and roughly ten applicants are transfers from ComStar's Explorer Corps on limited duty assignment.

After two years, candidates must pass a field exam, usually held at HTI's continent-spanning holdings on Linqing. Several billion tons of scrap litter the compound's five million square kilometers; students are expected to travel from their debarkation point to the HTI DropStation within a set period, using whatever they can to build their transportation. HTI has maintained a ninety percent graduation rate for the last four decades.

INTERNAL SECURITY COLLEGE

Those possessing inherent paranoia, nastiness, and a crafty nature are recommended for the Internal Security College, the training ground for ISF agents. Curricula include such relevant classes as physical education, psychology, and anatomy, and the more unusual such as spacecraft boarding and zero-gravity martial arts. The list of students is classified, as knowing the identity of future agents is a crime against the state.

Located on New Samarkand, the ISC is isolated and well protected. Surrounding the grounds are sixty kilometers of diacetylsilicate, a sand that eats away metal, rubber, and flesh. Any aircraft within 200 kilometers is shot down without warning. No one save the Coordinator and the Director of the ISF simply "visits" the ISC; no applications are accepted. Students are selected through a classified process, and only a rare few refuse the opportunity to join the state's security force.

MINORU KURITA UNIVERSITY

A visionary of sorts, Coordinator Minoru Kurita perceived a renewed outbreak of war among the Successor States. Determined to make sure the Dragon was ready, he created MKU to mass-produce trained infantrymen. Although a university in name, MKU is more a training facility designed to churn out the greatest number of soldiers in the least amount of time.

Training lasts only six months, after which graduates are grouped according to their home prefecture, and prefecture officials assign them to the planetary militias therein. In the past, a startling number of these green troops never saw more than one battle, and survivors were transferred to other units to plug gaps in manpower. During the Succession Wars and the Clan invasion, instructors considered MKU graduates' first battle as a final exam. As a result, MKU has few alumni.

PAGODA FOR LUTHIEN OFFICERS



The Pagoda and the Wisdom of the Dragon University are the toughest finishing schools remaining in the Combine. Between the two, the Pagoda is steeped in political influence, catering to the nobility of the realm and specializing in the skills necessary for life at court. The university's location on Luthien adds to its prestige. Every student is considered an officer candidate, though most will never see combat or even leave the planet. It exists solely for the privileged, earning it the nickname "Pampered Luthien Officers" among the more common soldiery.

Applicants must be of affirmed noble background; a hereditary title is not enough to guarantee entrance. The interview process is a grueling gauntlet of formal interviews and social functions that rival the productions found among the courts of House Steiner. Candidates spend four to six years in schooling, depending on their course of study and often on the political influence of the cadets or their families. Popular courses include those on protocol, administration, and bureaucracy; cadets who study tactics and warfare strategies are in the minority. Due to the tremendous political influence wielded by any person attending, only the truly inept can be dismissed from the Pagoda. Those that are may elect to resign or perform *seppuku* to avoid the shame of dismissal.

Life at the Pagoda is an ongoing social gauntlet, full of posturing and endless debates over whose family possesses more influence. Those who stress combat skills over social graces are snubbed by students and instructors alike. Rare are the cadets that can exercise enormous influence over the entire student body. The most notable example in recent years is Isoroku Kurita, the current Warlord of Dieron and cousin to the Coordinator.

SUN TZU SCHOOL OF COMBAT

Often overshadowed by the Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy, the Sun Tzu School of Combat offers a remarkably diverse range of courses. A large percentage of its graduates go on to officer training at a university. The school offers training in all branches of combat, and in a departure from DCMS tradition, emphasizes the ways in which each branch supports the others. This emphasis reflects the reforms instituted by Theodore Kurita and is one reason for the favorable attention it receives. Ten years after a sizeable grant from the DCMS, the school has expanded to three different campuses and a satellite facility on Kagoshima built specifically for battle armor training.

The Sun Tzu school teaches a "team play" attitude, stressing greater equality between differing branches of warfare. The competition for positions in the school's conventional forces programs is steep, as this is the only school in Combine space where conventional soldiers can receive samurai swords. The school teaches the philosophy of *bushido* along with loyalty to House Kurita. Instructors use the precepts of *bushido* to reinforce the notion that cadets must put aside personal pride and work together for the good of the Combine. Attrition tends to be highest among MechWarrior students, who fail to abandon the opinion that MechWarriors are a step above other branches of warfare and entitled to special consideration.

SUN ZHANG MECHWARRIOR ACADEMY

The SZMA is the largest academy of its kind in the Inner Sphere, graduating more than 450 soldiers each year. Located on New Samarkand, the SZMA trains BattleMech, armored infantry, and aerospace fighter cadets. The training regimen is harsh, often brutal, but SZMA graduates are among the most respected and privileged soldiers in the DCMS.

The SZMA emphasizes strict military discipline. All aspects of *bushido* are drilled into a cadet with an emphasis on service to the Draconis Combine. All cadets must carry themselves as samurai and treat each other with the respect that station deserves, down to permitting duels to the death for major slights to a cadet's honor. (Abuse by an instructor does not count, as an instructor is considered to belong to a higher social station; a cadet is barely worthy of an instructor's attention, let alone scorn.) Many failing students perform *seppuku* before receiving official notice of their impending dismissal.

Graduates are honored with the presentation of wakizashi and katana swords, which may be worn with a dress uniform. They are then assigned to one of the Sun Zhang Cadres for at least a nine-month term. From time to time the Coordinator grants rare exceptions to select DCMS regiments, allowing them to select from the best SZMA cadets that have not yet received a cadre assignment.

UNIVERSITY OF PROSERPINA

Suffering from a lack of equipment and proper facilities for decades, the UP offers two-year programs for battlesuit, infantry, and cavalry occupational specialties, and a four-year program for MechWarriors and aerospace pilots. Combat training is offered on two tracks, one for enlisted cadets, and the other for officer candidates.

The bulk of UP's student body is made up of residents of Proserpina, though its reputation does attract a disproportional amount of candidates from remote Combine worlds as well. Competition for the MechWarrior and aerospace slots is particularly fierce due to the limited resources available to the university. Once admitted, students are immersed into one of the most balanced programs of classroom learning and hands-on experience available in the Combine. The high success rate among graduates gives the average student a sense of confidence that cadets elsewhere often lack.

Because the Proserpina Hussars traditionally maintain and refurbish the school themselves, the DCMS has not paid the university much attention. As such, most graduates go on to serve in the Proserpina Hussars and are largely ignored by many of the Combine's line regiments.

WISDOM OF THE DRAGON



Located on Kagoshima, the Wisdom of the Dragon school is the premier finishing university in the Combine. Cadets attend the university to hone their skills in strategy and command; graduates are considered the elite of the DCMS. Unlike the Pagoda, the Wisdom of the Dragon is officially open to all citizens of the Combine who meet its stringent mental and physical requirements, are officer candidates, and have at least two years at an academy with the highest marks possible or are sponsored by a DCMS field officer of *tai-sa* rank or higher.

The atmosphere at the Wisdom of the Dragon contains an intensity unmatched by any other Combine academy or university. No matter what the field, a cadet is pushed to the limits of their mental and physical endurance. On top of their academic pressure, students must also cope with intense social pressure to follow the ancient traditions on which the Combine was founded. The university's rigorous adherence to the precepts of *bushido* exceeds that of any other school, and instructors stress loyalty to House Kurita above all. Theodore Kurita's reforms have met fierce resistance over the last decade but have made steady progress among both students and instructors.

The Wisdom of the Dragon rarely loses a student except in training accidents. Years in an academy or serving in the DCMS have hardened the typical candidate, so few drop out because of pressure. Graduation takes place in the presence of the Coordinator, who awards each graduate the coveted katana and wakizashi.

KENSAI KAMI



The Kensai Kami training program pits the best MechWarriors currently serving in the DCMS against instructors and one another in an effort to push the elite to greater heights of skill. Based on the Star League's ancient Gunslinger program, the Kensai Kami is a "master's program" in the combat arts. Only the most talented warriors in a given regiment receive the honor of undergoing the training.

Every regiment is allowed to send one warrior of *sho-sa* rank or lower to each Kensai Kami course. A warrior may only participate in the program once during his or her career. The three-month course sees each candidate fight a series of simulator and dummy-fire battles against elite instructors and other students. Competitions range from one-on-one battles to lance engagements, often pitting students against uneven odds. Seventy-five missions, lasting from a few hours to several days and worth up to forty points each, are run during the length of the course. A student must have 750 points in order to participate in the graduation ceremony. The top-scoring warrior in each class receives a promotion in rank and may opt to join the program as an instructor.

The original Kensai Kami is located on Aix-la-Chapelle. Two branch schools exist; one on Luthien and the other—recently reopened—on McAlister.

OSAKA FIELDS PROVING GROUNDS



While the DCMS relies almost exclusively on its military academies and universities to produce a steady flow of soldiers, it does acknowledge that true samurai may also rise from sources other than the noble and privileged classes. The "proving grounds" concept is set up for practicing military maneuvers and honing combat skills and offers citizens of low birth or low academic standing an avenue to develop and exhibit the skills needed to enter the rolls of the DCMS. Proving grounds can be found on every prefecture and district capital within the Combine and on a few other populous worlds.

Generally, proving grounds are dedicated to a specific branch of warfare and operate according to a variety of administrative styles. The ISF maintains operatives at all proving grounds to scrutinize promising candidates for correct doctrine and loyalty to the Combine. Those approved by the ISF generally receive invitations to study at military academies, though exceptionally talented candidates may receive only a minimum of training and indoctrination before entering the ranks of the DCMS.

The Osaka Fields Proving Grounds on Benjamin are the largest in the Combine. They consist of a large, untamed wilderness area that borders an abandoned Succession Wars-era military base. In 3061, the DCMS authorized a grant that added an urban combat environment for infantry squad tactics, which the planetary militia uses regularly to test and train new recruits. Three live-fire ranges exist for MechWarriors to use in calibrating their machines or simply to grow accustomed to piloting their family's ancestral heirlooms. Grudge matches are common fare and draw large numbers of spectators, making the proving grounds a source of entertainment for civilians in the Benjamin District. The DCMS imposes stiff fines to enforce the strict prohibition on wagering, a problem that typically occurs among the planet's nobility.

UNIFORMS AND INSIGNIA

The DCMS command structure, uniforms, medals, and decorations represent and reinforce the history and culture of the Combine military. These traditions help instill pride and a sense of group identity among DCMS troops.

UNIFORMS

In Combine society, individuals wear clothing that reflects their station in life. Therefore, the uniform of a DCMS trooper confers the prestige and respect associated with military service in the Combine. In fact, many soldiers on leave from their units choose to remain in uniform.

Senior Officers

Officers of the rank of *tai-sa* and above (captain in the Admiralty) constitute the senior officers of the DCMS.

All senior officer uniforms are black but otherwise follow the same design as the standard uniforms of each service branch. For example, an infantry *tai-sho* wears a black, standard DCMS infantry uniform. Unlike uniforms of the other Great House militaries, Kurita uniforms have few trappings. Medals and decorations are worn only on the dress uniform. Like all DCMS uniforms, senior officer uniforms are made from flame-, tear-, and water-resistant trichloropolyester.

The chief component of the senior officer's uniform is the high-collared black tunic. Each shoulder of the tunic bears the black-on-red Combine dragon symbol and gold Japanese symbols that describe House Kurita and the officer's military district Warlord. Officers may wear any type of cufflinks they prefer with their tunics. Popular cufflinks show school crests, images of a Kurita dragon, swords, or BattleMechs. Cufflinks may not exceed two centimeters in width, however, as larger cufflinks are too flashy for the proper officer.

All officers wear unadorned black trousers. The trouser legs are stuffed inside the officer's boots, which are black polyvinylate and must always be kept polished. Officers are permitted to wear handguns on their belts, and most carry a second, concealed weapon. Graduates of the Sun Zhang Academy, Wisdom of the Dragon university, and the Sun Tzu School of Combat may wear their katana and wakizashi as well.

The officer's hat is also black. Officers wear their regiment insignia on the front of their hats, battalion insignia on the left side, and company insignia on the right side.

Senior officers are expected to take special care to keep their uniforms immaculate so that their corpses will be presentable to an opposing general if they are killed in combat.

MechWarriors

MechWarriors of the Draconis Combine have two sets of regular uniforms: one for inside a 'Mech and one for public use.

While operating a 'Mech, warriors may wear the standard sleeveless and legless one-piece bodysuit, boots, a neurohelmet, the biofeedback apparatus needed to operate the helmet (often attached to the back of the helmet near the neck), and a cooling vest. MechWarriors need not wear rank insignia while fighting. Even though MechWarriors will rarely be seen in public wearing their cockpit garb, they are expected to keep their utility uniform in proper condition with no tears, rips, or other such deformities. Other Great Houses may allow such slovenly behavior in the cockpit of a war machine; proper *bushido* warriors do not.

When the warrior leaves his 'Mech, he must don his non-combat uniform. This consists of a dark gray jersey with a diagonal red stripe across the chest and dark gray trousers with a red stripe running down each leg. He must also wear the standard calf-length black boots and black visor cap adorned with his regiment, battalion, and company insignia. A wide black belt with a silver buckle encircles the pilot's waist. Again, this uniform is expected to be in pristine condition. Wearing a uniform with rips, tears, burn marks, and other marks of wear and tear are grounds for punishment and may result in a breach of honor with the warrior's superior.

Like all Kurita soldiers, MechWarriors wear their rank insignia on the left collar and the insignia of House Kurita and their district Warlord on each shoulder.

Aerospace Pilots

Kurita aerospace pilots wear simple, brownish-purple jumpsuits and parachute vests with front-mounted ripcords. All aerospace pilots wear special pads over their thighs, lower legs, and shoulders to reduce the risk of injury when their craft encounters turbulence. All leg pads contain regulators that prevent a pilot's blood from pooling in his lower extremities during high-G maneuvers. Additionally, every pilot's control helmet contains an Environmental Regulator Unit that allows the pilot to breathe normally even when his craft is in space or a hazardous planetary atmosphere.

Support Personnel

Technicians wear brownish-purple jumpsuits similar to those worn by aerospace personnel. These unadorned suits feature numerous pockets for storing tools and other needed items. Generally, DCMS commanders do not subject technicians to inspections and allow them to wear any clothing they prefer; most technicians wear the jumpsuit simply because the Procurement Department provides no other work clothing for them. All technicians are required to wear proper caps, which resemble cloth baseball caps, but contain a slim sheet of steel inside the fabric to protect from incidental contact with blunt objects.

Infantry, Armor, and Conventional Troops

Soldiers in the DCMS's infantry, armor, and conventional branches wear rugged, full-length, light tan jumpsuits. These garments feature shoulder and elbow padding to reduce the risk of injury from lifting heavy weapons and other vigorous activity. Soldiers are required to wear a branch-insignia pin on the chest of their suit.

The conventional hat has a short visor and earflaps, which may be turned down during cold weather or fierce winds. Artillery personnel are issued hats with extra insulation in the earflaps to muffle the sounds of artillery pieces. Many infantry units are issued helmets, gloves, and thick jerkins to protect them from blunt weapons and flamers. The jerkins issued to vehicle personnel absorb shocks from bumping around inside a vehicle. In addition, their helmets prevent injury to the head. Both types of jerkins contain cooling elements to help protect the wearer from excessive heat.

Dress Uniforms

The basic dress uniform for all DCMS personnel consists of a white tunic, black pants, and red boots. The white tunic's adornment was changed in 3062 to narrow red stripes running along the outside of the sleeves and down the center of the tunic's front, black cuffs, and a high red collar. Sewn in the tunic is a belt, which is fastened with a clasp fashioned in the shape of the Kurita dragon crest. Rank insignia are worn on the collar, and color-coded shoulder bars denote the soldier's service branch.

The black pants are virtually identical to those worn by senior officers, except for the addition of vertical piping along the legs that matches the soldier's shoulder bars.

RANK INSIGNIA

The DCMS command structure consists of commissioned-officer ranks and enlisted ranks. The system is designed to create a clear, concise chain of command. Unlike the DCMS's highest command echelons, the command structure at the regimental level and below resembles similar structures employed by other Inner Sphere militaries.

The DCMS has used its basic rank system for nearly four hundred years. The current system reflects minor modifications instituted by Theodore Kurita shortly after he was appointed *gunji-no-kanrei*. The rank of *tai-shu* applies to all DCMS Warlords. Japanese names are given to all enlisted ranks in a gesture of respect for the Combine's ancient Terran history. Traditionally, DCMS leaders displayed little regard for the noncommissioned officers and contended that enlisted ranks did not warrant the honor of Japanese names. Subsequent edicts changed this outdated mode of perspective.

All DCMS ranks use stylized kanji numerals as insignias. Rank insignia is worn on the left collar of the uniform at all times, on a small colored rectangle that denotes a soldier's service branch. Cherry red denotes BattleMech troops; yellow denotes aerospace pilots; dark green denotes DropShip and JumpShip crewmembers; light green denotes support personnel; dark brown denotes infantry; light blue denotes vehicle personnel; and purple denotes artillery personnel.

***Tai-shu* (Warlord)**

A *tai-shu* commands an entire Combine military district. All four *tai-shu* report directly to the Coordinator and wear green kanji "55" to denote their rank. Each also wears a bar below the rank insignia that distinguishes the Warlords from generals.



***Tai-sho* (General)**

Tai-sho most often serve as prefecture commanders or members of the High Command staff, though senior regimental commanders may also bear this rank. The *tai-sho* insignia is a green kanji "5."



DCMS COMMAND STRUCTURE

Commissioned Officers	Equivalent Admiralty Rank
Tai-shu (Warlord)	—
Tai-sho (General)	*Tai-sho* (Admiral)
Sho-sho (Brigadier General)	*Cho-sho* (Commodore)
Tai-sa (Colonel)	Captain
Chu-sa (Lieutenant Colonel)	*Sho-sa* (Commander)
Sho-sa (Major)	*Dai-i* (Lieutenant Commander)
Tai-i (Captain)	*Chu-i* (Lieutenant)
Chu-i (Lieutenant)	*Sho-i* (Ensign)

Enlisted Ranks	
Sho-ko (Sergeant Major)	*Kaisō-chō* (Chief Petty Officer)
Kashira (Talon Sergeant)	*Ittō Kaisō* (Petty Officer First Class)
Shujin (Master Sergeant)	*Nitō Kaisō* (Petty Officer Second Class)
Gunsho (Sergeant)	*Santō Kaisō* (Petty Officer Third Class)
Go-cho (Corporal)	*Kaishi-chō* (Leading Seaman)
Gunjin (Lance Corporal)	*Ittō Kaishi* (Seaman)
Heishi (Private)	*Nitō Kaishi* (Apprentice)
Hojuhei (Recruit)	*Santō Kaishi* (Recruit)

***Sho-sho* (Brigadier General)**

The *sho-sho* is normally a Warlord or general's aide, though *sho-sho* may command regiments. The *sho-sho* insignia is a green kanji "4."



***Tai-sa* (Colonel)**

Tai-sa typically serve as regimental commanders. The *tai-sa* insignia is a green kanji "3." The equivalent rank in the DCA is the captain of a vessel. The DCA retains the Star League tradition of denoting this rank as Captain, which is not to be confused with a DCA rank of *tai-i*. Someone addressed as "captain" on a DCA vessel is the commander of the ship.



***Chu-sa* (Lieutenant Colonel)**

Chu-sa usually command battalions, though they occasionally serve as regimental executive officers or regimental staff officers. The *chu-sa* insignia is a green kanji "2."



***Sho-sa* (Major)**

Generally, *sho-sa* serve as battalion staff officers, though some serve as senior company commanders. The *sho-sa* insignia is a green kanji "1."



***Tai-i* (Captain)**

A DCMS *tai-i* usually commands a company. The *tai-i* insignia is a royal blue kanji "5." DCA officers of equivalent rank—*chu-i*—command flights of six aerospace fighters.



Senior Master Chief Petty Officer



Technically, senior master chief petty officers are members of the Combine Support and Engineering Corps rather than the DCMS. However, in recognition of the senior master chief petty officer's position as the highest-ranking technician in the Combine military, the DCMS and DCA reserve the rank insignia of a royal blue kanji "4" for the exclusive use of these senior techs. Traditionally, each regiment contains a single senior tech.

***Chu-i* (Lieutenant)**



The *chu-i* is lowest of the DCMS commissioned officer ranks. Traditionally, officer school graduates enter the DCMS at this rank, and lance and platoon commanders are awarded this rank. The *chu-i* insignia is a royal blue kanji "3."

The equivalent Admiralty rank is *sho-i* (ensign), the lowest rank of an aerospace pilot. DCA *sho-i* who command aerospace lances are traditionally called "lancers."

***Sho-ko* (Sergeant Major)**



Sho-ko is the highest enlisted rank in the DCMS; the DCA equivalent is *kaisō-chō* (Chief Petty Officer). Few exist in either branch, because an enlisted soldier must strive his entire career to reach this rank. Typically, regiments contain a single *sho-ko*, who is responsible for the discipline and conduct of all enlisted personnel and noncommissioned officers in the regiment. The *sho-ko* insignia is a royal blue kanji "2." All DCMS lance second-in-command officers also wear this rank.

***Kashira* (Talon Sergeant)**



The *kashira* represents the first of the so-called middle ranks. The *kashira* insignia is a royal blue kanji "1." Support and Engineering petty officers wear the insignia, as do noble-born MechWarriors and those who own their own BattleMechs. These individuals are still addressed as "MechWarriors" and not *kashira*, however. The DCA equivalent rank is *ittō kaisō*.

***Shujin* (Master Sergeant)**



Shujin is the highest noncommissioned officer rank. The *shujin* insignia is a lavender kanji "5." MechWarriors who do not own their own 'Mechs also wear the insignia but are addressed as "MechWarrior." The DCA equivalent is *nitō kaisō*.

***Gunsho* (Sergeant)**



The DCMS *gunsho* typically serves as an infantry squad leader or vehicle commander. The *gunsho* insignia is a lavender kanji "4." The DCA equivalent is *santō kaisō*.

***Go-cho* (Corporal)**



Go-cho usually serve as assistant squad leaders or vehicle commanders. The *go-cho* insignia is a lavender kanji "3." The DCA equivalent is *kaishi-chō*.

***Gunjin* (Lance Corporal)**



Individuals of the *gunjin* rank receive higher pay than *heishi*, but the rank confers no additional authority or responsibility. The *gunjin* insignia is a lavender kanji "2." The DCA equivalent is *ittō kaishi*.

***Heishi* (Private)**



Recruits are automatically promoted to the rank of *heishi* after successfully completing basic training. The *heishi* insignia is a lavender "1." The DCA equivalent is *nitō kaishi*.

***Hojuhei* (Recruit)**

While in basic training, an individual is called a *hojuhei*. Recruits wear no insignia, only the colored rectangle that denotes their service branch. The DCA equivalent is *santō kaishi*.

MEDALS AND DECORATIONS

The DCMS awards many medals and decorations for service beyond the call of duty.

BUSHIDO BLADE

The Bushido Blade is awarded to officers who demonstrate great courage or leadership on the field of battle. Recipients wear the five-centimeter red circle, which is divided by a black katana sword, on the left breast pocket of their dress uniform.

THE FLEDGLING

The Warlord of the Pesht Military District awards the Fledgling to green Pesht Regulars *chu-i*s who perform beyond their expected limits. The decoration consists of a red braid attached just below the left collar and looped under the left arm. Once promoted to *tai-i*, a recipient may no longer wear the decoration. Soldiers often receive the Fledgling along with a promotion, and so never wear the braid.

FOUNDATION OF GALEDON

Each year, one soldier serving in the Galedon Military District receives the Foundation of Galedon in recognition of extraordinary courage and dedication to the principles of the Pillar of Steel—not the least of which is strict adherence to the traditions of *bushido*.

The decoration consists of a black pillar with a silver dragon coiled around it, hanging from a blue and silver ribbon. Recipients may also paint blue and silver bands on the arms of their BattleMechs or battlesuits, the turret of their vehicle, or the wings of their fighters.

GLORY OF THE FALLEN SAMURAI

Any great leader who falls in battle joins the ranks of the Fallen Samurai. The name of the deceased is etched on the Great Wall of Luthien alongside the names of those who fell before them, and his direct superior awards a black-and-red dragon banner to the fallen hero's next of kin.

Tai-sho Tomoe Sakade, former commander of Kagoshima Prefecture and wife of Theodore Kurita, was the first woman honored with the Glory of the Fallen Samurai in 3063. She fell during the Combine-Dominion War; her name was put forward by *Tai-shu* Kiyomori Minamoto of the Pesht Military District.

GUARDIAN OF THE LAIR

The Guardian of the Lair is awarded to warriors who perform heroic actions in the defense of the Pesht Military District. For members of the Pesht Regulars, the decoration consists of a smoke-colored, diamond-cut gem placed in a gold setting. Members of other units receive the decoration in a silver setting. The decoration is worn on the left breast, below all other service ribbons and medals. With Theodore Kurita's permission, *Tai-shu* Ashora sent several Guardian of the Lair awards to members of the Kell Hounds and Wolf's Dragoons to honor their efforts in the defense of Luthien against the Clans.

HONOR OF WAKIZASHI

A high-ranking officer who chooses to obey personal or family honor above his duty to House Kurita may receive the Honor of Wakizashi. When the Coordinator awards this medal, he grants the recipient the honor of performing *seppuku* to show remorse for his offense against the Draconis Combine rather than dishonor of submitting to execution.

The medal hangs from a heavy gold chain; the weight of the medal is designed to remind the recipient of the burden of honor.

HONOR TREE

The Honor Tree is awarded to a Luthien citizen who acts in an extraordinary manner that benefits the Combine in a significant fashion. The Keeper of the House Honor presents the citizen with a special cutting selected from her garden; typically, it is a bonsai tree but on several occasions has been a different species of tree, the meaning of which is known only to the Keeper and the honored citizen. These trees are jointly cared for by both the Keeper's staff and the citizen, for the life of the tree.

The oldest known Honor Tree is 218 years old, given to Honorable Citizen Iago McMurphy. His groundbreaking research in optics led to a breakthrough in miniaturization production, saving the Combine billions of K-bills annually in manufacturing costs.

KATANA CLUSTER

Each year, the DCMS MechWarrior in each military district who tallies the most confirmed 'Mech kills during the previous twelve months receives the Katana Cluster. The medal consists of a silver cast of the Kurita dragon banded with five different colors, hanging from a green-and-black ribbon.

KENSAI KAMI WREATH

This particular award is notable because it is not given to the top scoring warrior of each quarter's Kensai Kami. The Wreath is instead presented to his or her parents, guardian, or closest kin. The award, a bronzed wreath surrounding the Kurita dragon, is meant to be placed in the entranceway of the recipient's home or, if the recipient is deceased, at their memorial marker. First given in 2820, the award honors the wisdom and guidance of the warrior's ancestors, who provided the means and opportunities for the recipient's success. The Wreath was reinstated in 3048 when *Kanrei* Theodore Kurita resurrected the Kensai Kami.

KNIGHT OF NEW SAMARKAND RIBBON

Any officer whose strategy and tactics enable him to win a battle against imposing odds may become a Knight of New Samarkand. The Coordinator himself bestows this decoration, which consists of a red-and-black ribbon adorned with a depiction of an Oriental tiger. The decoration is worn on the left side of the recipient's uniform.

ORDER OF THE DRAGON

The Order of the Dragon is awarded to those who have aided the Draconis Combine by directly contributing to significant territorial gains for the nation. The Coordinator himself awards the medal, which is the highest honor a DCMS officer can receive, and recipients become knights in the Order of the Dragon.

The medal consists of the black-on-red Kurita crest surrounded by a wreath of eight, gold-tipped blue points. The medal hangs on a blue-and-black ribbon.

PROSERPINA BAR

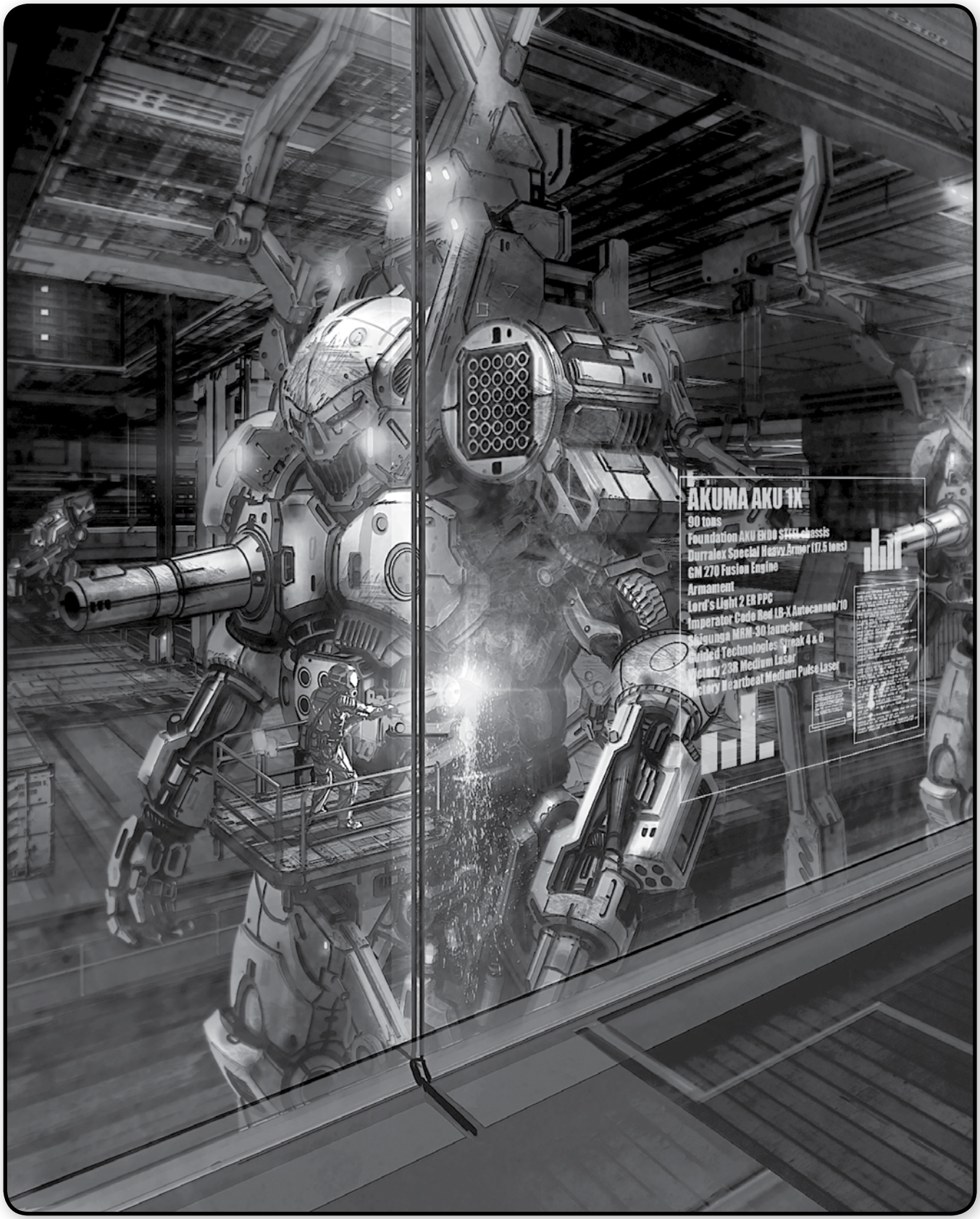
The Proserpina Bar is awarded to members of the Proserpina Hussars who demonstrate great skill or bravery against opponents. The medal consists of a stylized dragon's claw fashioned from bronze and obsidian. Most DCMS units award similar decorations to their members.

SILVER CLAW

The Dieron Military District Warlord presents the Silver Claw to the member of each Dieron Regulars regiment who achieves the most confirmed kills in a given campaign. The medal consists of a simple dragon claw pendant that warriors may wear with informal dress only. Warriors who receive multiple Claws often qualify for the Katana Cluster.

WATCHER OF THE DRAGON'S EYE

The Coordinator awards the Watcher of the Dragon's Eye certificate to civilians who take direct action to protect the Draconis Combine. Past recipients include a housekeeper who exposed a spy in the Combine administration (2653), a young boy who destroyed an ammunition dump behind enemy lines (3027), and the entire civilian population of Edo on Turtle Bay (3050). The certificate inscription offers the recipient the Coordinator's personal commendation and the blessing of the Draconis Combine.


AKUMA AKU 1X
90 tons
Foundation AKU ENDO STEEL chassis
Durralex Special Heavy Armor (17.5 tons)
GM 270 Fusion Engine
Armament
Lord's Light 2 ER PPC
Imperator Code Red LB-X Autocannon/10
Shigunga MRM-30 launcher
Guided Technologies Streak 4 & 8
Victory 23R Medium Laser
Victory Heartbeat Medium Pulse Laser

THE LESSER QUINTADOCS

1. Following the right path in all things, and avoiding or working against those who do not.

2. Treating friends as such, and enemies as such.

3. Maintaining honesty in all relations with friends, and integrity in all relations with enemies.

4. Behaving with proper decorum in the face of adversity or temptation.

5. Maintaining pride and self-esteem in the face of death.

—Dictum Honorium VII, 30–38

DEVOTION TO THE SUCCESS OF THE COMBINE THROUGH PROPER WORK

Devotion to duty, perfected through greater self-discipline, leads to an improved state of personal freedom and sense of joy focused on fulfillment in one's work.

[*Commentary*: Business is war on the field of numbers. Financial ruin from poor decisions and improper decorum is as deadly as badly considered tactics and unconsidered strategies. In the great machine, one faulty gear can create a catastrophe; one poorly maintained part could destroy a company. It is the duty of the worker to give all he is to the success of his endeavor. For the smallest part plays the largest role in the success or failure of the greater purpose.]

—Dictum Honorium VII, 215–216

The emerald green Imperial jade gemstone has been highly prized for millennia, with special mystic properties often associated with it. Among some peoples, the possession and contemplation of jade objects was though to bring a serenity to the soul and drive away evil thoughts.

Fine pieces of jade have always been worth large amounts of money, but most cultures prefer gold, silver, germanium, diamonds, or even platinum as symbols for commerce. In the Draconis Combine, the Pillar of Jade stands for commerce and industry. Indeed, pieces of jade are placed in all offices and factories as a reminder to focus on the expected task and not to become feverish with hopes of wealth. Even the well-informed trader or executive will often stop to meditate on jade when feeling that the pressure to succeed may interfere with his or her judgment.

Among the most popular forms for jade carvings are the simple pierced disk, the pillar, and the tree. The pierced disk, a form dating to primitive man on Terra, suggests breaking through the materialist view of life to see the vastness of the heavens. It also suggests a coin, open to the same view, which has been drilled to become "worthless," indicating that money should hold little value compared to the greater scheme of life. The largest jade disk resides in Chandrasekhar Kurita's mountain palace on Hachiman. Twelve meters in circumference, the disk was cut from the jade mines on Galedon V, the largest source of the stone in the Combine.

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

To say that the Combine government controls the economic system is almost redundant. As the Coordinator controls the nobles, military, and every other aspect of life, he is the government.

House Kurita is not as wealthy a state as its size and importance might suggest. Many of its worlds are actually resource-poor, having been settled for the purpose of exploiting only a few select minerals or crops. Other worlds have been hit hard by the Succession and Clan Wars and are victims of the philosophy of destroying the planet in order to save it. The disruption of interstellar transit during the Second and Third Succession Wars seriously affected many of the Dragon's worlds. Unable to grow their own food, these worlds found themselves cut off from needed supplies. The Clans' Operation REVIVAL and subsequent ten years of occupation severed many trade links to interdependent worlds, sending many once-prosperous systems into severe economic recession. The Kurita government typically redistributes segments of the affected population to other systems to "balance the load," often with mixed results. The citizens do not complain; to question the Dragon's judgment is simply not done.

The Combine government frequently keeps breadbasket worlds and systems with intact industrial bases at artificially high population levels. Through the Economic Relocation Program, the government moves people to these planets, where large families are encouraged through a system of monetary and social rewards—and through restricted availability of contraceptives. The official reason for this population program is to be ready to re-seed barren worlds when the conflict is past. The unofficial but generally accepted reason is to encourage young people to broaden their experience as a Combine citizen by joining the military.

Because of overpopulation, food rationing exists on even agricultural planets. What is available varies in quality with simple but fresh foods for their people. Less-endowed worlds have to make do with a bewildering variety of processed items. Corporations or the government provide housing by way of a cumbersome bureaucracy—making things crowded at times—though public housing is clean, well-maintained, and adequate, unlike many of the Combine's Inner Sphere counterparts.

Medical care is also available at no cost but can be frighteningly primitive. On many worlds, all but the most ill persons are better off going to a village folk medicine clinic for herbal tea and hot compresses rather than going to a government-run Health and Happiness Center where doctors might be experimenting with new and unknown techniques. Of the scientific disciplines, medical practice best reveals the depths of ignorance to which humanity has fallen—and how Kuritans apply any recovered knowledge to benefit the military first. DCMS medical service is considered extravagant compared to the simple clinical services offered to most working-class citizens. Combine citizens take this disparity in stride.

COMBINE CURRENCY

Each *ryu* (known to outsiders as a K-bill) is divided into 100 *yen*. The Combine government is constantly changing the make-up of its currency; at the time of the last revision in 3060, the denominations were 1, 5, 10, and 20 *yen* coins (copper alloy); 50 *yen*, 1 *ryu*, and 5 *ryu* coins (silver alloy); and 10, 20, 50, 100, and 500 *ryu* notes. The 1,000 and 10,000 *ryu* notes used before 3060 are rare, but they remain legal tender in the Combine.

Each prefecture mints its own coins and notes, but there is little difference among them beyond the name of the mint, which is embossed on the edge of coins or as a watermark on notes. Coins display the Kurita dragon on one side with the value embossed over it and the *mon* (heraldic symbol) of a Combine world on the other. The larger the coin's value, the smaller the size; a 20 *yen* coin is half the size of a 1 *yen* piece.

Notes are uniform in design, though the paper used varies on the military district of the issuing mint. Each note also carries a watermark in the form of the district's *mon*. *Ryu* notes from Pesht are dark rouge, Benjamin's are light orange, Galedon's are robin-egg blue, and Dieron's are dove gray. The lettering and symbols on all notes are black ink and contain the symbol of the Draconis Combine on one side and the side profile image of a Coordinator on the other. The denomination is prominently visible on both sides. *Ryu* notes larger than 50 have a silver border, and the rarer 1,000 and 10,000 notes have a gold border.

COINS

Yen (copper alloy)	
Value	**Image**
1	*mon* of Alshain
5	*mon* of Benjamin
10	*mon* of Dieron
20	*mon* of Pesht
50	*mon* of Galedon V (silver alloy)

Ryu (silver alloy)	
Value	**Image**
1	*mon* of New Samarkand
5	*mon* of Luthien

NOTES

Ryu	
Value	**Image**
10	Taragi Kurita
20	Takashi Kurita
50	Siriwan Kurita
100	Shiro Kurita
500	Miyogi Kurita
1,000	Sanethia Kurita
10,000	Martin McAllister

Not surprisingly, the most civilized developments in Kurita medicine are the well run Welcoming Homes, or hospices. These provide a quiet, pleasant atmosphere, sparsely furnished, sunny rooms with large meditation gardens, pain relievers, and a benignly neglectful medical staff.

More than ample and elegant housing always exists for deserving people with the proper connections, however, and luxury foodstuffs appear on fine porcelain dishes on even the most sharply rationed planet. The nobility have the cash and the connections to acquire any household item they desire, with noble families able to retain house physicians among their many attendants. If one were to point this out to an ordinary Draconian citizen, he would simply shrug and say that the upper classes serve the Coordinator more closely and have responsibility to the lower classes as well. They need more sensual pleasures as they have more pain in their souls. This way of regarding the Sufferings of the Lion has become a basic tenet of Kurita society.

This acceptance of station is a constant on those worlds that have been part of the Dragon for centuries. It is a harder—and more difficult—task to adjust the citizens of other realms to this peaceful existence. Their decadent lifestyles and looser environment, not to mention their ignorance of the finer details of honor, make the citizenry more prone to rebellion and dissent.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO THE MILITARY

The Kurita economy is geared to the improvement of Kurita life and to the grandeur of the Draconis Combine. At present, this means concentrating on military and war production, as Davion actions during the recent FedCom Civil War have destabilized the two realms' common border. Eighty years prior, under Treasury Minister Tadaki Nagai, all businesses were designated as either Direct Service (military) or Indirect Service (civilian).

The military designation affords a business government protection from both physical threats and economic difficulties. A military firm, however, is almost entirely controlled by the armed forces, with a military hierarchy paralleling and able to overrule the company's board of directors. Each military board may oversee several companies, or in the case of supranational corporations (such as Luthien Armor Works), just one.

Civilian businesses maintain more control over their own affairs. Most civilian businesses still deal with the military in some way, and all civilian firms operate under the direct supervision of at least one military officer. The amount of supervision will depend on what percentage of the business directly affects the military.

In a military firm, production schedules and even entire product lines may change suddenly to reflect the needs of the war effort. Should a civilian company be in disagreement with the military about production plans, the firm may simply find itself unable to obtain raw materials to manufacture the goods the military does not want produced.

CONSERVATION AND WASTE

With natural resources generally in short supply, conservation has become an important part of Combine life. The conservation ethic combines with respect for the work needed to produce anything of value. To waste any substance is an affront to nature and an act of disloyalty toward the Draconis Combine.

Conservation of Resources Bureau (CRB) auditors conduct inspections roughly every six months to ensure that corporations are not wasting resources. The CRB matches industries that use waste as their raw materials, so that one industry will receive another's usable waste products, while sending their waste to a third. Private citizens will occasionally find a CRB agent or a Neighborly Patrol member going through the trash to make sure it has been properly sorted into organic, cloth, plastic, glass, paper, metal, and so on.

THE CORPORATE STRUCTURE

The Kurita economy was based on a policy of controlled scarcity, with the government's Committee of Resource Management in control of the distribution of all resources, goods, and services. Noble families usually owned the Combine's industries, but essential services, such as electric power generation, were run as governmental monopolies.

Although the Kurita economy is government-run, it is by no means a communist economy. It can be best described as "controlled-market capitalism." New businesses start up only with the permission of the government and must be run under close government supervision. The corporations are not owned by the government; they have their own directors and may issue stock if they wish. There is a tolerance of small operations on most worlds, such as the independent farmer's markets. If they become too successful, they are usually closed down or absorbed by a larger firm.

Ownership of a corporation is equivalent to landholding in terms of noble prestige and power. Kurita corporations operate in much the same way as did feudal fiefdoms. Workers become attached to the company that employs their parents; often, the only way to leave their employ is to join the military or be exchanged to another corporation. (This is often called "given a new opportunity to grow in transplanted soil.") If fired, a worker will probably never find employment with another corporation and either becomes an Unproductive or joins the military to spend the rest of his short life among the lowest militia grunts. The government often sends Unproductives to work in the worst, most grueling positions of state-run industries. The only other option is starvation.

In some cases—dependent on the circumstances of firing—starvation is the honorable choice and the disgraced worker is allowed a proper funeral for having seen his life to its natural conclusion. Some starve simply to avoid the fate of becoming an Unproductive, which disgraces the worker's family and former employer, implying they did not raise or train the worker in proper execution of duty. The entire family may never work again, certainly not for that firm.

Loyal workers live their entire lives around the corporation. They are born in corporate hospitals, attend corporate schools, live in corporate houses, buy from corporate stores, and are frequently cremated and entombed in company mausoleums. Most workers wear uniforms indicating the company for which they work and the position they hold. Workers purchase these uniforms, along with nearly everything else they need, from the company store. These emporiums graciously allow credit against the next paycheck for their high-priced goods.

Believing that the Capellan Confederation's rigorous social stratification was responsible for their defeat in the Fourth Succession War, Coordinator Takashi instituted the Pillar Reforms in 3043. These laws, which relaxed the restraints on social classes in Combine society, are a major reinterpretation of the Dictum Honorium and remain in place today. The reforms also allow citizens more privacy than ever before. These reforms are not openly opposed by the O5P or the ISF.

The Pillar Reforms seem to have inspired a great sense of optimism among the Combine's ordinary citizens. In addition to enjoying greater personal freedom, people in the Combine have a higher standard of living for the first time in a century.

Agricultural Planets

Agrarian systems have more primitive conditions than industrial areas do. They often compensate by offering more room and sometimes better food to their residents. Noble families own the majority of arable land, which is tilled by serfs and Unproductives in a feudal scheme similar to other Great Houses. This is usually a plantation-style arrangement in which peasants receive a salary for their work but must buy their food at whatever prices the landholder wishes to charge. Unproductives receive no salary and are housed and fed in slave-like conditions.

Middle-class farmers hold a small percentage of the land, growing enough to feed their families and still sell a surplus at the markets. Peasants going to the markets spend their ration coupons on whatever fresh produce, meat, or fish they can afford. The marketing farmers cash in the coupons at a government office for whatever percentage of the face value the officials decide to pay. Middle-class farmers and small landholders exist on many industrial worlds, providing fresh food and and basic employment.

IMPORTANT DIRECT SERVICE (MILITARY) CORPORATIONS

ALSHAIN WEAPONS

Main Headquarters: East Lime (Tok Do)
CEO: *Daimyo* Kristof Webber
Main Products (Alshain Weapons, Tok Do): *Panther* BattleMech, *Pacifier* SecurityMech, various IndustrialMechs
Main Products (Diplan 'Mechyards, Aix-la-Chapelle): *Hitman* and *Kabuto* BattleMechs

Profile: Alshain Weapons underwent severe hardships after Clan Ghost Bear conquered most of the Free Rasalhague Republic, including Alshain. The Combine maintained strong economic ties with several of its former worlds within the FRR; Alshain Weapons was one of these. The corporation received hefty grants from the DCMS and the Bureau of Procurement to build new facilities in Combine space. Alshain Weapons has since continued supplying the Dragon with its venerable *Panther* light 'Mechs. It acquired faltering Diplan 'Mechyards in 3060.

BUDA IMPERIAL VEHICLES

Headquarters: Skytower City (Luthien)
CEO: *Daimyo* Piram Germane
Main Products (Proserpina; Bulldog Enterprises): Bulldog, Manticore, Schiltron, and Tokugawa tanks
Main Products (Luthien; Buda Imperial): Daimyo mobile HQ, Tokugawa tank, standard and heavy wheeled APCs, coolant trucks, various support vehicles
Main Products (New Samarkand; Nav Hull): Monitor and Mauna Kea Naval Vessels, *Ashigaru*-class Freighter, various other watercraft and watercraft components

Profile: Although a small company with factories located only in four systems, Buda Imperial has a long and illustrious history in the manufacture of military vehicles. They are noted in Combine history as the first to mount flamers on their coolant trucks during the First Succession War, a practice quickly emulated by the other Great Houses. The practice, once known as the "Buda Surprise," foiled a Davion raiding assault on Tok Do in 2809 after Federated Suns forces believed they had captured a large supply convoy.

In 2810, the Coordinator granted Buda Imperial the entire moon that orbits Pesht. This moon was renamed after the company and is the current location of Buda Imperial's corporate headquarters.

The company is well known for the Tokugawa medium tank, a solidly-built combat machine commonly found among all DCMS forces. Older versions trickle down into the planetary militia as new ones are replaced.

Buda acquired control of Bulldog Enterprises in early 3067. Marquis Piram Germane opted to leave Bulldog intact, merging only the two corporate distribution networks. Buda acquired Bulldog's robust R&D division. In return, the company provides its new subsidiary with Buda's superior corporate ratings within the Bureau of Procurement and the Ministry of the Interior.

COSBY BATTLEMECH AND MYOMER RESEARCH FIRM

Main Headquarters: Glorious Sunset (Vega)
CEO: Jennifer Watanabe
Main Products: *Crusader* and *No-Dachi* BattleMechs, Inner Sphere standard battle armor

Profile: Cosby has struggled of late as sales of its redesigned *Crusader* have been lackluster. As a result, Watanabe made the expensive decision to redesign two of the lines to accommodate the company's more popular *No-Dachi* BattleMech. The new factories have been problematic and are now the subject of an extensive investigation by the Bureau of Worker Protection. Until the bureau's inquiry is finished, Cosby has two complete manufacturing facilities at a standstill. The situation is not a pleasant one, and the board has begun calling for Watanabe's resignation.

GALILEO INSTRUMENTS

Headquarters: Matabushi (Schuyler)
CEO: *Tozama Daimyo* Mark Maestas
Main Products: *Achilles*, *Behemoth*, and *Monarch* DropShips, civilian trivid systems, mass market entertainment modules
Main Products (Chatham; Tomori Trans Industrial): *Nekohono'o* and *Vengeance*-class DropShips, various small craft

Profile: Galileo Instruments began as a manufacturer of control equipment for spacecraft but diversified into sophisticated electronic systems for a variety of applications. After a falling out between the corporation and the military procurement board in 3018, Galileo gave up the guidance systems division to remain a civilian company. The move initially gutted Galileo, but shrewd development and research in civilian electronics over the last several decades has paid dividends. The company re-entered the military market after acquiring Tomori Trans Industrial in 3055.

As part of the Coordinator's rebuilding initiatives concerning former Clan-occupied worlds, Galileo transferred its corporate headquarters to Schuyler in 3064. The move was more symbolic, showing the citizenry that the planet was worth rebuilding. Galileo is one of the top five employers on the planet and has turned Matabushi into a model corporate city.

In the mid-3060s, Galileo opened a new line of products in mass-market entertainment modules. The company's foray into the entertainment market was a calculated risk by new CEO Mark Maestas, looking to diversify Galileo's slumping civilian profit lines. The risk worked. *Combat Ops: Halstead Station* ranked number one in sales across the Combine for three years straight. The company's follow up, *Combat Ops: Vega*, crested the 3066 charts in presales alone.

HACHIMAN TARO ENTERPRISES

Headquarters: Masamori (Hachiman)
CEO: Lord Chandrasekhar Kurita
Main Products: Consumer electronics, military fire-control systems, C^3 computer systems

Profile: Starting on a modest scale, HTE owes its rapid growth in equal parts to strong financial backing from Chandrasekhar Kurita and to a business approach that borrowed heavily from Lyran and Marik models.

Focusing initially on servicing the growing domestic demand for consumer electronics, HTE's early years were marked by fierce competition with Tanadi Computers. Since then, the company has expanded its operations and now produces advanced electronics for the DCMS.

INDEPENDENCE WEAPONRY

Headquarters: River City (New Samarkand)
CEO: Judith Hotchkiss
Main Products (Independence Weaponry, Quentin): *Akuma*, *Atlas*, *Chimera*, *Excalibur*, *Gunslinger*, *Hatamoto-Chi*, *JagerMech III*, *Marauder*, *Naginata*, *Ninja-To*, *Shugenja*, *Taisho*, *Tessen*, and *Victor* BattleMechs
Main Products (Blankenburg Technologies, Soul): *BattleMaster* and *Katana* BattleMechs
Main Products (Telfar BattleMechs, Midway): *Lynx* and *Maelstrom* BattleMechs

Profile: As neutral as a weapons manufacturer can get on the interstellar political stage, Independence Weaponry services and supplies most major military manufacturers across the Inner Sphere. Based in the Combine, IW operates less as a corporation and more as a conglomerate, with each division responsible to a particular faction and their protocols. This type of setup leads to some odd situations, such as preventing any IW-manufactured weapons in the Combine from being sold, transported, or used in the manufacturing process of Federated Suns equipment, despite the fact that the weapons are identical to those produced elsewhere. Nevertheless, IW has successfully negotiated political minefields for centuries with aplomb.

Many of IW's manufacturing, research, and subsidiary facilities have worked with the Professional Soldiery Liaison Department to hire on additional security in the form of mercenaries.

Independence CEO Judith Hotchkiss controls the corporation. Rumors have been mounting that Hotchkiss is considering a large-scale relocation of IW's main corporate headquarters, possibly to Davion space where she has paternal ties. Both CEOs of Blankenburg Technologies and Telfar BattleMechs have threatened a hostile takeover if Hotchkiss initiates such a move.

ISHIKAWAJIMA-HARIMA BATTLE ARMOR INDUSTRIES

Main Headquarters: Ishikawajima (Luthien)
CEO: Jonas Tigiki
Main Products: Void battle armor

Profile: IHBAI is a relatively new company in the wide array of military corporations within the Combine. Originally a research and design firm dedicated to virtual engineering for several civilian electronics and industrial concerns, IHBAI joined the DCMS battle armor program as a technical consultant. When the first Void prototype was successful, Jonas Tigiki immediately placed a bid to construct the new battle suit. Using an upgraded production process, IHBAI began cranking out Void suits at a newly constructed facility in the southern region of Luthien.

Tigiki received a personal commendation by the Coordinator for the company's quick turnaround in providing the lethal suits for the DCMS. The Coordinator's recognition landed IHBAI additional DCMS grant money, which is being used to build a new facility on Agematsu in the Galedon Military District.

LEXATECH INDUSTRIES

Headquarters: LexaCity (Irece)
CEO: David Hu
Main Products (Hun Ho): *Stinger*, *Cerberus*, and *Grasshopper* BattleMechs, BattleMech actuators and gyroscopic systems

Profile: Once known in the Star League era as the best manufacturer of *Stinger* LAMs, LexaTech has suffered a complete identity crisis after 3051. When Irece fell to the Clans, the single surviving LAM production facility—so large it occupied an island offshore LexaCity—was violently dismantled by the occupiers. Clan officials since that time claim the destruction was to remove a perversion of warfare, a reason that sits oddly with Inner Sphere-educated scholars of Clan society.

With the loss of its primary facility, LexaTech was forced to reinvent itself. Utilizing its *Cerberus* factories located in Oshika Prefecture, the company increased production of its durable IndustrialMechs. The cosmetic redesigns made the *Stinger* more marketable, and the Procurement Department authorized shipments of the 'Mech to planetary militias located along the Clan occupation border. With the increased sales, LexaTech then refined its other facilities and focused on producing key spare parts and systems for other light 'Mechs.

With the liberation of Irece, the company has relocated its corporate offices to their original location. Negotiations with Clan Nova Cat's merchant caste remain stalled, however, as rumors spread of LAW's more aggressive tactics to secure the Clan's technology.

LUTHIEN ARMOR WORKS

Headquarters: Tokyo Island (Luthien)
CEO: *Shogun* Hoek Botterfield
Main Products (Dieron; LAW—Dieron): *Grand Dragon* BattleMech, BattleMech refits
Main Products (Enif; LAW—Enif): BattleMech and combat vehicle armor plating
Main Products (Luthien; BBP Industries): *Bara no Ryu*, *Excalibur*, *Intruder*, *Nekohono'o*, *Okinawa*, and *Triumph*-class DropShips, BattleSat System Defense Stations
Main Products (Luthien; Guthry Island OmniMech Production Facility): *Avatar*, *Black Hawk-KU*, *Blackjack*, *Firestarter*, *Owens*, *Raptor*, *Strider*, and *Sunder* OmniMechs
Main Products (Luthien; Primary Factory): *Charger*, *Daikyu*, *Daimyo*, *Grand Dragon*, *Jenner*, *Komodo*, *Mauler*, *O-Bakemono*, and *Quickdraw* BattleMechs; Kage, Kanazuchi, and Raiden battle armor
Main Products (Yorii; LAW—Yorii): *Grand Dragon* BattleMech
Main Products (Al Na'ir; Yori Mech Works) *Atlas*, *Catapult*, and *Hatamoto*-series BattleMechs
Main Products (Al Na'ir; Scarborough Manufacturers): Pegasus, Saladin, Saracen, and Scimitar hovertanks, Maxims, heavy, and standard hover APCs
Main Products (Oshika; Nimakachi Fusion Products Ltd.): *Bishamon*, *Spider*, and *Venom* BattleMechs
Main Products (Altair; Izumi JumpShip Yard): *Chimeisho*-class JumpShip
Main Products (Altair; Kurita Combine Munitions Corp)**:** *Riever* aerospace fighter
Main Products (Kessel; Diverse Optics, Inc.): laser weaponry
Main Products (Qandahar; Dow-Nexus Fusion Products): various fusion engines
Main Products (Galtor; Galtor Naval Yards): Neptune Submarine, civilian cargo submarines, various watercraft
Main Products (Proserpina; Guided Technologies): Missiles, missile launchers, and missile guidance systems
Main Products (Jeanette; Jeanette Naval Yard): Triton-class missile submarine
Main Products (Hanover; Saxe-Heidelberg Heavy Industries): Shuriken Spotter Plane, Graf-Tengu Air Transport, various civilian aircraft
Main Products (Benjamin; Whitworth Specialty Manufacturing): BattleMech repair and modification services

Profile: The biggest corporate conglomerate within the Combine and considered the Dragon's iconic BattleMech manufacturer, Luthien Armor Works is a foundational linchpin of the Kuritan empire. LAW's primary loyalty has always been to the Kuritan throne, structuring its hierarchy and business plans to the whims of the Coordinators. Nothing during its centuries of existence has truly threatened the massive corporation. It is the DCMS's largest weapons manufacturer, supplier, and the sole economic engine on several Combine worlds.

Over the centuries, LAW has absorbed or acquired several of its former competitors. Typically, LAW's board of directors leaves the assimilated company's internal structure intact; often, many of its new employees are not even aware of the transition of power. LAW senior executives continually challenge several of its subsidiaries to compete for contracts in the corporate arena; they believe such activity only strengthens the corporation as a whole.

When Sanethia Kurita authorized and designed the transformation of Luthien, she allotted several million square kilometers for LAW to build upon. The corporate designers selected two major island formations off the coast of the future site of Imperial City. Major reconstruction transformed the shallow bay, diverting millions of metric tons of water back into the Obsidian Sea. The result was two massive plateaus that towered over the landscape: Tokyo and Guthry Islands. LAW engineers then sculpted each into an organically centered arcology containing worker housing, manufacturing facilities, production areas, and smelting pits. Personal transportation rails interconnected the two islands and nearby Imperial City. In 3052, LAW built its massive OmniMech complex in and around the bases of both towers, covering much of the former bay floor. Despite the sheer amount of machinery and people in such a small area, the heavily populated LAW City maintains a harmonic feel that pleases the eye, if not the nose. Pollution is a perennial problem, one that LAW engineers are still working to resolve.

The second-largest LAW facility is its administrative division, located in LAW City on Pesht. It employs nearly fifty million workers to handle the monolithic company's internal bureaucracy.

MATABUSHI INCORPORATED

Headquarters: Pollux (Pesht)
President/CEO: *Shogun* Ishi Tahiro
Main Products (Avon): *Overlord* and *Union*-class DropShips
Main Products (Luthien): Military targeting and communications systems
Main Products (Pesht): computers, advanced electronics, robotics, banking, shipping

Profile: Matabushi's position proves the adage that "the giant grows unchecked when the walls are knocked down." The corporation has survived multiple wars and economic crises in its position as the most prosperous and technologically advanced company in Kurita space. Even during the Clan Invasion, where several of its outlying branches were consumed and dismantled, Matabushi used whatever opportunities it could seize to survive. With the reacquisition of its former properties after Clan Smoke Jaguar's destruction, the corporation looks to regain its place as the largest defense contractor in Kurita space not owned by LAW.

Matabushi has the government seal of approval, allowing it first bid on any contracts and giving it first civilian access to any new technology captured.

The Matabushi National Service Division produces guidance and tracking sensor systems, other computerized equipment, and robotics that might have applications in civilian transportation in most advanced societies. In the Combine, however, any equipment is subject to military requisition. Only a token minimum that is manufactured here goes for civilian use.

Matabushi Finance remains the largest private finance firm in the Combine. Most banks are government-run; Matabushi offers a privatized alternative built on a steady partnership with the government. One of Matabushi's major functions is to change House bills liberated from other Successor States into useful currency, mainly K-bills—for use by citizens within the Combine—and C-bills, used by major corporations and government contractors that operate beyond the Dragon's borders.

The corporation's shipping and trade division grew in parallel with their financial business, laundering money throughout settled space. Most of its dealings are with the scattered few pirate bands along the Dragon's Periphery border, the pacifistic Outworlds Alliance (in an attempt to keep Alliance border worlds economically unstable), and along the Ghost Bear border. Lesser operations occur along the Federated Suns, though recently the ISF has utilized Matabushi in various operations to undermine the economy on Davion border worlds.

MIDWAY SHIPYARDS

Main Headquarters: Orbital (Midway)
CEO: Lawrence Maas
Main Products (Midway; Midway Shipyards): *Inazuma*-class, *Kirishima*-class, and *Kyushu*-class WarShips
Main Products (Schuyler; Dharma HyperSpace) *Scout*-class JumpShip

Profile: Considered the Combine's experts in WarShip construction, Midway Shipyards began originally as a JumpShip manufacturer. Its first slips, still in orbit around the planet Midway, produced *Star Lord*- and *Invader*-class vessels for the Dragon. Midway-built JumpShips were known for their solid construction and had fewer breakdowns and repair issues than other similar class vessels.

Midway was given the DCA's contracts for the *Inazuma*-, *Kirishima*-, and *Kyushu*-class WarShips based on their exemplary record. The contracts included a massive series of grants to increase the Midway yards, tripling the company's size in less than four years. Midway's increase in fortune has trickled down to the planet proper, providing a level of comfort and satisfaction rarely found among other corporations of the same size.

The shipyards produce an average of one to three JumpShips a year as resources are reallocated to the WarShip program.

NEW SAMARKAND METALS

Headquarters: Garden (New Samarkand)
President/CEO: *Daimyo* Charles Sadafuji
Main Products: Behemoth, Demolisher, Schrek PPC Carrier, Kage and Raiden battle suits, standard armor alloys, ferro-fibrous armor, endo-steel structure, commercial steel, smelting and forging equipment
Main Products (Shimonita; Sapphire Metals): *Charger* BattleMech, various IndustrialMechs, armor plating

Profile: "If it's metal, it's Samarkand!" This motto has served New Samarkand Metals for six centuries. For the first five hundred years of its existence, NSM was the largest supplier of steel and armor alloys for the Combine's military and commercial industries. With mines, smelters, and other manufacturing facilities on most of the worlds taken by the Clans, NSM faced a minor economic crisis in the early 3050s. President Sadafuji moved forward with NSM's aggressive research into alternative alloys, such as Tempered Samarkite (developed in 3019). The best-selling and ultra-secret steel formula has since been refined twice, making it easier to formulate than its original version.

Responsible for a large segment of mining operations within Oshika, New Samarkand, and Tabayama Prefectures, NSM maintains a solid profit line with little competition. With gigantic mining operations—both surface and asteroid—in several systems, the corporation supplies the Dragon with raw materials for energy, manufacturing, trade, and other purposes. NSM is also a key supplier of material for the Outworlds Alliance thanks to an agreement forged with the Coordinator's blessing back in 2971. Despite recent troubles with the overbearing Ravens within the Alliance, the agreement remains in place. NSM is also responsible for much of the Dragon's germanium mines, many of which are located through the heart of the Combine.

NISSAN GENERAL INDUSTRIES

Main Headquarters: Onami (Kagoshima)
CEO: Mitchell Kurita
Main Products: Various fusion engines

Profile: One of the primary fusion engine suppliers to the Combine's military industry, Nissan General Industries draws its roots from ancient Terra. The company was lured to the Combine in 2612, receiving two hundred years of tax breaks and automatic grants in exchange for more than seventy-five percent of its production. After Nissan relocated to Kagoshima, the company's profits exploded and were redirected back into research and development division and building other facilities within the Combine.

As a courtesy to its benefactor, Nissan sells its fusion products at cost to other Combine military industries but at a significant markup to the Dragon's traditional enemies. The recent warming of relations with the Federated Suns has opened opportunities for the Davions to purchase Nissan engines with trade discounts, increasing the company's production and bolstering its profit line.

STELLAR TREK ENTERPRISES

Main Headquarters: Strabo (Chatham)
CEO: Trevaline Lemieux
Main Products (Chatham): *Invader*, *Merchant*, and *Monolith class* JumpShips
Main Products (Dieron): *Kyushu*-class and *Tatsumaki*-class WarShips, *Kyushu* cargo shuttle
Main Products (Dover; Hinsdale Elec): *Condor* and *Nagumo*-class DropShips, various shuttles and small craft

Profile: Another of the Combine's venerable shipbuilding industry, Stellar Trek formed during the days of the Alliance of Galedon. The company has remained at the forefront of K-F research and JumpShip construction design, earning it the DCA's *Kyushu*- and *Tatsumaki*-class WarShip production contracts. Though the new yards at Dieron support only the WarShip program, the company has not diverted resources from its more important commercial JumpShip projects. The decision to expand without reconfiguring its logistical chain has put Stellar Trek into a financial hole, further exacerbated with the delays to the *Tatsumaki* program.

Because of the company's struggle with the Dieron yards, there is a severe disparity in working conditions between its two shipyard locations. Workers at the Chatham site are rotated to Dieron for a year to assist the Dieron staff, a duty assignment that is not welcomed by most of the established employees.

TANADI COMPUTERS

Headquarters: Masamori (Hachiman)
President/CEO: *Mirza* Peter Abdulsattah
Main Products: Inner Sphere Standard battle armor, military tracking and communications systems, home electronics, small appliances, personal and commercial communication systems, security systems
Main Products (Benjamin; Amau Electronics): military circuit boards, consumer electronics, small appliances

Profile: Tanadi produces computers and other electronics for office, government, and home use. It also designs and installs communications systems in homes, personal transportation devices, and other commercial buildings. A separate division handles equipment testing and installation for sensitive government operations, requiring ISF security clearances and the loyalty of its employees.

Tanadi experienced a brief disruption in 3056 when Hachiman was subjected to a Word of Blake-sponsored raid. Later evidence showed collusion by two senior directors, who died in the assault. With the company's board in disarray and under investigation by the ISF, the Coordinator approved the sale of the company to Chandrasekhar Kurita.

Currently, Tanadi is one of the top five electronics manufacturers in the Combine. More importantly—and significantly—Tanadi has increased its product sales and production outside the Combine by 200 percent since Chandrasekhar's takeover. (Tanadi products are marked up an average of 150 percent in markets beyond the Combine's borders, speaking well of the corporation's dedication to quality.) The fact that the elder Kurita is the Coordinator's cousin says much about the influence "Uncle Chandy" has in regards to economic advice with the Imperial Palace.

VICTORY INDUSTRIES (FORMERLY NORSE BATTLEMECH WORKS)

Main Headquarters: New Pontiac (Marduk)
CEO: Ulysses Edwards
Main Products: *Avatar*, *Black Hawk-KU*, and *Firestarter* OmniMechs, *Griffin* and *Wolverine* BattleMechs

Profile: Victory Industries, under its former moniker Norse BattleMech Works, has been manufacturing BattleMechs for the DCMS and other concerns for centuries. A minor manufacturer compared to the megalithic LAW, the company's primary claims to success have been a streamlined production process and a refined technology staff. The Norse team was one of the few invited by the DCMS to reverse-engineer captured Clan technology in the early 3050s, leading to a lucrative subcontract producing three of the Combine's new OmniMechs. Along with its redesigned *Griffin* and *Wolverine* models—both venerable and popular designs with DCMS MechWarriors—Victory has found a solid niche within the Combine's military industry.

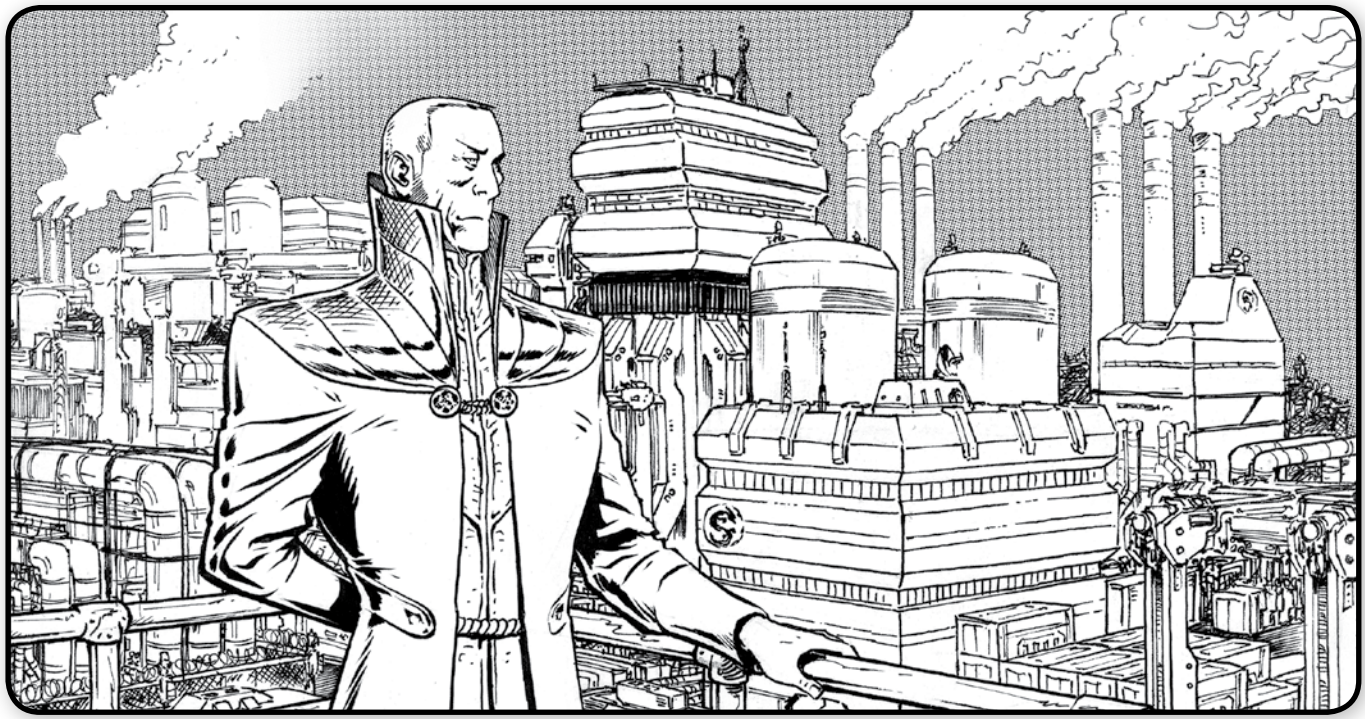
WAKAZASHI ENTERPRISES

Headquarters: Peal (Dover)
CEO: *Daimyo* Evelyn Tours-Kunis
Main Products (Chatham): *Lucifer II*, *Oni*, *Sai*, *Shilone*, and *Tatsu* aerospace fighters; Defender II, Inseki, Inseki II, and Suzume conventional strike fighters
Main Products (Dover): *Sholagar* and *Slayer* aerospace fighters
Main Products (Schuyler): *Sai* and *Sholagar* aerospace fighters
Main Products (Togura; Togura WarShip Yards): *Kirishima*-class Cruiser
Main Products (Tiflis; Surb Gevorg Manufacturing Incorporated): Wakusei no Mochiagerumono Air Transport
Main Products (New Samarkand; Yan Manufacturing): Yan Stutter, various VTOL aircraft

Profile: Wakazashi Enterprises was one of the premier aerospace manufacturers in the Star League era. After the start of the First Succession War, Wakazashi planned to relocate its facilities to the Periphery to avoid damage from the unfolding carnage. Coordinator Minoru Kurita wooed the corporation's loyalty by offering them the sole contract to build the *Shilone*, a design still manufactured and used today by the DCMS.

Today, Wakazashi is one of the Combine's largest aerospace manufacturers, accounting for nearly seventy percent of the commercial and civilian aerospace market. Its design division is often "loaned" to other Combine military aerospace manufacturers and was integral in the initial phases of the DCA's restarted WarShip program.

In 3042, Wakazashi absorbed Mangon Aeronautics. The seamless transition also netted Wakazashi several valuable DropShip and JumpShip contracts from the DCA, which recognized the corporation's increased production capability and their reputation for quality.



IMPORTANT INDIRECT SERVICE (CIVILIAN) CORPORATIONS

INTERSTELLAR HARVESTERS

Headquarters: Kiley (Tuscarawas)
President/CEO: *Daimyo* Dorothy Liu
Main Products: *Harvester Ant*, Plowshare Transport Landtrain, *Orange Blossom* PickerMech

Profile: Begun as a simple agricultural implements manufacturer, Interstellar Harvester has experienced solid growth for over three hundred years. Originally founded on Cusset, IH was on corporate life support after the Clan Invasion swallowed it up. What remained of the staff—only twenty-eight employees managed to escape the Wolf advance—wound up at IH's development facility on Tuscarawas. Unable to fulfill their government contracts, the company filed for "bankruptcy stasis" under the Committee of Resource Management's emergency bailout fund and closed its doors for eight years.

In 3060, IH reopened business, having built several new manufacturing and processing centers on Tuscarawas. What vaulted IH into the black was their limited partnership with Kong Interstellar Corporation to produce the *Harvester Ant*. Sales of the newly acquired design—built from Combine resources and priced for the Kuritan economy—soared, helping IH recoup eighty percent of its losses in fewer than five years.

ISESAKI SHIPPING

Headquarters: Ukonsoi (Isesaki)
CEO: *Daimyo* Ernest Machida
Main Products: Interstellar shipping, small craft, cargo modules, Roku Royal land train, *Tramp*-class JumpShips

Profile: Isesaki Shipping dates back over five centuries. Though the firm has undergone changes and restructuring over time, Isesaki holds a royal patent to trade anywhere in the Inner Sphere. Turbulent relations between the Combine and its neighbors have sometimes made these operations difficult, but Isesaki's agents and extensive contacts with "independent" traders have always allowed the company to find a way to its goals.

Rumors among Imperial courtiers typically place Isesaki's free-rein mandate in league with ISF operations beyond the Combine border. While no evidence has ever surfaced that the transport company is simply an extension of the security force, the ISF has been known to place agents on more far-reaching routes.

In addition to its primary business concern of interstellar shipping, Isesaki has branched into other related products and services. The company is the primary domestic shipping provider on the bulk of the Combine's planets. Isesaki's manufacturing arm produces several types of all-purpose cargo modules, the popular Roku Royal land train, and a handful of *Tramp*-class JumpShips every few years. These vessels are built directly for the company; retired JumpShips are often sold at auction to independent buyers and some small shipping concerns.

Currently, the company is wrapping up construction on its new orbital manufacturing facilities over Luthien. The interlinked stations are slated to produce Isesaki's new Roku Royal II tracked land train.

IVORY TRADE OF THE ORDER OF THE FIVE PILLARS

Headquarters: Imperial City (Luthien)
President/CEO: Keeper of the House Honor Miyako Kurita
Main Products: Ivory acquisition and trade

Profile: Not a corporation per se, this quasi-governmental monopoly was formed when Sanyu Kurita was Keeper of the House Honor during the twenty-fifth century. The O5P was originally formed as the firm's security force, eventually evolving to take over the trade and finance the Keeper's work. While O5P's interests now focus elsewhere, the Ivory Trade remains in place partially for tradition and to monitor and regulate the trade of this valuable material within the Combine and along its borders.

JOYOUS SPRINGS WINES

Headquarters: Xer (Palos)
CEO: Elizabeth Roshenco
Main Products: Wine production

Profile: A blanket company encompassing three of the biggest vineyards on Palos, Joyous Spring Wines enjoyed more than twenty years of booming business after the world fell to House Davion toward the end of the Fourth Succession War. Fine Palos wines found a place on the tables of the rich and powerful throughout the Federated Commonwealth. That all changed when the Capellan Confederation seized control of the world again in 3057. Cut off from its most profitable market, Elizabeth Roshenco's company was in a crisis financially, and Capellan executives were pressuring the CEO to sell the company for a tenth of what it was worth. They were sorely disappointed when Chandrasekhar Kurita's agents arrived to offer Roshenco a generous financial rescue package and access to Kurita's extensive shipping interests.

Able to reach lucrative markets in Lyran Commonwealth and Federated Suns territory, Joyous Springs Wines rebounded from financial ruin. The company is in negotiation with several other Kuritan vineyards that have expressed an interest in joining the Joyous Springs fold.

KINKAKUJI ENTERPRISES

Main Headquarters: Newton (Kirei na Niwa)
CEO: *Daimyo* Werner Jacobsen
Main Products: Manazuru Air Transport, various other civilian aircraft

Profile: Built from a merger of two other conventional airframe manufacturers in 2950, Kinkakuji stormed the civilian aerospace market, producing three variable interplanetary airliners that, though ugly, were reliable and cheap to maintain. Once established financially, the company then branched into conventional luxury aircraft for the Combine nobility.

What makes Kinkakuji airframes so durable is the extensive testing they undergo during the development phase. The main plant is located on a large plain battered by severe and unpredictable windstorms rolling in from the surrounding needle-like mountains. The hostile weather allows aircraft to be tested under the most hostile of conditions for takeoff and landing.

LONG LIFE COMPANY

Headquarters: Bonanza (Altair)
President/CEO: *Tozama Daimyo* Traci Lewison
Main Products: hospital equipment, herbal medicines, pharmaceuticals

Profile: The Long Life Company has existed for more than two hundred years, founded on sales of herbal medicines and patent nostrums. It now is the leading supplier of sophisticated chemical medications and hospital equipment, though its biggest profit maker is the steady sale of its "home remedy" medicinal tonics.

METALS OF THE EARTH

Headquarters: Jassen (Nox)
President/CEO: *Daimyo* Unno Kitabake
Main Products: Mining equipment, industrial chemicals, synthetic plastics, myomers

Profile: The second-largest commercial company in the Combine, Metals of the Earth dates back to the Star League era, when it was established on Nox as a medium-sized mining firm. The company grew to one of the Combine's largest commercial industrial firms when selected by Sanethia Kurita to spearhead the bulk of construction on Luthien in 2619. The company did exceptional work under budget—rumored to be at the cost of thousands of Unproductive laborers—and enjoyed premier status with the Combine government for four centuries. In the early 3020s, however, a scandal involving then-President *Shogun* Rollo Rourke nearly ruined Metals of the Earth.

Because Metals of the Earth has operations on a number of planets, its 'Mech security force was rather large. *Shogun* Rourke skimmed profits and used the corporate security force to intimidate the populations of worlds where the company had mines. The ISF learned Rourke intended to use his power to foment a series of uprisings as a cover for his absconding into the Periphery with a large amount of wealth and stolen resources. Before he could enact his plan, Rourke was apprehended and summarily executed. Takashi Kurita appointed *Daimyo* Unno Kitabake as the new president and CEO.

At a well-preserved ninety-nine years of age, the venerable Unno Kitabake shows no signs of stepping down. A brilliant man, he has earned renown across the Inner Sphere for his innovations in mining and processing. His son Richard, a spry seventy years of age, is slated to step into his father's place as CEO.

As the Combine's largest manufacturer of myomers, Metals of the Earth was entrusted by the DCMS with the task of reverse-engineering the Federated Commonwealth's triple-strength myomers.

Metals of the Earth has always been closely tied to the ruling dynasty, as one of the original founder members was a Kurita. There has always been at least one Kurita on the Board of the Directors; currently, that member is Chandrasekhar Kurita. These ties and the company's longstanding record of successes earns them the majority of industrial contracts within the Combine.

OSAKA HEAVY METRICS

Main Headquarters: Yokahama (Apriki)
CEO: Brett O'Shaughnessy
Main Products (Dieron): various WorkMechs
Main Products (New Samarkand): various WorkMechs
Main Products (Philadelphia): *Herdsman* IndustrialMech, various WorkMechs
Main Products (Togura): *Herdsman* IndustrialMech, various WorkMechs

Profile: Formed in 2570, Osaka Heavy Metrics built its reputation upon the success of its initial heavy construction design, the *Kiso* ConstructionMech. Debuting in 2638, the *Kiso* became OHM's mainstay product until all three of its production facilities were destroyed in the Succession Wars. With the loss of its most popular product and the complete destruction of its headquarters on Arlington, OHM foundered.

Since that time, OHM has primarily focused on heavy construction tools and materials and producing cheap IndustrialMechs for various industries. The reemergence of Star League data from the Helm Memory Core contained several technical specifications for the *Kiso* manufacturing line, which is now in pre-production. OHM plans to debut the revamped design during the company's five-hundredth anniversary.

PEOPLE'S PROTECTION

Headquarters: East Wexler (Hanover)
President/CEO: *Tozama Daimyo* Juno Ollsen
Main products: Security and bodyguard services, personal security systems, Protector personal sidearm series

Profile: In the fearful atmosphere that permeates the higher strata of Kuritan nobility, companies that produce systems and personal weapons are prolific. The most successful is People's Protection, whose clientele are Kuritan leaders and nobility on more than forty planets. Hiring out bodyguard services and armed escorts for valuables, People's hit the Combine's spotlight after foiling a highly public assassination attempt on Thessalonika Planetary Chairman Earl Darrell Johannes in 3027. In the four decades since, hired protective services now constitutes fifty-three percent of the company's profit line. All of the company's hired staff are ex-DCMS service members who were honorably discharged or retired.

People's was built on its manufacturing of alarm systems, secure storage safes and rooms, surveillance equipment (and detectors), and a host of other security products. The company also produces small personal weapons, mostly bladed weapons, slug-throwing guns, and laser pistols. All of its products are sold strictly to the civilian market. The research and development department, run by several retired DCMS officers, freely shares ideas and research with the military.

PESHT MOTORS

Headquarters: Vrydolyak (Pesht)
CEO: *Daimyo* Thom O'Callaghan
Main Products: Civilian transportation vehicles, railway systems, public transit, freight transportation, Prowler multi-terrain vehicle

Profile: Pesht Motors produces sixty-five percent of the Combine's trains, tractors, buses, and automobiles. It also runs the mass transit system on most of the Dragon's worlds, even building and providing streetcars to be drawn by beasts on planets that cannot afford any other vehicles. At least one Pesht Motors auto manufacturing center can be found on every planet in the Combine.

CEO O'Callaghan stepped into his position after Fuyoshi Nose perished in a horrible intrasystem accident in 3063. Looking to enlarge Pesht's corporate portfolio, he initiated talks with the DCMS to produce small reconnaissance vehicles.

Pesht Motors began constructing a new factory on Unity two years ago. A new city has already sprung up in the otherwise unspoiled wilderness around the factory site. The once-placid waters of Lake Dunn and the Orville River have already begun to show the effects of unregulated pollution.

SPARKLING SPIRITS, INCORPORATED

Headquarters: Kooya (Huan)
President/CEO: *Tozama Daimyo* Vikram Lafyette
Main Products: Purified water products, wines, bottled spirits

Profile: For over two centuries, Sparkling Spirits survived mainly by the influence of its founder, Patel Tsuki, and his family. The Tsuki family wielded powerful influence within the royal court until 3060. After the attempted assassination of Theodore in 3058, the ISF discovered ties between the Tsuki family and the Black Dragons. The Coordinator deposed the family, stripping them of their titles and having them executed. The Combine then nationalized the company, which sparked profits to record-setting heights.

SPREADING THE GLORIES, INCORPORATED

Headquarters: Cho (Minakuchi)
President/CEO: *Tozama Daimyo* Timothy De Sorrentelli
Main Products: Arts and entertainment production and distribution

Profile: Spreading The Glories is an arts and entertainment production and distribution firm. It mostly churns out war movies and morally instructive romances for consumption by the masses. Taking its cue from holos and films imported from outside the Combine border, STG produced such hits as *The Attack of the Polymer-Coated Man*, *Gojira 3050*, and *Far Country*. The company's musicals combine pageants and sentimental paeans to loyalty, honor, family love, and collectivism.

STYX MINING

Headquarters: Memphis (Styx)
CEO: *Tozama Daimyo* Charles Monahan
Main Products: Mining equipment and refineries

Profile: Styx Mining exists solely to serve as a foil to Metals of the Earth and New Samarkand Metals. Whenever both competitors have drawn a disproportionate number of government contracts, some are redistributed to Styx. The firm also picks up slack when both competitors are overextended and have no further equipment available. The working environment in the Styx boardrooms is heavy with fatalism as the corporation struggles with its purpose in the Combine.

Conversely, the working class enjoys a less stressful environment because of the lack of constant contracts. Since the Combine heavily subsidizes Styx, workers often find long stretches of time when no work is being done. Many are encouraged to join the planetary militia and, because of the time available to them, they end up among the militias' mid-level officer corps.

SURINAMI PROCESSING

Headquarters: Surinami (Ko)
President/CEO: *Daimyo* Hughbert Turnbull
Main Products: Consumer packaged goods, commercial catering

Profile: Surinami Processing produces processed foods ranging from freeze-compressed survival rations to the Tinned Splendors specialty gourmet line. The bulk of their business is the Happy Home Helper line of canned, boxed, and compacted foods, especially prepared to feed many people from the small cooking space of an average Kurita home.

Surinami's highest profit brand, Stomach's Joy, is sold on only ten Combine worlds a year. The company uses a complex population algorithm and reconfigures its "sales list" for the brand every October; the announcement of the next year's planetary list is a highly anticipated event. Once a system is on "the list," it receives massive imports of Stomach's Joy for the next sales year. If the system falls off the list, imports cease.

While such actions would normally make Stomach's Joy one of the most expensive perishable goods in the Combine, the company discourages overpricing. Surinami sells the product on a variable pricing structure according to a citizen's status. This practice ensures that the dish remains wholly accessible for all citizens to enjoy. Consumers report that eating a lot of Stomach's Joy produces a feeling of well-being, an almost floating sensation, that brings people back again and again.

Happy Life Meals, Surinami's catering brand, provides food for institutions, corporate cafeterias, schools, hospitals, and Feeding Stations. The quality of food is average, but the product is hard to beat in the cost department.

TURANIAN TRANSPORT COMPANY

Headquarters: Sosolito (Ludwig)
CEO: Ignatius Brown
Main Products: Planetary freight and passenger shipping

Profile: Established during the Second Succession War, Turanian Transport Company is the largest freight service on the Federated Suns world of Towne. Using cargo airships to traverse the rugged terrain of the Eigophian and Gunderland mountains, the company transports copper ore and timber to Port Howard for processing and offworld export. The beautiful and durable hardwood from the Eigophian mountain bloodwood is prized throughout the Draconis March.

Chandrasekhar Kurita bought this company in 3057, using his acquisition as an excuse to deploy mercenaries on Towne to foil a plot by the Black Dragon Society. The Society had recruited *Taisho* Jeffery Kusunoki, and together they had formulated a plot to grab Towne, in order to rekindle war between Kurita and Davion at a time when the Combine could ill afford to be distracted from the Clan threat.

TTC broke ground on a new factory complex and divisional headquarters in 3064. Located on Ludwig, TTC's new development is rumored to be the result of an agreement between the Coordinator and Chandrasekhar, where all of the younger Kurita's holdings must be headquartered within the Combine. The factory and surrounding employee city registers huge losses on Chandrasekhar's yearly reports, yet no expense is spared in construction.

YOSHIMATSU CHEMICALS

Headquarters: Siang (Biham)
President/CEO: *Daimyo* Ned Yoshimatsu-Rodgers
Main Products: Paint, cleaning and industrial chemicals, petroleum-based fuels

Profile: The largest chemical concern in Kurita space, Yoshimatsu Chemicals is famous across the Inner Sphere for its rigorous safety procedures. A YC division is located in each Great House and Periphery nation that sells their product; these administrators keep track of each Yoshimatsu product and licensed manufacturer. Every other year safety teams are sent out to various plants to conduct extensive quality control tests, and at least one ISF agent commonly accompanies them for "protection purposes."

President Yoshimatsu-Rodgers flirted with scandal in 3057 when he married Beth Rodgers, a common middle-class school teacher. The only heir to the Yoshimatsu dynasty on Biham, he was nearly stripped of his title for the dishonor, until the ISF revealed the Rodgers family's distant connection to the Sorenson line. Yoshimatsu's bride-to-be had voluntarily taken the class demotion in order to teach, a vocation for which she is exceptionally gifted. No one is certain what favors Yoshimatsu called in, but the nobility's dissent to his marriage quickly dissipated. Ned took the Rodgers surname as his own to honor the distant Sorenson bloodline.

TRADE

> Combine merchants are not the problem: they operate on a code similar to our own and thus are not difficult to deal with. What makes dealing with the Dragon so problematic is the sheer amount of bureaucratic "red tape" that needs accounted for. To their credit, these economic samurai factor that into all their dealings with us.
>
> We need to learn to do the same, or we as a Clan will perpetually be left holding the short end of the stick.
>
> —Dorian Novacat, in a personal communiqué to the Clan's Merchant Council, 3064

INTRA-COMBINE TRADE

In the Draconis Combine, production and distribution of materials and goods is still highly specialized on specific worlds. Too few worlds are totally self-sufficient, meaning more effort goes into transporting materials around the Combine. There have been some improvements, mostly from the realm's larger shipping firms. The majority of industries reliant on one raw material are typically located on the planet with the resource in abundance. Production still remains slow in most places, however.

The Clan Invasion disrupted trade routes for nearly five years as various shipping concerns re-plotted ancient routes. Several facilities faced temporary shutdowns due to shortages; at least two corporations found a critical shortage in JumpShips and DropShips to accommodate the changes. The liberation of the worlds within the Smoke Jaguar/Nova Cat Occupation Zone relieved much of the pressure as trading firms worked to re-establish their old routes.

Any Draconian citizen who can afford to buy consumer goods usually prefers foreign imports over the fairly shoddy Combine versions. Working-class people are encouraged to keep possessions to a minimum, not only because of high prices and small living spaces but also through a cultural ethic that discourages accumulating luxury items. (Such items would be defined as anything not necessary to maintaining life in one's proper station.) Workers who attempt to acquire excess goods are considered either unseemly imitating nobles or perhaps partaking of treasonous activities against the Combine. Nobles, on the other hand, are encouraged to accumulate and display fine objects as a reflection of their status and the glory of the Combine.

Middle-class citizens and military families are in a perpetual craze to acquire semi-practical objects such as electronic gadgets and products for personal adornment. This began as a taste for imported toys and luxuries in the mid-thirtieth century. The fad got out of hand in the mid-3040s, and official government policy began to promote "buying Kuritan." This pro-Combine movement found moderate success as corporations took advantage of state-sponsored tax breaks to improve their products.

INTERSTELLAR TRADE

Even with the improvements, Kurita consumer goods are not high enough caliber to market around the galaxy, but government-connected merchants have no qualms about trading in materials and goods sorely needed, even by the military, if they need ready cash. Some merchants have received special dispensation from the Coordinator to broker deals with Clan Diamond Shark, though such deals are more military in nature with little civilian impact. The unique position of Clan Nova Cat, however, has opened opportunities for merchants and corporate executives to acquire, study, and propagate Clan-inspired technology and products, further increasing Kuritan quality in the interstellar market.

Part of the Combine's problem in trade matters has been a perennial lack of long-term planning for short-term gains. For example, if the Capellan Confederation has large quantities of plastisteel available, Combine traders will sell surplus 'Mech armor to the Free Worlds League in order to acquire the cash necessary to buy the Liao overage. There is no consideration for the long-term need for the 'Mech armor. Part of this short-sighted operation is that a percentage of such a sale would go to the broker.

Earlier this century, the Combine had for a time granted "Most Favored Nation" trading status with the Confederation and the League. The agreement failed to boost the economies of any of these nations, however, as there was little to offer their trade partners.

Despite the Second Star League Accords and broad neutrality on the trade markets, the Combine officially does not trade with the Lyran Alliance or the Federated Suns. Unofficially, however, civilian firms with no government involvement conduct trade with these ancient antagonists. Traders from worlds who want to maintain their lucrative accounts with the Combine soon learn the elaborate etiquette surrounding business in the Kurita empire. One of the prime directives of such etiquette is to hide one's close ties to one's government and to withhold any knowledge of the other parties.

COMBINE BUSINESS TIPS

> Kurita businessmen and women will never begin to discuss business right away. Instead, they will converse about the seasons, the stars, the wonders of botany, all the while waiting for the other party to break down and mention business first. To do so is a sign of weakness and impatience to a Draconian; they will avoid doing this as a matter of honor. If business is broached first by a Draconian, they're possibly a spy with a fake cover, in trouble with the ISF, or the issue is of an emergency on the scale of impending death and destruction.
>
> Draconian businessmen do not conduct business over the comm or by HPG. They wish to always look their business associates in the eye.
>
> —*Business In the Sphere: Hints for the Lyran Trader (Revised)*; Commonwealth Press, 3038

The Draconis Combine imports both useful and frivolous items from Ghost Bear and Davion space. Food is the most common import along the border worlds, primarily to satisfy the cravings of pampered nobles. Among the other useful items brought in are building materials such as plastisteel and moldable concrete, along with high-tech industrial items. The amount of plastisteel imported indicates how severely limited production facilities for the material are in the Combine—especially with the loss of several worlds to Clan Ghost Bear. Kuritan engineers hoping to keep pace with technological developments elsewhere probably study the high-tech items. Most industrial items are used as intended, as Kurita productions typically fails to keep up with demand.

Frivolous imported items include goods such as toys, small appliances, and electronic entertainment systems, though several Draconian firms have produced equivalent products in recent years. Antique weapons, collected by high society nobility in every Great House and beyond, are an especially popular import in the Draconis Combine. Weapons that range back to prespaceflight Terra are eagerly sought and fuel a lucrative, if highly specialized, black market.

In contrast, Clan Ghost Bear and House Davion do not import much from the Combine. Most Kuritan goods are of average to subpar quality, attracting little interest to buyers. (Something can also be said for these realms' reluctance in putting more money into the Combine coffers.) Most popular Combine exports tend to be Kuritan liquors and wines, black market military technology, and select personal weapons.

The Combine and Periphery states trade freely, as the Outworlds Alliance and the Taurian Concordat are a perfect market to sell untested, unacceptable, or outdated products. House Kurita often supplies Periphery worlds with goods that no one else will sell. The number one item is weapons, even if outdated. Kurita merchants also sell chemicals, computers, and cheap, small appliances within these outlying systems.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The greatest strength of the Combine is its people. The Dragon's citizens are devoted to their society and their Coordinator in a deep, unquestioning way that any other head of state would envy. All Combine citizens have a sense of their place in the grand scheme of life. Rather than spending time trying to get ahead by raising their social status, Kurita workers strive to show honor by finding the best way to do any job they are given. The loyalty and production levels of Draconis workers, like those of Combine soldiers, are amazing to citizens of other realms. The general population also accepts a standard of living that is adequate, though rarely more than that.

The ultimate economic weakness of the Combine is its policy of wholehearted commitment to the military. This single-minded policy hamstrings new production, innovation, and development within the civilian and private sectors. The nobility can sometimes cause problems as well, with their cautiousness holding up progress and their underhanded backstabbing and court intrigues distracting them from necessary work. The middle class, military, and nobles—all of whom are exposed to influences from outside the Combine—may also be susceptible to a dangerous form of materialism. Luxury trade sometimes threatens to distract merchants from their clever negotiations for raw goods because they can so easily move luxury items within the Combine.

In the mid- to late-3020s, an upturn in the Combine's inflation rate lopsided several trade agreements to the detriment of the Dragon. A sweeping purge of the Ministry of Treasury, newly placed austerity measures, and a courtly disdain for outward trappings of wealth reversed the trend until the Clan Invasion.

The loss of several key worlds in the Clans' assault destabilized the Combine's economy for nearly a decade. With so many worlds interdependent on each other, many noble leaders were left scrambling to find new sources of replenishment—all while under the possibility of another assault. The formation of the Second Star League settled the economy down to a more manageable level. This opened up numerous trade options that Kuritan merchants eagerly exploited, bringing unprecedented amounts of goods and services back into the Combine. The surplus was well timed, as the rebuilding of the former Smoke Jaguar-occupied worlds has taken quite a bit of capital.



This section provides new rules to supplement those found in *A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG* (*AToW*). These rules offer players and gamemasters additional features that can be used to enhance campaigns based in the Draconis Combine.

CREATURES

This section provides several new creatures found on worlds in the Draconis Combine. All of them follow the rules for creatures presented in *AToW* pp. 238–245, and in the *AToW Companion* (*AToWC*), pp 106–135.



DRAGON DOVE

(Pseudobuteo Doveris)

The primary predator on Dover, dragon doves populate the coastal regions hunting the local fish and reptiles that inhabit the planet's small seas. Their appearance resembles that of the ancient Terran hawk, though two long, curly headfeathers give the dragon dove an elegant appearance. With wingspans averaging four meters or more, these birds can soar upwards of three kilometers into the sky. Their migratory patterns have them ranging across the surface of the planet, though they return to their nesting grounds along the equatorial belt.

Dragon doves have long been a research topic for students at the Dover Institute for Higher Learning. Their complex communities, migration, and feeding patterns, and sleek, predatory look are the subject of thousands of papers, artworks, and treatises on aerodynamics. The *Tatsu* aerospace fighter owes part of its look and maneuverability to the dragon dove.

Home world: Dover
Environment: Plains and coastal regions
Type: Introduced
Body Shape: Avian
Coloring: Grayish blue
Length: 60–80 cm
Wingspan: 215–240 cm
Weight: 12–15 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
2	3	3	5	2	2	1

Traits: Flight (+1), Good Vision (+1), Poor Hearing, Skittish
Skills: Perception +2
Size: Small (–1)
Armor: None [0/0/0/0]
Attack: [Claws: 1M/1]
Movement: 0.2/90/—



KAOSU/CHI NO HEBI

(Arthopleuris Draconius/ Arthopleuris Haemadipsa Draconius)

A bane of spacers and mechanics, the *kaosu no hebi* doesn't look like it can cause the damage it does. Biologists do not know where the *kaosu* originated; it is a common pest that can be found anywhere within—and beyond—the Combine's borders. This small worm resembles a pale, stringy earthworm, though it has a tougher skin and uses thousands of microscopic legs surrounding its body to move.

The *kaosu*'s favorite meal is insulation, especially that found in high tech equipment such as BattleMechs and spacecraft. The worm zeroes in on active power lines to feed. A single *kaosu* can strip a meter of wire in roughly two hours. Its feet act as miniature razors, slicing and cutting as it moves. A mouth at the worm's posterior devours the debris as it clears from underneath the body. The *kaosu*'s excretory orifice is located at its anterior and produces a paste-like, lubricating waste that flows the length of its body, keeping the worm insulated, breaking down the insulate material, and protecting the worm from electric current.

The *kaosu* reproduces asexually and prolifically, limited only by the amount of food it digests. Infestations can quickly spiral out of control if not contained early. Several industrial pesticides and electricity traps are available on the market and found at nearly every spaceport and station in the Combine.

A mutated version of the *kaosu* has been reported, though rarely. Found mainly on derelict vessels and in abandoned ruins, these *chi no hebi* enter through any available opening on an organism. The *chi* are drawn towards bone marrow. While feeding, the worm secretes a poisonous enzyme that burns nerve endings. The victim feels as if they are burning from the inside out; death comes within seventy-two hours. Rumors that the ISF uses *chi no hebi* as part of a torture regimen are unfounded.

Home world: Unknown
Preferred environment: Swamps, urban, space habitats
Type: Introduced (*kaosu no hebi*); Introduced/mutated (*chi no hebi*)
Body Shape: Flat and legless
Coloring: Pale white or gray
Length: 20–70 cm
Diameter: 1 cm
Weight: 30 g

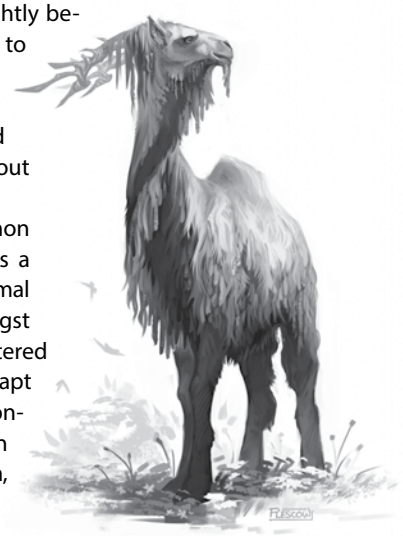
STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
2	1	1	5	1	4	1

Traits: Blood Sucker, Coldblooded, Offensive Adaptation (Fangs)
Skills: AniMelee +3, Perception +1
Size: Extremely Small (–3)
Armor: None [0/0/0/0]
Attack: [Internal; 1M/1]
Movement: 5/15/30

OUSHI-UMA

(Camelus Dromedaius Chapelleus)

The origin of the *oushi-uma*—known outside the Combine as an ox horse—is lost through the centuries. Combine biological scientists believe the *oushi-uma* has its genetic roots in the dromedaries of Terra's deserts. Those inhabiting the wastes of Aix-la-Chapelle's arid landmass of Aachen certainly resemble the ancient species: sinewy necks, long legs, coarse fur. Similar beasts can be found on many of the arid worlds of the Combine. Though their appearance varies slightly between worlds, usually due to high or low gravity, these *oushi-uma* are universally docile, travel in herds, and can survive for weeks without food or water.



Oushi-uma are common beasts of burden as well as a source of textiles. The mammal is commonly found amongst low-tech communities scattered across the Combine. They adapt easily to a variety of environments but tend to thrive in wide-open savannahs, tundra, and scrub lands.

Home world: Aix-la-Chapelle
Preferred environment: Plains, savannah
Type: Introduced (mutated)
Body Shape: Tall four-legged mammal
Coloring: Muted colors, typically ash to auburn
Length: 4–5 meters
Height: 1.5–2 meters
Weight: 400–700 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
24	30	1	4	4	2	1

Traits: Camouflage (+1), Domesticated
Skills: AniMelee +1, Perception +2, Running +7
Size: Large (+1)
Armor: None [0/0/0/0]
Attack: [Bite/hooves: 1M/2]
Movement: 28/45/90

PACHIRISU

(Pachirisu Marmotis Hachimanus)

Pachirisu are common, diurnal squirrel-like animals native to Hachiman. They are easily recognizable for their large fluffy tails that curl around them at night. The original colonists called them "night puffs" for their pillow-like appearance in trees and tall shrubs. Combine biologists renamed them after discovering their more unusual trait. Theses "lightning squirrels" have a bioelectric gland that dispenses a nasty shock to predators who grab the pachirisu's tail. A single shock is enough to stagger a human; two can send a human into unconsciousness or even stop the heart.

In the wild, pachirisu travel in small packs of five to seven, usually a mix of adults and juveniles. They are not territorial but rove large areas in search of food, shelter, and attention. They are easily domesticated and are a popular pet on Hachiman and several other populous Combine worlds, though laws dictate such house pets have their shock glands removed. Because of their high energy and short attention span, however, pachirisu are mischievous and destructive. They are known to eat communication wires, insulation, and other small electronic equipment.

A popular yakuza initiation rite called *sorera wo subete shutokushimasu* (get them all) involves chasing a pack of pachirisu in an enclosed and low-light area. Initiates must catch as many pachirisu as possible in five minutes; their success is determined by how entertaining they are to the observers. The rite found its way into lower-class neighborhoods as a form of urban sport. It is not unusual for area medical care centers to treat a number of younger adults over the course of a holiday for "puffball shock" injuries.



Home world: Hachiman
Preferred environment: Forest, Urban
Type: Native
Body Shape: Four-legged
Coloring: Dusky yellow, black or brown spots
Length: 60 cm
Height: 20 cm
Weight: 7 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
4	3	7	6	5	6	4

Traits: *Exceptional Attack (Shock: oE/4D on successful attack once per turn, instead of biting), Tool User
Skills: AniMelee +4, Perception +4, Swimming +3, Tracking +3
Size: Small (–1)
Armor: None [0/0/0/0]
Attack: [Bite; 1M/1*]
Movement: 10/20/40

PESHT TAWAGOTO SARU

(Ponginais Tawagoto Peshti)

The scourge of Pesht's early settlers, the *tawagoto saru* makes its nests among dark crags and caves while hunting in the lower valleys and forests. As Pesht grew in prestige and industry, their hunting grounds were slowly eliminated, and the *tawagoto saru* faced extinction. In the late twenty-seventh century, the Pesht DEST command built a preserve for the animals and imported a colony to New Samarkand. Isolated, these *tawagoto saru* are rumored to be genetically altered and violent towards unrecognized humans.

Due to the ISF's protection, the *tawagoto saru* bounced back and overran their protective preserve. The animal adapted to the urban environment spread across Pesht. Today it is an urban pest, infesting garbage middens, decaying buildings, tunnels, and sewers, as well as inhabiting the high peaks and valleys of several mountain ranges.

Tawagoto saru packs consist of fifteen to twenty adults. Juveniles are only present when the pack is migrating to a new hunting ground. Hunting packs, led by one or two alpha females, use basic tactics and adapt their skills as situations warrant. A standard hunting tactic sees half the pack chase its prey as the rest surge ahead. These flankers help steer their target into a space where they can surround their prey, kill it, and feed. In pack defense, the *tawagoto saru* scoop up fecal matter and other nearby substances, tossing them at their antagonists in a delaying action while the pack scatters.

These ape-like mammals have exceptional sense of smell, and captive subjects have been recorded hunting successfully even while blind. Their four-fingered claws are surprisingly articulate, giving them limited ability to wield primitive tools such as stones and heavy sticks and manipulate mechanical door mechanisms. Stories of parents returning home from work to find a pack of *tawagoto saru* devouring a child are mostly legend.

Home world: Pesht
Preferred environment: Forest, jungle, swamps, ruins
Type: Native
Body Shape: Four-legged with sinewy tail
Coloring: Mottled red (adult); green (juvenile)
Height: 900 cm
Width: 2.5 meters
Weight: 65 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
6	7	5	5	5	6	2



Traits: Aggressive, Armor (+2), Good Smell, Offensive Adaptation (Claws, Fangs), Pack Hunter (6-20), Tool User
Skills: AniMelee +6, Perception +5, Running +4, Stealth +2, Swimming +1, Tracking +3
Size: Medium (+0)
Armor: Scaled [2/1/1/2]
Attack: [Bite, claws; 2M/2]
Movement: 11/25/50

SNAPPING DRAGON

(Aldrovandic Pseudoflorae Mardukis)

First discovered in the jungles of Marduk, the snapping dragon is a carnivorous plant. Nestled within foliage alongside an animal trail or watering hole, the snapping dragon drapes its thin tendrils across a path or over nearby bushes or trees. When prey brushes by, the vines contract near the plant's stalk and whip around the animal's nearest body part. Small thorns grip the animal's skin as the plant secretes a mild contact sedative, slowing the prey down. The vines drag ensnared animals towards the leaf-like throat near the ground. When prey is on the fibrous leaves, the stalk contracts. This constriction snaps the throat stem upwards, levering its prey fully into the trap. The broad leaves then clamp down like jaws, trapping the animal, and is slowly digested.

The snapping dragon is easily recognized by the bright pink streaks that color the outside of its throat stem. Its bluish-gray tendrils are harder to see, as they blend well with the surrounding foliage. Though originally native to Marduk, Star League biologists exported several hundred of the plants to other jungle worlds as a form of pest control. Snapping dragons can devour upwards of six to ten medium-sized mammals and reptiles a month. The plant flowers twice a year and is fast-growing. On Tabayama, snapping dragons were planted in order to control the rampant whitetail deer population; within two years, the plants propagated to the point that the deer was threatened with extinction.



Home world: Marduk
Preferred environment: Jungle
Type: Native
Body Shape: Flowering plant
Coloring: Mottled green and pink stem; blue-gray leaves
Length: 2 meters
Diameter: 250 cm
Weight: 100 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
3	10	1	1	1	0	0

Traits: Armor (+2), Blood Sucker, Exceptional Attack (Constrict: see p. 114, *AToWC*)
Skills: None
Size: Medium (+0)
Armor: Fibrous [2/1/2/2]
Attack: [Constriction; 0M/0]
Movement: —

TARAZED VIPER

(Viperidis Saliens Tarazedi)

The Tarazed viper is considered to be the most dangerous reptile in Combine space. A common inhabitant of the mountains and caves of its namesake, the viper's venom can kill a human in less than five seconds. What makes this deadly reptile more vicious, however, is its uncanny ability to leap forward more than seven meters in a strike attack.

Yellow and black triangular markings make the viper easy to spot when it is sunning on a rock or lying along the banks of various hot springs. Similar in size and look to the Tarazed rock python, it is distinguishable due to a low, hard ridge of spines that run from the viper's snout to roughly a third of its length. The spines are used in a similar fashion to a snake's tongue, scenting the air around it. When extending the ridge forward and fanning its "mohawk," the membranes can smell a scrub jackal a kilometer away. The viper flattens the ridge a second or two before it strikes.

Fortunately for the residents of Tarazed, the viper is rarely found outside its mountain environs. The few mines still in operation conduct daily sweeps for the viper, as it tends to find its way to warm spots near the facility refineries.



Home world: Tarazed
Preferred environment: Mountains, rocky highlands
Type: Native
Body Shape: Serpentine
Coloring: Black with yellow triangles
Length: 3 meters
Diameter: 30 cm
Weight: 10 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
8	8	1	6	3	5	1

Traits: Aggressive, Armor (+1), Camouflage (+1), Offensive Adaptation (Fangs), Poisonous (Injected; AP/Strength: 1S/4; Duration: 2 Minutes; Notes: Continuous, Lethal)
Skills: AniMelee +6, Perception +3, Tracking +4
Size: Medium (+0)
Armor: Scaled hide [1/1/1/1]
Attack: [Bite; 2M/2]
Movement: 6/16/32

TOGURA DRAGON

(Minivaranusis Toguras)

Best known for their exotic look and extreme loyalty, Toguran dragons lounge in noble houses across the Combine. Averaging half the length of an adult human's forearm, this nimble reptile is found covering the coastal flats and shorelines along Togura's planet-girdling equatorial ocean. The dragon looks similar to miniature komodo dragons found on Terra, with one obvious exception. It possesses a flattened face and short snout similar to that of a feline predator. Short, wiry hairs cover the nape of the animal's neck.

Excellent swimmers, Toguran dragons spend their first year of life in the deeper alkaline sea. Dragon pairs mate for life and are loyal to their mates. When domesticated, they confer that loyalty to their owner. Their uncanny tracking ability makes them impossible to abandon; stories occasionally cross the Combine HPG nets of dragons travelling thousands of kilometers to reunite with lost owners.

Because the dragons have need of heavy alkaline water and a specific diet to survive, they are exorbitantly expensive to keep as pets. Outside of Togura, dragons are a rarity in lower-class families.



Home world: Togura
Preferred environment: Coastal waters
Type: Native
Body Shape: Four legged
Coloring: Black
Length: 20 cm
Diameter: 5 cm
Weight: .05 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
2	2	3	7	4	4	2

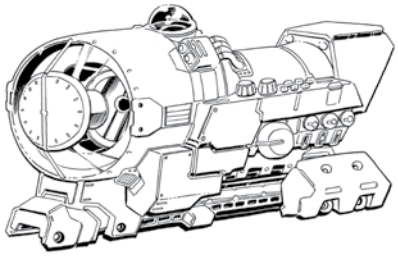
Traits: Cold-blooded, Good Hearing (+1)
Skills: AniMelee +2, Perception +3, Swimming +2
Size: Very Small (–2)
Armor: None [0/0/0/0]
Attack: [Claws; 1M/1]
Movement: 9/19/38

CREATURES TABLE

Creature	Mass (kg)	Attributes (S/B/D/R/I/W/E)	Size (Mod)	BAR (M/B/E/X)	Damage (AP/BD)	Move (W/R/S)
Dragon Dove	12	2/3/3/5/2/2/1	Small (–1)	0/0/0/0	1M/1	0.2/90
Traits: Flight (+1), Good Vision (+1), Poor Hearing, Skittish						
Skills: Perception +2						
Kaosu/Chi no Hebi	.03	2/1/1/5/1/4/1	Extremely Small (–3)	0/0/0/0	1M/1	5/15/30
Traits: Blood Sucker, Coldblooded, Offensive Adaptation (Fangs)						
Skills: AniMelee +3, Perception +1						
Oushi-uma	400	24/30/1/4/4/2/1	Large (+1)	0/0/0/0	1M/2	28/45/90
Traits: Camouflage (+1), Domesticated						
Skills: Animelee +1, Perception +2, Running +7						
Pachirisu	15	4/3/7/6/5/6/4	Small (–1)	0/0/0/0	1M/1*	10/20/40
Traits: *Exceptional Attack (Shock: 0E/5D on successful attack, instead of biting), Tool User						
Skills: AniMelee +4, Perception +4, Swimming +3, Tracking +3						
Pesht *Tawagoto Saru*	65	6/7/5/5/5/6/2	Medium (+0)	2/1/1/2	2M/2	11/25/50
Traits: Aggressive, Armor (+2), Good Smell, Offensive Adaptation (Claws, Fangs), Pack Hunter (6–20), Tool User						
Skills: AniMelee +6, Perception +5, Running +4, Stealth +2, Swimming +1, Tracking +3						
Snapping Dragon	100	3/10/1/1/1/0/0	Medium (+0)	2/1/2/2	0M/0	—
Traits: Armor (+2), Blood Sucker. Exceptional Attack (Constrict: see p. 114, AToWC)						
Skills: None						
Tarazed Viper	10	8/8/1/6/3/5/1	Medium (+0)	1/1/1/1	2M/2	6/16/32
Traits: Aggressive, Armor (+1), Camouflage (+1), Offensive Adaptation (Fangs), Poisonous (Injected; AP/Strength: 1S/4; Duration: 2 Minutes; Notes: Continuous, Lethal)						
Skills: AniMelee +6, Perception +3, Tracking +4						
Togura Dragon	11	2/2/3/7/4/4/2	Very Small (–2)	0/0/0/0	1M/1	9/19/38
Traits: Cold-blooded, Good Hearing (+1)						
Skills: AniMelee +2, Perception +3, Swimming +2						

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The equipment described below follows the standard rules for *A Time of War*.

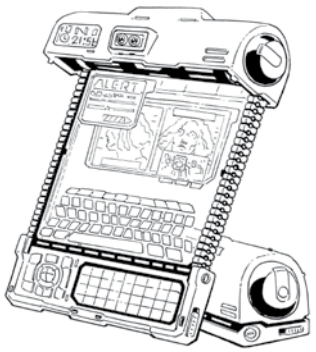


GALILEO SCANSCOPE

This night-vision scope produced by Galileo Instruments originally began as a side project for the professional shooting circuit. The resulting prototype impressed *Daimyo* Charles O'Brennan, a retired sniper from the Fortieth Dieron Regulars. The *daimyo* brought it to the attention of the DCMS—which had originally passed on the project—and it was quickly put into production for the military. Two hundred years later, it remains the top scope for DCMS snipers and sharpshooters. Though heavier than its counterparts in other militaries, the optics are superb and the scope works equally well both at night and day. The night-vision capability gives the operator visual clarity out to 800 meters. Use of the scope is limited to authorized DCMS personnel. Stringent orders for troops to destroy their optics have kept all but a handful finding their way outside the Combine.

Game notes: Characters using a ScanScope to conduct attacks receive a –3 modifier to M/L/E ranges and negate Darkness modifiers out to 800 meters.

TANADI NETWORK ENFORCEMENT PAD (NEP)

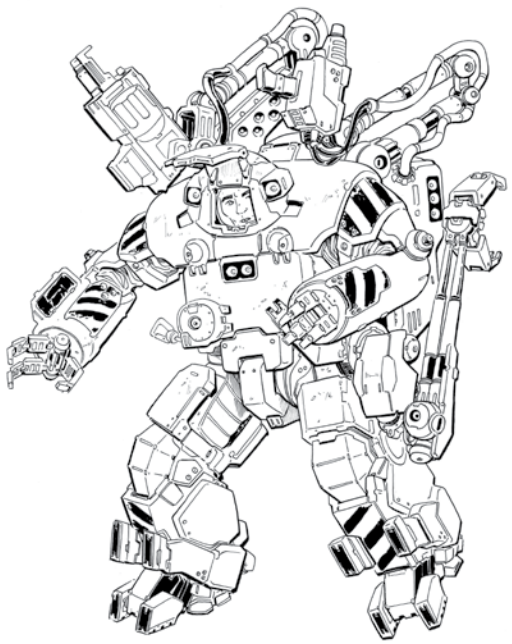


The ubiquitous NEP is an indispensable tool for civilian law enforcement and higher-level government and military bureaucrats. Designed and produced solely by Tanadi for over fifty years, the NEP gives officials instant connectivity with planetary networks in order to carry out assigned duties. Many a citizen has been stopped by a Friendly Persuader for questioning while their background or alibis are checked against real-time schedules, transit information, database information, and more. The NEP gives functionaries the capability of making faster, more informed decisions in their various duties.

Each NEP is assigned to a user using a unique security code. Those in use by high-level dignitaries, nobles, and officers often have additional security measures installed, such as biometric programs or randomized protocols. NEPs operate as a standard noteputer when disconnected from the planetary grid.

Black market NEPs are available at exorbitant prices. Tanadi recently began installing tracking codes (and in higher-level user devices, tracking bugs) to help authorities crack down on illegal sales. When detected, individuals possessing or using a stolen NEP are subject to immediate apprehension.

Game notes: Using a connected and authorized device gives a +1 bonus to all Investigation and Interrogation rolls.



SPACE DOCK REPAIR SUIT

Though currently in vogue as the Combine ramps up its WarShip programs, space construction and repair efforts have been an integral part of the Admiralty's duty for centuries. A tried-and-true tool for workers assigned to construction or repair duties is the standard space dock repair suit. There are a few manufacturers of the standard suit, though the most popular is the one produced by Stellar Trek Enterprises.

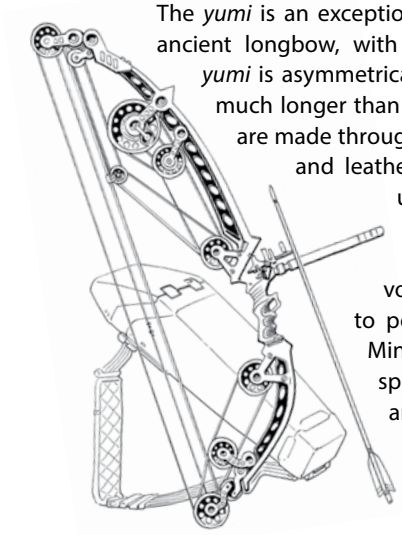
The suit is blocky but comfortable. Reinforced bracing is located at every articulation point, and a hard plastic frame connects each joint. Three layers of insulation weave line the inside of the suit, with the outside skin made of a polyblend of synthetics, plastic, and lead. Due to its mass, the suit is near-impossible to move unassisted in standard gravity. While it looks like a standard exoskeleton suit, that is the only resemblance to such technology.

Sensors woven through the suit's frame are tied to the helmet's heads-up display. The hands of the suit allow fine motor control, as the outer layer is a stiff glove that can be slipped off (the glove is clipped to the cuff). The user can then manipulate smaller objects and tools using the inner sheath glove, which is seamlessly joined to the suit's sleeve. It is recommended that mechanics only expose the inner glove to space conditions for no more than twenty minutes at a time, as the insulation leaks body heat.

A small thruster pack is attached to a life support system on the back of the suit. Wearers working under normal conditions can operate up to twenty-four hours in the suit. The thruster pack contains enough reaction mass for standard operations; excessive use or bursts longer than ten seconds can quickly drain the pack.

Game notes: Switching from outer to inner gloves (and vice versa) is a Complex Action.

COMPOUND YUMI



The *yumi* is an exceptionally tall bow, much like the ancient longbow, with one critical difference. The *yumi* is asymmetrical in shape, with the top half much longer than the bottom. Traditional *yumi* are made through laminating bamboo, wood, and leather, using techniques virtually unchanged from the time of ancient Japan on Terra.

Compound *yumi* came in vogue after Minoru Kurita came to power. A consummate archer, Minoru was passionate about the sport. He shot more than fifty arrows every morning, using a hand-built archery range that mimicked those from the early Tokugawa period. The Coordinator was so adept he could nail a grasshopper dead-center at a distance of fifty meters or more. Courtiers took to the sport quickly, believing it an avenue to Minoru's good graces.

Using the ancient *yumi* design and materials is considered a high art among the Combine nobility. For those lower classes and minor nobles desiring a modern equivalent, the compound version is available. The unique lever system provides the same amount of power for a fraction of the energy; using a modern compound *yumi*, an experienced archer can hit a course target close to 250 meters away. The compound *yumi* can be disassembled for travel and storage.

Game rules: Loading a compound *yumi* requires a Simple Action. Because of the bow's stability and power, the Attack Roll receives a +1 bonus.



NISSAN 8G-12 SHOOTER'S SPECIAL

Combine laws restrict projectile and laser weapon possession to licensed professionals and the nobility. While ostensibly protecting the lower classes from themselves, these laws have also restricted professional sport shooting to an elite pastime. Though participants are restricted to the well-off and various nobles, Kuritans from all walks of life enjoy observing and debating the nuances of the sport.

A particular favorite among professional shootists is Nissan's tried and true 8G series of pistols. The 8G-12 is considered the elite of the line, made from rare earth metals and precisely calibrated. Each pistol is custom-made for the owner, fitting the person's grip, stance, weight distribution, and other factors that can affect a shooter's performance. The result is a highly accurate pistol with

TOTAL WARFARE CONVENTIONAL INFANTRY CONSTRUCTION ADDENDUM

Infantry Weapon Construction Data

Infantry Weapon Type	Tech (Rating)	Class/Type (Damage Type)	Base Range	Damage (Each)	Weight of Weapon /Ammo (Shots)	Crew
Melee and Archery Weapons						
Compound *Yumi* (Bow)	IS / Clan (C)	Small / Melee (B)	0	0.01	2.0 kg / 0.07 kg (1)	1
Small Arms						
Auto-Pistol (Nissan SG-12)	IS (C)	Small / Standard (B)	1	0.17	2.7 kg / 0.16 kg (8)	1
Machine Pistol (H-T Spec-7a)	IS (D)	Small / Standard (B)	0	0.13	1.2 kg / 0.2 kg (7/1)	1
Shotgun (Wakazashi O-12)	IS (D)	Small / Standard (B)	0	0.35	5.2 kg / 0.2 kg (10/3)	1

Infantry Armor Construction Data

Infantry Armor Type	Tech (Rating)	Damage Divisor	Notes
Space Dock Repair Suit	IS (D)	1E	Infantry wearing this armor may operate in vacuum

Item	Equipment Ratings	Cost/ Reload	Aff	Mass	Notes
Galileo Scan Scope	D/X-C-B/A	200	DC	1.5kg	+3 Attack Roll Modifier at M/L/E Ranges; Negates Darkness Modifiers up to 800m; Requires Micro-Power Pack to function (0.1 PPH)
Tanadi Network Pad	C/X-F-C/D	900	DC	400g	Portable; Required Micro Power Pack (0.1 PPH); Provides +1 to Interrogation and Investigation Skill rolls when connected to network

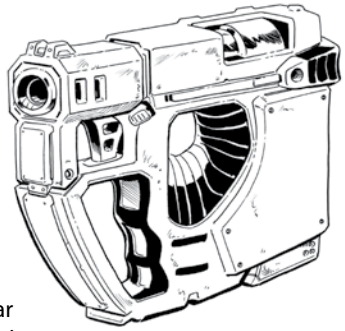
Item	Equipment Ratings	BAR (M/B/E/X)	Cost/ Patch	Aff	Mass	Coverage	Notes
Space Dock Repair Suit	D/C-E-C/B	2/3/3/3	7,500/50	DC	150kg	Full	Encumbering; Provides +2 STR; Includes Engineer's Helmet (see p. 296, *AToW*), Descartes Mk. XXI Computer (see p. 303, *AToW*), Emergency Jet Pack (see p. 312, *AToW*), and 24-hour life support

Item	Equipment Ratings	AP/BD	Range	Shots	Cost/ Reload	Aff	Mass/ Reload	Notes
Skill: Archery								
Compound *Yumi*	C/C-D-D/A	2B/2	11/28/75/170	1	30/2	DC	2kg/70g	Simple Action to reload; +1 Attack Roll Modifier; includes Laser Sight, Bow Accessory Mount (see p. 286, *AToW*)
Skill: Small Arms								
Auto-Pistol (Nissan SG-12)	C/B-B-B/C	3B/4	15/25/65/160	8	250/3	DC	2.7kg/160g	+1 Attack Roll Modifier (–3 if not custom-made for user)
MP (H-T Spec-7a)	D/X-X-D/D	4B/2B	5/15/32/70	7	190/25	DC	1.2kg/200g	Burst: 7; Recoil –1; includes Sound and Flash Suppressor (see p. 286, *AToW*)
Shotgun (Wakazashi O-12)	D/C-C-C/D	2B/5BS	5/11/22/45	10	180/2	DC	5.2kg/200g	Burst: 3; Recoil –1; Includes Stunstick (see p. 264, *AToW*)

exceptional range. Possession of these weapons is considered a supreme luxury, and individuals caught with one that is not their own are subject to immediate incarceration.

Game notes: If using a pistol not built specifically for the shooter, apply a –3 penalty to all Attack Rolls.

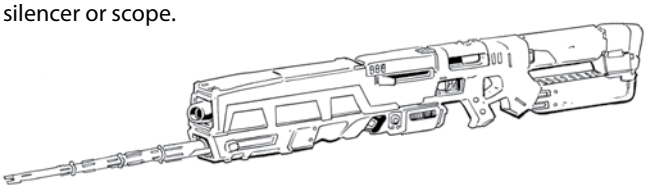
PEOPLE'S PROTECTION H-T SPEC-7A



In the mid-2900s, People's Protection introduced the H-T Spec-5a, a low-cost, light machine pistol built as a hold-out weapon for security personnel and private protection details. The 5a was popular despite its horrible reliability; the firing mechanism needed replaced every forty to fifty rounds. The latest version of the widespread H-T is the 7a, which debuted in 3053. Using composite materials, the weapon is extremely light, small, and sturdy. A self-enclosed magazine holds seven bullets in the grip. The bullpup design includes an integral flash and sound suppressor, making it a favorite hold-out weapon for intelligence agents and important personages. Reloading is a bit complicated, as it requires sliding off part of the forward trigger guard then seating a new clip.

Rumors broke in early 3052 that People's Protection were using Clan-occupied worlds as a test bed for the model. The rumors were proven true when the company used footage taken from Schuyler showing several children wielding the 7a in a firefight with a Clan police squad.

Game notes: The 7a can fire in single shot or Burst Fire mode. Switching between modes takes a Simple Action. The weapon comes with a built-in sound and flash suppressor; it cannot mount a silencer or scope.



WAKAZASHI O-12 SHOTSTUN

Developed for Friendly Persuaders dispatched to high-security or tension-prone worlds, the Wakazashi ShotStun serves a dual purpose for peace officers. A coaxially mounted stun baton, which can pivot from its forward resting position 180 degrees, provides

a friendlier alternative to the violent suppression tactics available to the traditional shotgun. The baton's stun capacity is switched on by pressing the trigger forward in the guard. Persuaders are trained in the use of the weapon, as it can be unwieldy for those unfamiliar with its functions and weight. Every year, academies send several dozen rookies to the nearest care center for treatment of shock burns.

Game notes: Switching the baton to its rear seating is a Complex Action. Turning the stunner on or off is a Simple Action. The stun baton operates as a Stun Stick (see p. 264, *AToW*).

COST OF LIVING IN THE DRACONIS COMBINE

The four military districts of the Draconis Combine have one common feature: a hardworking lower class. The working poor make up the majority of population of every world in the realm. Wages tend to remain along the same scale from prefecture to prefecture. The variance comes from the upper classes and nobility: the more of these involved in a planet's economy, the higher the cost of living. On district and prefecture capital worlds and centers of military industry, costs and wages can fluctuate wildly. As a general rule of thumb, the more populated the world, the higher the cost to reside there. Less economically developed regions, typically worlds where mining and agriculture are the main source of work, are considered poor on an economic scale but more reasonably priced for those of modest means.

Compared to the rest of the Inner Sphere, the Combine is considered very poor. Marginal worlds of the other Great Houses would be considered upper-class systems if under the Combine's rule. New corporate ventures that make it through the Dragon's grueling bureaucracy find it exceptionally expensive to conduct business. Conversely, the business failure rate is low, as the Combine provides an abundance of grants and services to provide assistance. These programs often come with long-term debt allowances, binding these corporate interests tighter to the realm.

Because the Dragon's economy is heavily tied to its military, the realm's times of prosperity ebb and flow roughly with its periods of war and peace. This is especially prevalent on Dieron and Galedon Military District worlds near the Federated Suns border. Systems that have changed hands between the two realms see drastic economic swings. The Combine enacts severe restrictions on imports and exports to neighboring systems still under enemy control and impose heavy taxes on extant corporations not of Combine origin. These actions are conducted primarily to drain excess cash flow from the planetary economy, indebting the populace to Draconian products and services. A secondary effect splits the economic classes, paving the way for the more traditional lower and upper class divide—as long as the world remains under the Dragon's authority.

Worlds near the Combine's core highlight the ideal economy of the nation. Trading is restricted to nearby worlds and consists primarily of necessary products. People in these systems learn to make do with what is available locally; luxury items are exorbitantly priced, affordable only by the nobility. Personal firearms are heavily restricted through a complex permit system. With such a simple existence, citizens do not require high wages and have long since adjusted to sparse living conditions.

The Dieron Military District is constantly on a war footing. Imported goods and materials are more expensive as the DCMS keeps the district worlds on alert. Because so many goods and services are redirected into the DCMS's rebuilding efforts, civilian products and necessities such as housing and fuel feel the economic bite. To give citizens something cultural to focus on during their downtime, travel and entertainment options are kept inexpensive.

Facing a looming threat on the Clan front, the Benjamin Military District is at a heightened security level. With the Combine-Dominion war only a few years past, much of the district's efforts have been in rebuilding defenses and the DCMS. Combine materials flow in a constant stream to the Irece Prefecture in particular, helping Clan Nova Cat citizens settle into their new homes. Much of this increase has boosted costs as companies adjust their output and tax levies. The higher cost of goods and services has caused economic problems on less prosperous worlds, which many citizens ultimately blame on the new Clan-in-residence.

Considered the slowest in growth is the Galedon Military District, partly due to its constant rebuilding efforts from wars with the Federated Suns. The unspoken ceasefire between the

TYPICAL SALARY TABLE

(Prices and Salary Rates as of Fiscal Year 3067)

Biweekly Salary	Military District			
(in ryu)	Dieron	Benjamin	Galedon	Pesht
Unproductive	NA	NA	NA	NA
Minimum Wage	125	100	85	70
Lower Class	185	161	113	98
Merchant Class	493	428	436	376
Upper Class	8,380	7,002	7,320	5,721
Lord/Lady	13,826	12,708	14,213	11,639
Samurai	26,300	24,793	25,185	23,914
Shugo	589,490	536,935	575,063	525,519
Tozama Daimyo	1,695,027	1,567,308	1,620,730	1,310,682
Shogun	25,729,824	24,382,199	25,493,777	22,072,486

Combine and the Suns—Draconis March raids notwithstanding—has elevated the district's economy over the last fifteen years. Many noble families have benefited from the boon of technological growth within the district, which is slowly spreading throughout the realm.

Perennially considered the slowest to change in the Combine, the worlds of the Pesht Military District are also the most traditional. Low-technology communities are found side-by-side with advanced metro zones, offering a range of products and services. Trends do not start within the district, save Luthien; the district's citizens are usually the beneficiaries of at least a decade's worth of innovation from elsewhere within the Combine. Many worlds reclaimed from Clans Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat continue to rebuild. Assimilated Clan technology found there is starting a mini-renaissance within the district's more populous systems.

Weapons and accessories fall within two distinct categories in the Draconis Combine. Ancient weapon forms, such as knives, *tetsubo* clubs, bows, and their ilk, are easily found on any world within the realm. Because the majority of Draconians revere the ancient ways of *bushido*, samurai, and other pan-Asian philosophies, these weapons are considered more of an art form than instruments of violence.

Conversely, mechanical weapons such as pistols and rifles are heavily regulated through a long, convoluted bureaucratic process that can take upwards of five years to complete. In part because they are not classified in society as an art form—the rare gun *kata* discipline found among the yakuza excepted—any sign of such a weapon is cause for immediate inquiry into a citizen's permit history. Social experts argue restricting these weapons is a design to keep the culture pure and the innocent protected from the temptation immediate access to these weapons bring. Spot inspections by the Department of Private Citizen Small Weapons Ownership ensure authorized weapons aren't being resold on the black market.

Electronic devices and equipment are a common sight among most citizen classes. With several epicenters of technology found in the realm on worlds like Hachiman, Isesaki, Luthien, and Dover, cheap electronic goods are a benefit to Draconians. The technological breakthroughs have filtered down to regular society, providing a variety of devices within affordable reach of the lower class.

Imported entertainment is heavily restricted, usually through a long bureaucratic process and multiple tariff and fee structures. Those who can afford such luxury items must possess current licenses and authorization for these products. The Combine media markets thrive in the resulting vacuum, creating cheap productions that venerate Combine values and uphold the ancient honor and history of the realm.

Most Draconian families possess at least one civilian vehicle per household. Many a family's financial status can be determined based on how many personal transports they own. Most of the lower class prefers using mass transit or simpler forms of locomotion such as bicycles to get around, as fuel costs are extremely volatile. Military surplus and armed vehicles are prohibited items on most worlds, found primarily among private security firms, corporate garrisons, and noble compounds. The Combine never wastes out-of-date equipment, redirecting such material to military commands and proving grounds for use as target practice and training models.

Medical costs are largely defrayed by the Combine government depending on in the patient's social class. Because the government wishes to have a healthy workforce, the citizen's employer—through hefty deductions—covers most common medical services. Emergency needs not directly related to one's usefulness to the state are the responsibility of the individual.

Local travel and entertainment are cheap on most Draconian worlds. As the Kurita government keeps a steady hand on the style and content of such indulgences, these activities tend to idolize the realm's history and stature. Conversely, interstellar travel can be prohibitively expensive unless a family is relocating under refugee status or under one of the Dragon's periodic relocation initiatives.

The table below shows average salaries for various economic and social classes in each military district of the Draconis Combine, with percentage modifiers based on the location and importance of a given world, as well as the relative cost and availability of equipment in such regions. The equipment modifier tables allow players to determine the cost, availability, and legality of equipment and services in each district as well, with the cost expressed as a percentage of the item's listed price and the availability modifiers given in terms of rating levels. Positive modifiers increase the percentage of the item's cost or its equipment levels as indicated, making items harder to acquire, while negative modifiers reduce cost or levels.

In many cases, the gamemaster determines into which categories a world may fall. Border worlds lie close enough to another state to have either significant cross-border trade, or (in the case of Combine planets that border Davion or Dominion space) beefier than usual military defenses. Major worlds consist of national capitals or major industry or trade centers. Backwaters, by contrast, are sparsely populated worlds largely lacking in major industries or even a native military defense force.

There is no limit to how much modifiers may change the percentage of an item's final cost, but availability and legality levels may not fall lower than A or rise higher than F.

EXCHANGE RATES

(as of 1 September 3067):

K-bill (*ryu*)	1.00	TC Bull	3.05
C-bill	0.76	CP Bull	3.82
D-bill (pound)	0.92	MC Dollar	3.05
S-bill (*kroner*)	0.90	FR Dollar	7.63
L-bill (*yuan*)	1.53	Talent	6.10
M-bill (eagle)	0.86	Skull	15.27
Escudo	5.09	Kerensky	0.15
R-bill (*krona*)	1.27		

PRICE GUIDE TABLE

Item/Expense	Cost Modifier (%)/Availability Modifier/Legality Modifier (by Region/World Type)					
	Dieron	Benjamin	Galedon	Pesht	Major World	Backwater
Weapons						
Blades, unpowered	85/–2/–1	80/–2/–2	85/–1/–1	80/–/–1	–10/–2/–2	+4/–1/+0
Blades, powered	90/–1/+0	90/–1/–1	95/–1/+0	100/+0/–1	–5/–1/–1	+5/+0/–1
Staffs	80/–2/–2	70/–2/–2	85/–2/–1	65/–2/–2	–5/–2/–2	–3/–2/–3
Archery	75/–2/–2	80/–1/–2	75/–2/–2	70/–2/–2	–12/–1/–1	–5/–3/–3
Pistols, ballistic	130/+3/+1	140/+3/+1	135/+3/+2	150/+3/+2	+2/+4/+2	+8/+2/+0
Pistols, energy	150/+3/+1	160/+3/+2	145/+3/+2	170/+3/+2	+2/+4/+2	+10/+2/+0
Rifles, ballistic	120/+2/+2	130/+2/+1	130/+2/+1	165/+2/+2	+5/+2/+2	–3/+1/+0
Rifles, energy	150/+3/+2	160/+2/+2	145/+2/+2	145/+2/+1	+5/+2/+2	+3/+1/+1
SMGs	195/+3/+3	190/+2/+2	185/+3/+1	200/+2/+3	+8/+1/+3	+8/+2/+0
Shotguns	110/+0/+1	100/+0/+0	115/+1/–1	120/+0/+0	–2/+0/+0	–2/–1/–2
Throwing weapons	70/–2/–1	85/–1/–1	80/+0/–1	90/+0/–1	–10/+0/–1	–4/–3/–1
Support weapons	200/+3/+2	195/+1/+2	180/+2/+1	210/+3/+2	+17/+2/+0	+10/+1/+1
Demolitions	170/+2/+2	165/+1/+2	155/+2/+2	180/+2/+1	+12/+2/+1	+3/+1/+1
Weapon Accessories						
Power Pack/Rechargers						
Standard	105/+0/+0	110/–1/+0	103/+1/+0	105/+0/+0	–4/+0/+0	+5/+1/+0
High-Capacity	110/+0/+1	114/+1/+0	108/+1/+1	110/–1/+1	–2/+0/–1	+8/+0/+1
Quick-change	112/+1/+1	110/+1/+0	106/+1/–1	103/+1/+0	–3/+0/+1	+10/+0/+0
Rechargers	105/+1/+0	108/–1/+1	100/+1/+1	109/+1/+1	–3/+0/+1	+7/+1/+1
Armor/Combat Garb						
Flak	90/–1/+0	90/–1/–1	100/+0/–1	110/+1/–1	–5/–1/+0	+6/+1/–2
Ablative	95/+0/+0	100/–1/+0	98/+0/+0	100/+0/+1	–2/–1/+0	+8/+0/–1
Ablative/Flak	100/+0/+0	102/–1/+0	103/+0/+0	106/+1/+0	–2/–1/+0	+12/+1/+0
Ballistic Plate	96/–1/+0	99/–1/+0	104/+0/–1	102/+0/+0	–3/–1/+0	+4/+2/+0
Leather	88/–2/–1	90/–1/–1	94/–1/–1	96/–1/+0	–5/–2/+0	–5/–1/–1
Miscellaneous	105/+0/+0	103/+0/+0	105/–1/+0	105/+1/+0	–3/–1/+0	+3/+0/+0
Camo/Sneak Suits	150/+1/+2	160/+2/+2	155/+2/+1	180/+2/+2	+10/+2/+3	+20/+1/+2
Battle Armor	200/–2/+2	190/–1/+2	195/–1/+2	220/+1/+3	+30/+1/+3	+45/+2/+2
Misc. Equipment						
Communicators	85/–2/+1	94/–1/+0	80/–2/+0	90/+0/+0	–7/–2/+0	+3/–1/+0
Kits	95/+0/+0	98/+0/+0	100/–1/+0	100/+0/+0	–5/–1/+0	+2/+1/+0
Computers	78/–2/+1	85/–1/+0	70/–2/+0	90/–1/+0	–12/–2/–1	+4/–1/+0
Musi-chips, Combine	60/–2/–1	75/–2/–1	72/–3/–2	65/–2/–1	–9/–2/–2	+2/–2/–1
Musi-chips, Import	240/+3/+3	255/+3/+3	275/+3/+3	310/+3/+3	–5/+3/+2	+18/+4/+2
Tri-vid Sets/Cameras	98/–1/+0	100/–1/+0	92/–2/+0	100/–1/+0	–8/–2/+0	+3/–1/+0
Holovids, Combine	55/–3/–2	65/–2/–2	60/–3/–2	68/–3/–1	–10/–3/–2	+2/–2/–2
Holovids, Import	285/+3/+3	260/+3/+3	290/+2/+3	320/+4/+3	–3/+1/+3	+24/+4/+2
Print Media, Combine	65/–2/–1	73/–2/–2	78/–2/–2	70/–2/–1	–8/–2/–2	+3/–2/–1
Print Media, Import	225/+2/+2	230/+2/+2	245/+1/+3	297/+4/+3	–4/+1/+2	+35/+4/+2
Personal Gear/Expenses						
Clothing	110/+0/+0	105/+0/+0	100/–1/+0	100/+0/+0	–7/+0/+0	+3/+1/+0
Food	90/–1/+0	102/+0/+0	100/+0/+0	101/–1/+0	–3/–1/+0	+6/+1/+0
Housing, Rental	85/+1/+0	90/+2/+0	87/–1/+0	85/–1/+0	+5/+1/+0	–4/–2/+0
Utilities	99/+1/+0	100/+1/+0	93/+0/+0	100/+0/+0	+12/+1/+0	–2/–1/+0
Housing, Owned	110/+1/+1	113/+1/+1	102/+0/+2	105/+1/+2	+15/+2/+1	–7/+0/+0
Utilities	130/+0/+0	127/+0/+0	140/+0/+0	135/+0/+0	+40/+1/+0	+2/+0/+0
Hotel Rental/Expenses	100/+1/+1	103/+0/+0	100/+0/+0	108/+0/+0	+10/+0/+0	+4/+0/+0
Fuel	145/+1/+1	126/+0/+1	130/+1/+0	150/+1/+0	–8/+0/+0	+8/+0/+1

THE BLACK MARKET

Just as the location and relative industrial, economic, or political importance of a world influences its economy, these factors also affect the local black market (if any). As always, the efforts of local law enforcement and the material needs of the planet's inhabitants can make the results vary widely at the gamemaster's discretion. In general, players can find the price for any piece of hardware or service required by determining the item's availability and legality ratings, modified for the appropriate district (in the *Price Guide Table*) and then consulting the *Black Market Base Cost Table*. Additional modifiers to the base costs are provided as well, based on the character's location in Kurita space. A character may negotiate these prices using the Negotiation/Commercial Skill, but gamemasters should keep in mind that black markets are typically illegal, fly-by-night operations—often organized and operated by the local yakuza. Most who trade in illicit goods and services don't have the patience for a drawn-out bargaining process.

As with the cost of living modifiers above, prices fluctuate based on a character's location in the Combine, with all applicable modifiers multiplied together.

ROLEPLAYING IN THE DRACONIS COMBINE

The following information for gamemasters and players of *A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG* campaigns covers other aspects of Combine characters and life in the Draconis Combine. This information should be used to add local flavor to such campaigns and characters.

COMBINE VALUES: OUR LIVES FOR THE DRAGON

The underlying foundation of a Draconian's life is to live for the Dragon. Everything a citizen does should be beneficial to the Kuritan realm in some form. The Combine exists for the people, and the people live to serve the Dragon. The realm is manifested in the person of the Coordinator, whose character and presence exudes the identity of the Combine. For an average citizen, going against the Coordinator's will is unheard of.

Among the lower classes, this ideology is enough to provide a purpose for daily living. The higher the social stratum, however, the looser this ideology becomes. The higher classes experience an increase in power and comfort, which the more unscrupulous use and abuse to their personal gain. The nobility recognizes its

Item/Expense	Dieron	Benjamin	Galedon	Pesht	Major World	Backwater
Personal Vehicles						
Civilian, Ground	104/–1/–1	100/–1/+0	105/+0/+0	108/+0/+1	–4/+0/+0	+8/+1/–1
Civilian, Air	107/–1/+0	103/+0/+0	103/+0/+0	110/–1/+1	–5/–1/+1	–8/+1/–2
Civilian, Seagoing	100/+0/+0	105/+0/+0	102/+0/+1	105/+0/+0	–7/–1/+0	–10/+2/–1
Civilian, Spacecraft	106/–1/+0	102/+0/+0	104/+0/+0	109/+0/+1	–2/+0/+0	+7/+2/–1
Military, unarmed	200/+0/+1	207/+0/+1	198/+0/+1	220/+0/+2	+0/+0/+2	–3/–1/+1
Military, IS-armed	250/+3/+3	242/+3/+3	260/+2/+3	280/+2/+3	+10/+1/+2	+0/+1/+1
Military, Clan-armed	310/+3/+2	290/+1/+3	328/+3/+3	300/+1/+3	+15/+1/+2	+20/+1/+1
Fusion-powered	130/+0/+1	126/+1/+1	120/+0/+1	125/+1/+1	–8/+0/+1	+11/+1/+1
ICE-powered	96/–1/+0	100/+0/+0	93/–2/+0	98/+0/+0	–4/–1/+0	+6/+0/+0
Medical/Survival Gear						
Medical Kits	100/+0/+0	101/–1/+0	100/+0/+0	95/+0/+0	+5/+1/+1	+17/+2/+1
Cybernetic Limbs	100/+1/+0	104/+0/+0	109/+1/+0	99/+0/+1	–4/+0/+1	+9/+1/–1
Bionic Eyes/Ears	129/+0/+0	120/+1/+0	117/+0/+0	122/–1/+0	+3/+1/+0	+13/+1/–1
Other Medical Gear	100/+0/+1	103/+0/+0	106/+0/+1	102/+0/+0	–3/+0/+0	+4/+2/+1
Medical Services	190/+1/+1	182/+0/+1	170/+1/+1	188/+1/+1	+14/+2/+1	+29/+2/+2
Survival Kits	92/–1/+0	97/–1/+0	100/+0/+0	95/+0/+0	–5/–1/+0	–10/–1/–1
Other Survival Gear	100/+0/–1	102/–1/+0	100/+0/+0	98/–1/+0	–5/–1/+0	–10/–1/+0
Travel/Entertainment						
Surface Travel	80/–1/+0	91/+0/+0	88/–1/+0	95/+0/+1	–8/+0/+1	–4/–1/–1
Atmospheric Travel	95/–1/+1	99/+0/+0	93/+0/+0	100/+0/+1	–3/+0/+2	+5/+1/+0
Oceanic Travel	97/+0/+0	92/+0/+1	100/+0/+0	96/–1/+0	–6/–1/+0	+3/–2/–1
Space Travel, In-system	130/–1/+2	126/–1/+1	125/+0/+1	140/+0/+2	+11/–1/+1	+35/–1/–1
Space Travel, interstellar	275/+2/+2	288/+2/+2	270/+1/+2	280/+2/+3	–5/+1/+1	+28/+1/+2
Concerts/Theater	100/–1/+1	95/+0/–1	80/–1/–1	65/–2/+1	–10/–1/+2	+13/+0/+0
Sporting Events	80/–1/–1	85/–1/–2	75/–1/–1	78/+1/+0	–14/+0/–1	–5/+1/–2

BLACK MARKET BASE COST TABLE

	Availability					
Legality	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**
A	0.5	0.75	1.5	1.75	3.75	8
B	0.75	1.5	2	3.25	4.5	9.5
C	1.5	2	2.75	4	5.25	12
D	3	4	5	6	7	15
E	6	7	8	10	12	25
F	10	11	14	17	20	40

Additional Modifiers	
Dieron Military District	x1.10
Benjamin Military District	x1.04
Pesht Military District	x0.97
Galedon Military District	x1.08
Major World*	x1.05
Hot Zone*	x1.35
Hostile Border*	x1.12
Periphery Border World*	x1.01
Nova Cat World*	x0.95
Backwater	x1.06

**Hot Zone, Hostile Border, and Periphery Border Worlds are described in the Combine Border Crossing Results rules on p. 84. Major worlds serve as district or prefecture capitals, or as centers of major industry (such as worlds that host the companies described in this book or can locally manufacture items of Tech Level D or better).*

privilege; those seeking power twist it to their own purposes. Those who adhere to the Combine's core philosophies use their position to better the people beneath them—in turn, strengthening the Dragon. This dichotomy of interest creates a low-level of tension among the various nobility and upper classes not readily discernible to the non-Draconian. A person must be able to interpret the subtleties of language, gesture, and timing to discern the true issues at play. A simple tea ceremony between business partners could mask a hostile takeover, a lover's quarrel, or state treason, and observers could be none the wiser.

The Dragon's perseverance through several centuries of warfare comes not from a desire to defeat its enemies, but to carry out Shiro Kurita's original mission: to see all humanity under the honorable rule of the Draconis Combine. As the other Great Houses fought the Succession Wars to claim the vacant Star League throne, the Combine fought to further its mandate. Citizens of the Combine know this is not a plan simply enacted but a philosophy that encompasses their entire lives. With everything done to benefit the Combine, the Dragon will eventually rise to its rightful place of rule. As such, alliances, agreements, and other, less desirable decisions are a means to the greater end and endured stoically for the moment.

Constant war has made the common Draconian a hardy individual. A simple life is the most desired, as the more complicated things become, the less fruitful the outcome for the Dragon. Thus, hard work is not wasted; such tasks are seen as vital to the Combine's welfare and success. The Unproductives are an ever-present reminder that failure to serve the Dragon is to fall purposeless to the wayside, directionless and adrift. The loss of structure in a Kuritan's life is to be feared, as it inevitably leads to a wasted, forgotten death.

Though the philosophy of *bushido* is most prevalent in the DCMS, many of its tenets can be found throughout Combine society. Business is conducted honorably and with single-minded devotion. Boardroom combat can be politically and professionally lethal, especially if vendetta is evoked. Because retreat is rarely an option, those who attempt to bring change or discussion forward must be prepared to weather possible backlash. Breaking away from the established norm can make a citizen (along with his family) a social pariah—someone useless to the betterment of the Dragon.

The accumulation of wealth is considered a burden borne by those sufficiently educated and knowledgeable to handle it. Ideally, the nobility are responsible for those lower-class citizens underneath them—be they employees, citizens, or soldiery—while serving the Coordinator. This additional obligation entitles the noble class access to physical pleasures not legal to the lesser subordinates to relieve their minds of such a heavy burden. Many Draconian nobles handle this balance well, indulging in small vices and expensive gifts while using their wealth to create opportunities to better the lower classes in their care. There are other nobles, however, who submit to the baser instincts of greed, gluttony, or lust and cast aside the tenets of Draconian living. They see their wealth as a gateway to power and prestige beyond the reach of their current position, leading to conspiracy and corruption. Such activity is justified due to the individual's burdens, despite the increase of risk inherent to the action.

Corruption exists at all levels of the Combine, though less so among the lower classes. The yakuza thrive as an outlet for this darker side of citizenry. Many nobles see organized syndicates as a necessary evil in the Dragon's underbelly. The yakuza, in turn, see themselves as protectors who shield the lower classes from the nobility's predations. Authorities who veer from the Dictum Honorium and the Dragon's precepts often find themselves at odds with local yakuza. Conversely, those nobles who do right by their subjects find an undergirding of support from the criminal underworld. Coordinator Theodore's honorable actions in dealing with the yakuza and the formation of the Ghost Regiments have given the syndicates an unofficial stamp of approval to continue their actions as guardians.

Local authorities are given wide latitude in autonomy, often down to the precinct and zone level. The Friendly Persuaders are highly visible in areas with a history of violence or maleficence. The visual cue of their candy-striped uniform is enough to

dissuade many overt criminal activities. What goes unseen, however, is the multitude of plainclothes observers, ISF agents, and O5P operatives mixing among the crowds. Though following their own directives, they are not afraid to step in and dissuade those citizens who attempt to go above their station or whose actions may harm the Dragon.

Most Draconians give little thought to those outside the Combine and view their interstellar neighbors as belligerent obstacles to the Dragon's ultimate purpose. The constant Succession Wars cemented that viewpoint as the Great Houses fought only to claim the rule of the Star League. The Combine's goal was intrinsically loftier and therefore pure, putting Draconians at a level higher than the rest of the Inner Sphere. Hatred and loathing for the Dragon's perennial enemies—Houses Steiner and Davion—is predominant along the shared borders. Given a Draconian's innate xenophobia, making inroads through trade, politics, and conquest is a tough proposition for outsiders. Within the Dragon's core systems, where citizens have only rumors and official news of various conflicts and not direct experience, such xenophobia can devolve into a form of interstellar bigotry. Typical Draconian stoicism masks such actions from public display, but true sentiment is seen through body language, price gouging, and a slowdown of processes in completing administrative tasks.

Permeating all layers of Draconian lifestyle is the traditional tea ceremony. Influenced by Zen Buddhism and twenty-second century practices on Terran Japan, the Way of the Tea (*chado*) is itself an art form many rigorously pursue. The *otemae* (manner of tea) has many layers, from *chakai* (simple) to *chaji* (formal) rituals, depending on the occasion. (A *chaji* ceremony with the Coordinator can last upwards of six hours.) Every city and village in the Combine has at least one public *chashitsu* (tea building). These buildings typically contain a floor hearth, *shoji* screens, decorative alcoves, several entrances, and a dedicated *mizuya* (preparation area). More elaborate *chashitsu* are surrounded by a *roji* (tea garden) or Zen garden.

Those who master the various ceremony arts are well respected in their community, and their opinions carry great weight. Experienced tea masters are highly sought after by nobles and planetary leaders. Acquiring a tea master as a mentor can be a difficult but rewarding task. Students spend a minimum of fifteen years under a master's tutelage.

REGIONAL VIEWS

Most Draconians share a common identity within the Dragon. Each of the four military districts have slightly different values, goals, and outlooks on their place within the Combine as a whole.

Dieron Military District

Citizens of these systems are exceptionally proud of the worlds of their birth. The Dieron district claims some of the earliest worlds colonized by Terrans, and residents often point to ancient Star League relics and fortifications as a source of their pride. Constant wars of possession and raids have been conducted within these systems, giving the people a proverbial spine for their continued survival.

Several centuries after joining the Combine, many systems still cling to their past heritage as Terran Hegemony worlds. Among the people of the district, loyalty to the Dragon comes immediately after a citizen's loyalty to their world. The ISF has spent untold years attempting to stamp out this mindset.

Because of the district's prominent position between the Dragon's ancient adversaries, the people here are constantly wary. Strangers with little or no authority are regarded with suspicion that can last decades. People are more aware of happenings outside the Combine's border, an awareness that stems from their constant watch for raiders or the next invasion wave.

Most nobles among these worlds see themselves above the rest of the Combine. This mindset comes from the importance of the district's worlds to the Dragon's industry. The combination of Hegemony history, a powerhouse industrial base, and fierce resistance to enemy incursions has made many district nobles insufferable on visits to Luthien and other worlds of importance.

The ISF's presence is known but hardly seen. Because of the district's position near Terra and two ancient Combine enemies, the agency takes a quiet observational role. Agents follow a suspected subversive, record his actions, and mark his contacts for further investigation. The region's nobles are under constant scrutiny due to their necessary contact with foreign trade dignitaries and other elements. Espionage is a way of life on most worlds in the region, adding a dose of paranoia to many in the upper classes. Stories of citizens whisked away in the night for questioning are more truth than rumor.

Benjamin Military District

The people inhabiting the worlds of the Benjamin Military District are fiercely loyal to the Dragon. The Combine rescued many from Clan oppression, banishing the Smoke Jaguars for their evil ways. Even with the Jaguars removed and the Nova Cats contained, the people of Benjamin know the Ghost Bears can rage across the border at any time, as they did less than half a decade prior.

The stories and reports coming from survivors of the Clan occupation have built up a mythology of hatred for the "children of Kerensky." The average citizen views the Clans as brutal overlords with an alien civilization that threatened to topple the might of the Dragon. Only the rightness of the Dragon's cause and its continued purpose—to rule all of the human sphere—pushed the Clans back where they belong: under the Kurita heel.

A strong military presence instills a sense of pride in the iron might of the Combine. Culture and the expression of art is considered equally important for male warriors but unfit for women, children, and the infirm to express properly. Active duty soldiers are catered to; retired veterans, especially those from Clan campaigns, are worshiped. Most upper class citizens and minor nobles defer to those wearing DCMS uniforms—as long as at least some attempt at *bushido* behavior is present.

The ISF and O5P maintain a subtle but open presence in the region. Returning combatants and merchants from outside the Combine are commonly detained for intelligence debriefings. Citizens are observed at length, lest they make contact with foreign elements who do not have the Dragon's best interest in mind.

Galedon Military District

Despite the glory days of the Combine's birth being well behind them, citizens of the Galedon worlds take great pride in their role in the Dragon's rise. The people here firmly believe they are the epitome of the Combine and refuse to believe otherwise. Without these worlds, Shiro Kurita's dream of conquest and rule would have died stillborn.

Of all the people in the Combine, those from this district hold to the strictest forms of honor and duty. They view the Dragon's mandate in black and white with little gray. The lower classes worship the Coordinator and the realm, knowing that his successes are due largely to their efforts through the centuries. Citizens in this district are keenly aware of the honor and shame that has happened here; debates of actions and decisions made centuries ago remain hot topics in tea houses and parks across the region.

The ever-present threat of another invasion from the Federated Suns or the newly arrived Clan Snow Raven in the Periphery keeps citizens on their toes. Rudimentary defense courses and militia training are a social necessity for every resident. Little news from across the border finds root among these worlds; they firmly believe it to be nothing but propaganda designed to lull them into complacency before the next strike. Strangers are warily accepted, though anyone who challenges the status quo finds themselves under observation by the ISF.

Infiltrating Davion MIIO agents were, at one time, a common problem. Incidents have tapered off in recent years, though the ISF and O5P remain vigilant for spies. Individuals can be brought in and interrogated for simple infractions of societal norms.

Pesht Military District

The prefectures of the Pesht district have the dubious distinction of being both the jewel and the backwater of the Combine. Kagoshima Prefecture is the location of Luthien, a point of pride for many citizens who reside in this sector of space. Not surprisingly, these Combine worlds ooze the Dragon's essence and are drenched in culture, nationalism, rituals, and traditions.

The more distant prefectures that border the Periphery remain culturally connected to the Combine, but the pace of life is much slower than in other districts. Because of strong cultural connections to the capital, a large number of worlds in the district turn out a sizeable portion of academics and artisans. Worlds that border the Ghost Bear Dominion have the highest percentage of applicants accepted into the DCMS.

A large number of residents trace their family history back through other Combine worlds, thanks to the realm's periodic relocation programs and refugee grants. Many embraced Shiro Kurita's early emphasis of adopting ancient Japanese culture. Tradition is sacred; modern initiatives have often been refused because they went against "the way it has always been done." For example, many government buildings are still built through simple manual labor rather than utilizing advanced construction methods.

Such devotion runs at odds with the settlement of Clan Nova Cat in the Irece Prefecture. Many regard the hosting of the Nova Cats as an affront to the aesthetic of the realm. Others see it as putting the Clan in its place as a servitor. Citizens view the Coordinator's gifting of the Irece Prefecture to Clan Nova Cat as an act of compassion, something the Clans have proven incapable of. While the citizens admire the Coordinator's actions, they are offended by the Clan's failure to adopt Draconian traditions and way of life. This breach of honor has spawned a growing sense of distrust towards the Combine's newest residents.

The ISF spends the least amount of manpower among the district's border worlds. Agents do nothing to disguise their presence, relying on the ISF's reputation to keep mischief subdued. The agency's higher echelons have broad discretionary power to handle any situations that develop, with heavy concentration in Nova Cat enclaves. Such latitude has proven detrimental at times, as Black Dragon incidents and subversives are slowly on the rise.

CROSSING BORDERS

Travel by citizens within the Draconis Combine is permitted with limited monitoring and few restrictions. Draconians can travel for recreation or relocation; merchants and nobles may also travel for business and political needs. Those wishing to travel intrasystem need only apply for the permit, pay the application fee, submit the permit, wait for its acceptance, pay associated tax levies, apply for official travel documents, pay additional transportation and fuel fees, and enjoy their trip during the approved window—additional late fees are applicable if the travel window is exceeded. Travelling to other systems within the realm requires the same process repeated for each system through the appropriate prefecture *Minbushö* departments. Applications are rarely denied, though nobles have the authority to veto an application at any point in the process. Residents planning an interstellar journey begin the process at least eighteen months prior to their departure.

Merchants and nobles go through a faster application cycle. Permits are completed for an entire itinerary at one time rather than system by system. If the route takes the applicant beyond the Combine border, the ISF reviews the entire permit package and often assigns a case agent to the traveler's entourage. Mercenaries under contract to corporate or private citizens are automatically assigned agents from the ISF and the Professional Soldiery Liaison office.

A traveler's documentation is checked during both a DropShip's departure and arrival burn. Access to the JumpShip is limited to nobles; if the vessel is a DCMS or DCA transport, no passenger—regardless of class—may exit their DropShip unless given permission by the transport's captain. Those who violate these laws are automatically charged with espionage and sabotage and are held until they can be transferred to a nearby ISF agency.

Worlds lying within one jump of uncharted space or an Inner Sphere border traditionally employ close aerospace patrols, system sensor satellites, and similar measures to watch for pirate or military incursions. Dedicated DCA Port Authority (DCAPA) teams randomly check arriving and departing vessels for contraband. These security protocols protect Combine worlds with an escalating range of responses based on determined threat level. Casual inquiries can lead to brief detention, spot inspections, interceptions, seizure, or armed combat. DCAPA teams are given a broad mandate to carry out their duties; threats that appear to be outside the teams' capabilities are referred to DCA military units on standby. High profile systems such as a prefecture capital or heavy industrial worlds see DCAPA teams augmented with regular militia forces. At Luthien and the four district capitals, these duties are assigned only to frontline DCMS and DCA forces.

Vessels refusing to submit to DCAPA requests are regarded as hostile and receive one warning shot before being fired upon. In high-profile systems, fleeing, failing to communicate, or deviating from a provided flight plan is cause for immediate violence and subjugation. Those who submit and have nothing to hide (or grease the right palms) find a DCA inspection tedious and time-consuming. Border-world inspectors tend to be more thorough, confiscating anything deemed in violation of cultural and local laws. These inspection teams often include an ISF or O5P agent who looks for evidence of espionage.

Hostile vessels are confronted and pursued by available DCA forces. These Combine crews have orders to shoot first and ask questions later—if possible. The Combine takes its restricted border policy seriously; at each border world, the DCA has at least one fast-response team stationed near popular jump points or near the planet's surface. In systems where space assets are unavailable or cannot bring the threat down, uncooperative vessels will find ground forces waiting for them when they land.

Traditionally, interstellar powers are rarely given expanded travel rights through the Combine. Through the accords of the Concord of Kapteyn, the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation were given limited travel rights to worlds within one jump of the Combine border, but those rights were revoked in 3055. Clan Nova Cat may travel freely throughout the Combine, though these vessels face rigorous and intensive inspections regardless of what world they visit. Clan Diamond Shark is currently the only foreign power granted expanded travel rights, but only to certain worlds within the Benjamin and Pesht Military Districts.

In game terms, a border crosser (the JumpShip captain or the most prominent of the player characters aboard the border-crossing vessel) may determine the likelihood of an encounter during an attempt to cross any of the Combine's prefecture boundaries by making a modified Reaction Check. Additional modifiers may apply to this roll based on various circumstances, including character traits belonging to the border crosser. Certain Action Checks, made before the vessel hops the border or soon after its arrival, may further modify the circumstances surrounding such travel.

This modified Reaction Check, generally made as soon as the border crosser enters a new system and completes any related Action Checks (unless otherwise noted), determines what kind of response—if any—the border crosser and his vessel arouse among local security forces. All modifiers made to the standard numbers given in the *Draconis Combine Reaction Table* during a border crossing appear in the Additional Reaction Modifiers section of the table.

To determine a specific encounter or reaction from local military, security, or bandit forces present in the system, the border-crossing player should roll 2D6, apply the appropriate reaction result modifier, and consult the appropriate column of the *Border Crossing Roll Results Table* for the region into which the vessel has just crossed. The encounter descriptions provide a more detailed explanation of each encounter type, allowing gamemasters to further develop whatever reaction the arriving vessel and its crew receive.

DRACONIS COMBINE BORDER CROSSING ROLL RESULTS TABLE

The Border Crossing Roll Results Table identifies regional borders and the types of regions into which player characters are moving: hot zones, hostile borders, Periphery borders, or green zones. Gamemasters should note that not all zones exist during all eras. Green zone worlds, for example, do not exist during the Succession Wars.

A hot zone is an active war zone, like the Lyran Commonwealth/Draconis Combine border during the Second Succession War or the War of 3039. It may also be an extremely tense Demilitarized Zone such as the region of space between the Terran Hegemony and the Combine after Amaris seized the Star League.

A hostile border is a notch down on the danger scale from a hot zone, but still tense enough to get interesting. There's no active warfare going on, nor is it on the brink, but the region has enough history of mutual hostilities between powers that player characters are likely to get hassled when they try to cross over. Good examples include the Combine/Ghost Bear Dominion border or worlds that reside a jump away from the Federated Suns Draconis March.

Periphery border worlds lie on the edges of the Galedon and Pesht Military District that border "uncivilized" space and therefore are most heavily frequented by pirates and incoming traffic from the Outworlds Alliance. Any world along this border qualifies as such.

Finally, a green zone is any border region where relations between powers are fairly calm, such as the short stretch of worlds bordering the remains of the Free Rasalhague Republic during the post-Clan Invasion era or the Dieron Military District border with the Terran Hegemony during the Star League's heyday.

DRACONIS COMBINE BORDER CROSSING ROLL RESULTS TABLE

	Encounters (per Region Type Entered by Border Crosser)			
Modified 2D6 Result	Hot Zone	Hostile Border	Periphery Border	Green Zone
0 or less	Attacked!	Attacked!	Pirates!	Pirates!
1	Attacked!	Pirates!	Pirates!	Pirates!
2	Raiders!	Raiders!	Pirates!	Bandits!
3	Raiders!	Raiders!	Bandits!	Interception
4	Interception	Interception	Bandits!	Interception
5	Interception	Interception	Confiscation!	Confiscation!
6	Interception	Confiscation!	Attacked!	Confiscation!
7	Confiscation!	Confiscation!	Interception	Inspection
8	Confiscation!	Confiscation!	Interception	Inspection
9	Scrutiny	Inspection	Inspection	Registered
10	Scrutiny	Scrutiny	Inspection	Scrutiny
11	Scout	Scrutiny	Scrutiny	Ignored
12	Registered	Registered	Ignored	Ignored
13 or more	Registered	Registered	Greetings!	Greetings!

ENCOUNTER TYPES

Type	Description/Effects
Pirates!	A veteran bandit force of equal or greater strength in aerospace and marine support attacks the border crosser(s) with the intent to cripple and plunder the vessel(s) and enslave everyone on board. Over major worlds, such as industrial centers or regional capitals, treat this as an Attacked! result.
Bandits!	A bandit force of equal aerospace strength and average skill attacks the border crosser(s) with the intent to board and plunder the vessel(s). Over major worlds, such as industrial centers or regional capitals, treat this as a Raiders! result.
Raiders!	A small strike force of equal or lesser strength in aerospace and marine assets from the nearest military power attacks the border crosser(s) with intent to disable or capture the vessel(s) and prevent them from warning local/regional security.
Attacked!	A veteran local military/security force of equal or greater aerospace and marine strength attacks the border crosser(s) with the intent to capture, cripple, or destroy the vessel(s), believing them to be hostile invaders or dangerous criminals.
Interception	A local military/security force of equal strength in aerospace and marine assets and average combat skills orders the surrender of the border crosser(s) and attempts to detain and board the vessel(s) on suspicion of subversive activities or the smuggling of contraband. Will attack with intent to cripple or destroy if provoked or if the border crosser(s) resist.
Inspection	A random DCAPA inspection, backed up by minimal force, is requested of the border-crossing vessel(s). Any attempt to resist or stonewall the inspection may result in local security scrambling an interception force from the nearby jump station or patrol vessels, if any (see Interception).
Confiscation!	A current military crisis of emergency prompts local military/civil authorities to demand that the vessel(s) used by the border crosser(s) immediately surrender the vessel(s) to an appointed officer for military use as a transport or weapon of war. Any resistance will result in the scrambling of interceptors to take the vessel(s) by force (see Interception). If there is no military or local crisis, treat this result as an Inspection.
Scrutiny	The vessel(s) used by the border crosser(s) are flagged by local security or military for further observation by other regional forces or the ISF. Roll for an encounter in the next system, regardless of location and border status, with an additional –2 Reaction roll modifier. If the modified roll drops the result to Attacked! or below, apply the Interception result instead.
Scout	An unregistered and unknown JumpShip is discovered nearby. It does not respond to hails but may attack or flee if provoked.
Registered	Local sensor probes or solitary patrol craft query the vessel(s) used by the border crosser(s) regarding their identification, nationality, destination, and business but otherwise leave the ships alone unless they engage in overtly hostile action or their responses to any inquiries fail to check out. In such cases, local authorities may call for an Inspection or Confiscation.
Ignored	Aside from a casual scan by local sensor satellites or wandering patrol craft, the border-crossing vessel(s) are left alone and unacknowledged by local authorities and traffic.
Greetings!	Friendly vessels and/or patrols operating close by issue trusting hails to the border-crossing vessel(s). Aside from a genuine eagerness for conversation, news from beyond the system of trade, these greetings have no ulterior motive.

DRACONIS COMBINE REACTION TABLE

2D6 Roll	Reaction Type	Reaction Result Modifier
0 or less	Extremely Negative	−4
1–4	Negative	−2
5–10	Neutral	0
11–12	Positive	+1
13 or more	Extremely Positive	+2

Reaction Roll Modifiers

	Receiving Character Origin														
Reacting Character	Draconis Combine					Inner Sphere						Other			
Origin	DMD	BMD	PMD	GMD	GBD	LA	CC	FW	CM	FS	FRR	P	CL	CS	WB
Dieron Military District	+2	+1	+0	+1	−2	−1	+0	+0	+0	−1	+1	+0	−3	+1	+0
Benjamin Military District	+1	+2	+0	+1	−3	−2	+0	+0	+0	−1	+2	+0	−3	+0	+0
Pesht Military District	+0	+0	+1	−1	−1	+0	+0	+1	−0	−2	+0	−1	−2	+1	−0
Galedon Military District	+2	+1	−1	+2	−0	+0	+1	−0	+1	−3	+0	−2	−1	−0	−0
Periphery Border	+0	+0	−0	−1	+0	−0	+0	+0	−0	−1	+0	+2	+0	+1	+1
Davion Border	−1	−1	−1	−2	+0	−0	+0	+0	−0	−0	+1	−1	−2	−1	−1
Ghost Bear Border	+1	+1	−0	+0	−2	−1	−0	+0	+1	−0	+2	+0	−3	+0	+0
FRR Border	+1	+2	+0	+0	+1	−1	+1	+1	+1	−0	+3	+0	−3	+2	−2
Chaos March Border	−1	+0	+0	+0	−1	−1	−2	−1	+1	−1	+1	+0	−1	−1	+2

Receiving Character Origin Key

DMD=Dieron Military District
BMD=Benjamin Military District
PMD=Pesht Military District
GMD=Galedon Military District
GBD=Ghost Bear Dominion
LA=Lyran Alliance
CC=Capellan Confederation
FW=Free Worlds League
CM=Chaos March
FS=Federated Suns
FRR=Free Rasalhague Republic
P=Periphery
CL=Clan
CS=ComStar
WB=Word of Blake

Additional Reaction Modifiers (for Border Crossing)

Condition or Circumstance	Reaction Roll Modifier
Major military activity underway in region	−3
Border crosser is Commercial/Government-employed	+2
Border crosser is Independent Vessel	−1
Border crosser is using Clan Vessel	−2
Border crosser is Mercenary/Friendly Military	+1
Border crosser vessel is Military Class	−2
Border crosser Connection Trait used*	+1/level
Border crosser has Enemy/Negative Reputation Trait	−1/level
Border crosser has In for Life/Dark Secret Trait	−1
Border crosser has Unlucky/Bloodmark Trait	−1/level
Border crosser has Yakuza Connection	+1
Border crosser uses Protocol Skill†	+1 MoS
Border crosser uses Bureaucracy Skill†	+1 MoS
Border crosser attempts preemptive bribery‡	+1/2 MoS
Border crosser attempts bribery at crossing‡	+1/3 MoS
Border crosser failed in bribery attempt‡	−MoF
Border crosser failed previous crossing§	−4(+1/month since failure, max 0)

*To be relevant, the Connection Trait must be applicable to the Combine and must be extensive enough to influence the locals. The border crosser must make a successful Protocol Action Check, adding the value of the Trait to the roll result.

†Skill Checks are required for these efforts at the time of the border crossing, reflecting advance communications or responses to hails from local security agencies, with modifiers based on the margin of success (MoS).

‡Bribery attempts require a successful Negotiation or Performance Action Check with a −2 roll modifier (plus any reaction modifiers from the Draconis Combine Reaction Table). This Action Check roll is modified by +1 for every 500 C-bills or 5 percent value of any cargo being smuggled (whichever is greater) by the border crosser(s), as well as by the relevant reaction roll modifiers from the Draconis Combine Reaction Table. Double this monetary cost if the bribe is attempted at the time of crossing, rather than having been arranged ahead of time. A failed Action Check during a bribery attempt automatically applies the margin of failure (MoF) to the border-crossing check roll.

§Repeat the reaction roll for every world visited after the initial failure, regardless of location or border status. This modifier increases over time by 1 point per month (based on the time elapsed since the last failure) to a maximum of 0.

DRACONIS COMBINE ADVENTURE HOOKS

The sprawl of the Dragon's realm encompasses industrial powerhouse systems to simple agrarian worlds, everyday working-class citizens to influential nobles in the Imperial Court. Depending on local conditions, varying amounts of turmoil bubble beneath even the calmest of surfaces, offering plenty of potential trouble in which player characters can enmesh themselves. Below are some plot hooks for gamemasters and players to consider when campaigning in the Draconis Combine, or with Combine characters.

THE RED TAPE MOUNTAIN

A rule of the realm is that to get anything truly meaningful accomplished, one must go through a number of bureaucratic channels. Oftentimes, it seems that the more important an item, journey, or situation, the larger the amount of red tape to cut through. Much of life in the Combine for those beyond the working class involves knowing the right people in the right places. Many find that doing a favor for one person leads to a chain of favors that greases several palms and provides numerous opportunities for side adventures and events that can gobble up a character's time and money. The end result is usually worth the effort, as new contacts are made and added to a person's power base. Within the Combine, those who can get things done quickly are the ones who know the right people at the right time.

Just like corporations, the various ministries and departments of the Kurita government often operate in competition with each other. Budgets and grants are seen as prizes to attain, keeping much-needed capital out of the hands of rival agencies and bureaus. Bureaucratic power within the Combine is a combination of money and connections. The paper war that rages among the administrative halls of the realm can be every bit as vicious as those in a corporate boardroom. For players who find satisfaction in waging a war of negotiation, money, and connections, wading into a conflict between ministries can be rich and rewarding.

COURT WARFARE

The nobility in the Combine holds tremendous power, mostly due to the Combine's approach to duty and honor. Through the edicts of the Suffering of the Lion, Combine nobles find themselves in a position to either make the lower classes better off—which benefits the Coordinator and the Dragon as a whole—or selfishly indulge in their own vices. Whichever path they choose, these nobles find themselves at odds with others of similar or greater stature to their own.

To be successful in whatever endeavor they choose, nobles use whatever weapons are available and known to them. Politics is the most common; with the realm draped in the veneration of ancient traditions and customs, political maneuvering is an art form. Every action, word, and gesture can carry a multitude of meaning within the Byzantine and vicious worlds of the Imperial Court and the DCMS.

Characters who hold some power or prestige within the Combine have ample opportunities to involve themselves in these constant power struggles. In any era, the most obvious move is to find a way to benefit from the Coordinator's decisions or a ministry's operation, a practice that Kurita philosophy tacitly allows—as long as the Dragon benefits. In eras where strong Coordinators such as Urizen II or Hugai Kurita held the throne, political maneuvering was hidden in manipulation and nuance. Canny characters adept at manipulating the Combine's tenets can find ways to enrich themselves from the system, shaming and destroying their enemies.

With the Combine's reliance on its monolithic bureaucracy, a player character's level of wealth and power determines his or her access to the myriad levels of Combine government and commerce. Campaigns run on economic bases or class disputes can be set on any world in the Combine.

SHADOWY UNDERGROUND

Though the Combine goes through great pains to downplay the seedier elements of its society, the yakuza's domination of the criminal underworld is an open secret. Gang warfare between clans is a common occurrence on more populous worlds. The yakuza clans live, fight, and die following a darker version of the *bushido* code adapted for their environment. Power struggles are common, with *oyabun* playing the role of the nobility among the shadowy underworld.

Player characters can find themselves embroiled in the affairs of the yakuza, promoting or destroying a clan's power and influence. Rival clans, mafia families, and triads also populate this stratum of society and can quickly entangle characters who stumble their way into an event, hangout, or crossfire. Among the yakuza favors are considered political gold; earning one from a clan can be a worthwhile experience. Fulfilling a requested favor from an *oyabun* can involve anything from a simple job to part of a larger, more complex power play by a planetary noble or imperial courtier.

EYES ARE EVERYWHERE

The ISF—and to a lesser extent, the O5P—is a constant presence in the Combine and will most likely influence almost any player campaign. Despite its fearsome reputation, the agency is a competent organization devoted to the welfare of the Dragon and the pursuit of universal conquest. The danger lies with the wide operational latitude given to ISF agents: some are more zealous than others, often for political reasons.

If the players are Combine or Combine-oriented, the ISF may be observing them for signs of treason or actions contrary to the Dragon's purpose. Recent incidents involving the Black Dragons are fresh in the minds of ISF agents; accusations of treason are taken seriously. Conversely, if the players show the ISF they are working towards the Dragon's best interest, they may gain allies, contacts, or even assistance if needed. Working against the interests of the Combine, however, brings a powerful enemy to oppose them. The survival and success of the Dragon is everything to this agency and plausible threats will be eliminated before questions are asked.

CORPORATE COMPETITION

Much of the Combine's corporate culture is heavily linked with its military. Civilian enterprises are considered a second-class operation when compared to military contractors. Competition for contracts, technology, and resources in various markets is fierce. During the technological boom of the Star League, Combine industries spent their energies competing with Hegemony firms, often acquiring needed technology and research using espionage, subterfuge, and political pressure. During later eras, such activities occurred less frequently but were still carried out against neighboring realms as foreign corporations attempted to branch into Kurita space.

While outright violence between competitors is a major breach of etiquette and law, the bureaucratic and political battles waged between corporations are a standard way of life. Using any means necessary—within the confines of Draconian law and the Dictum Honorium—to gain the upper hand in negotiations is common practice. Player characters who operate along the fringes of Draconian society can be quietly retained for services deemed unworthy of upper class actions, or they may be used to prevent such activities.

Many of the Combine's megalithic corporations have business dealings across the Inner Sphere, providing opportunities for player characters. Foreign assets, delegates, dignitaries, corporate officers, and the like need protection, guidance, or observation. Government agencies such as the ISF or Procurement Department may have need of representatives or operatives to provide assistance or act as intermediaries. The benefits and drawbacks of such assignments can increase a character's political power or honor or make way for the Dragon to remove subversive and reactionary elements from itself.

ATTACKED!

No matter the era, the Draconis Combine has always shared two broad, hostile borders. The Dragon's continual emphasis on its military and its *bushido* ways make it a perennial instigator. The Terran Hegemony, Federated Suns, Lyran Commonwealth (and later Alliance), Outworlds Alliance, and Clan Ghost Bear have all known the fear of a Combine assault. Conversely, most of its neighbors have taken the opportunity to attack the Dragon at every turn when strategically necessary. The border worlds of the Combine are subjected to constant raids and assaults as enemies of the nation probe and assess Kuritan readiness. Characters operating on worlds within reach of either border can easily find themselves caught in such an attack and forced to choose sides—even while working for the Dragon's interests. Politics and power plays are always an underlying issue; those characters who can tap into such undercurrents will find ways to turn such incidents to their benefit—or downfall.

BATTLETECH RULES

The following rules supplement those in *Total Warfare* (*TW*), *TechManual* (*TM*), and *Tactical Operations* (*TO*), and cover combat in various terrain and environmental conditions that players may encounter in the *BattleTech* universe. All players should read through these rules and agree to their use before beginning play.

NEW UNIT TYPES

The following are new battlefield unit types available in the Draconis Combine. Unless otherwise stated, they follow the rules laid out in *TW*, *TM*, and *TO*.

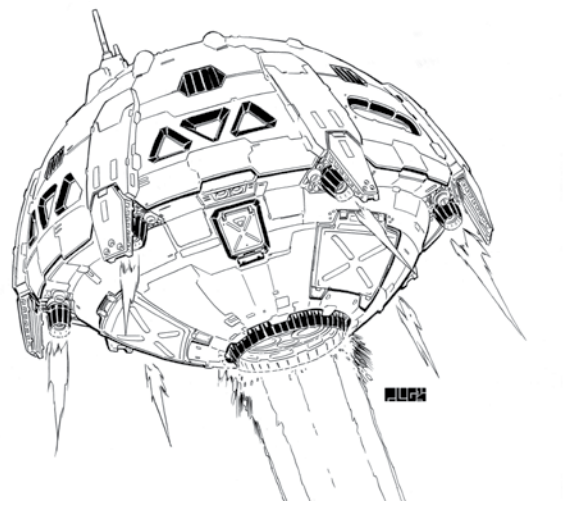
HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY

When the Dragon's citizens are in need of forceful education, the Friendly Persuaders remind them of their duty as Draconian citizens. If this reminder requires the use of stun batons and riot shotguns, then so be it. For those times when a truly criminal element rears its head, the Persuaders call out their tactical teams. These teams ride armored cars, carry thick ballistic armor, and wield recoilless rifles capable of bringing down buildings or delivering riot gas canisters.



Heavy Riot Infantry 1
Notable Unit: Thirty-second Riot Response Precinct, Imperial City, Luthien
Tech Base (Rating): Inner Sphere (D/C-C-C)
Transport Weight: 3 tons
Equipment:
Primary Weapon: 20 Wakazashi O-12 Shotguns
Secondary Weapon: 8 Bullet Shields
Armor: Draconis Combine Standard Infantry Kit
Battle Value: 89
Notes: Can only damage conventional infantry units. Unable to conduct Anti-'Mech attacks
Platoon Type (Specialty): Foot (None)
Ground MP: 1
Platoon Size (Squad/Platoon): 28 (7/4)
Damage Divisor: 2
To-Hit Modifier (Range in Hexes):
-1 (0 Hex), 0 (1 Hex), +1 (2 Hex), +2 (3 Hex)
Maximum Weapon Damage (# of Troopers):
10 (28-7), 9 (26-24), 8 (23-21), 7 (20-19), 6 (18-16), 5 (15-13), 4 (12-10), 3 (9-7), 2 (6-5), 1 (4-2), 0 (1)

Heavy Riot Infantry 2
Notable Unit: Thirty-second Riot Response Precinct, Imperial City, Luthien
Tech Base (Rating): Inner Sphere (D/C-C-C)
Transport Weight: 24 tons
Equipment:
Primary Weapon: 16 Wakazashi O-12 Shotguns
Secondary Weapon: 8 Heavy Recoilless Rifles
Armor: Standard Ballistic Plate
Battle Value: 61
Notes: Does +1 damage to conventional infantry at range 0. Unable to conduct Anti-'Mech attacks
Platoon Type (Specialty): Mechanized (Wheeled)
Ground MP: 3
Platoon Size (Squad/Platoon): 24 (6/4)
Damage Divisor: 2
To-Hit Modifier (Range in Hexes):
–1 (0 Hex), 0 (1–2 Hexes), +2 (3–4 Hexes), +4 (5–6 Hexes)
Maximum Weapon Damage (# of Troopers):
10 (24-23), 9 (22-21), 8 (20-18), 7 (17-16), 6 (15-14), 5 (13-11), 4 (10-9), 3 (8-6) 2 (5-4), 1 (3-2), 0 (1)



DRAGONSTAR PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Designed and produced during the height of the Star League, the *Dragonstar PT* is the workhorse of the Combine's intersystem transport network. These spherical transports are a common sight at all Combine spaceports, ferrying passengers from the planet to waiting vessels in orbit or at the system's primary jump points.

*Dragonstar*s are relatively cheap to build. As they are notoriously prone to breakdown, these vessels are retired after logging at least 1,000 AU of travel. Most Combine transportation firms find that purchasing a new *Dragonstar* is more cost effective than paying for escalating repair fees. Yakima Enterprises, the vessel's primary manufacturer and part of the Stellar Trek Enterprise conglomerate, is aware of the paradigm. A solid secondary market in salvaging and stripping the older vessels for spare parts keeps the company in business—along with heavy government subsidies. Despite news that many of these spare parts find their way into newly manufactured models, trust in the *Dragonstar* product is nearly fanatical.

Part of the vessel's charm is its history. Though officially debuting in 2610, the *Dragonstar*'s roots go back to the days of the Dragon's expansion. The original *Dragon's Stars* vessels were used extensively in shuttling Combine dignitaries and officials and were, for a time, a symbol of the Dragon's diplomacy efforts. Yakima strove to keep the aesthetics of the older vessel in the revamped (and renamed) *Dragonstar* design, though with updated systems and electronics.

With the advent of battle armor and a resurgence in naval warfare, the DCA commissioned Yakima to develop the *Dragonstar* into a military transport. With minimal changes to the craft's armor, engine, and weapons bays—a testament to the militaristic eye by commercial engineers in the Combine—*Dragonstar* Assault Transports (AT) began arriving at DCA installations within a year.

***Dragonstar* PT (Passenger Transport)**
Type: Civilian Spheroid
Use: Passenger Transport / Assault Craft
Tech: Inner Sphere
Introduced: 2610
Mass: 150 tons
Battle Value: 1,205

Dimensions
Length: 18 meters
Width: 14 meters

Fuel: 6 tons (480)
Safe Thrust: 5
Maximum Thrust: 8
Heat Sinks: 20
Structural Integrity: 11

Armor
Nose: 85
Sides: 72
Aft: 55

Crew: 1 officer, 2 enlisted/non-rated, 1 gunner, 42 bay personnel

Cargo
Bay 1: Jump Infantry Bay (2) 2 Doors
Bay 2: Cargo (16.5 tons) 1 Door

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Tonnage	Heat	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
Large Laser	Nose	5	8	8	8	–	–
Medium Laser	Nose	1	3	5	–	–	–
Medium Laser	L	1	3	5	–	–	–
Medium Laser	R	1	3	5	–	–	–
Large Laser	Aft	5	8	8	8	–	–
Medium Laser	Aft	1	3	5	–	–	–

Note: All crew quarters use Steerage Compartments. Jump Infantry Bays may also be used to carry 40 passengers.

***Dragonstar* Assault Transport (3060)**
Type: Military Spheroid
Use: Assault Craft
Tech: Inner Sphere
Introduced: 3060
Mass: 150 tons
Battle Value: 1,175

Dimensions
Length: 18 meters
Width: 14 meters

Fuel: 6 tons (480)
Safe Thrust: 5
Maximum Thrust: 8
Heat Sinks: 20
Structural Integrity: 11

Armor
Nose: 85
Sides: 72
Aft: 55

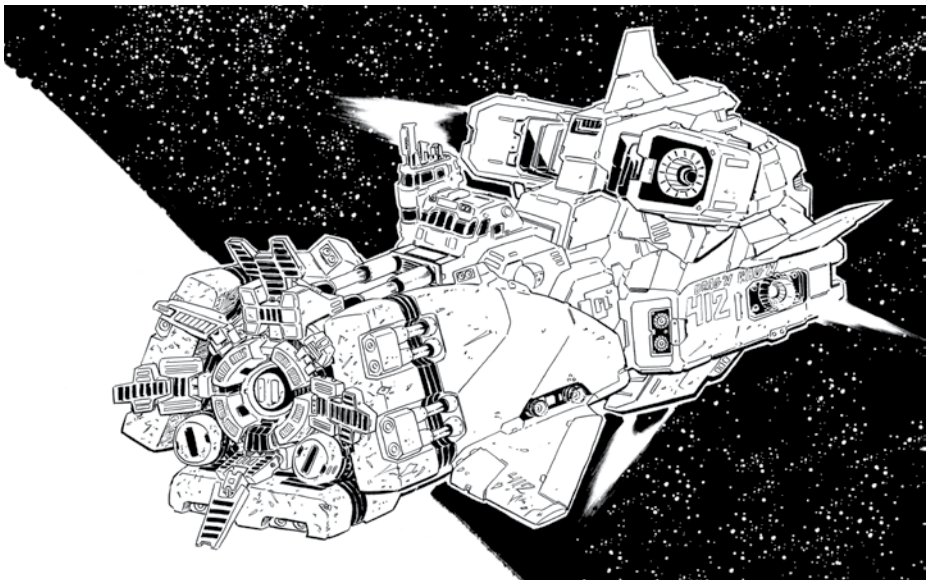
Crew: 1 officer, 2 enlisted/non-rated, 1 gunner

Cargo

Bay 1: Battle Armor Compartment (12)	2 Doors
Bay 2: Cargo (4.5 tons)	1 Door

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Tonnage	Heat	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
Large Pulse Laser	Nose	5	9	9	9	–	–
ER Medium Laser	Nose	1	5	5	5	–	–
Medium Pulse Laser	L	2	4	6	–	–	–
Medium Pulse Laser	R	2	4	6	–	–	–
2 ER Medium Lasers	Aft	2	5	5	5	–	–

Note: All crew quarters use Steerage Compartments.



HOSHIRYOKOU

Nearly as old as the nation that birthed it, the *Hoshiryokou* is a common sight at busy Combine space stations. Its boxy design has seen several aesthetic changes over the centuries. Despite the cosmetic alterations, the essence of the *Hoshiryokou* remains unchanged from its debut.

Initially conceived as a standard cargo and passenger hauler, the *Hoshiryokou* served passably in the role. Its modular cargo containers were interchangeable with utilitarian passenger carriages. For amenities, comfort, and space, the *Dragonstar* succeeded where the *Hoshiryokou* failed to deliver. Kintetsu Stellar Systems faced bankruptcy when Yakima Enterprises' offering pushed the *Hoshiryokou* out of the market. Rather than fold, Kintetsu found a new way to use its cargo hauler, using extensive grants from the Combine government.

The structure of the *Hoshiryokou* was reinforced, and a space tug adapter was fitted to its front. Free upgrades to all owners of the vessel sent Kintetsu deeply into debt to the government. Isesaki Shipping bought the company for little more than a handful of *ryu* and a two-hundred-year agreement to produce the space tug for the DCA under cost.

The *Hoshiryokou* is in constant use, interchanging cargo between vessels at high-traffic stations and moving malfunctioning DropShips to maintenance slips or other JumpShips. In low traffic networks, the *Hoshiryokou* serves double-duty with *Dragonstar*s, transporting cargo and passengers around a system. The vessel's reliability is exceptional, and many Combine merchants have two or three in use with their convoys.

Though not a military vessel by design, the *Hoshiryokou* has found its way through several conflicts. In 3056, the *Dogstar Express* delivered a DEST squad to a Clan Smoke Jaguar merchant vessel at Luzerne. The tug's crew pressed their vessel against a Clan *Broadsword* that attempted to undock from the JumpShip. After the merchant JumpShip was captured, the *Broadsword* was discovered to have the OmniMechs of Beta Galaxy's Command Star on board. The *Dogstar Express*'s quick action netted the Dragon five pristine Clan OmniMechs and fifteen Clan scientists and technicians.

Hoshiryokou
Type: Civilian Aerodyne
Use: Tug Boat
Tech: Inner Sphere
Introduced: 2480
Mass: 800 tons
Battle Value: 1,216

Dimensions
Length: 51 meters
Width: 36 meters
Height: 12 meters

Fuel: 20 tons (1,200)
Tons/Burn-day: 1.84
Safe Thrust: 5
Maximum Thrust: 8
Heat Sinks: 8
Structural Integrity: 25

Armor
Nose: 122
Sides: 92
Aft: 82

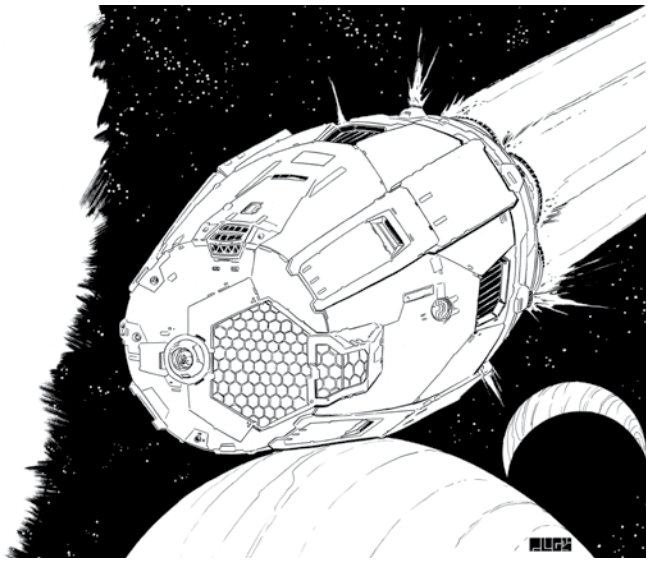
Cargo

Bay 1: Cargo Containers, 10-ton capacity (10)	1 Door
Bay 2: Cargo (8 tons)	1 Door

Life Boats: 0
Escape Pods: 1
Crew: 1 officer, 4 enlisted/non-rated, 1 gunner, 9 steerage passengers

Notes: Equipped with 18 tons of Standard armor and Naval Tug Adapter

Weapons:	Capital Attack Values (Standard)					
Arc (Heat) Type	**Heat**	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**	**Extreme**	**Class**
Nose (10 Heat)						
Large Laser	8	1 (8)	1 (8)	–	–	Laser
2 Small Lasers	2	1 (6)	–	–	–	Point Defense
Aft (3 Heat)						
Small Laser	1	0 (3)	–	–	–	Point Defense



GAAJIAN SYSTEM PATROL BOAT

First built for the Alliance of Galedon, the *Gaajian* operated as an escort vessel for Alliance merchants. This system patrol boat remains in service within the DCA and is commonly used by the Port Authority. Largely unchanged since its debut, this tiny DropShip is the symbol of the Dragon's longevity and authority on every Combine world.

Today's *Gaajian*s equip high-powered Look-Down Radar and Hi-Res Imagers to scan incoming and outgoing traffic. Modest crew and officer quarters provide comfort for those on deep system patrols. If necessary, up to two platoons of marines can be housed to carry out police or boarding actions. The small bay has enough room for a pair of *Dragonstar*s.

Though primarily used for orbital and station patrols, *Gaajian*s can also be found at an important system's more common pirate points. DCA JumpShips often rotate through a system's pirate points, dropping off and relieving crews on perpetual watch for smugglers, pirates, spies, and would-be invaders. Though not sufficiently armed to stop an invasion fleet, *Gaajian*s have proven to be more than a match for small-time mercenaries and pirates looking to steal valuable Combine commodities.

A common practice with many *Gaajian* crews is to record the vessel's history through painting the interior spaces. Similar to yakuza tattoos, the artwork is done by crew during a *Gaajian*'s long patrol circuit. Prominent events, from police actions to naval combat, and personal happenings such as the birth of a child or the death of a beloved crewman, are illustrated in colorful detail. Because many vessels are a few centuries old, the murals are a living history of people, worlds, and the nation itself. The oldest *Gaajian* in service is the *Hiroshima Sunlight*. Commissioned in 2489, the *Sunlight* has transported five Coordinators and dozens of Kuritan family members during its long history. It recently transported the Heir-Designate to Dieron before returning to its duty station with the DCS *Galedon Express*.

***Gaajian* System Patrol Boat (2485)**
Type: Military Spheroid
Use: System Patrol Boat
Tech: Inner Sphere
Introduced: 2485
Mass: 1,500 tons
Battle Value: 3,351

Dimensions
Length: 70 meters
Width: 49 meters
Height: 49 meters

Fuel: 100 tons (5,000)
Tons/Burn-day: 1.84
Safe Thrust: 4
Maximum Thrust: 6
Heat Sinks: 68
Structural Integrity: 12

Armor
Nose: 208
Sides: 182
Aft: 172

Cargo

Bay 1: Small Craft Cubicle (2)	2 Doors
Bay 2: Cargo (95 tons)	1 Door

Life Boats: 0
Escape Pods: 4
Crew: 2 officers, 4 enlisted/non-rated, 6 gunners, 10 bay personnel, 42 marines

Notes: Equipped with 43.5 tons of Standard armor. A Look-Down Radar and Hi-Res Imager are mounted in the nose.

Weapons:		Capital Attack Values (Standard)				
Arc (Heat) Type	**Heat**	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**	**Extreme**	**Class**
Nose (46 Heat)						
3 PPC	30	3 (30)	3 (30)	–	–	PPC
4 Medium Lasers	12	1 (10)	–	–	–	Laser
4 Small Lasers	4	1 (12)	–	–	–	Point Defense
FR/FL (22 Heat)						
2 Large Lasers	8	2 (16)	2 (16)	–	–	Laser
2 Medium Lasers	6	10 (1)	–	–	–	Laser
AR/AL (6 Heat)						
2 Medium Lasers	6	10 (1)	–	–	–	Laser
Aft (26 Heat)						
2 Large Lasers	16	16 (2)	16 (2)	–	–	Laser
2 Medium Lasers	6	10 (1)	–	–	–	Laser
4 Small Lasers	4	12 (1)	–	–	–	Point Defense

***Gaajian* System Patrol Boat (3060)**
Type: Military Spheroid
Use: System Patrol Boat
Tech: Inner Sphere
Introduced: 3060
Mass: 1,500 tons
Battle Value: 3,592

Dimensions
Length: 59 meters
Width: 59 meters
Height: 59 meters

Fuel: 100 tons (5,000)
Tons/Burn-day: 1.84
Safe Thrust: 4
Maximum Thrust: 6
Heat Sinks: 54 (108)
Structural Integrity: 12

Armor
Nose: 208
Sides: 182
Aft: 172

Cargo

Bay 1: Small Craft Cubicle (2)	2 Doors
Bay 2: Cargo (111 tons)	1 Door

Life Boats: 0
Escape Pods: 4
Crew: 2 officers, 4 enlisted/non-rated, 5 gunners, 10 bay personnel, 21 marines, 12 battle armor marines

Notes: Equipped with 43.5 tons of Standard armor. A Look-Down Radar and Hi-Res Imager are mounted in the nose.

Weapons:		Capital Attack Values (Standard)				
Arc (Heat) Type	**Heat**	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**	**Extreme**	**Class**
Nose (61 Heat)						
2 ER PPC	30	3 (30)	3 (30)	3 (30)	–	PPC
2 Large Pulse Lasers	20	2 (18)	2 (18)	–	–	Pulse
2 ER Medium Laser	10	1 (10)	1 (10)	–	–	Laser
Anti-Missile System (48)	1	0 (3)	–	–	–	Point Defense
FR/FL (30 Heat)						
2 Large Pulse Lasers	20	2 (18)	2 (18)	–	–	Pulse
2 ER Medium Lasers	10	10 (1)	10 (1)	–	–	Laser
AR/AL (8 Heat)						
2 Medium Pulse Lasers	8	1 (12)	–	–	–	Pulse
Aft (31 Heat)						
2 Large Pulse Lasers	20	2 (18)	2 (18)	–	–	Pulse
2 ER Medium Lasers	10	1 (10)	1 (10)	–	–	Laser
1 Anti-Missile System (48)	1	0 (3)	–	–	–	Point Defense

OBUZAABAA TACTICAL VEHICLE & SASAYAKU CONTROL TRANSPORT

A common sight in Combine police fleets for the last century, the 'zaabaa—as it is known by many Friendly Persuaders—is a low-slung civilian personnel carrier. The 'zaabaa is a command-and-control vehicle capable of coordinating tactical teams, patrol groups, and local DCMS units. In low population zones, the 'zaabaa is used instead of the more ubiquitous minicars or bicycles found in high density areas.

'Zaabaas are crammed with communications equipment, making the crew space more utilitarian than comfortable. The four tons of cargo space is customized to a crew's mission, often containing riot gear, standard emergency supplies, roadway assistance kits, criminal suppression systems, and in some cases, temporary prisoner transportation cubes. Those tasked with more tactical duties contain additional weapons and gear, as well as surveillance equipment and sensors.

Identical in form, Sasayaku Control Transports are indistinguishable from the more prevalent 'zaabaa. Every major population center contains dozens of Sasayaku CTs operating on a constant rotation. The cargo area in the rear is converted into a Gossamer drone launch bay. Half of standard 'communications consoles are replaced with the more sophisticated surveillance and control systems. The Sasayaku has half of the infantry space found in a 'zaabaa. As such, a Sasayaku is paired with a nearby *'zaabaa* in case assistance is needed.

Type: **Obuzaabaa**
Technology Base: Inner Sphere
Movement Type: Wheeled (Medium)
Equipment Rating: D/X-D-C
Tonnage: 25

Equipment		**Mass**
Chassis:		6
Engine/Controls:	Electric (Fuel Cell)	5.5
Cruising MP:	5	
Flank MP:	8	
Heat Sinks:	0	
Fuel:	1,212 km	1
Armor Factor (BAR 7):	44	2
	Armor Value	
Front	12	
Sides	15/15	
Rear	12	

Weapons and Ammo	**Location**	**Tonnage**
None	—	—

Crew: 5 (1 officer, 4 enlisted/non-rated)
Cargo:
4.5 tons — 1 Door (Right Side)
4 tons Infantry Compartment — 1 Door (Rear)

Notes: Features Off-Road chassis modification, Communications Equipment (2 tons).

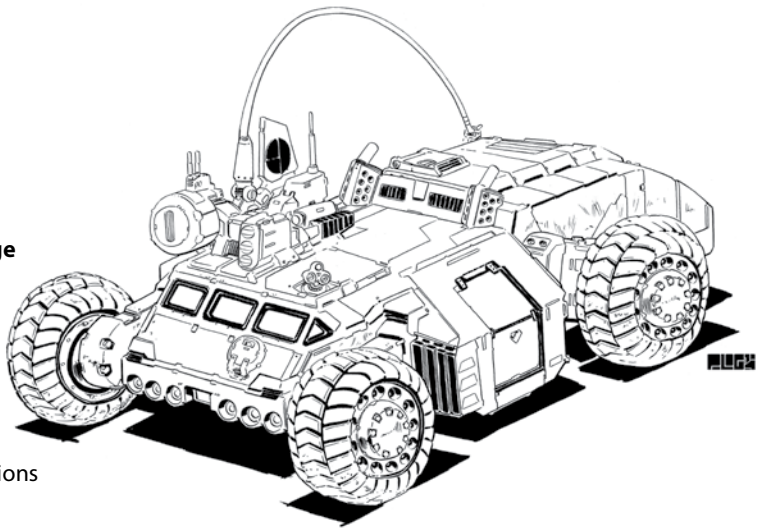
Type: **Sasayaku**
Technology Base: Inner Sphere (Advanced)
Movement Type: Wheeled (Medium)
Equipment Rating: D/X-F-F
Tonnage: 25

Equipment		**Mass**
Chassis:		6
Engine/Controls:	Electric (Fuel Cell)	5.5
Cruising MP:	5	
Flank MP:	8	
Heat Sinks:	0	
Fuel:	1,212 km	1
Armor Factor (BAR 7):	44	2
	Armor Value	
Front	12	
Sides	15/15	
Rear	12	

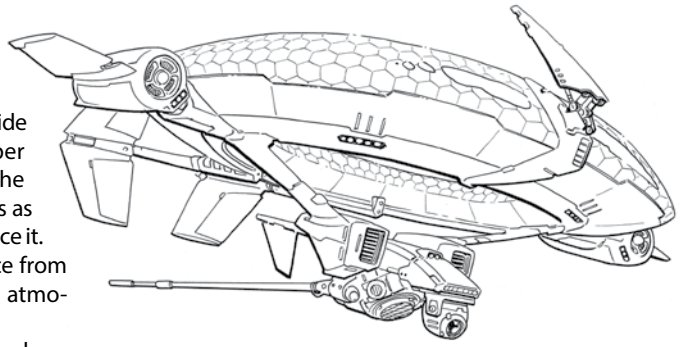
Weapons and Ammo	**Location**	**Tonnage**
None	—	—

Crew: 5 (1 officer, 4 enlisted/non-rated)
Cargo:
5 tons — 1 Door (Right Side)
2 tons Infantry Compartment — 1 Door (Rear)

Notes: Features Off-Road chassis modification, Drone Control System (1 drone, 2.5 tons), Communications Equipment (1 ton).



GOSSAMER SURVEILLANCE DRONE



For centuries the Dragon has kept an eye on its citizenry, watching to protect them from undue harm caused by outside influences. By observing the people, the Combine's upper levels of government maintain a finger on the pulse of the nation. While many outside the realm would see such actions as obtrusive and invasive, those inside the Dragon's grasp embrace it. Such activity helps officials proactively protect the populace from divisive elements and subversion, maintaining a peaceful atmosphere in which to live and work.

The Gossamer is the latest in a long line of drone technology used by civilian protection services for the last several centuries. The drone's lifting power is sufficient to carry sophisticated hi-res imaging systems and multi-directional audio pickups, transmitting its data in a real-time feed to a grounded control system. In heavy urban areas, Gossamer drones are controlled from Sasayaku Control Vehicles, providing necessary mobility and a small reaction team to handle detected crises.

Drone usage is heavier on Combine border worlds as the ISF also fields specialized surveillance teams to keep tabs on foreign diplomats, merchants, and other persons of interest. On important worlds such as prefecture capitals, the ISF uses modified *Luxemburg*-class airships as its central drone network. During recent incursions by Draconis March troops, the ISF used drones at night, keeping tabs on Davion troop movements and maintaining reliable intelligence for the DCMS. Gossamers are silent and typically color-neutral, making them extremely difficult to detect in the twilight and evening hours.

Type: **Gossamer**
Technology Base: Inner Sphere (Advanced)
Movement Type: Airship (Small)
Equipment Rating: E /X-X -F
Mass: 4,450 kg

Equipment		**Mass**
Chassis:		379
Engine/Controls:	Electric (Solar)	570
Safe Thrust:	2	
Max Thrust:	3	
Structural Integrity:	2	
Heat Sinks:	0	
Fuel:	N/A	0
Armor Factor (BAR 2):	4	48
	Armor Value	
Front	1	
Sides	1/1	
Aft	1	

Weapons and Ammo	**Location**	**Tonnage**
None	—	—

Crew: 0 (Drone)
Cargo: 8 kg standard

Notes: Features Ultra-light chassis modification, Hi-Res Imager (2,500 kg, Nose), Drone Operating System (945 kg).

WAKAMIYA SALVAGE DESTROYER

A holdover from the early days of Combine exploration efforts, the *Wakamiya* continues to serve as the Combine's premiere surface naval vessel. Found cruising the oceans of the Dragon's many primarily water worlds such as Buckminster, Athenry, and Isesaki, the *Wakamiya* remains in service over five centuries later. Finding two or more of these salvage destroyers on a single world is rare.

Initially conceived as an all-in-one vessel, the *Wakamiya* mounts impressive offensive and defensive capabilities that surround a dedicated core of deep-water salvage and rescue equipment. The *Wakamiya* serves as a mobile command center, coordinating fleet efforts across the globe. Underwater bays service the vessel's submarine escorts, while twelve light bays on deck utilize the oversized aft helipad. The *Wakamiya* carries up to eight additional surface vessels—typically hovercraft or light ships—and provides fire support through the main turret mounted near the bow. Up to twelve drones provide additional observational and sensor data crucial to the *Wakamiya*'s multi-mission role.

Aside from standard defensive operations, the *Wakamiya* assists local mining efforts under the waves. Sizable cargo bays provide needed equipment for survey and construction efforts. Vehicle complements can be adjusted to accommodate support vessels and other equipment, and the vessel provides a temporary administrative and control platform until the facility is ready.

On border worlds subjected to constant raids and temporary occupations, *Wakamiya*s serve as a central hub for Draconian resistance. A Davion assault on Deshler in 2872 defeated the small garrison force and attempted to control the system for the Federated Suns. What the AFFS failed to take into account was the *Sakura no Hana*. The *Hana*'s captain kept the ship mobile along the main coast and deep inland rivers, striking Davion patrols with its hovercraft and VTOL complement. The harassment kept the Davion forces focused on the *Hana*, as the invaders had minimal aerospace support. The *Hana* suffered severe damage from a DropShip strike but did not sink, limping along for another month before the arrival of the Second Sword of Light. The captain of the *Sakura no Hana* was awarded the Bushido Blade for his efforts.

Type: ***Wakamiya*-class Salvage Destroyer**
Technology Base: Inner Sphere (Advanced)
Chassis Type: Naval (Large, Template E)
Mass: 50,500
Battle Value: 48,028
Equipment Rating: D/E-F-F

Equipment		**Mass**
Chassis:		15,453
Engine/Controls:	Fusion	13,180.5
Cruising MP:	5	
Flank MP:	8	
Heat Sinks:	60	60
Fuel:	N/A	0
Turret (T1):		5.5
Turret (T2):		10.5
Turret (T9):		3.5
Armor Factor (BAR 10):	1563	98.5
	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*
Front	56	200
Front R/L Side	56	185/185
Rear R/L Side	56	171/171
Rear	56	171
Turret (T1)	56	160
Turret (T2)	56	160
Turret (T9)	56	160

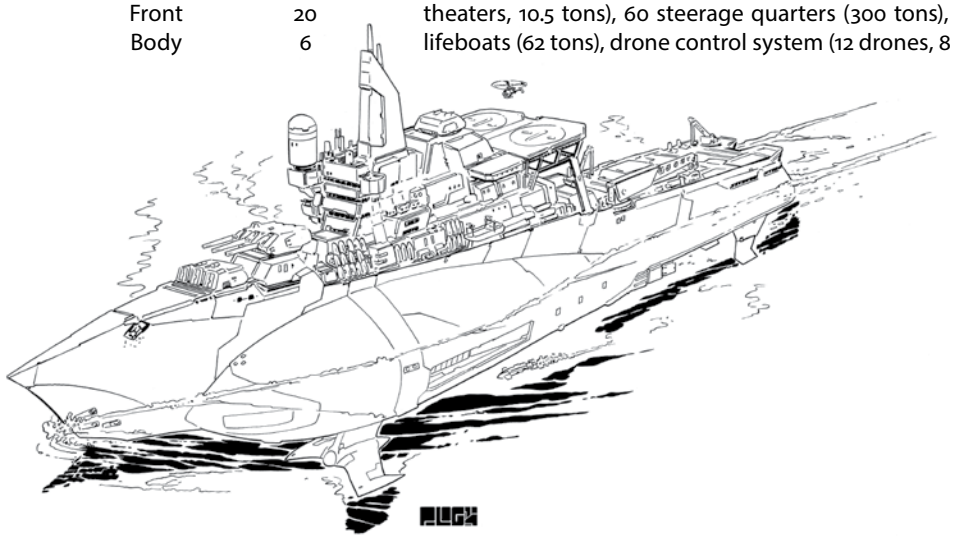
Weapons and Ammo	**Location**	**Mass**
4 LRM 20	Turret (1)	40
Ammo (LRM) 96	Body	16
2 PPC	Turret (1)	14
3 Long Tom	Turret (2)	90
Ammo (Long Tom) 180	Body	36
2 PPC	Turret (2)	14
2 LRM 20	Turret (9)	20
Ammo (LRM) 48	Body	8
2 PPC	Turret (9)	14
2 LRT 20	Front	20
Ammo (LRT) 36	Body	6

Weapons and Ammo (continued)	**Location**	**Mass**
2 SRT 6	Front	6
Ammo (SRT) 30	Body	2
4 Machine Guns	Front	2
Ammo (MG) 200	Body	1
2 LRT 20	FR/FL	40
Ammo (LRT) 72	Body	12
SRT 6	FR/FL	6
Ammo (SRT) 30	Body	2
2 Machine Guns	FR/FL	2
Ammo (MG) 200	Body	1
2 Fluid Guns	FR/FL	8
Ammo (Fluid) 400	Body	20
2 Machine Guns	AR/AL	2
Ammo (MG) 200	Body	1
2 Fluid Guns	AR/AL	8
Ammo (Fluid) 400	Body	20
LRT 20	Rear	10
Ammo (LRT) 18	Body	3
SRT 6	Rear	3
Ammo (SRT) 15	Body	1
2 Machine Guns	Rear	1
Ammo (MG) 100	Body	.5
Advanced Fire Control System	—	30

Crew: 174 (27 officers, 83 enlisted/non-rated, 75 gunners)
Cargo:

1,820 tons liquid cargo (2,000 tons)	1 Door (Rear)
2,610 tons refrigerated cargo (3,000 tons)	
11,530.5 tons standard cargo	2 Doors (FR, FL)
4 super-heavy vehicle bays (800 tons)	2 Door (Front)
8 heavy vehicle bays (800 tons)	3 Doors (Front, FR, FL)
16 light vehicle bays (800 tons)	2 Doors (FR, FL, Rear)

Notes: Features Armored and Tractor (Naval) Chassis Modifications, helipad (500 tons, T7), 4 lift hoists (12 tons, 2 FR, 2 FL), 8 fluid suction systems (8 tons, 2 FR, 2 FL, 2 AR, 2 AL), 3 field kitchens (9 tons), communications equipment (8 tons), MASH equipment (7 additional theaters, 10.5 tons), 60 steerage quarters (300 tons), 62 maritime lifeboats (62 tons), drone control system (12 drones, 8 tons).



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BATTLETECH™



HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 1 RECORD SHEET

HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 1: PLATOON 1

Armor Type: Draconis Combine Standard Infantry Kit **Divisor:** 2

Experience:_____
Gunnery Skill: ____
Anti-'Mech Skill: ____
Max Weapon Damage*:

30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
—	—	10	10	9	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	0

*Damage is always applied in 2-point Damage Value groupings

RANGE IN HEXES (TO-HIT MODIFIER)

Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Range Modifier	-1	0	+1	+2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes:
Can only damage conventional infantry units.
Cannot conduct Anti-'Mech Attacks.

Field Gun Type: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A
Disposable Weapon: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A

BV: 89 **Transport Wt:** 4 **Movement MP:** 1 **Type:** Ground
Movement MP: N/A **Type:** N/A

HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 1: PLATOON 2

Armor Type: Draconis Combine Standard Infantry Kit **Divisor:** 2

Experience:_____
Gunnery Skill: ____
Anti-'Mech Skill: ____
Max Weapon Damage*:

30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
—	—	10	10	9	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	0

*Damage is always applied in 2-point Damage Value groupings

RANGE IN HEXES (TO-HIT MODIFIER)

Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Range Modifier	-1	0	+1	+2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes:
Can only damage conventional infantry units.
Cannot conduct Anti-'Mech Attacks.

Field Gun Type: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A
Disposable Weapon: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A

BV: 89 **Transport Wt:** 4 **Movement MP:** 1 **Type:** Ground
Movement MP: N/A **Type:** N/A

HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 1: PLATOON 3

Armor Type: Draconis Combine Standard Infantry Kit **Divisor:** 2

Experience:_____
Gunnery Skill: ____
Anti-'Mech Skill: ____
Max Weapon Damage*:

30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
—	—	10	10	9	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	0

*Damage is always applied in 2-point Damage Value groupings

RANGE IN HEXES (TO-HIT MODIFIER)

Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Range Modifier	-1	0	+1	+2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes:
Can only damage conventional infantry units.
Cannot conduct Anti-'Mech Attacks.

Field Gun Type: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A
Disposable Weapon: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A

BV: 89 **Transport Wt:** 4 **Movement MP:** 1 **Type:** Ground
Movement MP: N/A **Type:** N/A

HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 1: PLATOON 4

Armor Type: Draconis Combine Standard Infantry Kit **Divisor:** 2

Experience:_____
Gunnery Skill: ____
Anti-'Mech Skill: ____
Max Weapon Damage*:

30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
—	—	10	10	9	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	0

*Damage is always applied in 2-point Damage Value groupings

RANGE IN HEXES (TO-HIT MODIFIER)

Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Range Modifier	-1	0	+1	+2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes:
Can only damage conventional infantry units.
Cannot conduct Anti-'Mech Attacks.

Field Gun Type: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A
Disposable Weapon: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A

BV: 89 **Transport Wt:** 4 **Movement MP:** 1 **Type:** Ground
Movement MP: N/A **Type:** N/A

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BATTLETECH™



HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 2 RECORD SHEET

HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 2: PLATOON 1

Armor Type: Standard Ballistic Plate **Divisor:** 2

Experience:_____
Gunnery Skill: ____
Anti-'Mech Skill: ____
Max Weapon Damage*:

30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	0

Notes:

Does +1 damage to conventional infantry at range 0.
Cannot conduct Anti-'Mech Attacks.

*Damage is always applied in 2-point Damage Value groupings

RANGE IN HEXES (TO-HIT MODIFIER)

Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Range Modifier	-1	0	0	+2	+2	+4	+4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Field Gun Type: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A
Disposable Weapon: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A

BV: 61 **Transport Wt:** 24 **Movement MP:** 3 **Type:** Wheeled
Movement MP: N/A **Type:** N/A

HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 2: PLATOON 2

Armor Type: Standard Ballistic Plate **Divisor:** 2

Experience:_____
Gunnery Skill: ____
Anti-'Mech Skill: ____
Max Weapon Damage*:

30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	0

Notes:

Does +1 damage to conventional infantry at range 0.
Cannot conduct Anti-'Mech Attacks.

*Damage is always applied in 2-point Damage Value groupings

RANGE IN HEXES (TO-HIT MODIFIER)

Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Range Modifier	-1	0	0	+2	+2	+4	+4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Field Gun Type: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A
Disposable Weapon: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A

BV: 61 **Transport Wt:** 24 **Movement MP:** 3 **Type:** Wheeled
Movement MP: N/A **Type:** N/A

HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 2: PLATOON 3

Armor Type: Standard Ballistic Plate **Divisor:** 2

Experience:_____
Gunnery Skill: ____
Anti-'Mech Skill: ____
Max Weapon Damage*:

30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	0

Notes:

Does +1 damage to conventional infantry at range 0.
Cannot conduct Anti-'Mech Attacks.

*Damage is always applied in 2-point Damage Value groupings

RANGE IN HEXES (TO-HIT MODIFIER)

Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Range Modifier	-1	0	0	+2	+2	+4	+4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Field Gun Type: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A
Disposable Weapon: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A

BV: 61 **Transport Wt:** 24 **Movement MP:** 3 **Type:** Wheeled
Movement MP: N/A **Type:** N/A

HEAVY RIOT INFANTRY 2: PLATOON 4

Armor Type: Standard Ballistic Plate **Divisor:** 2

Experience:_____
Gunnery Skill: ____
Anti-'Mech Skill: ____
Max Weapon Damage*:

30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	0

Notes:

Does +1 damage to conventional infantry at range 0.
Cannot conduct Anti-'Mech Attacks.

*Damage is always applied in 2-point Damage Value groupings

RANGE IN HEXES (TO-HIT MODIFIER)

Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Range Modifier	-1	0	0	+2	+2	+4	+4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Field Gun Type: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A
Disposable Weapon: N/A **Ammo:** N/A **Disposable Weapon:** N/A **Ammo:** N/A

BV: 61 **Transport Wt:** 24 **Movement MP:** 3 **Type:** Wheeled
Movement MP: N/A **Type:** N/A

CATALYST game labs

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BATTLETECH

SPHEROID SMALL CRAFT RECORD SHEET

CRAFT DATA

Type: Dragonstar Assault Transport (PT)

Thrust:		**Tonnage:**	150
Safe Thrust:	5	**Tech Base:**	Inner Sphere
Maximum Thrust:	8	**Era:**	Star League

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

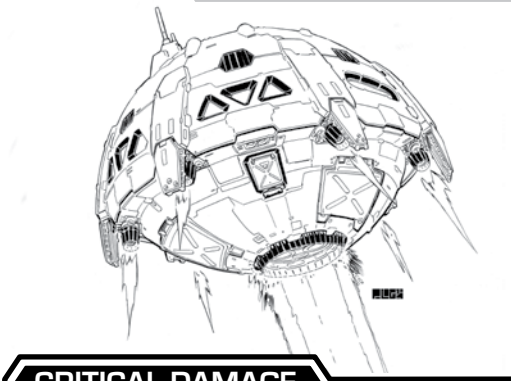
Standard Scale

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	(1–6) SRV	(7–12) MRV	(13–20) LRV	(21–25) ERV
1	Large Laser [DE]	N	8	8	8	—	—
1	Medium Laser [DE]	N	3	5	—	—	—
1	Medium Laser [DE]	LS	3	5	—	—	—
1	Medium Laser [DE]	RS	3	5	—	—	—
1	Large Laser [DE]	A	8	8	8	—	—
1	Medium Laser [DE]	A	3	5	—	—	—

Cargo:
Infantry Bay - 2 platoons (2 doors)
Cargo Space - 16.500 tons (1 door)

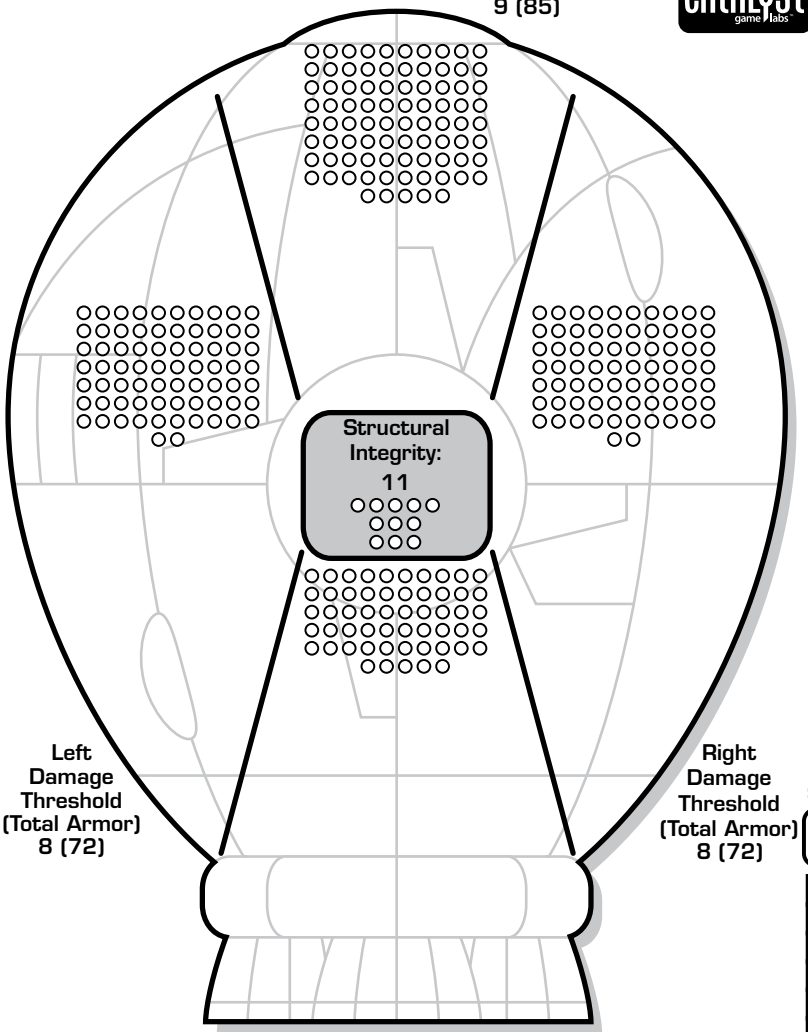
Fuel: 480 Points

BV: 1,205



ARMOR DIAGRAM

Standard Scale



Heat Scale

Overflow
30*
29
28*
27*
26*
25*
24*
23*
22*
21*
20*
19*
18*
17*
16
15*
14*
13*
12
11
10*
9
8*
7
6
5*
4
3
2
1
0

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics	+1	+2	+5	**Engine**	2	4	D
FCS	+2	+4	D	**Gear**	+5		
Sensors	+1	+2	+5	**Life Support**	+2		

PILOT DATA

Name: _____

Gunnery Skill: ___ **Piloting Skill:** ___

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness #	3	5	7	10	11	Dead
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	

HEAT DATA

Heat Level*	Effects
30	Shutdown
28	Ammo Exp. avoid on 8+
27	Pilot Damage, avoid on 9+
26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+
25	Random Movement, avoid on 10+
24	+4 Modifier to Fire
23	Ammo Exp. avoid on 6+
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+
21	Pilot Damage, avoid on 6+
20	Random Movement, avoid on 8+
19	Ammo Exp. avoid on 4+
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+
17	+3 Modifier to Fire
15	Random Movement, avoid on 7+
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+
13	+2 Modifier to Fire
10	Random Movement, avoid on 6+
8	+1 Modifier to Fire
5	Random Movement, avoid on 5+

Heat Sinks:
20 (20)
Single

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

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BATTLETECH

SPHEROID SMALL CRAFT RECORD SHEET

ARMOR DIAGRAM

Standard Scale

Nose
Damage Threshold
(Total Armor)
9 (85)

Left
Damage
Threshold
(Total Armor)
8 (72)

Structural
Integrity:
11

Right
Damage
Threshold
(Total Armor)
8 (72)

Aft Damage Threshold
(Total Armor)
6 (55)

Heat Scale

Overflow

30* 29 28* 27* 26* 25* 24* 23* 22* 21* 20* 19* 18* 17* 16 15* 14* 13* 12 11 10* 9 8* 7 6 5* 4 3 2 1 0

CRAFT DATA

Type: Dragonstar Assault Transport (3060)

Thrust:		**Tonnage:**	150
Safe Thrust:	5	**Tech Base:**	Inner Sphere
Maximum Thrust:	8	**Era:**	Clan Invasion

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

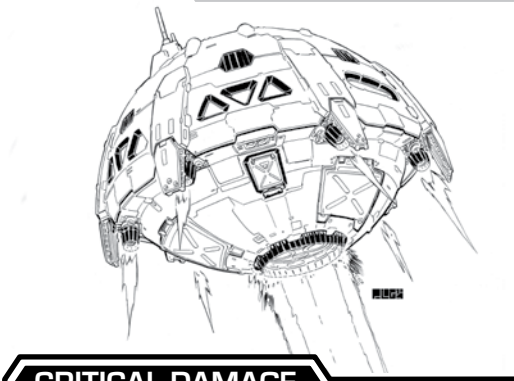
Standard Scale

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	(1–6) SRV	(7–12) MRV	(13–20) LRV	(21–25) ERV
1	ER Medium Laser [DE]	N	5	5	5	—	—
1	Large Pulse Laser [P]	N	10	9	9	—	—
1	Medium Pulse Laser [P]	LS	4	6	—	—	—
1	Medium Pulse Laser [P]	RS	4	6	—	—	—
2	ER Medium Laser [DE]	A	5	5	5	—	—

Cargo:
Battle Armor Bay - 3 Squads (2 doors)
Cargo Space - 4.5 tons (1 door)

Fuel: 480 Points

BV: 1,175



CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics	+1	+2	+5	**Engine**	2	4	D
FCS	+2	+4	D	**Gear**	+5		
Sensors	+1	+2	+5	**Life Support**	+2		

PILOT DATA

Name: _____

Gunnery Skill: ___ **Piloting Skill:** ___

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness #	3	5	7	10	11	Dead
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	

HEAT DATA

Heat Level*	Effects
30	Shutdown
28	Ammo Exp. avoid on 8+
27	Pilot Damage, avoid on 9+
26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+
25	Random Movement, avoid on 10+
24	+4 Modifier to Fire
23	Ammo Exp. avoid on 6+
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+
21	Pilot Damage, avoid on 6+
20	Random Movement, avoid on 8+
19	Ammo Exp. avoid on 4+
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+
17	+3 Modifier to Fire
15	Random Movement, avoid on 7+
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+
13	+2 Modifier to Fire
10	Random Movement, avoid on 6+
8	+1 Modifier to Fire
5	Random Movement, avoid on 5+

Heat Sinks:
20 (20)
Single

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

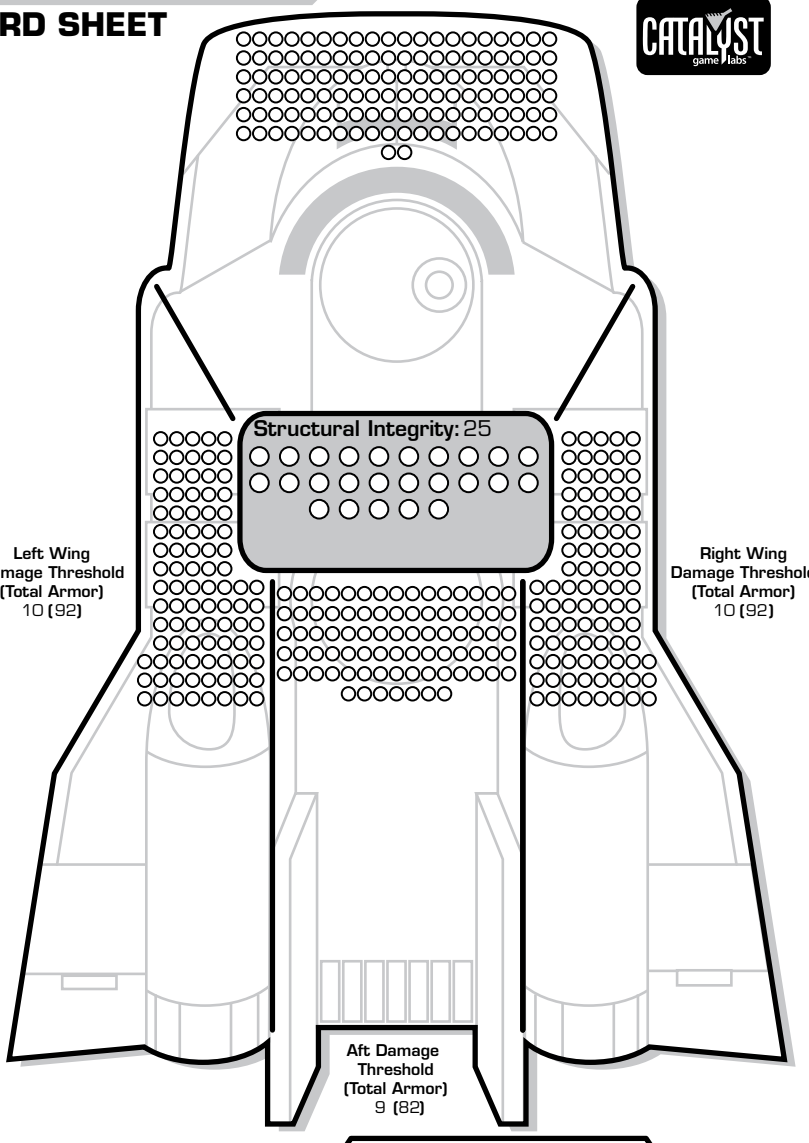
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BATTLETECH™

AERODYNE DROPSHIP RECORD SHEET

Nose Damage Threshold (Total Armor)
13 (122)

ARMOR DIAGRAM
Standard Scale



DROPSHIP DATA

Type: Hoshiryokou

Name: _____ **Tonnage:** 800
Thrust: **Tech Base:** Inner Sphere
Safe Thrust: 5 **Era:** Age of War
Maximum Thrust: 8

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

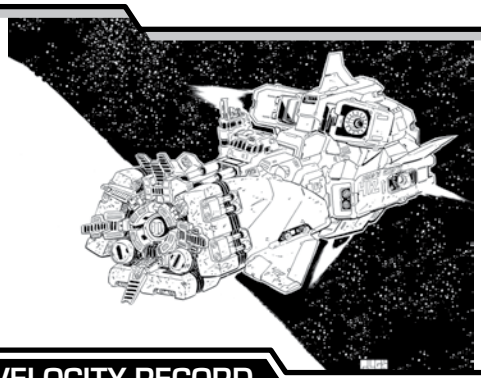
Standard Scale

Bay		Loc	Ht	SRV (1–12)	MRV (13–24)	LRV (25–40)	ERV (41–50)
1	Large Laser	N	8	1 (8)	1 (8)	—	—
2	Small Laser	N	2	1 (6)	—	—	—
1	Small Laser	A	1	0 (3)	—	—	—

Notes:
Naval Tug Adaptor

Cargo:
Bay 1: Cargo Space - 100 tons (1 door)
Bay 2: Cargo Space - 8 tons (1 door)

BV: 1,216 **Fuel:** 1,400



CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: ___ **Piloting Skill:** ___

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.

Crew: 6 **Marines:** 0
Passengers: 9
Other: 0 **Battle Armor:** 0
Life Boats/Escape Pods: 0 / 1

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics	+1	+2	+5	Gear	+5
FCS	+2	+4	D	Life Support	+2
Sensors	+1	+2	+5	K-F Boom	D
Thrusters				Docking Collar	D
Left	+1	+2	+3	D	
Right	+1	+2	+3	D	
Engine	–1	–2	–3	–4	–5	D

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

HEAT DATA

Heat Sinks:
8 (8)
Single

Heat Generation Per Arc

Nose:	10	Aft:	1
Left Wing:		Right Wing:	
Fwd:	0	Fwd:	0
Aft:	0	Aft:	0

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BATTLETECH™

SPHEROID DROPSHIP RECORD SHEET

DROPSHIP DATA

Type: Gaajian System Patrol Boat (2485)

Name: _____ **Tonnage:** 1,500

Thrust: **Tech Base:** Inner Sphere

Safe Thrust: 4 **Era:** Age of War

Maximum Thrust: 6

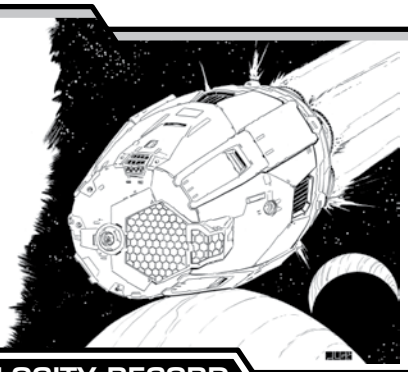
Weapons & Equipment Inventory

Standard Scale			(1–12)	(13–24)	(25–40)	(41–50)
Bay	**Loc**	**Ht**	**SRV**	**MRV**	**LRV**	**ERV**
3 PPC	N	30	3 (30)	3 (30)	—	—
4 Medium Laser	N	12	2 (20)	—	—	—
4 Small Laser	N	4	1 (12)	—	—	—
2 Large Laser 2 Medium Laser	FL/FR	22	3 (26)	2 (16)	—	—
2 Medium Laser	AL/AR	6	1 (10)	—	—	—
2 Large Laser 2 Medium Laser	A	22	3 (26)	2 (16)	—	—
4 Small Laser	A	4	1 (12)	—	—	—

Notes:
Look-Down Rader
High-Resolution Imager

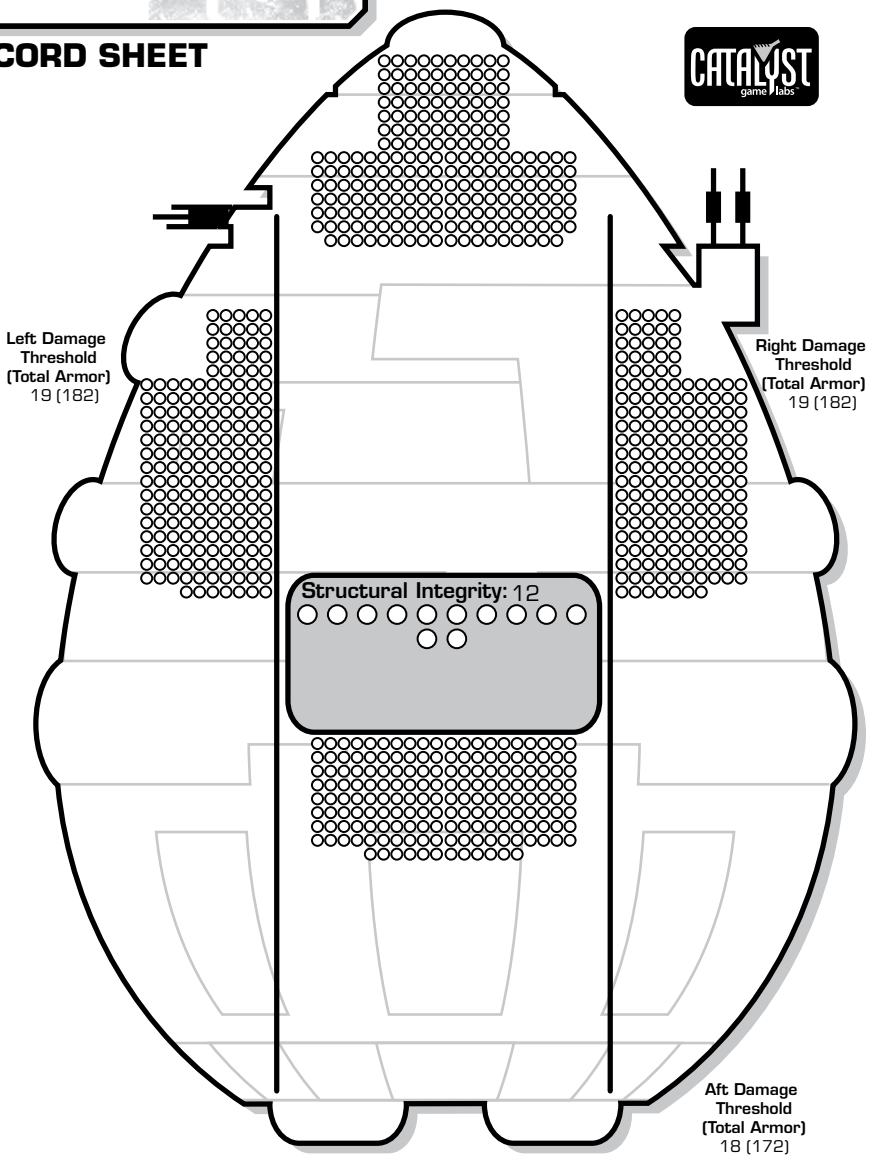
Cargo:
Bay 1: Small Craft - 2 units (2 doors)
Bay 2: Cargo Space - 95 tons (1 door)

BV: 3,351 **Fuel:** 5,000



ARMOR DIAGRAM

Standard Scale



CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: ___ **Piloting Skill:** ___

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.

Crew: 10 **Marines:** 0

Passengers: 42

Other: 0 **Battle Armor:** 0

Life Boats/Escape Pods: 0/4

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics	+1	+2	+5	Gear	+5
FCS	+2	+4	D	Life Support	+2
Sensors	+1	+2	+5	K-F Boom	D
Thrusters				Docking Collar	D
Left	+1	+2	+3	D	
Right	+1	+2	+3	D	
Engine	–1	–2	–3	–4	–5	D

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

HEAT DATA

Heat Sinks: 68 (68) Single

Heat Generation Per Arc

Nose:	46	Aft:	26
Fore-Left:	22	Aft-Left:	6
Fore-Right:	22	Aft-Right:	6

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BATTLETECH™

SPHEROID DROPSHIP RECORD SHEET

DROPSHIP DATA

Type: Gaajian System Patrol Boat (3060)

Name: _____ **Tonnage:** 1,500

Thrust: **Tech Base:** Inner Sphere

Safe Thrust: 4 **Era:** Clan Invasion

Maximum Thrust: 6

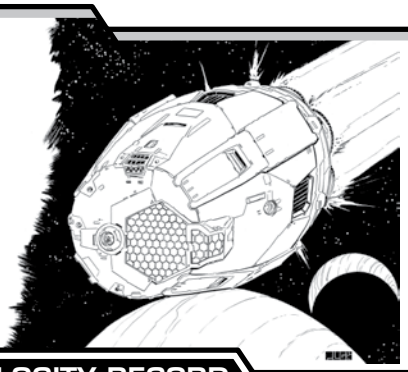
Weapons & Equipment Inventory

Standard Scale			(1–12)	(13–24)	(25–40)	(41–50)
Bay	**Loc**	**Ht**	**SRV**	**MRV**	**LRV**	**ERV**
2 ER PPC	N	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	—
2 Large Pulse Laser	N	20	2 (18)	2 (18)	—	—
2 ER Medium Laser	N	10	1 (10)	1 (10)	—	—
1 AMS [48 rnds]	N	1	0	(3) Point Defense		
2 Large Pulse Laser	FL/FR	20	2 (18)	2 (18)	—	—
2 ER Medium Laser	FL/FR	10	1 (10)	1 (10)	—	—
2 Medium Pulse Laser	AL/AR	8	1 (12)	—	—	—
2 Large Pulse Laser	A	20	2 (18)	2 (18)	—	—
2 ER Medium Laser	A	10	1 (10)	1 (10)	—	—
1 AMS [48 rnds]	A	1	0	(3) Point Defense		

Notes:
Look-Down Rader
High-Resolution Imager

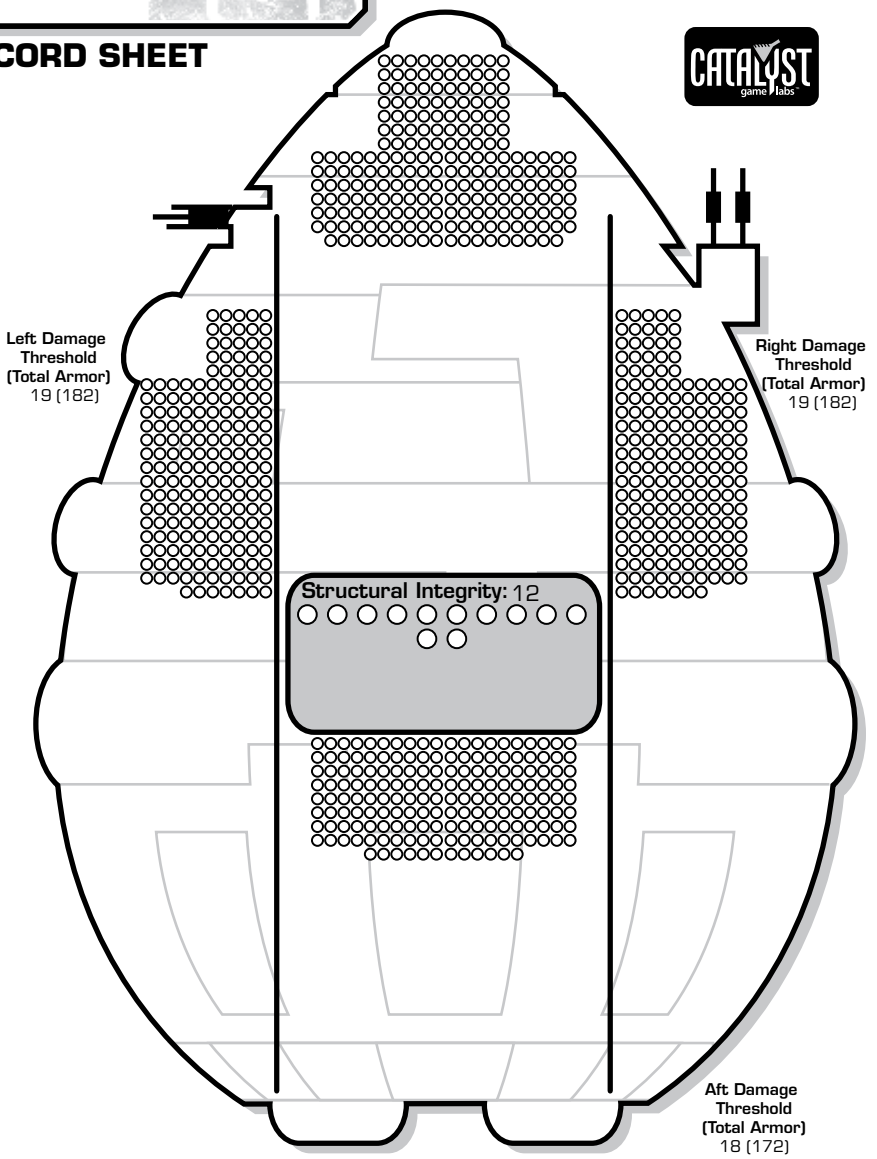
Cargo:
Bay 1: Small Craft - 2 units (2 doors)
Bay 2: Cargo Space - 111 tons (1 door)

BV: 3,592 **Fuel:** 5,000



ARMOR DIAGRAM

Standard Scale



CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: ___ **Piloting Skill:** ___

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.

Crew: 11 **Marines:** 0

Passengers: 33

Other: 0 **Battle Armor:** 0

Life Boats/Escape Pods: 0/4

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics	+1	+2	+5	Gear	+5
FCS	+2	+4	D	Life Support	+2
Sensors	+1	+2	+5	K-F Boom	D
Thrusters				Docking Collar	D
Left	+1	+2	+3	D	
Right	+1	+2	+3	D	
Engine	–1	–2	–3	–4	–5	D

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

HEAT DATA

Heat Sinks: 68 (68) Single

Heat Generation Per Arc

Nose:	61	Aft:	31
Fore-Left:	30	Aft-Left:	8
Fore-Right:	30	Aft-Right:	8

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BATTLETECH™

WHEELED VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: Obuzaabaa Tactical Vehicle

Movement Points:
Cruising: 5
Flank: 8
Movement Type: Wheeled
Engine Type: Electric (Fuel Cell) Engine

Tonnage: 25
Tech Base: Inner Sphere
Era: Succession Wars

Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	Cargo (4.5 tons)	BD	[E]	—	—	—	—
1	Communications Equipment (2 tons)	BD	[E]	—	—	—	—

Infantry Compartment (4 tons)
Chassis Modifications: Off-Road

BV: 134

CREW DATA

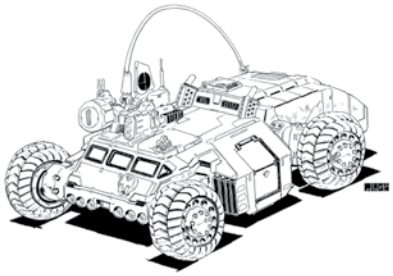
Crew: 5
Gunnery Skill: ___ **Driving Skill:** ___

Commander Hit +1
Modifier to all Skill rolls

Driver Hit +2
Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

CRITICAL DAMAGE

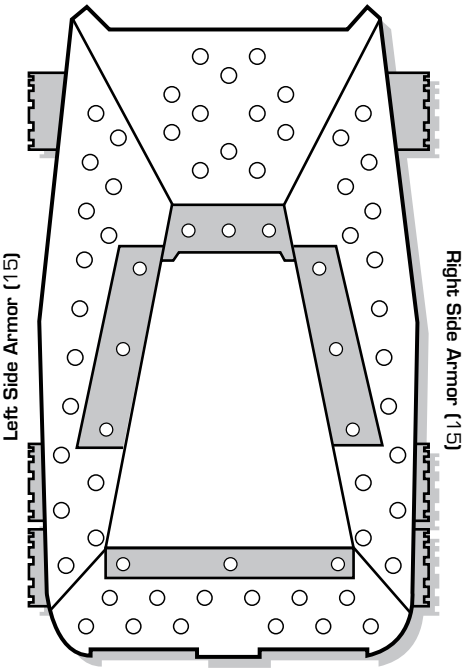
Engine Hit ☐
Sensor Hits +1 +2 +3 D
Motive System Hits +1 +2 +3
Stabilizers
Front ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐
Rear ☐



ARMOR DIAGRAM

BAR: 7

Front Armor (12)



Rear Armor (12)

CATALYST game labs

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BATTLETECH™

WHEELED VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: Sasayaku Control Transport

Movement Points:
Cruising: 5
Flank: 8
Movement Type: Wheeled
Engine Type: Electric (Fuel Cell) Engine

Tonnage: 25
Tech Base: Inner Sphere
Era: Succession Wars

Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	Cargo (4.5 tons)	BD	[E]	—	—	—	—
1	Communications Equipment (1 ton)	BD	[E]	—	—	—	—
1	Drone Carrier Control System (1 drone)	BD	[E]	—	—	—	—

Infantry Compartment (2 tons)
Chassis Modifications: Off-Road

BV: 134

CREW DATA

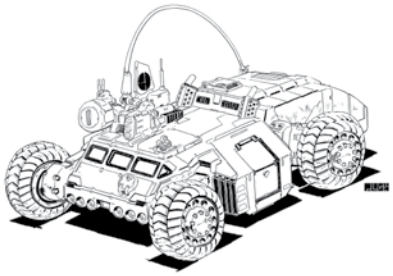
Crew: 5
Gunnery Skill: ___ Driving Skill: ___

Commander Hit +1
Modifier to all Skill rolls

Driver Hit +2
Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

CRITICAL DAMAGE

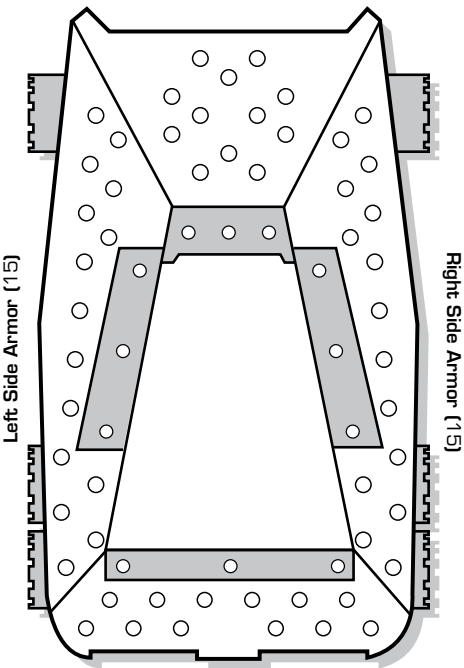
Engine Hit ☐
Sensor Hits +1 +2 +3 D
Motive System Hits +1 +2 +3
Stabilizers
Front ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐
Rear ☐



ARMOR DIAGRAM

BAR: 7

Front Armor (12)



Rear Armor (12)

CATALYST game labs

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BATTLETECH

AIRSHIP RECORD SHEET

AIRSHIP DATA

Type: GOSSAMER SURVEILLANCE DRONE

Name: _____ **Tonnage:** 4,450 kg

Thrust:

Safe Thrust: 2 **Tech Base:** Inner Sphere

Maximum Thrust: 3

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

Standard Scale Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	SRV (1–6)	MRV (7–12)	LRV (13–20)	ERV (21–25)
1	Drone (Remote) Operating System [E]	BD	0	—	—	—	—
1	High-Resolution Imager [E]	N	0	—	—	—	—

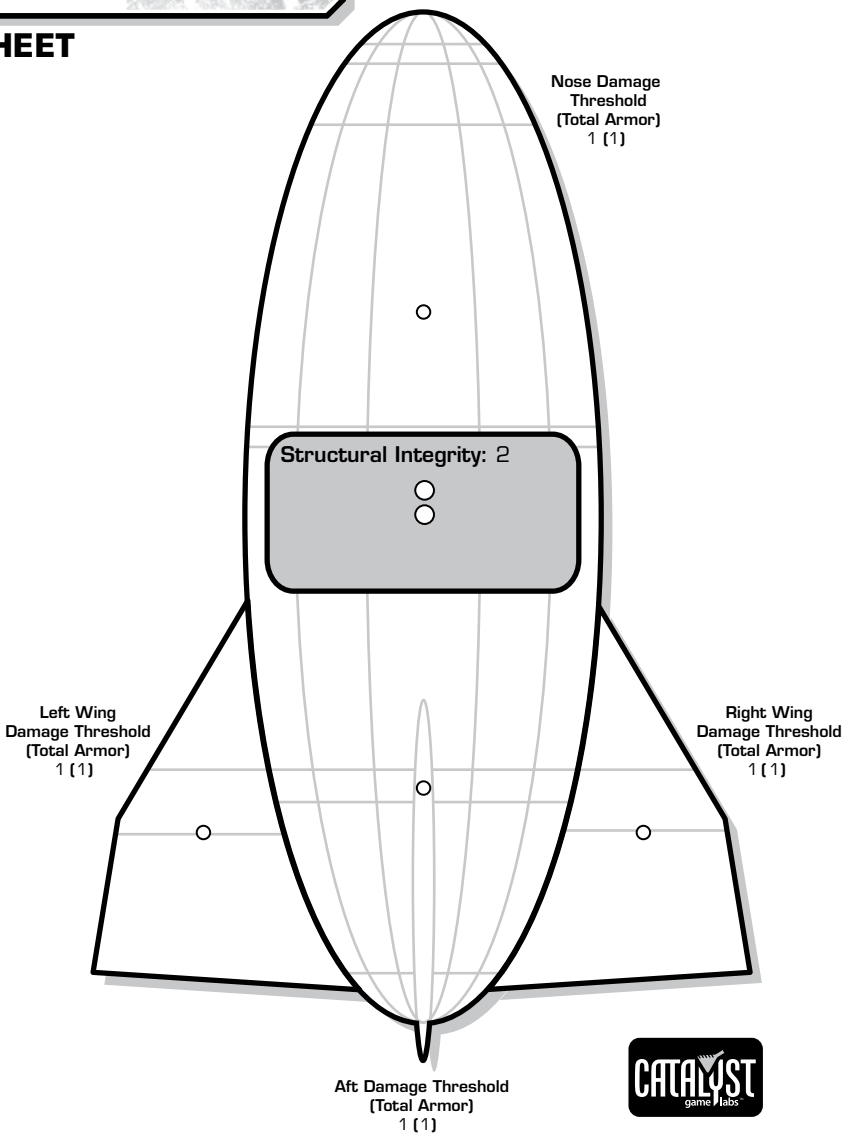
Notes:
Cargo: 8 kg
Chassis Modification: Ultra-Light Chassis

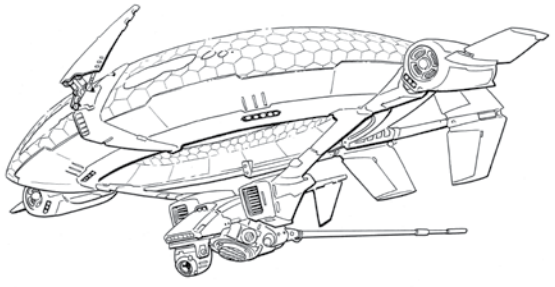
Fuel: N/A

BV: 6

ARMOR DIAGRAM

BAR: 2





CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: ___ **Piloting Skill:** ___

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.

Crew: 0 **Marines:** 0
Passengers: 0 **Elementals:** 0
Other: 0 **Battle Armor:** 0
Life Boats/Escape Pods: 0/0

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics +1 +2 +5
FCS +2 +4 D
Sensors +1 +2 +5
Thrusters
Left +1 +2 +3 D
Right +1 +2 +3 D
Engine –1 –2 –3 –4 –5 D
Gear +5
Life Support +2

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

AIRSHIP VELOCITY TABLE

Current Velocity	Thrust Points per Cycle Turn 1	2	3	4
0.25	1	—	—	—
0.5	1	—	1	—
0.75	1	—	1	1
1	1	1	1	1
1.25	2	1	1	1
1.5	2	1	2	1
1.75	2	1	2	2
2	2	2	2	2
2.25	3	2	2	2
2.5	3	2	3	2
2.75	3	2	3	3
3	3	3	3	3

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BATTLETECH

NAVAL VESSEL RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: Wakamiya-class Salvage Destroyer

Movement Points:
Cruising: 5
Flank: 8
Movement Type: Naval
Engine Type: Fusion

Tonnage: 50,500
Template: E
Tech Base: Inner Sphere
Era: Age of War

Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
4	LRM 20	T1	1/Msl	6	7	14	21
2	PPC	T1	10 DE	3	6	12	18
3	Long Tom Artillery	T2	25 AE,S	—	1	2	30
2	PPC	T2	10 DE	3	6	12	18
2	LRM 20	T9	1/Msl	6	7	14	21
2	PPC	T9	10 DE	3	6	12	18
2	LRT 20	F	1/Msl	6	7	14	21
2	SRT 6	F	2/Msl	—	3	6	9
4	Machine Guns	F	2 DB	—	1	2	3
2	LRT 20	FR/FL	1/Msl	6	7	14	21
1	SRT 6	FR/FL	2/Msl	—	3	6	9
2	Machine Guns	FR/FL	2 DB	—	1	2	3
2	Fluid Guns	FR/FL	* DB,S	—	1	2	3
2	Lift Hoists	FR/FL	[E]	—	—	—	—
2	Fluid Suction Systems	FR/FL	[E]	—	—	—	—
2	Machine Guns	AR/AL	2 DB	—	1	2	3
2	Fluid Guns	AR/AL	* DB,S	—	1	2	3
2	Fluid Suction Systems	AR/AL	[E]	—	—	—	—
1	LRT 20	R	1/Msl	6	7	14	21
1	SRT 6	R	2/Msl	—	3	6	9
2	Machine Guns	R	2 DB	—	1	2	3

Ammo: (Fluid Gun) 800, (Long Tom Artillery) 180, (LRM 20) 162, (LRT 20) 126, (Machine Gun) 700, (SRT 6) 75

BV: 48,028

CREW DATA

Crew: 185 **Life Boats:** 62
Gunnery Skill: ___ **Driving Skill:** ___

Commander Hit +1
Modifier to all Skill rolls

Driver Hit +2
Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Engine Hit ☐
Sensor Hits +1 +2 +3 D
Motive System Hits +1 +2 +3
Stabilizers
Front ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐
Rear ☐

NOTES

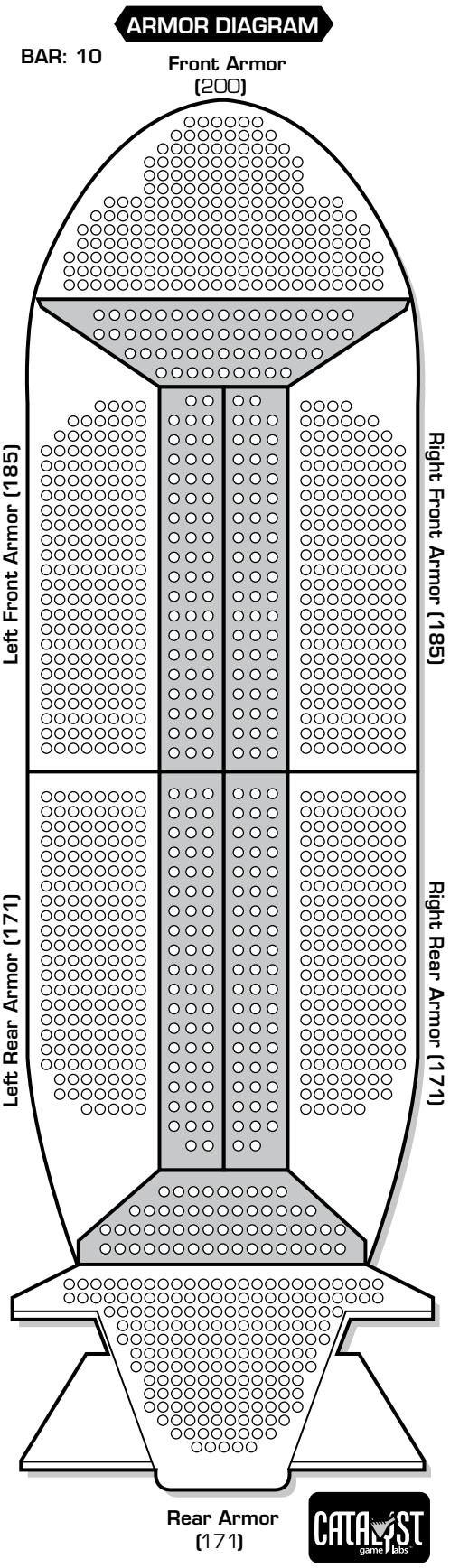
4 Super-heavy Vehicle Bays (2 Doors)
8 Heavy Vehicle Bays (3 Doors)
16 Light Vehicle Bays (2 Doors)

Chassis Modifications: Armored Chassis, Tractor (Naval), Advanced Fire Control System, 8 tons of communication equipment, MASH unit with 7 additional theaters, drone carrier control system (12 drones), helipad, 3 field kitchens

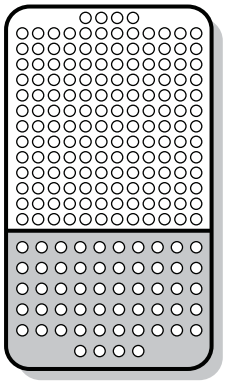
Cargo:
1,820 tons liquid cargo (1 Door)
2,610 tons refrigerated cargo (1 Door)
11,491.5 tons cargo (1 Door)

ARMOR DIAGRAM

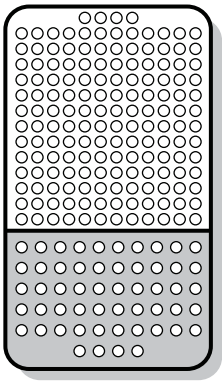
BAR: 10



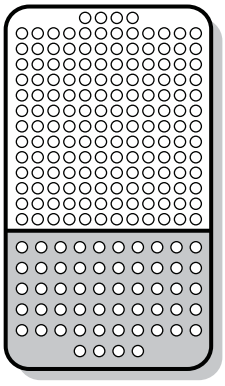
Turret 1 Armor (160)



Turret 2 Armor (160)



Turret 9 Armor (160)



DEPTH TRACK

Turn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Depth																				

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HOUSE KURITA



HOUSE KURITA



Coordinator
Theodore Kurita



Heir-Designate/*Tai-sa*
Hohiro Kurita

HOUSE KURITA



Five symbolic pillars are said to support the society of House Kurita: the Pillar of Gold, signifying the ruling Kurita dynasty; the Pillar of Steel, symbolizing the military; the Pillar of Jade, representing economic wealth and commerce; the Pillar of Teak, standing for culture and art; and the Pillar of Ivory, exemplifying faith, philosophy, and codes of conduct.



House Kurita Crest



Luthien Flag

Sword of Light



HOUSE KURITA



Coins display the Kurita dragon on one side with the value embossed over it and the *mon* of a Combine world on the other. From left to right, denominations are 1 *ryu*, 1 *yen*, 5 *ryu*, 5, 10, 20, and 50 *yen*.



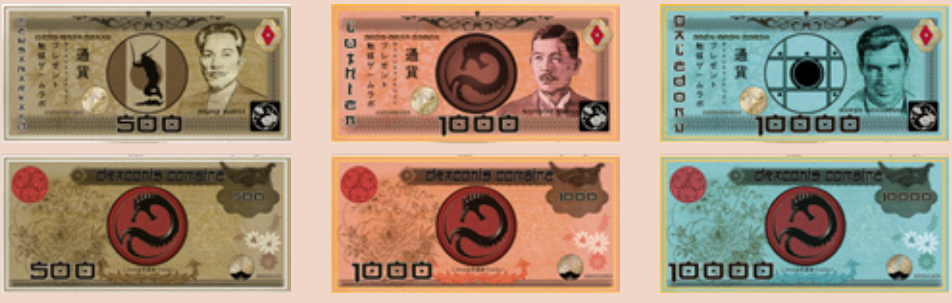


HOUSE KURITA

The DCA commands the military naval yards in the Combine, though day-to-day operations fall under the various corporate interests under contract to the Bureau of Procurement.

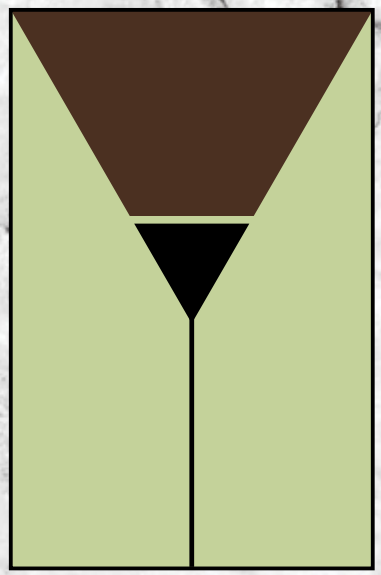


Notes are uniform in design, though the paper used varies on the military district of the issuing mint. Each note also carries a watermark in the form of the district's *mon*.



Tai-sa Sahalli
Odessa





Al Na'ir Flag



Arkab Legion



Operating on a chivalric code of honor very similar to *bushido*, the yakuza avoids street-level crime—such as muggings—out of respect for the common man. Less competitive than mafia, the yakuza handle inter-clan conflict in a more civilized fashion.

Alshain Weapons

Luthien Armor Works

Tanadi Computers

Victory Industries

Wakazashi Enterprises

HOUSE KURITA



Otomo



Genyosha



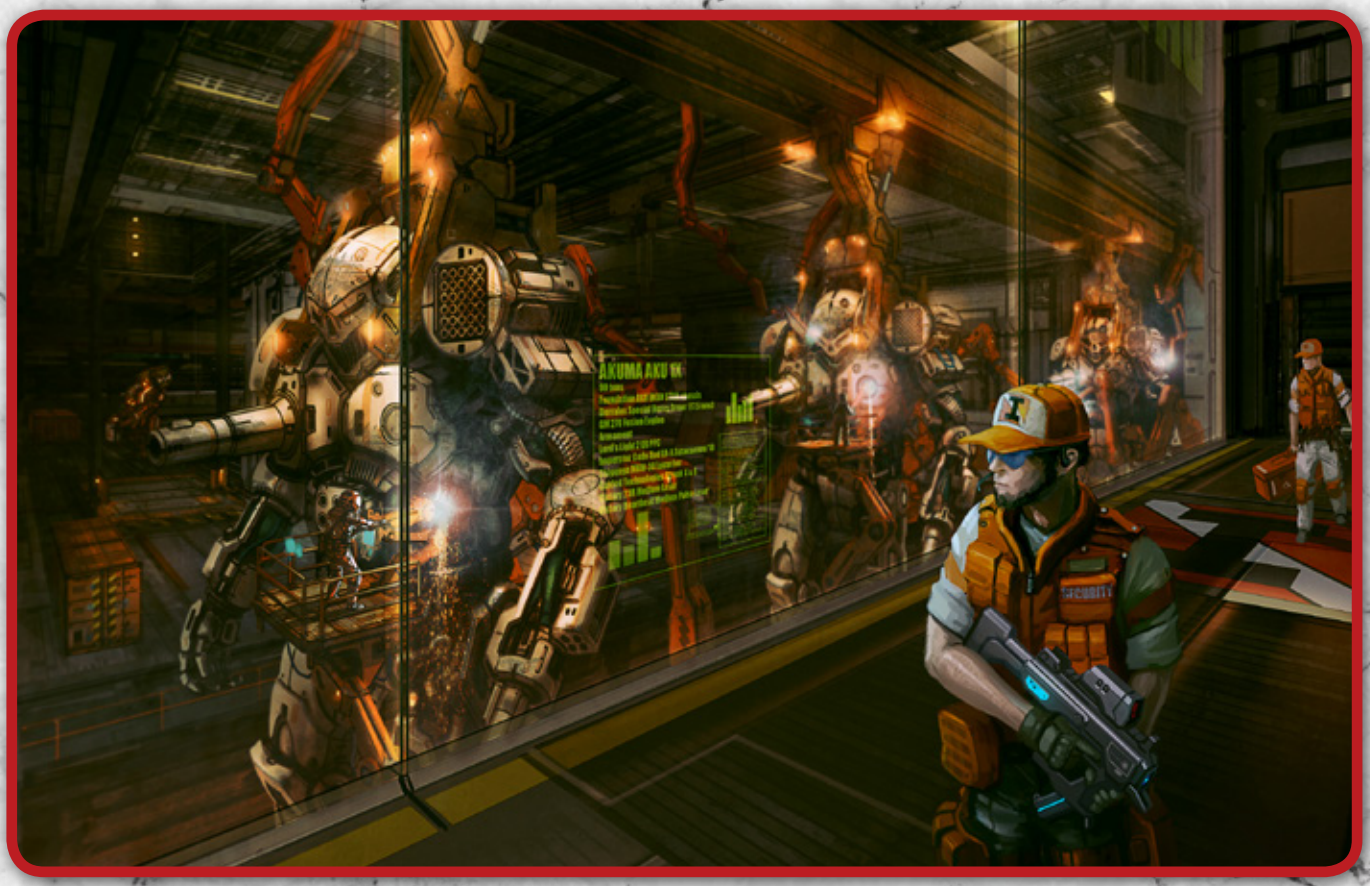
Izanagi Warriors
(Dragon's Claws)



Sho-sho Shin Yodama

HOUSE KURITA

Based in the Combine, Independence Weaponry operates less as a corporation and more as a conglomerate, with each division responsible to a particular interstellar faction and their protocols.



Independence Weaponry

Joyous Springs Wines

Sparkling Spirits Inc.

Turanian Transport Co.

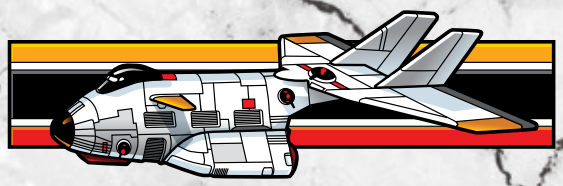
HOUSE KURITA

Warlord Kiyomori Minamoto



Minoru Kurita University

Sun Tzu School of Combat



Aerospace and Interstellar Institute

HOUSE KURITA

Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy

Port Arthur Flag



The Sun Tzu School of Combat teaches a “team play” attitude, stressing greater equality between differing branches of warfare.

HOUSE KURITA



Though certain modern developments have tempered and challenged *bushido*, devotion to this ancient code of conduct has kept the Dragon strong through more than three hundred years of Succession Wars and the Clan invasion.

Long Life Company

Yoshimatsu Chemicals

HOUSE KURITA



Hachiman Flag



Hachiman Taro Enterprises



Chandrasekhar Kurita

HOUSE KURITA



Internal Security Force



Mononokete



Koe No Ryu



Draconis Elite Strike Teams



Mokonete



Metsuke



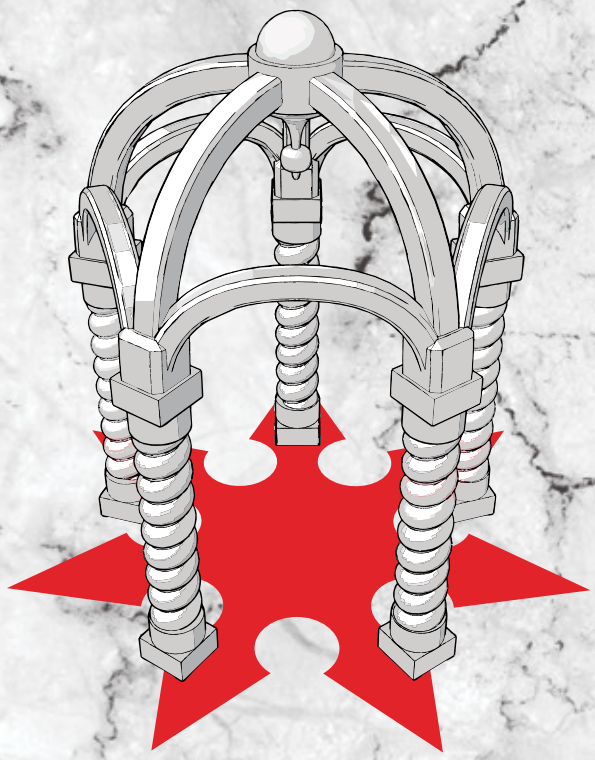
Musukosan No Ryu

The DEST squads of the ISF are ever-vigilant in hunting down and eliminating sympathizers of the Black Dragons.



HOUSE KURITA

Abbess Tomade Yamiro



Order of the Five Pillars



HOUSE KURITA



"Life consists in conflict. So long as man remains a social animal he cannot live in isolation. All individual hopes and aspirations depend on society. Society is reflected in the individual, and the individual in society."

~Dictum Honorium, v. VIII, 145



Tai-shu (Warlord)



Tai-sho (General)



Sho-sho (Brigadier General)



Tai-sa (Colonel)



Chu-sa (Lieutenant Colonel)



Sho-sa (Major)



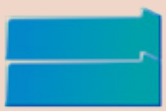
Tai-i (Captain)



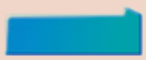
Senior Master Chief Petty Officer



Chu-i (Lieutenant)



Sho-ko (Sergeant Major)



Kashira (Talon Sergeant)



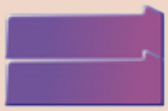
Shujin (Master Sergeant)



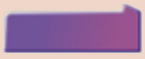
Gunsho (Sergeant)



Go-cho (Corporal)



Gunjin (Lance Corporal)



Heishi (Private)