

STAR TRADERS: FRONTIERS

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TRESE BROTHERS GAMES



AUTHORS AND DESIGNERS

Cory Trese

Andrew Trese

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>The Star Traders</i> _____	4	<i>The Spice Hall</i> _____	22
Privileges Among the Stars _____	4	Recruiting Gravs to the Stars _____	22
Living Near a Void Engine _____	5	Spice _____	23
Charter and Limitations _____	6	Spice Festivals _____	23
Serving in a Faction Military _____	6	Pit Fighting _____	24
Trading Permits _____	7	<i>Medical Traditions</i> _____	24
Edicts and Warrants _____	7	Chaesin Doctors _____	24
Standard Kit _____	8	Gestalt Technologists _____	25
<i>The Factions</i> _____	9	<i>Zendu</i> _____	25
The Great Houses _____	9	Origins _____	26
Clan Javat _____	10	Lineage Memories _____	26
House Thulun _____	10	Templar Militant _____	27
Clan Steel Song _____	11	Leviathan Mechs _____	28
Clan Alta Mesa _____	12	Lineage Lines _____	28
Clan Moklumvue _____	12	Only in Victory _____	28
Clan Zenrin _____	13	Arbiters _____	29
The Syndicates _____	14	Augurs _____	30
Cadar Syndicate _____	15	<i>Threats</i> _____	31
De Valtos Syndicate _____	16	Inhuman Threats _____	31
Syndicate Rychart _____	16	Xeno _____	31
<i>Legal Codes</i> _____	17	Narvidians _____	32
The Founding _____	17	Threats From Within _____	32
Faction Accords _____	17	The Hunna _____	32
Quadrant Senates _____	17	Gux Malleus: Mastermind Cult _____	33
Shalun Law _____	18	Cult of Shelgeroth _____	34
Retribution Justice _____	19		
Duel of Assassins _____	20		
Planetary Law _____	20		
<i>The Controlled District</i> _____	22		

THE STAR TRADERS

You came into your Star Trader charter in one of two ways—you were sponsored by a powerful member of a faction, or you were chosen from among your family or cohort to inherit a charter held by your mother, father or some other family member or ancestor. At either moment, you chose to renounce your faction citizenship and become a Star Trader. It was a choice not to be made lightly, as it can never be undone, and it changed your life forever.

Because Star Trader Captains can have extended life spans, charters are often passed down in a fashion that skips multiple generations, perhaps going from great grandfather to the newest generation in a single leap.

A charter alone makes you a Star Trader and restricts your on-world movements for the rest of your days, but it does not make you who you truly are. You must have a ship, and it defines you, your life, and your future. A ship is your freedom, it is your ticket between worlds, and is it your livelihood and the engine of your income, power or glory. Upon this ship, you have rebuilt your nuclear family from trustworthy officers and loyal crew, all who have suspended their faction rights to join a Star Trader with their own hopes and dreams of adventure, riches, or whatever drives them.

It is notable that a Star Trader charter cannot be revoked once it has been granted, much to the chagrin and political detriment of many faction princes and commanders. Charters are granted rarely and carefully as those with the power to do so have heard the cautionary tales of infamous mistakes. Star Traders like the Cadar-sponsored Captain Vincent Vax-Cadar who went onto become a scourge of Cadar worlds across multiple quadrants after being handed his license by an all too eager Cadar Prince live on in history as a warning tale.

PRIVILEGES AMONG THE STARS

Star Traders are such an integral part of the interstellar life of the factions that there are many privileges accorded to them by Shalun Law. Faction princes and military commanders galaxy-wide know these rules and adhere to them strictly, as they too need the services of the Star Traders. Sometimes the laws are followed simply out of respect but other times from fear that by breaking the accords other Star Trader Captains will turn their back on such a law breaker, as well as breaking ties with their allies who also rely on the coming and going of Star Traders.

One such privilege is that a Star Trader will never be denied the right to land on a world. Refusing the right to land could amount to a death sentence to the captain and crew of the vessel, and so landfall is considered a right. Even a wanted criminal must be allowed to land at the starport. However, the Prince, military, and other arms of the local faction government have the right to deny services and privileges, such as access to the Exchange or the Palace, once the Star Trader has made safe landfall. In the same vein, a faction military may never use orbital defense weapons against a Star Trader—any military engagement against a Star Trader

must be in space or face-to-face on the ground. The Accords provide the factions some limited security controls—starport rights can be temporarily suspended in face of civil unrest, xeno activity or extreme orbital dangers. These closings are politically charged for Star Traders and are limited in their duration.

While there are some protected privileges, a Star Trader is still sailing a vessel through faction space, which grants the faction military its own set of privileges and rights that cannot be refused. Within faction space, the faction military marines have the right to interdict and search a Star Trader vessel if they believe that it is carrying illegal cargo or fugitives, or if the Captain is a wanted criminal. If a Star Trader is able to prove that their business, cargo or passenger are protected by rank, permit or the Faction Accords then they have the right to sail safely past the military unmolested.

Farther from the gravity wells of planets, situations between Star Traders, faction military marines, and other spacing vessels become more touch and go. Out in the depth of space, the rules start to bend, if not break. It becomes a question of how far either party is willing to risk their ship and lives of the crew. Often such a risky meeting will result in jockeying for position, threats, bribery and intimidation tactics as each captain tries to gain the upper hand without having to resort to ship-to-ship combat. Far enough away from occupied space, there is little or no hope that help or a rescue ship will arrive if things end badly for either party, and it tints these entire encounters. But, by the same turn, there is smaller chance that word will spread of the transgressions against the law in deep space, and many captains—whether a Star Trader, pirate, or faction military—choose to take advantage of this.

LIVING NEAR A VOID ENGINE

The electro-magnetic fields gathered around a functioning Void Engine have powerful and long lasting effects on life forms. Those humans or creatures that live in close proximity to a Void Engine—such as those serving on a Star Trader vessel—suffer harsh effects. The field of an active Void Engine dramatically slows the aging process, interferes with metabolism and shuts down most natural processes. The Void Engine's effect is the reason why Star Traders and their crew need specially trained Doctors and why their diets are so high in spice-rich foods. Spice helps greatly with the negative effects of living within such a field. In addition, those males and females living within constant proximity of a Void Engine become temporarily infertile, unable to conceive.

For some spacers, the experience of leaving the field of a Void Engine is pleasant, a nice return to the ground. However, something in the back of their mind starts itching for them to get back to space soon. For other spacers, this is a painful, sickening experience called gravity sickness.

Current technological research indicates that the immense energy generated by a Void Engine may generate a gravity-well effect that incrementally slows down the passage of time within near proximity, that is, the hull of a spacing vessel. This effect is, in some regard, similar to the time-bending travel of the Hyperwarp Drive. For the time, it is the best explanation modern science can offer as to why spacers have greatly extend the lifespans compared to graus.

It has been claimed by some Star Trading captains that living in near constant proximity to a Void Engine is able to extend a human's lifespan up to ten times its normal length.

Of course, this version of modern immortality is fleeting when such lives are so often cut short by violence, malnutrition, disease, collapsing hulls, raging fires, or Hunter-Killer torpedoes. With the best of care from a skilled Technologist Doctors and the heaping pile of credits to afford it, a Star Trader can live for multiple centuries.

CHARTER AND LIMITATIONS

Your charter as a Star Trader catapults you into a rare position among the stars. You have near unlimited freedom to go where you please, to make a living how you choose, and to rule your own ship as you see fit. On the other side of the coin, your charter restricts your life to the stars. When you land on a faction system or orbital, you will do so only in a sanctioned starport or orbital station, and from there you are not allowed to go far. A cluster of important structures known as the controlled district surrounds every starport and gives spacers a temporary, if limited, home on a planet's surface among the graus. Beyond the bays of the starport, you and your crew are limited to the neighboring spice hall district for planet-leave or you may buy and sell cargo within the Exchange, a limited market only open to Star Traders.

A Star Trader captain and officers may apply for permission to travel beyond the district to visit political dignitaries and faction powers, even the Prince at the Palace, if they have the approval of the local powers that be. While such permits are possible, being granted exceptions that allow you and your officer corps to leave the restricted area around the starport are rare—they are, after all, exceptions. While outside of the zone restricted for Star Traders, expect to be closely watched. This is why many Star Traders may instead turn to some distraction, a hefty bribe, or discreet stealth to allow you and a few of your spacers to slip out unnoticed, though you risk legal trouble if you are caught in the act or abroad without the proper papers. Another common occurrence is for contacts of all sorts to come to the district surrounding the starport, most often the spice hall, where enough is happening that observation is low and privacy can be achieved.

Serving in a Faction Military

While you may choose your own way and how you make your living as a Star Trader, many captains choose to ally themselves with a faction for a time or for the length of their career. For those Star Traders who do actively work to the benefit of a faction, those factions are willing to offer special military promotions within their military hierarchy.

The ranks and honors given to a Star Trader are unique and limited. They provide prestige and access to previously restricted services, but they do not grant the right to command faction forces, levy troops, or take any position of leadership within the military structure. As a Star Trader is always an independent agent, factions know that they may turn against or betray their alliances, and therefore the faction militaries reserve the right to strip a Star Trader of their rank at any time for a transgression, real or perceived. However, having such rank within

a military does come with great pomp, circumstance, and privilege. Ranking Star Traders will be given preferential treatment at military installations, starports, and by those members of the faction military marines they may encounter in deep space or on the surface of a planet. Often, rank will allow a Star Trader to gain access to military hardware that is otherwise reserved only for the faction's warships. And, those Star Traders who carry rank within a faction will often find that other citizens, dignitaries, and contacts within the faction pay them more heed for it, as it is a sign and mark of loyalty and consistency within a captain's career.

Trade Permits

Each system's Prince pens the laws of legality in regards to trading goods within the Star Traders Exchange. A secondary set of laws are put in place to limit trading on the standard merchant Exchange available to all faction merchants. Within the Star Traders' Exchange, the specialized market available only to Star Traders, legality of trading goods is often based on the Prince's personal interpretation of the strictures of Shalun law, his or her interest in allowing military hardware onto the planet, and the system's tax code along with many other factors involved in what the Prince deems that Star Traders should be able to bring into the system.

In all cases, factions and their Princes recognize the trade permits that a Star Trader may carry with the stamp of approval of a faction. These trade permits are issued by individual factions, and allow a captain to gain access to what might otherwise be considered restricted trading within the Star Traders' Exchange. What may be illegal for an unlicensed merchant captain to sell on the Exchange may be perfectly legal for a Star Trader captain carrying a verified trade permit with the faction's seal. Trade permits are another way that the factions cater to Star Traders to gain their loyalty, business and services.

Edicts and Warrants

Carrying an Edict marks you as a faction agent who is licensed to participate in any form of martial justice, from being drafted in a Duel of Assassins to serving out Death Warrants for wanted criminals. In the eyes of the law, you have the right to mete out justice and, if called for, death. Edicts are most commonly carried by licensed Bounty Hunters, but a wise Star Trader knows it is always valuable to have such a mark of the law ready.

Without an Edict, Star Traders can still obtain warrants, giving them the right to capture or kill criminals who have broken faction law. While the law gives a Star Trader carrying a warrant the right to serve it and carry out its sentence, it is all too often that unexpected forces may step in between the Star Traders and his or her target, or try to delay the Star Trader. In these situations, the next move can be tricky and is a balancing act between carrying out the letter of the law and avoiding retribution from the party that may be trying protect the target of the warrant. Carrying an Edict is a powerful tool and a reminder of the power of law—that you have the authority to use lethal force against your target in any circumstance as well as to use force against those who would try to obstruct your lawful pursuit. When the moments are

tense and trigger fingers are twitching, Star Traders often reveal their official Edict and warrant to remind everyone at hand that they are just an agent of the law and that any who step in their way is inviting retribution.

Each faction has a different title for their most powerful and supreme class of Edict—Thulun's Death Rose, De Valtos' Sword of Justice, Rychart Crimson Seal, Cadar's Silverwasp, or Steel Song's Bloodbadge.

STANDARD KIT

The equipment a captain and crew may use while plying the stars is as varied as the types of Star Traders. However, there are certain constants within the kits that are kept on hand by most spacers. The following list includes some of the most standard or essential equipment that a crew member, officer, or captain could be expected to have in possession on a Star Trader vessel.

- ❖ **Vac suit:** used for low atmo work, typically made of matchweave material
- ❖ **Void suit:** used for deep space work
- ❖ **Breather:** small portable breathing mask used for toxic environments such as the engine bay
- ❖ **Plasma Cutter:** portable cutting torch commonly used in ship repairs
- ❖ **Lev Rig:** anti-gravity suspensor platform used in heavy lifting, cargo loading and unloading. Very dangerous when malfunctioning, difficult to keep maintained
- ❖ **Stick / Tobic:** smokable spice mix, often rolled into a cigarette like form.
- ❖ **Lux:** a popular spice-based liquor that is known for being expensive and loved by Star Traders. Classified as a high-end vodka for trade purposes, Lux is served almost exclusively in Spice Halls catering to off-worlders. Families and friends look to break out their lux stash at important moments—births, marriages, funerals.
- ❖ **Hexshell Sidearm:** light firearms that can be fired in variant gravity or atmospheric conditions
- ❖ **Lumatern:** an electric lantern which can be adjusted to give a soft reading light or a sharp spotlight
- ❖ **Mag Boots:** Boots with internally controlled variable magnetic fields, making walking on a ship's hull in zero gravity possible. Due to potential changes in artificial gravity when a Void Reactor is offline, wearing mag boots during combat is considered essential. To be caught "without boots" is to be cause flat footed or unprepared for danger.
- ❖ **Spice Loaf:** A self-cooking dehydrated bread-like food product commonly eaten by Star Traders. Prepared in a variety of ways, Spice Loaf needs only water to be added to begin the cooking process. Eating spice loaf is done best with liberal use of butters, honey, or sauces.
- ❖ **Torch:** A small, self-powered personal light and emergency beacon. Carried on the belt and considered a critical part of the Star Trader's kit.

THE FACTIONS

The Faction Accords were written and signed during *The Founding*, in the years before the Great Exodus, and were carefully negotiated by Shalun, his advisors and the leadership of the Star Traders people. At the time, the Accords molded many separate dynasties and smaller syndicates into nine recognizable factions, as a way to create and enshrine balanced and stable political bodies within the fabric of Star Traders society.

THE GREAT HOUSES

As defined under the Faction Accords, the Great Houses are organized along hereditary lines and place power in the hands of a small, privileged ruling class that changes over time. The entire population of a Great House is organized in a caste system, categorizing individuals and families into tiers by social standing and function—traders, military, and laborers. Membership in the ruling class of this system is permeable, but the ability for common citizens of the faction to ascend into the nobility is limited by acquisition of sufficient power, wealth, military prowess and political influence. Such ascension often takes the dedicated work of generations within a single family to rise through the caste system.

Families within the Great Houses are sprawling and extremely large. One only has to mention Javat and the line of the Leiwin is sure to come to mind, just as there are thousands claiming the name Mykatte within Thulun, or the famous Seith of Steel Song. Within these extreme large family structures, power tends to gravitate to smaller nuclei of power players, often across close bloodlines. Therefore, while there may be multiple Leiwin who hold Javat Princedoms on systems, and those within a few familial circles are part of their power center, there are still large branches of the Leiwin family striving to rise up from the lower castes.

The feudal title of Prince is awarded to a family head within the Great House structure. This title stays within the family permanently, passed through the line of inheritance. Only a major disgrace or complete extinction of the family line has been known to dislodge a Princedom from within a Great House family.

It is notable that marriage across faction lines is looked down upon and discouraged within the Great Houses. Often, those who do find love across such boundaries will consider fleeing into Independent space or joining a Star Traders crew to make a new life away from the judgment of their faction-loyal peers and elders.

Clan Javat

"Keep your head in the stars and your feet in the dirt."

The people of Clan Javat are known for their industrious spirit with their focus on mining, resource gathering and production of quality goods. The powerful and efficient mines and factories of Javat's worlds keep its exchanges stocked with all kinds of goods, making Javat trade permits especially valuable.

Having developed some of the most advanced technology and best trained personnel in the mining, deep space operations and spice farming industries, Clan Javat stays ahead of the competition on many fronts. Their widely varied mining operations range from spice mining to remote mining sites which all efficiently feed into the Javat industrial and refinery backbone. Due to their vital position in the hub of trade, many other Great Houses and Syndicates seek to keep in trade alliances with Javat, for mining is known to be an always in demand.

The men and women of Javat are known to be focused, steady, and mechanically attuned, close to the machines by which their Great House has made its fortunes. Many of the rich and powerful bloodlines within the Clan maintain their power and wealth through their connection to industry and mining, and so Javat leaders are uniquely connected to the concerns and challenges of their citizen laborers.



House Thulun

"Nobility is earned."

House Thulun is often seen as the de facto leader of the Great Houses due to its status as the oldest of the Great Houses. Its political influence, in synergy with its economic and military might, has allowed it to claim some of the best worlds during the settling after the Exodus. Its Grand Naval Academy, which trains its naval leaders, has a reputation for excellence. House Thulun's experience in construction guarantees all of their zones have strong economies and starports.

The men and women of Thulun are known to be charming if at times haughty. The leaders among them have a noble bearing and are known for their calm and steady judgment. In Thulun, one is often told to "measure twice and cut once." Classic education and training—in the arts of swordplay, philosophy, diplomacy, and the arts—are well valued within Thulun families.



Clan Steel Song

"Peace is an illusion."

Undisputedly the Great House with the most powerful military presence, the Steel Song achieve their dominance from a mix of merchant marines, mercenaries, rogues, pirates, and assassins. Steel Song is known for having claimed fewer worlds within the many Quadrants, though they hold them all with an excess of military might.

Steel Song has long been known for the guilds of assassins that train on their worlds. The tradition of the Steel Song assassin cults started as far back as during the Guild War. Their assassins were notorious for unpleasant deeds and efficient, effective, widespread killing around their targets. For centuries, Steel Song assassins have been feared, and rightly so.

The men and women of Steel Song are courageous, self-sacrificing, and known to be intimidating. As a people, they profess a belief in reincarnation, and that the ethereal spirits of man are reborn into new lives after death. Among some of the Steel Song assassin cults, it is said that their agents do not kill, but simply guiding their marks to their chance to be reincarnated in better lives. If their targets have lived an honorable life, perhaps they will come back as a Steel Song. It is hard to tell if this is a satirical joke or a serious feeling.



FAUG DAEN

"I find peace in your violence."

Some consider the Faug Daen to be a myth created by the Steel Song to scare children or their enemies. An assassin death cult formed during the Guild War, the legends say that the Faug Daen were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of high ranking Guild representatives. In that era, in a bloody and desperate war against the Guild, the other factions may have been glad to know the Faug Daen were striking such serious blows against the enemy, regardless of their methods. However, in the centuries since then, the Faug Daen have used their deadly talents to solely further the aims of Clan Steel Song.

One fact that is known about the Faug Daen is that they are not embraced by all elements within the Steel Song. On one hand they find allies among their own clan but on the other they find enemies who wish to stomp them out. And so, even Steel Song knows the pain of being cut by their assassin's blade.

Clan Alta Mesa

"A solid keel makes for a solid ship"

Clan Alta Mesa is famous for their mastery of ship architecture and unrivaled piloting. The surface of Alta Mesa worlds are dotted with flight academies while their orbits are often dominated by Star Forges—shipyards and foundries built completely in orbit. The position of ship architect, ship builder, or ship pilot are some of the most honored positions within the clan's structure, and even those who go on to become political leaders will look back and lean on the exploits and experiences of their youthful pilot career. The most exclusive pilot academies are hosted off-world on orbital stations in the same way as the Star Forges.



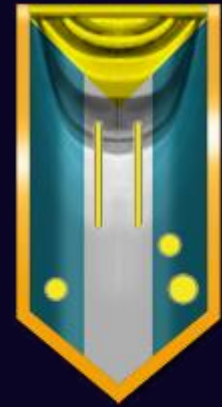
The secrets of Alta Mesa's architects and shipyard masters are closely guarded, often within family lines of the Clan. These coveted secrets of design and construction allow Alta Mesa to maintain their unique ability to build the best ships in the galaxy. Almost all of them end up in service of the Mesa Clan or military, but a few are sold to loyal Star Traders.

The men and women of Alta Mesa are known to be travelers, struggle to keep still, and dream of the void. They are especially attuned to low gravity and life in space on orbital stations or in spacing vessels. Certain family lines within the Alta Mesa Clan are known to have developed a gravity sickness which is passed down over generations.

Clan Moklumvue

*"There is always something to discover out there.
You just need to survive the journey."*

Born in the orbit of a trinary star, Clan Moklumvue soon became known for the skill of its merchants. By the time its trade network crisscrossed the galactic core, the clan had turned into the most desired trade ally among the factions. For centuries, all doors were open to Moklumvue traders. In the years leading to the Guild War, however, the Guild worked to erode the Moklumvue network, in which it saw as the backbone of the Star Traders economy and thus an obstacle in its path to power. After the end of the war and the Exodus, Moklumvue has managed to rebuild a healthy trade network, but the other factions have been wary of letting it regain its former prominence. Forced to diversify, Moklumvue has reinforced both its industry and its military, and its traders often double as diplomats.



Worldly and friendly, the scions of Moklumvue make good merchants, negotiators, and peacemakers. Trade flows best when there is peace after all, and honest trade is still the lifeblood of their clan. However, some Moklumvue families who chafe under "unfair" restrictions imposed by the other factions now operate smuggling rings in the shadow of their clan's trade network.

Clan Zenrin

"We are all memories"
Inscription in Halls of Memories

Clan Zenrin are a hardy breed of survivors who remember and honor the sacrifice of their ancestors in everyday rituals. Clan Zenrin was notably the final clan to be liberated from the Guild's domineering control and suffered greatly for it. With their internal focus, the Zenrin are a more self-sufficient faction than others, less likely to rely on alliances and trade with the other factions than their own industry and strength, even if it means that they may end up with less than if they had cooperated at times. Zenrin ships are known to be built with special interleaving of hulls and decks to increase their durability due to combat or accidental space damage.



The men and women of Clan Zenrin are known to be stubborn, loyal to a fault, and to refuse to back down when they have their iron-spine set to do something. Those who have chosen the Zenrin as their enemy have said, "You cannot bend the Zenrin, so you try to break them. But Zenrin never break, so your only choice is to kill them."

HALL OF MEMORIES

As soon as the Zenrin colony hives touched down on the new worlds in the post-Exodus era, they began to construct their Halls of Memories. Zenrin archivists and historians work to gather endless records into these towering monuments to history. However, Halls of Memories also play a powerful role in the personal life of Zenrin, serving as the memorial to family members who have passed away and as a place to entreat ancestors, receiving their guidance and solace in times of hardship.



THE SYNDICATES

The Syndicate organization is also permitted under the Faction Accords, and adopts a very different philosophy which replaces the hereditary family unit with the cohort. Wherein a hereditary family structure passes power and property through a bloodline, the cohort structure encourages the adoption of individuals based solely on their ability, talent and experience. While a traditional family structures such as marriage and children still exist within cohorts, these ties are considered secondary to the value of proven talent and achievements. An adopted child is just as valuable as a child of blood, and truly they are only measured by their achievement. Cohorts often compete to recruit the most promising candidates from academies and universities. In many cases, and especially when there is recruiting competition, an adoption dowry is paid to the cohort as that child leaves to join their new cohort.

Cohorts, like families within the Great Houses, come in a wide range of power, ability, and focus. Most cohorts have become specialized in order to be as profitable and powerful as possible. For example, some cohorts are organized as an interstellar company of merchants, while others may run spice farming operations, and others are completely dedicated to the military or political sphere. Cohorts come in all shapes and sizes, and at the bottom of Syndicate society, there are cohorts that will adopt any and all comers. These cohorts are formed into vast worker's unions, providing raw labor where needed, or training their people in a specific field of work, such as starport cargo operations.

Advancement in the Syndicate system is solely based on performance as measured by success within the faction, and demonstrated by achievements in the field of military, political and economic arenas. In stark contrast to the Great Houses, the Syndicates put no weight in heredity for selecting the next generation of leadership.

A Princedom within the Syndicates is granted to a leader who have proven their prowess within the political sphere. Most often, these proving grounds are found in contests of power against other factions as well as internally against rivals. Once a Princedom has been granted, the Prince or Princess will control the line of succession within his or her cohort, and in general it is uncommon that the next-in-line would be of blood kin as opposed to a stellar adopted and groomed candidate.

Detractors of the Syndicates system argue that nepotism runs wild within the structure as a whole. Of course, the children of those who have obtained great power and influence have a better chance to rise to places of power within the cohort structure, but they must compete to do so against their peers on a relatively flat playing field. In the Syndicates, some parents will disown a child who is deemed to have failed to live up to the expectations of the cohort. These disowned children must then find a lower cohort to adopt them, where their lesser achievements meet expectations.

Marriage across Syndicate boundaries is not discouraged though it is almost always a guarantee to slow one's rise to wealth and power. If a Syndicate member attempts to marry into a Great House then the expectation is that they have renounced their citizenship within the Syndicate and should join the inferior Great House system.

Cadar Syndicate

"Through strength, peace."

Far and away the Syndicate that can boast the most powerful military, Cadar puts great value in the might of its navy and planetary armies. Within the Syndicate's meritocracy, great weight and emphasis is placed upon military exploits and victories. It would be extremely rare to find a leader in a place of power in the Syndicate who has no previous military career. While there are no official statistics, it is estimated that more than one third of the families of Cadar faction are employed in one form or another by the different branches of military and merchant marines.



The most powerful entity within Cadar's economic sphere of trade and industrials is the UTF ("Unified Trade Front"). This corporate pact forms a union-like structure, promising cooperation, employment and contracts between a large varieties of Syndicate companies. While the UTF once joined together hundreds of companies across Syndicate lines, it has become more and more of a Cadar-only organization after Rychart withdrew the majority of their support.

The men and women of Cadar are known to be stout and strong, stubborn at times to a fault, and courageous to the point of rashness. Cadar are committed to their beliefs, whatever they may be, and stand by them. They are known for often going down with the ship, refusing to retreat, or compromise.

ELITE 303

Cadar's Elite 303 is a fabled and secretive division of shock troopers and covert operatives. The training and discipline of the Elite 303 is such that very little has ever leaked about its methods, training or who truly controls the military organization. The shock troops are known to infiltrate enemy locations and then strike with excessive force before disappearing like wisps of smoke. Whatever the size and scope of their operation may truly be, the Elite 303 rely completely on their own forces—their own exceptional pilots drop off and extract strike teams with terrifying skill.

Those few Elite 303 who have been captured by other factions have either died in prison or under interrogation, proudly taking their secrets to their grave.

De Valtos Syndicate

"You need to spend money to make money"

The De Valtos Syndicate is known for its influence and wealth, secured through its manufacturing expertise and extensive trade network. Within its meritocracy, positions of leadership are open to those who, through running a successful company, prove they can provide for themselves and their cohort. Within the Syndicate, the accumulation of great wealth is often the most direct path to accumulating power and taking positions of leadership. De Valtos leaders prize generosity and will publicly shower others with gifts to show the depths of their pockets and hearts.



The men and women of De Valtos are known to be focused, professional, and charming. Within De Valtos families, classic education and training—in the arts of diplomacy, finance, and swordplay—are the standard for citizens in the upper two thirds of the Syndicate society. Citizens from other factions are often surprised at the expected standard of living within the De Valtos Syndicate, which might be considered more luxurious than found in most other habitable worlds. The De Valtos expect more and are willing to spend resources to obtain or create the best.

In the Farfallen Rim Quadrant, the De Valtos won the right to operate the Syndicate Core, one of the richest worlds in all the known quadrants.

Syndicate Rychart

"No one owns secrets"

Rychart is known to the Syndicate as the most deeply entrenched in the political game. Their diplomats are everywhere, and it seems that they are constantly tipping the scales of balance one way or the other—into conflict, pressing to break alliances, or coming back to peace again. Assisting the diplomatic corps in their constant machinations, the Rychart spy cadres are rumored to be the best trained in any Quadrant. Some Rychart operatives may go undercover for the majority of their lives to serve the Syndicate, benefit their family, and either feed a stream of valuable information back to their handlers, or be in a position to make decisions within the opponent's power structure to the benefit of Rychart.



Rychart is also known to keep and employ a strong force of bounty hunters. Through centuries of paying exuberant rewards for warrants, they have an eager contingent of hunters willing to seek out and capture or kill their targets.

In the early days of the Farfallen Quadrant, Rychart took a more violent and direct military path than they have in recent centuries. During the Faction Wars, they left a number of ruined planets strewn across the galaxy in their destructive bid for power.

The men and women of Rychart are known to be clever, inquisitive, and sometimes too curious for their own good. The shadow of the xeno cult of Shelgeroth is something they would like to forget as a people, but it is also a path that far too many Rychart follow into xeno-fascination or obsession. Their leaders are known for their tactful negotiation skills and their tireless pursuit of returning things to a profitable, peaceful balance. At least, in the visible realm of politics. Across the Quadrants, the men and women of Rychart are known to test the limits of outlandish fashion and are famous for their penchant for hats.

LEGAL CODES

The legal codes of the quadrants and their diverse people, planets, and cultures are multi-layered and complex. The nature of the overlapping jurisdictions and legal codes empowers planetary government in some areas, while dictating law from on high in others. The main two legal codes that are followed by the society are Shalun Law and the Faction Accords. At the system level, every Prince establishes their own set of unique planetary laws.

THE FOUNDING

The Faction Accords and Shalun Law were written and signed during *The Founding*, in the years before the Great Exodus, and were carefully negotiated by Shalun, his advisors and the leadership of the Star Traders people. At the time, the Accords molded many separate dynasties and smaller syndicates into nine recognizable factions, as a way to create and enshrine balanced and stable political bodies within the fabric of Star Traders society.

FACTION ACCORDS

While Shalun Law defines property, crime, war and the legal system for all citizens, the Accords defines the structures and rules that factions must follow, basically laying out the foundation of both Great Houses and Syndicates. The Accords also dictate the size, structure, and rules of a Senate, how one is to be formed and the rules by which senators are elected to the governing body.

Quadrant Senates

A senate is an overarching legal body within a single quadrant that aims to preserve the rule of law. When the many isolated groups of colonists in the Exodus settled new systems and planted the seeds of the quadrants of today, each established their own senate, as dictated by the Faction Accords.

Within a quadrant, each faction controls a number of senate seats, allocated by the size, strength and population of the systems they have settled. Each faction has their own unique process for how senators are elected, but they all center on the powerful and elite members of the faction's leadership nominating candidates and casting votes. Within the syndicates it is

often powerful board members, princes and the leader of rich cohorts who cast these votes. In the great houses, it is usually the leading bloodlines, richest families and princes. Each faction has their own unique approach, for example, within the Cadar Syndicate, some of the top military commanders often participate in the process.

Senators are elected for only three years. Some senators spend this time tirelessly working to gain additional support within their faction, while others take their duty to heart and work to keep the rule of law, tamp down violence and feuding, and adhere to the goals of the senate body as Shalun saw them. As senate seats often change hands between terms, those faction leaders who wield power in their own right, such as princes, syndicate board members and family leaders would not gamble their future on a fickle senate seat. Therefore, while most senators come from powerful families and cohorts, these positions are seen as perfect for second or third sons and daughters.

SHALUN LAW

The Laws of Shalun, as codified during the Guild War, have roots as ancient as the first interstellar human colonization. Shalun and his advisers based this formalized set of laws on ancient legal systems but also modified that code to look forward to a new future after the Great Exodus. Shalun Law was written during The Founding and at a time when the Great Exodus was already being planned, and therefore the legal codes were designed to support the Exodus and the post-Exodus colonization period. Instead of trying to establish new laws for the already fractured galactic core, Shalun Law looked forward to a new era.

Shalun Law was the legal backbone for colonization of a new crop of worlds and the rebuilding of a vibrant society out of the chaos of post-Exodus times. In many ways, Shalun Law and the Faction Accords are a return to an individualist ideal of freedom, obviously influenced by the Guild's unjust and destructive use of centralized power. In this regard, the Law seeks to uphold the rights of free citizens and to put the power of the law into the hands of individuals and planetary rulers, instead of making it a prerogative of a central governmental body.

In total, Shalun Law defines the laws of individual freedom, ownership of property, technological limitations, crime, just compensation and retribution justice.

One well known aspect of Shalun Law is its prohibition of faster-than-light communication technology. Such communication devices were developed by the Guild and allowed the Narvidians to infiltrate and hijack their command structure at the highest level. In the end, a great deal of blame and suspicion was laid at the feet of the technology itself and the Star Traders society has made a conscious decision to live without it to avoid the risk of repeating the bloody history of the Guild War. The prohibition has a profound effect on the organization, messaging and traveling habits of the spacefaring Star Traders at large and serves to keep many Star Trader Captains busy ferrying messages and people across the galaxy.

Another key aspect of Shalun Law is that it demands that no citizen of one faction must accept being ruled by another faction. Along with the strict rules of planetary ownership, this law prevents factions from ever attempting to usurp, invade or conquer any planet that is ruled

by another faction. These strictures ensured that the post-Exodus colonization did not devolve into a destructive territorial war. Once established, faction settlements are permanent points of stability for the space-faring people. There are complex rules and laws for abandoning or transferring ownership of a system, but they are rarely used. Notably, these laws do not protect those on the fringes of Star Traders society—the independents—who have seen more than a few worlds roughly taken over by factions in the wake of a newly discovered resource or economic boom.

Retribution Justice

One of the primary concerns of Shalun Law is to channel conflict and violence into acceptable, defined, and in fact ritualized patterns in order to control their scope and impact. These ritualized forms are known as retribution justice and encompass legal conflict between factions in the form of Duels of Assassins, Solar Wars, Trade Wars, and more. Recognizing the danger of unlimited hostility between distant and often distrustful worlds and peoples, Shalun Law channels that hostility into smaller, contained episodes instead of allowing it to grow into something akin to territorial warfare.

The basis of Shalun Law is compensatory rather than punitive. When damages of some form have been caused, the first stage is a negotiation over just compensation between the two individual parties. If the wronged party chooses to accept offered compensation then the matter is simply cleared up outside of any complicated legal proceeding. If an agreement cannot be reached over just compensation, the wronged party may start a legal case with a local judge within whose jurisdiction the crime occurred. In some instances, especially with high profile cases, the plaintiff may petition to have the case taken up by the judiciary of the quadrant's senate. Either way, once a legal case is begun then both sides must present their case at the court of law. Given that legal proceedings are playing out over interstellar distances, these are multi-stage, extended affairs with witnesses and evidence being transported great distances to appear in a court of law. Star Trader Captains often provide transport and security for witnesses, evidence, and legal advocates during such cases. In the most controversial cases, the senate may appoint a Zendu Arbiter to a case to ensure that the law is followed to the letter and that a faction judge does not bend law in favor of their own faction, and that neither side is tampering with evidence or hindering the ability to hold a fair trial.

The judge's ruling on a case is always in the form of dictated just compensation for the wrongs done. This compensation may be more or less than the original offers made, depending on the evidence and particulars of the case. In most cases, with the legal pressure on, the wronged party will accept the dictated compensation and the case will come to a close. However, either party has the legal right to refuse to pay or accept the compensation. If compensation cannot be agreed upon, the wronged party may demand retribution justice, basically requesting to take their compensation from the other party in blood, economic damage, or stolen secrets.

Interplanetary commerce, and the fierce competition that it brings, is a constant stabilizing factor within Star Traders society. The system of feud and retribution justice has worked for

generations because of the great economic need for stability within society and trade. While actors and power players within factions hold grudges and vendettas that could prolong retribution justice into an endless cycle of eye-for-an-eye, the rest of their factions exert pressure to settle cases, accept compensation and end feuds in order to return to normal operations, a steady flow of credits, and the turning of the great wheel.

Duel of Assassins

The most bloody and directly violent form of retribution justice, a Duel of Assassins allows either side to gain just compensation through direct violence against individuals. When a judge grants a Duel of Assassins, a death court is established, which is comprised of a mixed group of senators and senate judges. Either faction in the legal case may bring their specific claims forward to the death court and petition for a capture or death warrant to be granted. The most immediate and important warrant granted by a death court is in regards to the original case that devolved into a Duel of Assassins and is almost always a death warrant.

As with all retribution justice, a Duel of Assassins is a dual edged blade. Once the death court is opened, it becomes a clearinghouse for moving cases and criminal acts through the legal system and bringing them to resolution. Either faction may bring forward grievances, crimes and evidence against the other faction and may appeal to the court to grant a warrant. These legal appeals may or may not relate to the original case. The death court expedites what might have been lengthy, multi-year process and either permanently dismisses cases or grants a capture or death warrant. In this fashion, the death court clears the air between two factions—albeit in a blood way—often processing hundreds of cases in a few years.

Refusing just compensation and demanding a Duel of Assassins as retribution justice is a risky political maneuver. It may be staunchly resisted by other members of a faction. The reach of the death court has grown exponentially with the reunification of the quadrants through the hyperwarp gates, and faction leadership recognize just how many of their own may die across the galaxy when a Duel of Assassins begins. With the reunification of the quadrants, a death court run by the local senate has become an intergalactic threat to all members of either involved faction.

As the executors of retribution justice, Star Traders who carry the red badges of Edicts are the ones who execute these warrants. Bounty hunters flock like carrion birds to a Duel of Assassins conflict, eager to make fortunes on the morbid feud.

Those crimes which are not worthy of a death warrant result in a capture warrant which allows a target to be captured and held for ransom during the Duel.

PLANETARY LAW

Each star system is ruled by a faction Prince, enshrined in his or her place of power by their Great House or their Syndicate Board. On the worlds of their system, a Prince is the unquestioned feudal ruler who has both the power to establish his or her own rule of law as

well as to draw upon the system's faction citizens to fill the ranks of the defense forces and military marines.

One of the most direct impacts planetary law has upon a Star Trader is through trade law. Based upon the economy, local circumstances, environment, and the security situation, the Prince may decide to outlaw many different commodities, types of goods, substances or weaponry. The most restrictive version of trade law is often applied at the Star Traders' Exchange, where a Prince may decide that independent traders should be prevented from trading in commodities like fertilizer, even on a farming world. In most cases, this more restrictive trade law is usually used to bolster trade alliances and agreements with other systems and to protect the Prince's economic interests. Many types of goods are also restricted behind Trade Permits, such as personal weapon components as well as power generators and other valuable commodities. The requirement for a Trade Permit enables a faction to demand a level of loyalty from traders dealing in more lucrative commodities, and risk the loss of their permit if they wrong their faction allies. Princes may restrict the trade of goods for many different reasons, from concerns over security, as an extreme form of tariffs, to prevent competitive businesses from gaining a hold on their world, or because of personal or religious beliefs. Some Princes go so far as to restrict the trade of off-world Spice, driving trade underground.

With regards to Shalun Law, a Prince generally has the right to interpret these laws in a more conservative and restrictive way, however planetary laws that break the clearest and most easily interpreted strictures of Shalun Law will be challenged in the Senate Courts or by other competitive powers within a Prince's own faction. For example, under Shalun Law, a planet may not deny the landing rights of a space traveler from another faction. This law is written in the same spirit as the law that requires a planet to grant a Star Trader landing rights, as this can be a matter of life and death in interplanetary travel. While the Shalun Law is clear on some points, others are open to the interpretation of the Prince and their planetary law. Most Princes require that visiting citizens of another faction register their presence with the local security forces, share the purpose of their visit, their location of stay, as well as a reliable form of contact. Other more restrictive laws may put a time limit on a visitor's stay or require that the visitor present proof of an economic contract in order to move beyond the walls of the starport itself.

THE CONTROLLED DISTRICT

The area around the Star Trader's landing zone of the starport is specifically designed for off-worlds visitors. Known as the controlled district, this area includes the starport, the specialized exchange for Star Traders and the spice hall.

THE SPICE HALL

The districts and buildings surrounding a starport are strategically picked and positioned. The strict travel limitations on Star Trader captains, officers, and crew from off-world vessels keep everyone close to the starport—and therefore, the fun comes to them. The spice hall is a sprawling district of entertainment, leisure activities, and small-scale merchants that have gathered to cater to the spacing men and women of the Star Traders and the faction military marines who are on planet-leave.

Depending on the world, its local laws, and its economy, a spice hall can be a one building spice-bar or a sprawling multi-mile district containing every imaginable game, delight, and form of spice. Such spice districts are one part circus, one part gambling den, one part bar, one part technology incubator, are likely to house a black market and are a great melting pot for graus and spacers alike. In more established spice halls, entertainment is provided by carefully trained faction members, men and women, who specialize in providing comforts and pleasures to the crew of visiting ships. Entertainers ply spacers and graus alike, selling rounds of vodka and spice beer, running gambling games, displaying physical skills (particularly popular are Steel Song blade dancers), playing music or offering private time in pleasure rooms.

Unless the local legal codes are tyrannical, one thing that is constant in every spice hall is the spice, in the form of spice-beer, snortspice, and smokable tobic sticks.

Recruiting Graus to the Stars

Among the booths and bars of the spice hall, captains may find eager graus who wish to suspend their faction citizenship and join a Star Trader among the stars. Graus who are mechanics, bladesman, soldiers or even criminals—can be found on the right world, and will line up to join a Captain with a good reputation. Some may be hiding from or fleeing the law, while others are simply looking to make an honest living to line their own pockets or to send credits home to their family.

Spice

Spice is the universal intoxicant that keeps any good spice hall running for spacers and gravers alike. By the time it reaches the spice hall, it has been refined from its naturally occurring or farmed form into all sorts of consumable eats, drinks, smokes, and other delights.

In its natural state, spice is an organism that in many ways resembles an oceanic coral—spreading through spores released into the air which take root and replicate when they land in favorable conditions. From these spores grow a hard crystalline structure that eventually cracks or shatters and releases another round of spores to continue the spice's spread.

Spice has been found to be naturally occurring on worlds across the galaxy, even before the arrival of the Star Traders. How the spice crystal has managed to travel amongst the stars is an enduring mystery. Some believe that humanity and xeno alike played a role in inadvertently spreading the spores of spice to the galactic winds. Whatever the truth behind its proliferation, the spice spore is a hardy organism. Trace amounts of spice spores are able to survive harsh conditions and environments and then later blossom into spice crystals that start a new cycle. Once airborne in a "spice wind," spice spores have been known to drift hundreds of miles in the atmosphere until landing in an area to start the cycle again.

Far away from the Spice Halls, spice harvesting and farming is hard and grinding work. Refining spice requires whole crystals that have not been damaged or cracked, as once the inside of the crystal is cracked and exposed to air, it begins to rapidly decompose into spores. On worlds where spice has been growing unharvested for thousands of cycles, great crystal deposits have built up over the ages. On these worlds, spice mines plunge deep beneath the surface to tap into these immense seam deposits of spice, often employing massive labor forces to carefully extract individual crystals.

While spice crystals spread naturally, their quantity and quality for refinement varies greatly upon the conditions under which the spice grew and the timing of its harvest. Spice farming is a labor intensive practice of spreading spice spores, trimming and grooming the spice field, and attempting to provide the optimal radiation, moisture and temperature for the crystals. The Spice Festivals across the many Quadrants are often tied to the timing of the spice harvest on nearby spice farming worlds.

Spice Festivals

Spice festivals are declared for rare and portent astronomical events or aligned with great spice field harvests on nearby systems. Planned for years in advance at times, these excessive and exaggerated affairs draw hundreds of thousands of spectators to the spice hall and the surrounding districts to join in the weeks of revelry and hedonism. During these times, it is not uncommon that laws are bent if not outright broken.

Pit Fighting

On some of the more lawless and backwater worlds, spice festivals may include gladiatorial violence. Pit fights draw crowds of blood-thirsty spectators who roar for more and fill rosters with bets on the opposing teams of four. Such murderous sport is allowed only during a festival, but it is known that, much like black markets, pit fighting goes underground the rest of the year.

MEDICAL TRADITIONS

Two separate and equally strong medical traditions have developed among the Star Traders over the centuries. While the many worlds of the quadrants are rife with medical schools and universities which train doctors focused in all manner of specialties, the Chasesin Doctors and Gestalt Technologists stand out as unique professions due to their use of secretive techniques. There are high barriers of entry to gain such knowledge and skill, and both traditions require lifelong dedication by their members. Joining either of these groups is far above and beyond choosing the occupation of doctor—these traditions demand a way of life, an ethical code, and tight-lipped silence about their medical methods.

Because of their secrecy and the reliably superior results, these two medical traditions have a tight grip on a monopoly for the best medical care available, allowing both of them to charge high prices. As their presence is such a boon, their enclaves and leaders are cherished, enshrined and doted upon by local authorities to curry their favor. A Star Trader will always find medical care more effective in faction holdings where a Gestalt or Chasesin Doctor enclave pushes the level of care at the academy-trained hospitals to higher heights.

CHAESIN DOCTORS

The Chasesin discipline is a medical tradition that has been part of the Star Traders culture since time immemorial. Historians estimate that their order was first formalized during the later period of the great expansion when the Star Traders began to settle thousands of new worlds and build an intergalactic network of trade. The theory goes that the access to new plants, animals and organisms spurred on a period of rapid discovery in the medical fields. In these early eras, Chasesin were famous for joining forces with adventurous colonist-explorers to find the cutting edge of the newest substance, mineral, or plant-based techniques. Now, a much larger and more formal organization, the Chasesin discipline is split between those who provide the highest levels of care to their patients and those who continue to seek out new cures and remedies. While the early Chasesin traditions focused on natural and holistic medical approaches, it has changed over the centuries to include synthesizing advanced medicines of all sorts by emulating the properties of substances found in nature. To provide competitive care, Chasesin Doctors work in all forms of surgery, including the installation of augmetics, and deploy the highest technological advances in manufactured and Spice-based medicines.

In the years leading up to and during the Guild War, the Chaesin tradition was greatly damaged and diminished. The Guild viewed them as a threat and worked to undermine, kill, or sideline many of their leaders. Systematically weakened by the Guild, they were further hurt by the upheaval and extreme violence of the war, and only really began to rebuild their tradition to its full strength after the Exodus. In the post-Hyperwarp era, their tradition has re-established some of its lost dominance. The group's superior ability to provide large-scale care to both rich and powerful as well as to the middle classes of faction citizenry has reinvigorated their order.

GESTALT TECHNOLOGISTS

The Gestalt Technologists carry on a medical tradition that developed during the deadly years of the Guild War. Born out of a period of extreme violence and loss, the Gestalt's focus and expertise was driven by an extreme need to help soldiers survive horrendous wounds and to rapidly return wounded warriors back to the fields of battle.

Historians have traced the origins of the Gestalt Technologists back to the siege of Rypok 4, a Guild-held industrial and fortress system. From among the ashes of that twelve year campaign emerged a small unit of highly successful combat medics who employed cutting edge techniques on the warfront to save lives. Unlike the Chaein Doctors, the Gestalt tradition rapidly accelerated and grew during the Guild War.

When the Exodus finally began, the Gestalt's influence and applicability had grown far beyond battlefields, and their unique techniques were in high demand during and after the long journey.

Gestalt Technologists are known for always pushing the boundaries of medical science and specialize in the use of organic vat grown replacement body parts, such as ears, hands, and even full limbs to rehabilitate those most grievously wounded. Their secretive vat techniques can also be used to grow graftable skin and muscle tissue that can be used to repair minor wounds and can also combat aging or treat disease. Not all bodies will bond with the vat-grown tissues and there have been some recorded cases where the treatments have turned fatal or the replacements have atrophied after bonding. Alongside their use of vat-grown tissue, Gestalt are skilled in the installation of augmetic technologies as more cost-effective solutions or to employ mechanical solutions when a vat grown repair will not suffice. In comparison to the techniques and the rates of their Chaein competitors, Gestalt medical treatment is priced so high that it is only available to the rich and powerful graus or to wealthy Star Traders.

ZENDU

Zendu are humans who share a unique genetic mutation that allows their children to inherit the memories of their parents and their parents and so forth back up the chain of ancestors. These memories are known as a Zendu's Lineage. Throughout the history of humanity, Zendu sects have come and gone. Some have survived longer than others and the oldest among them are the Augurs who have been with the highest Princes of the factions since time immemorial.

ORIGINS

For as long as historians have recorded, the Zendu have been among the Star Traders in one form or another. However, the origins of their many sects have always been shrouded in mystery. What is known is that the genetic mutation that enables Zendu Lineages is developed over generations on unique “bioforming worlds”. These worlds gain their property to mutate human genetics through some biological agent that is resident within the environment or atmosphere. There are no examples of bioforming worlds for modern science to study, and so the origins of the Zendu are—for the time being—purely in the realm of theory. Some theorists believe that these unidentified bioforming agents must bear great similarity to the spice and move from world to world much in the way that spice spores do.

Of the bioforming worlds, the most is known about the glacial homeworld of the Templar Militant, Mal Direx. The bioforming homeworld of the Augurs, Ver Dwenna, was long lost to history even before the Guild War. Other Zendu sects such as the Harripaen Troubadours or the Kaelate Devote might have possessed more intimate secrets of bioforming worlds, but they were eradicated during the Guild’s consolidation of power in the years before the Guild War.

LINEAGE MEMORIES

A Zendu’s Lineage refers to all of the memories passed down from one’s ancestors. This Lineage—the Zendu’s parents, grandparents and beyond—determines the sum total of possible accessible memories and knowledge available through the genetic remembrance. The things that have been seen and known!

While some memories, skills and knowledge may transfer between parents and child without purposeful meditation and preparation, the transfer of a Lineage is most effective when both the parents and the young children work through a ritualized process of deep meditation, patterned physical exercise, and self-hypnosis. The same processes that a Zendu uses to retrieve stored memories from his or her Lineage is also used to encode living experience into Lineage memories for the next generation.

The individuals who inherit the Zendu bloodline do so within a range of potential to retrieve and encode their Lineage memories. There are those who have great potential and those who have lesser abilities, and some excel at muscle memory while others can only recall visualized memories or the voices of their ancestors. Depending on their potential, the manifestation of Lineage memories is different for every Zendu, but there are some common similarities that have been recorded.

- ❖ The most common and constant input from a Lineage is muscle memories. Without prompting, these memories constantly help guide a Zendu’s actions, balance, timing, movements, aiming, fighting and any mechanical tasks.
- ❖ Visual memories can be summoned by a Zendu by an act of mental focus, looking back on moments in the past and seeing them unfold. Many such memories can be painful, and as with our own human memories, these visual recallings come with the full weight of the

emotions of the ancestor. Such memories can come unbidden, welling up out of the Lineage when the living Zendu is presented with something that triggers a long forgotten memory.

- ❖ Some Zendu hear the voices of their ancestors in their head, explaining things or recounting facts. It is thought that such voices are memories of conversations the ancestor had with others, or the mental discussion the Zendu has with herself or her Lineage memories. Some Zendu have come to believe that their ancestors are talking to them.

A Lineage is lost forever if a Zendu does not have children and successfully pass their memories on to the next generation. Procreating is a societal responsibility within all Zendu sects and the tragedy of a Zendu dying before fulfilling this responsibility is deeply felt by all.

TEMPLAR MILITANT

"Shalun favors the brave"
Templar Battle Cry

The Templar Militant are famously known for their 12 foot tall Leviathan mechs in which they ride to war. They are the Zendu who have honed their Lineage memories in the fires of war, gaining skill and prowess with each successive generation.



In the beginning of the Guild's domination of the Star Traders people, the Guild banished, scattered or exterminated many of the organizations, traditions and families that they considered to be a threat to their grand plans. Especially high on their list of targets were the Hardoss Monks, a Zendu sect known for their prowess in martial combat but also for their dedication to peace. The Guild exiled the entire Hardoss people to the ice world of Mal Direx Prime and then cut their lines of interstellar support to ensure their demise.

Over two centuries, the Hardoss Monks not only survived but found ways to flourish in the harsh environment of the Mal Direx Prime. Perhaps because they unknowingly brought the bioforming agents with them or by sheer luck, they found Mal Direx to be a bioforming world in which their Zendu genetic mutation only strengthened. Their long exile on Mal Direx was interrupted by the emergency landing of a damaged mining freighter. Along with the survivors of the lost ship came news of the Guild's bloody tyranny over the Star Traders, cargo holds equipped with a few high-pressure mining mech rigs that would one day be known as Leviathans, and a boy: Ardok Shalun.

Forty years later, Ardok Shalun led the Templars in the first battle at Mattozin Gate against the Guild's forces. Word of their daring uprising and unlikely victories against the seemingly undefeatable Guild spread quickly. After centuries of being crushed under the Guild's heel, this galvanized the princes and leaders of the Star Traders factions into battle. Their bravery and sacrifice lit the fires of the Guild War, and throughout the century long conflict, they were at the forefront of every battle.

During the Exodus, the Templars protected the fleets of the Star Traders and helped maintain peace among the factions. As the Star Traders found new worlds and set down their space

hives, the Templars fought battles at terrible cost to help safeguard the new colonies. Finally, in the years following the settling of Farfallen Rim, the main Templar fleet moved into a defensive position around the Alzean Core to intercept an unimaginably large and powerful xeno swarm that was shredding across the galaxy. In total, more than half of the Templar Militant died in the Alzean Campaign along with Ardok Shalun who lost his life in the 12-day assault on the xeno hive mind.

Leviathan Mechs

Leviathan mechs were originally designed for exploration and mining in extreme-pressure environments such as the interior of gas giants. During the early years to the Guild War, the first generations of the Templar Engineers adapted the mechs for war. Because a mech battle suit's internal power source relies on kinetic reclamation during extended deployments, Leviathans are optimal for quick and deadly strike team missions. Otherwise, mech pilots would be roasted alive in the searing temperatures of an overheating Leviathan.

Lineage Lines

Over the centuries, Templars have split into loose bloodline castes around specific professions. Where a Soldier's Lineage contains millions of battle memories and muscle twitch responses, a Templar Engineer has seen everything and repaired everything through their Lineage memories. It is said that no years of training within a single human lifespan can encompass the knowledge within the memories of a Templar Engineer. The famed Neptune, Hydra, Berserk and Scout all hail from separate bloodlines and rely on generations of muscle memories to pilot their specialized Leviathan mechs to battle.

Not all Templars are mech pilots. As a people, they are dedicated to maintaining the military might that has saved the Star Traders time and again and upheld the rule of Shalun Law. But, among their Lineage lines there are tacticians, mechanics, pilots, leaders, historians and more. The number of Templars who pilot Leviathans is not more than twenty percent of their entire population.

Only in Victory

One cannot underestimate the effect and natural efficiency of a Lineage's scope of memories. Lineage memory encoding is performed by a living Zendu, therefore the next generation of Templar Militant can only remember victories and the tactics, skill and decision-making used to achieve them. They never remember the death of their ancestors since a death is never encoded into one's Lineage memories.



The ice worlds of the Alzean Core are reminiscent of the long lost Mal Direx Prime

ARBITERS

Arbiters are an offshoot sect of the Templar Militant, chosen by Shalun himself to be guardians of Shalun Law. Their sect was formed near the end of the Guild War and given the responsibility to enforce Shalun Law, to help guide the factions for future generations and in some cases to take leadership positions within the Exodus fleets. The first Arbiters were picked from among the Templar Militant for their inspiring leadership, political leanings and dedication to the new laws that were being written.

The Arbiters have acted as impartial guides, advisers, leaders and judges for the factions since the end of the Guild War and the beginning of the Exodus. Their ability to act as neutral parties and their reputation of incorruptibility has seen them called into action in many arenas, moments of desperation and political disputes. While they are few in number, their influence holds great sway over faction leaders, princes and senators. In general, Arbiters rely on Star Trader Captains to assist them in travel and in their duties in order to maintain their impartiality.

Like all Zendu, Arbiters pass their memories down to their descendants. These experiences prepare each new generation of Arbiter for the challenges of their day, gifting them with deep knowledge of Shalun Law, heightened empathy, piercing ability to read people and brilliant tactical and strategic minds. As their ancestors survived the Guild War, the Exodus and the years that followed, many Arbiters have seen battle through their Lineages if not in person. Therefore, Arbiters can boast some of the battle prowess that is usually associated only with Templars though they fight as men and women, not from the confines of mighty Leviathan mechs.

Some of the most feared Arbiters are those few who have taken up the mantle of Hunter and ply the stars tracking down the galaxy's worst criminals, xeno cultists and worse.

Arbiters are by far the smallest Zendu sect. Most Arbiters are agents constantly on the move among the stars and therefore they benefit from the life extending influence of the Void Engines. Combined with rigid practices of Zendu meditation, exercise and other life-extending technologies, Arbiters are said to be the longest living Zendu. As free agents of Shalun Law, Arbiters are free to make their own choices about coupling but their sect place great emphasis on bearing the next generation of to protect Shalun Law. More than any other Zendu sect, Arbiters are known to separate after bearing offspring with one of the two parents taking the next generation Arbiter under his or her wing from early adolescents. Many Arbiters grow up in this fashion—traveling the stars with a parent and learning the ropes of their Lineage and their duty. As their total numbers can be counted in the hundreds, Arbiters face an ever dwindling set options for coupling two centuries after the end of the Exodus.

AUGURS

Augurs are the old guard of the Zendu who hail from a time long before Shalun and the Templar Militant. They are a small but influential sect of Zendu who directly serve the most powerful Princes among the Great Houses and Syndicates. Augurs act as advisors and are often exceptionally skilled in reading human emotion and body language, to the point of being able to detect lies or predict what someone is about to say. In the princely courts where Augurs are present, they become a constant fixture and are called upon to advise, weigh in, or comment on almost all business that passes through the court. As their Lineage memories contain the proceedings and results of hundreds of courts that came before them, their knowledge in political machinations, schemes, deception, loyalty and good policy are deep and invaluable to a Prince or Princess. It is said that if a Prince has an Augur but does not ask their advice, they are like a merchant who buys a load of Duranium without weighing it first.

Augurs are the second smallest sect of Zendu, but have found their own ways to survive and maintain their number. By serving only the most powerful Princes, Augurs gain access to the most advanced medical and technological life-extension techniques. Combined with the rigid practices of Zendu meditation and exercise, some Augurs have lived for multiple centuries. Augurs make their own choices about coupling and offspring to protect the future of their people. While their numbers may only be in the low thousands, their non-violent profession and extended lifespans have allowed their sect to endure for millennia.

Augurs often play a vital role in the education of the children from a royal family or cohort that are being groomed for succession. Therefore, Augurs and the Princes or Princesses they serve often share a lifelong bond. In some cases, Augurs have lived long enough that they educated and advised three generations of a royal bloodline or cohort succession.

Augur Lineages run back into time immemorial, but most contemporary Augurs are only able to remember back to the bloody start of the Guild War with any definitive clarity.

THREATS

The Star Traders live within a dangerous galaxy, constantly facing threats from within and from without. While the graus fortify their worlds and build their empires, the Star Traders face the unforgiving threats of the void and the enemies that lurk there.

INHUMAN THREATS

Humanity is alone in a hostile galaxy. The only other known intelligent lifeforms are hungry for destruction or dominance.



Terrox Hunters stand over 10 feet tall

Xeno

A catch-all term that describes a variety of carbon-based creatures which are extremely hostile to all other lifeforms across the galaxy. Xeno exhibit a general disinterest in each other but otherwise consume and destroy anything that stands in their path. Military minds, scholars and often too-eager lore experts categorize xeno as hive-based and insect-like in their behavior and biology. While there exists a wide variety of xeno lifeforms, they are all terrifying in combat, extremely hard to kill and ruthlessly lethal. Star Traders have had contact and

conflict with the xeno for centuries but the Exodus has thrown the Star Traders into new galactic territory, much of which is infested with xeno.

Some of the Quadrants that were colonized by Star Traders after the great Exodus have been completely lost to the terror of the xeno and all human colonies were wiped out.

Narvidians

While the great Exodus aimed to leave the Narvidians and the failing Guild behind in the Galactic Core, it is clear that some of their kind have discovered the location of the Star Traders new homeworlds. It has been confirmed that some Quadrants fell to Narvidian incursions, while others, such as the Cirm Quadrant, were able to defeat the ancient enemy in direct battle.

Before the Guild War, the Guild was infiltrated and turned against humanity by a small number of powerful Narvidians. In turn, the Narvidians used the Guild's vast industry to rebuild the Narvidian race and unleash war upon the galaxy once again. The Guild Wars pitted Guild against Guild, Narvidian against human and Star Trader against all. Only a rebuilt Zendu leadership and the military might of the Templar Knights allowed the Star Traders to emerge victorious.

THREATS FROM WITHIN

There are many who seek to undermine, weaken or gain dominance over the Star Traders, their factions and the new quadrants.

The Hunna

Independents have always existed on the fringes of Star Traders society. Indies are those who have choose to live free of the faction law and by their own code. Others join the independents in an attempt to dodge the law or an unfortunate past. Indies scratch out a living on the least habitable planets of the Quadrants. Within these independent bastions and settlements, the Hunna has arisen from the resentment against the power and greed of the factions. The battle cry of the Hunna is that the factions have abandoned Shalun Law in trust, only using it in name to further their greedy, bloody quest for power and wealth. The rebel organization was first named and recognized in the conflict on the Javat mining world Tennhaus IU, in which a small battalion of Javat Faction Defenses was overrun in a bloody conflict. From there, the spark grew into a movement that has endured for more than a century.

The Hunna do what they can to keep their operations in secret, and recruit from among disenfranchised colonists, independents, and faction laborers who agree with their damning read of the faction leadership's greed and betrayal of Shalun. Because of their position on the fringe worlds and the edge of legality, the Hunna work closely with smugglers, pirates, and other criminal operations as a way to fund their self-righteous cause. The Hunna's tactics are



often violent, ranging from intimidation, murder, guerrilla warfare, sabotage, and assassination. When and where they can, they follow their own version of Shalun Law, but as with any group walking such a knife edge, they have made compromises for their cause.

Gux Malleus: Mastermind Cult

Malleus was named “Gux Thulun” at birth. Once a loyal and promising military lieutenant, he broke from his path to greatness within House Thulun for unknown reasons at an early age. Whatever the cause, Gux turned his back his bloodline and his almost assured spot as a commander of a planetary defense battalion. The rest of Gux’s story has become a dark stain on his family and his impressive ancestry that has never washed out.

By 42.01 AE, Gux had already taken command of the Thulun military base on Terrot 5. In a deadly betrayal of his bloodline, he disabled the bases defenses and sensors to the bloody advantage of an indie space pirate known as Captain Eli Hrake. Gux sacrificed the lives of more than a hundred Thulun merchant marines to allow Hrake to loot and then raze the Thulun military base. Joining the pirate’s crew as a chief officer, Gux took on his second name—Gux Malleus. After a few years of looting and raiding, Gux and Hrake both slide out of the history records for a time.

Sometime after the year 50.01 AE, Gux Malleus resurfaced as the Captain of Hrake’s old ship, the *Aperio Caliga*. Newly dubbed Captain Malleus proceeded to murder, plunder, and kill mercilessly across the galaxy—in the process accumulating great wealth and a great many contacts in the darker corners of space. His heinous crimes earned him bounties from both the Syndicate and Houses, and Death Warrants were issued by over 30 Princes.

When it became clear that Captain Malleus was involved in a budding xeno cult on the system known as Olggavan Hold, the Templar Knights stepped in. As they are known to do, they relentlessly hunted down the traitor. However, at every turn he stalled them with new tricks, false leads and bloody resistance. The hunt revealed that the threat Gux Malleus represented was far beyond that of a pirate, but that of a dark and criminal genius. At last, the Templar Knights cornered Gux in his stronghold where he had unearthed a xeno lord from a dark age. They were able to assault his citadel in time to witness the raising of the xeno lord. At this time, it was believed—and, in fact, witnessed by several Templars—that Gux Malleus was killed by the claw of the enraged xenomorph. History would prove otherwise.

Almost 150 years later, clues that Gux Malleus was alive began to surface in Templar and faction military circles. In time, many black-hearted pirates, sinister spies, and devious cult leaders were linked back to Gux, and it became clear that from whatever shadowy realm he was pulling strings, Gux had assembled, and possibly trained a great cult of baleful villains and predators. Undermining the law of the factions, starting uprisings, stealing military hardware, and gathering relics of power and ill-repute—this shadow army has become known as the Mastermind Cult. The leaders of this cult employ Malleus’ tricks and tactics, seem to serve some greater dark purpose, and some have even sworn under the pain of torture that they have seen or were trained by Gux himself. However, for all the signs and whispers, Malleus has never resurfaced, but either way his vile legacy lives on.

Cult of Shelgeroth

In the century following the end of the Exodus, a maleficent presence made itself known among the Star Traders who had fled the Galactic Core and the Naruidian scourge. Rising up in rebellions and coups across the many of the fledgling Quadrants, the Cult of Shelgeroth made violent attempts to grasp power. The Cult's promises to its followers are vague and often confusing—ranging from the return of powerful xeno gods, to unlocking the Zendu secrets, to the rise of the Naruidians—but all lead to the same end game: promises of immortality and ascending to the throne by which to rule all of humanity. While the madness seems evident to those outside the cult, such promises whispered in the ears of malcontents and confused citizens have turned far too many into loyal followers.

Regardless of their delusions, the Cult has proven to be extremely well-organized and disciplined. While in many Quadrants the Cult was defeated and stamped back into the shadows, it has also had its share of successes. Some Quadrants were entirely lost in the civil war that broke out around their rebellion, while others were razed by xeno or Naruidian incursions. Where Shelgeroth has been defeated, it has been the Templar Militant who time and time again have had the required strength and foresight to see such victories through. Still, with the tightly compartmentalized cult-cell organization, at least some of the leaders and powers behind Shelgeroth have slipped into the shadows, only to rise again generations later.

Much to their chagrin, the Princes of Rychart have always been closely associated with Shelgeroth. The Templar Knights estimate that more than three quarters of the Cult's uprisings have spawned from Rychart Princes or worlds in the wake of the Exodus.

In the century following the Exodus, most of the Shelgeroth power-base was destroyed, and the unification of the Quadrants has only further allowed the faction militaries to unite against the occasional appearance of the Cult. But in the end, the cult is clearly biding its time and gathering power once again; patience and secrecy have always been Shelgeroth's greatest strengths.

