





A traveler from the Empire of Alexius Hawkwood will be struck by the dazzling contrasts found among the worlds of the Kurga Caliphate. Breathtaking luxury lives alongside abject poverty; plump, perfumed hedonists take counsel with skeletal ascetics; refinement, piety and civility mark every social interaction, while crimes are punished with gutwrenching brutality. To Known Worlders, Kurgan space is a lawless, barbarous region, devoid of any guidance from the Royal Houses or inspiration from the Universal Church, where even the Merchant League hesitates to trade.

The peoples of the Caliphate, however, look upon the Known Worlds with similar feelings. In their view, Kurgan society is the most perfected of all cultures, the last bastion of enlightenment in a chaotic universe. Everybody occupies a place in the well-ordered social system, directed by the wise and beneficent Caliph who rules in the name of the Maker of Stars.

Egon's Worlds

Kurgan history and culture began with a single man, just as modern Kurgan society revolves around the Caliph. That man was Bjorn Egon, whose lifetime straddles the end of the Diaspora and the start of the Second Republic — indeed, early historians considered him one of the “founding fathers” of the Republic (although this characterization, the product of his aggressive public-relations executives, was disputed). A shadowy figure, heir to a large mercantile fortune and usurper of many noble holdings, Egon was a ruthless businessman who maintained a wall of absolute privacy to isolate himself from public life. In truth, Egon despised Republican ideals, viewing their ethic of equality as a threat to his accomplishments and an attempt to deprive him of his immense wealth. Later Republican historians depict him as a merciless tyrant to his employees, embodying all the abuses of power, wealth and privilege normally attributed to the nobility.

In the early 36th century Egon acquired a failing mining concern, which claimed to possess the jumpcodes to two mineral-rich planets beyond Khayyam (then connected to Sutek). Egon moved in to set up shop, keeping his new interest as secret as possible in order to avoid the anti-monopoly laws of the new Republic. Over the next several decades, Egon gradually diverted manpower and equipment from his other businesses, keeping false records to show the Senate, bribing space patrol officials at Khayyam to look the other way when his transports jumped through their system, and moving his workforce in ships with portholes painted over to keep them from knowing where they were being sent.

Envious of the pageantry and splendour of the late Diasporan nobility, Egon created his own private empire, re-educating his employees and indoctrinating their children into an artificial culture of his own devising, a jumble of influences from Central Asia and the Middle East of ancient Urth, to which he gave the Central Asian name of “Kurga.” Part of Egon’s plan was to keep his workers dependent upon him both personally and socially, as well as economically, by setting himself up as a divine ruler. Another part was to create a web of scenic worlds with strange colorful inhabitants for use as his own private playground, into which he could invite his closest friends or rich and powerful people he wished to impress.

Egon and his successors managed to keep his private empire hidden until the late 38th century, when Republican authorities discovered the secret jumpweb and moved in to liberate the captive employee population. In the process they opened the secluded jumproutes to free travel, tourism and exploration. Egon’s cultural indoctrinators had done their work well, however. The “Kurgan” people regarded the new Republican influences as alien and abhorrent, and the Republican welfare system imposed upon them as a degrading form of oppression. Most eventually fled the cities where the Republican system was strongest and lived in the unde-



veloped wildernesses of the newly terraformed planets, ignored and ultimately forgotten by the authorities.

Sata Natura

Kurgan culture, such as it was at that time, enjoyed a slight notoriety in the late Republican era when Sata Natura, a nomad-born Kurgan woman, capitalized upon her exotic beauty, endearing social skills and shrewd business savvy to become one of the top entertainers of the late 40th century. Separated from her tribe while still very young, Natura worked as a prostitute in the poverty-stricken cities of Al Fashir, then as a dancer and singer with a number of traveling theater troupes before obtaining a contract with a large holovid company. By the 3960s she was not only the most widely recognized celebrity in the universe but also confidante, physical therapist and secret lover to some of the most prominent men and women of the late Second Republic. In the successful holovid *Jumping To Nineveh*, a singer and a comedian travel to the mythical planet Nineveh (the Kurgan-inspired sets and costumes of which became vogue among many Republicans) and form a serio-comic love triangle with the local Queen, amply portrayed by La Natura. Her career was so extensive that examples of her work have survived the past millenium in both Kurga and the Known Worlds, in the form of poster art, holoreal models and prerecorded vocal intonations such as "Thank you for doing business with us and have a pleasant day," "Please watch your step when exiting the vehicle," and the memorable "This installation will self-destruct in five... four... three..."

Sata Natura (a Latin stage name — her given name long forgotten) used her covert position of influence to lobby for Kurgan interests among senators and corporate magnates, working to stem the massive influx of tourists to Irem and exempt the most remote nomadic tribes from the mandatory census. She retired from public life a decade before the Fall when her scandalous politicking was brought to light amidst rumors that she had dosed many unwitting heads of state with exotic drugs to achieve her ends. Through her contacts she learned of a Philosopher's Stone which exerted a powerful influence upon the jumpgate at Hira; during the Hazat coup against House Chauki, she lead a squadron of Kurgan nationalists who seized the artifact and used it to shut down the jumprouete from Hira to Vera Cruz. Proclaimed a Kurgan folk hero during her own lifetime, many legends are told of her exploits during the turbulence of the Fall; when the welfare system collapsed, she was said to have halted the bloodiest food riot on Tsuma with but a few soft-spoken words. When Khayyam elected to seal its jumpgate, Natura convinced them to allow her one last tour of Hira, where she told the Kurgan populace of Khayyam's decision — which would effectively seal Hira off from jump travel as well. In a series of dramatic and impassioned personal appearances,

Natura foretold that one day the route through Khayyam would re-open and the people of Hira could rejoin a united Kurga.

Anarchy and Barbarism

After the Fall, major population centers — weakened by their dependence upon Egon and later the Republic — either consolidated under military dictators or degenerated into anarchy. Driven by starvation or local oppression, many fled into the surrounding countryside, occupying any farmlands they could hold or attempting to take up the nomadic way of life (with varying degrees of success). Tiny isolated kingdoms rose and toppled, warred, allied or were subsumed into nascent empires all over the Kurgan worlds. Few lasted for very long, however, due to the ever-growing strength of the nomads, whose self-reliant lifestyle left them virtually unaffected by the Fall and subsequent turmoil. Tribes raided weaker kingdoms when resources were scarce, and banded together to overrun larger empires which they perceived as a threat. Some settled in to enjoy the fruits of their conquest, and some even took to the stars as spacefarers whose wanderlust could not be contained within a single planet.

In the early 44th century, Kurgan nationalists on Khayyam succeeded in reactivating the jumprouete to Al Fashir, initiating a brief period of trade and prosperity among the Kurgan worlds until Vuldrok scouts discovered the jumprouete to Irem and began to explore the Kurgan jumpweb. The fractious Kurgan states had no major planetary defenses, their few remaining starships reserved almost exclusively for trade or pilgrimage caravans (which were allowed to pass peacefully by all Kurgan worlds, and thus were seldom heavily armed or escorted). Meanwhile, at Hira, the jumprouete to Vera Cruz spontaneously re-opened for one year, during which an exploratory mission from the Hazat seized a fief on the backward planet before being cut off from their homeworld.

Vuldrok invaders met with little resistance in Kurgan space — aside from interplanetary nomads who put up too much fight for too little loot — and for the next century and a half they raided and plundered their way across Irem, Tsuma, Beliah and Al Fashir. The Vuldrok advance was finally stemmed at Khayyam, where more technology had survived the Fall and superior global communications enabled the world to mount a unified defense. Successive waves of Vuldrok settled on the rich worlds of Irem and Tsuma, occupying the domed city of Irem Zat el-Amad and establishing a Vuldrok kingdom that would dominate the planet for most of the 45th century.

The New Prophet

At this time there lived among the steppe nomads of Irem a man named Juhangiz Turhan, the son of a chieftain,

who had renounced his birthright of tribal leadership to follow the contemplative life of an ascetic hermit. Shortly after Juhangiz retired to his hermitage, the Turhan clan fell prey to a Vuldrok slave raid, and when news of this reached Juhangiz, further mystic contemplation was out of the question. For a decade he waged a one-man guerilla war against the slavers, sometimes rallying the support of outlaw bands or forming short-lived tribal coalitions, but with only sporadic success. Juhangiz realized that he would need more powerful allies, and so took his cause to the stars.

Many legends are told of the First Pilgrimage of Juhangiz. Children are fond of the tales describing how he cleverly contacted his kin among the spacefaring nomads and was whisked away to fight Vuldrok pirates in the Beliah system. On Al Fashir he rode with the desert warriors against Vuldrok settlers, and retrieved the Hiran Philosopher's Stone from the remote tribe who had kept it in secret since Sata Natura entrusted it to their care centuries earlier. After preaching about the evils of the Vuldrok in the agorae of Khayyam he used the Philosopher's Stone to jump to Hira and warn the primitives there of the menace that threatened to spill past the Khayyam jumpgate.

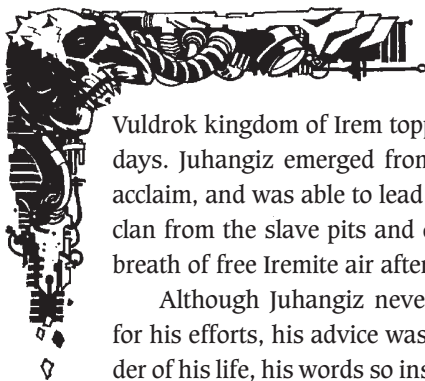
Hailed by the Kurgans of Hira as the fulfillment of Sata Natura's prophecy, Juhangiz had little difficulty in gaining the support of the world's more civilized kingdoms; not content, however, he took his mission into the jungles and the most remote quarters of the planet. Although his cries fell mostly upon deaf ears, some natives, recalling the earlier invasion attempt by the Hazat, agreed to follow him. Returning through Khayyam, Juhangiz pointed out to planetary leaders that the disruption of the trade route was severely crippling their economy; unwilling to risk the lives of their people for another world, the leaders of Khayyam agreed to supply Juhangiz with weapons and tech. At Al Fashir he armed the tribes, whipping them into a righteous fury, and succeeded in capturing all the Vuldrok colonies in that system within five years. At Beliah, he left his forces under the command of his lieutenants, continuing on to Irem alone after leaving detailed instructions with his commanders.

Upon his return to his homeworld, Juhangiz allowed himself to be captured by slavers and was taken to toil in the great dome. For two years he endured the manacles and whips of his Vuldrok masters, working all the while in secret to organize covert resistance and foment rebellion among the slave population. His work came to fruition in 4473, when the combined Kurgan forces at Beliah, armed with weapons from Khayyam and captured Vuldrok starships, jumped to Irem in full force, hammering away at the occupying fleet and landing troops to lay siege to the domed city. When Juhangiz saw that the attention of his overlords was directed skyward, he gave the signal that triggered the slave revolt. Caught between war fronts without and within, the

Kurga Timeline

Date	Event
ca. 2500	Khayyam discovered from Sathra's Boon (Sutek).
ca. 2550-2650	Hira discovered from Khayyam and colonized until a cometary impact shuts down the jumpgate.
ca. 3500	Bjorn Egon acquires jumpcodes to Al Fashir and Beliah; creates "Kurgan" culture.
3728	Jumproute from Khayyam to Hira reopens.
3770	Second Republic discovers Egon's hidden empire.
ca. 3940	Sata Natura born.
3997	Natura closes Hira's jumproute to Vera Cruz.
4000	Khayyam seals own jumpgate.
ca. 4000-4473	Age of the pre-Juhangid khalifs.
4317	Khayyam's jumproute to Al Fashir is reactivated.
ca. 4320-4548	Vuldrok invasions of Kurga.
4327	Don Gonzago Justus establishes a Hazat kingdom on Hira.
4434	Juhangiz Turhan born.
4467	Juhangiz re-opens Khayyam's jumproute to Hira.
4473	Juhangiz liberates Irem Zat el-Amad; Kurga Caliphate founded; Year 1 of Caliphal calendar.
4498	Juhangiz kills the last rukh on Rukh.
4506	Tarkhan Rustam Khabir succeeds Juhangiz; Khabir reactivates Hira's jumproute to Vera Cruz and begins Jihad.
4525-35	Vuldrok warlord Freya Firestorm's vicious raids on Kurgan worlds weaken Khabir's Jihad.
4547	Khabir dies on Vera Cruz; succeeded by Ogadai
4559	Siyurkuktiti succeeds Ogadai; declares end to Khabir's Jihad.
4584	Sulayman Darumai succeeds Siyurkuktiti.
4587	Sulayman welcomes his heretical rival, Kubilai ibn al-Hansur Abu Ilghazai, the Agha Khalif of Al Fashir, into the Kuriltai, as well as initiating him into the Mysteries of Satai.
4591	Sulayman Darumai dies.
4764	Caliph Salim Rahman stops initiating newly appointed potentates from Al Fashir and Khayyam into the Mysteries of Satai after a fistfight between the Agha Khalif and the Noyan of Al Fashir during the Rites.
4801	Caliph Bayazid Iskandur renews Khabir's Jihad.
4819	Civil unrest on Khayyam; Sultana Kutukti Baghira entrusts many local relics to Caliph Bayazid.
4843-51	Caliph Zeenat Amina renovates Irem Zat el-Amad.
4889	Sultan Juruk ibn Hachmet moves the seat of the sultanate of Al Fashir from Uwandibad to Rub el-Harim.
4899	Caliph Juhangiz XVII closes Vera Cruz jumproute.
4974	The Agha Khalif takes Uwandibad
4987	Hira's jumpgate spontaneously reactivates Vera Cruz route; Baronet Teikorc of the Hazat takes the M'Ballah Garrison on Hira.
4992	Hazat invade Hira in force.
4999	Hazat control most of Hira except for the Balif kingdoms.





Vuldrok kingdom of Irem toppled in the space of just a few days. Juhangiz emerged from the chaos to overwhelming acclaim, and was able to lead the surviving members of his clan from the slave pits and out of the dome for their first breath of free Iremite air after two decades of oppression.

Although Juhangiz never claimed any title or reward for his efforts, his advice was sought by all for the remainder of his life, his words so inspiring that he was proclaimed a living prophet. Toward the end of his life people began to call him the khalif, or vice-regent, of Zebulon, and asked that he name a successor to guide the folk of Kurga when he was gone. As many expected, he chose Tarkhan Rustam Khabir, a warlord of Beliah, renowned for his many victories over the Vuldrok and his almost prophetic ability to anticipate the actions of his opponents in battle.

The Prophetic Succession

Khabir worked to consolidate the power of the unified Kurgan worlds and establish the office of the khalif (by then pronounced "Caliph" to reflect the harder consonants of Khabir's Beliahin accent) as sole central authority. To this end, he declared a jihad — holy war — to extend the territory of the Caliphate and used the Hiran Philosopher's Stone to reactivate the jumproute between Hira and Vera Cruz. During his reign, which spanned five decades, a route to Ravenna via Antioch and Twilight was discovered, giving Kurga the opportunity to make war upon both Hazat and Hawkwood worlds. Thanks to the strong martial traditions of both houses — and the Vuldrok Freya Firestorm's encroachment into Kurgan space — the expansionist intent of Khabir's crusade was thwarted, but his forces proved such a threat to travel and trade in the Known Worlds that Vladimir Alecto was eventually able to unite the feuding houses.

Khabir died fighting on Vera Cruz in 4547; his successor was Ogadai Dzakan, a visionary Tsuman merchant to whom Khabir had intended to entrust the economic leadership of the Caliphate once the jihad was over. Caught off guard by his premature ascension and lacking any training in military leadership, Ogadai found himself unwilling to finish what Khabir had begun, and closed off the Vera Cruz jumproute. Within a decade, however, it had reopened of its own accord and Ogadai took this as a sign to resume the Vera Cruz Jihad, partially out of a duty to take Vera Cruz and recover the body of the second Caliph, and partially because of the vast wealth he and his colleagues on Tsuma were accumulating by financing plundering forays into the Known Worlds. Addicted since birth to luxury and decadence, Ogadai applied much of his wealth to transforming the domed city of Irem Zat el-Amad into his own personal pleasure palace, reigning for 12 lavish years until succumbing to heart fail-

ure without having named a successor.

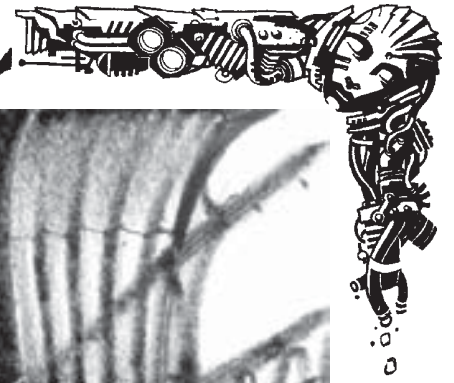
The Caliphate might have collapsed at that point had not an unlikely candidate emerged in the person of Siyurkuktiti, a lesser concubine to Ogadai the Fat (as he was by then known). Charismatic and flamboyant, she had demonstrated a healing touch and an ability to predict the future, but some — most notably Ogadai's chief concubine — whispered that she was a witch, or at the very least a fortune-telling charlatan. Despite such opposition, Siyurkuktiti had immense support from the common people who had suffered under Ogadai's rule, so much so that even her political enemies finally had to agree to her ascension simply to avoid unrest among their own subjects. Khabir's Jihad had run its course, she said, and Ogadai's greed had driven most of Kurga to the brink of economic ruin. The nascent empire of Vladimir was posing a threat even greater than that of the Vuldrok by the time Siyurkuktiti ordered the route to Vera Cruz closed.

With the Kurgan worlds at peace and the pilgrimage route secured for the first time since the Fall, Siyurkuktiti worked to repair the excesses of her predecessor. Much of Ogadai's fortune she redistributed to regions with the greatest need, especially in war-torn Hira. Her reign lasted some 25 years, and is marked by the greatest flowering of Kurgan culture. She made large donations to the arts and to education, sponsored festivals and contests, and gathered all the most learned or talented folk in Kurga to her court. Siyurkuktiti was poisoned by her old rival, Ogadai's chief concubine, who was subsequently torn to pieces by a grief-maddened crowd.

Siyurkuktiti chose her successor shortly after being named Caliph; many thought her choice was a joke, or some kind of subtle political maneuver. Her choice, Sulayman Darumai, was a holy hermit of Rukh who was already an old man when Juhangiz liberated that world during the preceding century. When Siyurkuktiti died, Darumai was well over a hundred years old, a fact which convinced many of his spiritual power, as the people of Rukh are relatively short-lived and the wizened ascetic had no access to longevity serum. At first some doubted the ability of this mystical recluse to lead the widely varied Kurgan states, yet Darumai proved himself not only capable of ruling with wisdom and solemn dignity, but with a surprising degree of vigor as well.

Eschewing the pleasure palace at Irem Zat el-Amad, Darumai spent nearly all of his brief reign on perpetual pilgrimage, visiting all the Kurgan worlds on numerous occasions. While he made all the obligatory visits to the centers of power, performing all the political duties by then expected of the Caliph, most of his time was spent exploring the more remote stretches of Kurga, parleying with nomad chieftains and preaching the Caliphal gospel to the most savage and backward tribes in nigh-impenetrable wildernesses.



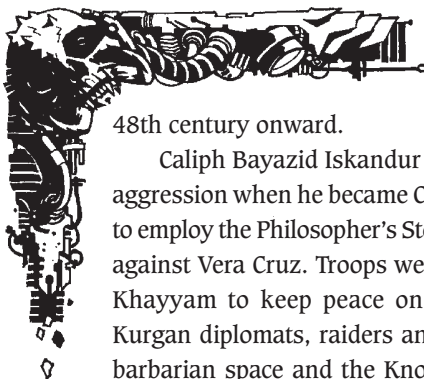


Most of his important executive decisions were made in transit, and the most autocratic heads of Kurgan states took his style of rule in absentia as license to ignore his edicts. But Darumai followed through with his actions, cultivating an intelligence network that permeated all levels of society and relayed back to him the degree to which his commands had been obeyed. Though a kindly and caring soul, he did not hesitate to deploy carefully orchestrated social pressure, subtle intrigue, overt force and even — on a few rare and well-remembered occasions — terror, to rid the Caliphate of corruption and injustice whenever it was discovered.

Darumai's rule was characterized by a strong moral sense which endeared him to the common folk, and rulers who took his principles to heart prospered. Building upon the achievements of the preceding Caliphs, who established the temporal authority of the Caliphate, Darumai skillfully wove the broad cultural diversity of Kurga into a rich tapestry arrayed around a clear and strong spiritual center, the religious authority of the Caliph. (Even the economic ideas espoused by Ogadai the Fat in his early days proved workable when applied to all Kurgans, rather than just Ogadai's rich friends on Tsuma.) Although he warned against the dangers of inflexible doctrine, Darumai's words and acts were recorded in exacting detail, and are cited as the strongest precedent in all matters to which they apply, even to this day.

Tradition holds that when Darumai named his successor (another holy hermit, this one from the wind-swept mountains of Al Fashir), he also announced the exact time of the next Caliph's ascension. On the seventh day of the seventh month in the seventh year of his reign, Sulayman Darumai perished in his sleep of no discernable cause. All the Kurgan worlds spent the next year in mourning, and it is said that during that year no blow was struck, no voice was raised in anger, all raiding and feuding ceased among the unruly nomads, and no important action of any sort was undertaken without a prayer being said for the Fifth Caliph.

The first five Caliphs comprise the Golden Age of the Caliphate, and set the pattern which all who came afterward were to follow. During the Silver Age, generally considered to encompass the 47th and most of the 48th centuries, the majority tended to be of Darumai's type: solitary ascetics whose removal from worldly affairs had given them the spiritual clarity to rule with wisdom and justice. For nearly 200 years the line of prophetic succession remained unbroken, as did the jumpweb between Irem and Hira. The Jihad was pursued only as a defensive measure to protect the integrity of Kurgan space, rather than the naked expansionism espoused by Khabir. Culture and interplanetary commerce flourished, and Kurgan society assumed much of its present shape and aspect. This era of peace ground to an ignoble close as civil unrest rocked Khayyam and Al Fashir from the mid-



48th century onward.

Caliph Bayazid Iskandur ushered in an age of renewed aggression when he became Caliph in 4801; his first act was to employ the Philosopher's Stone in restarting Khabir's Jihad against Vera Cruz. Troops were quartered on Al Fashir and Khayyam to keep peace on those troubled worlds, and Kurgan diplomats, raiders and profiteers made forays into barbarian space and the Known Worlds to treaty, trade or plunder. Bayazid's successor was his foremost raider, Ilkhan Zeenat Amina, who turned the Jihad into a purely mercenary, almost piratic, venture, stuffing the coffers of Irem with the loot of nearly a dozen worlds. The Vera Cruz jumprouete was opened and closed on an almost routine basis to send out raiding parties or cut off pursuing Hazat patrols. Many Hazat forces managed to enter, however, in ever greater numbers and with growing frequency, until the Hira system was in a near-constant state of war and interstellar travel was restricted to military maneuvers.

By the end of the 49th century the Caliphate had squandered much of its wealth on the Jihad, while the Hazat had gained ground on Hira. In 4899 Caliph Juhangiz XVII, a direct descendant of the first Caliph, ordered the Vera Cruz route closed permanently, and had the Hiran Philosopher's Stone secured in a vault at Irem Zat el-Amad. The ensuing decades were devoted to taking care of Kurga's internal troubles, but to little avail — anti-Caliphal sentiments on Al Fashir and Khayyam continued to grow. A succession of spiritually inclined Caliphs sought diplomatic solutions over the objection of conservative elements from Beliah and Tsuma who cried that the Jihad should be declared against the rebellious worlds.

The Present

In 4987 the Vera Cruz jumprouete spontaneously reopened, and Caliph Hulagulu assented that this was clearly a sign to renew Khabir's Jihad. For almost a decade the Caliphal fleet enjoyed unprecedented success in battle with the Hazat, who were forced to turn the bulk of their power to the Emperor Wars. Once the Wars were over, House Hazat descended upon Hira in full force, fortifying their small holdings and conquering or allying most of the non-Kurgan kingdoms on the planet. Amidst this, Hulagulu died without naming his successor; fully a year passed before a new leader, another young scion of the Turhan lineage — Juhangiz XXIV — emerged as the last hope of the fragmenting Caliphate.

Culture

The values of Kurgan culture are those of the nomad, reflecting an ever-shifting balance between personal independence and responsibility to one's community. On the one hand, Kurgans take pride in their individual accomplish-

ments and revel in the idiosyncrasies that mark them as unique. On the other hand, everyone recognizes that tribal unity is necessary for survival and that there is no shame in submission to a worthy authority. Five centuries of increasing urbanization under Caliphal rule has pushed each ideal to its extreme, extending the notion of community beyond just the tribe or neighborhood to include the region, the world, and ultimately the entire Caliphate, resulting in a view that is at once provincial and cosmopolitan.

While all strangers are met with courtesy and hospitality, all relationships in Kurga are marked by an assessment of personal merit. Kurgans despise hypocrisy, will not place their trust in anyone they do not know, either personally or by reputation, and will never follow a leader who has not proven herself capable of leading wisely. The primary virtue is to know one's job and do it well, but, in contrast to the hereditary social positions of the Known Worlds' feudal system, coupled with this virtue is that of making one's own place in the world, to excel in a life of one's own choosing, rather than simply being given a role at birth.

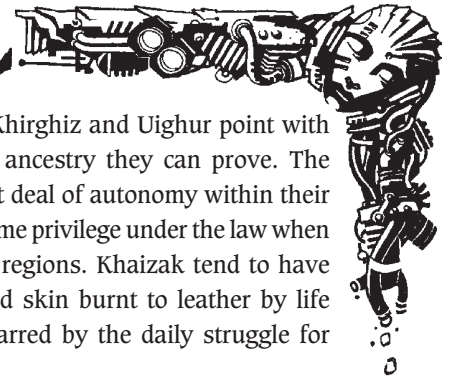
Social Structure

Kurgan society is often mistaken by outsiders as adhering to a rigid caste structure; in truth, there is some social mobility within the Caliphate, but few ever take full advantage of it. The overwhelming majority of Kurgan peoples are content with their lot, having been raised to carry on the life led by their parents. The basic social unit is the *usun*, or "bone," a term which encompasses the idea of both an extended family or tribal clan, and that of a family business. Parents teach their children the family trade, training them to maintain their usun's place in the local economy.

During adolescence, a child may opt to become an apprentice for another usun, and, upon reaching the age of majority, chooses whether to return to his original usun, continue life with his adopted usun or marry and begin his own usun. Although sons and daughters have every legal right to choose whatever path they wish, family pressure — shaped by economic necessity — is a tremendous factor, so most apprenticeships and marriages are arranged by usun elders long in advance. Going against the wishes of one's family is a popular theme in Kurgan romances, but those who try it in real life often find it difficult.

As its name suggests, the usun system forms the backbone of Kurgan society, with each succeeding generation carrying on the family trade. Each usun belongs to an *ordu* (the root of the Urthish word "horde"), broad categories which describe the usun's trade or lifestyle — primarily for legal and civic purposes. Due to the insular nature of the usun system, each ordu listed below can easily be identified by their distinctive body type, with regional variations reinforced by generations of marriage within the same ordu.





Ordu'l-Diin — “The Faithful Horde”

The broadest designation, this term is often used to refer to Kurgan society as a whole, or to those of Kurgan descent, who are commonly shorter and stockier than Known Worlders, with dark hair and eyes combining Asian, Middle Eastern and North African features. Specifically the term denotes anyone who acknowledges and submits to the spiritual and temporal authority of the Caliph in all matters. Those who share the Faith (“El-Diin”) may live as they will, where and however they will, so long as they fulfill standard communal responsibilities (like doing their job, paying their taxes and obeying the local laws), offering to the office of the Caliphate any goods or services they can spare and alms to those less fortunate. A Faithful One may, once during her life, declare herself a hajji, or pilgrim; upon completion of the pilgrimage at Irem, the pilgrim is allowed to approach the Caliph personally, to briefly speak her mind without fear of reprisal, and to ask one question which the Caliph by tradition must answer as best he may. The Faithful Horde is divided into three parts:

Uighur — “Soft-Skins”

The Uighur are city-dwellers, their local ordus designating their profession. Because they live in such close quarters, the Uighur are bound by more laws, and because most wealth flows through the cities, the Uighur are more heavily taxed. Despite this, most view the cities as centers of opportunity and in recent centuries have flocked there to pursue lives of relative comfort and prosperity. True to their name, Uighur are easily known by their paler, softer skin, and most have lighter colored hair and eyes denoting Vuldrok or even Republican ancestry.

Khirghiz — “Fertile Fields”

The Khirghiz live in rural communities, and Khirghiz ordus may be villages, suburban provinces, family farms, vast plantations with feudal power structures or communes practicing some experimental political model. As usable farmlands are relatively scarce among the Kurgan worlds, the Khirghiz have a major responsibility to produce as much food for the Caliphate as possible. Any ordu which cannot work its land to the fullest extent may see that land granted to another ordu by Caliphal command. Lighter features are sometimes found among the Khirghiz, but all exhibit the healthy complexion and hearty constitution of country life.

Khaizak — “Wanderers”

The Khaizak are the nomadic tribes who have lived in the wildernesses and desolate regions of the Kurgan worlds since before the Fall. Despite increasing urbanization, the nomads are still considered to be the heart and soul of the Kurgan people. Nearly all of the pre-Juhangid khalifs were

of the Khaizak, and many Khirghiz and Uighur point with pride to whatever Khaizak ancestry they can prove. The Khaizak are afforded a great deal of autonomy within their own lands and even enjoy some privilege under the law when traveling in more populous regions. Khaizak tend to have leaner builds, wiry and hard skin burnt to leather by life under the open sky and scarred by the daily struggle for survival.

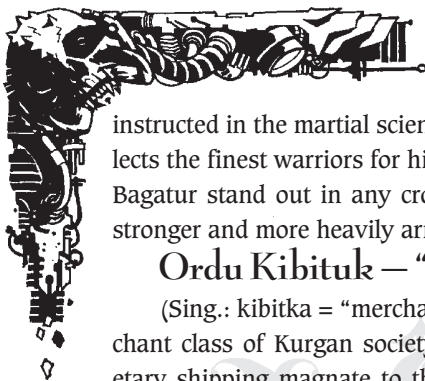
A notable subclass of the Khaizak is the spacefaring nomads, called Tengri-Igren or “Sky-dwellers.” Found in every solar system of the Caliphate, they are especially numerous around Al Fashir and Beliah, and cover an even broader diversity of customs, beliefs, lifestyles and physical appearances than their cousins planetside. Most visit the surfaces of inhabited worlds on a regular, if infrequent, basis, in the role of pilgrims, soldiers, traders or — in extreme circumstances — raiders. Some of the most remote and reclusive Tengri-Igren have lived and bred entirely in the low- or zero-gravity environs of moons, asteroids and primitive starships, and cannot live long in Urthlike gravity. A few tribes, mostly found in the Rukh system, are descended from Egon employees genetically altered to work exclusively in space, and have passed on such traits as enhanced cardio-pulmonary or skeletal-muscular systems and fully articulated prehensile feet.

These three divisions seldom mix socially, and intermarriage is rare, even expressly forbidden in some regions. The Uighur keep to their cities and travel only in large groups. The Khirghiz and Khaizak have been enemies since time immemorial, as growing agrarian populations encroach upon nomad territories and tribes respond with cattle raids and highway banditry. Present within all three are the Great Ordus defined by lifestyle or profession, each with its own restrictions and privileges under law. Each Great Ordu is further subdivided into lesser ordus, which may denote the area in which they operate or their specialty within their field.

Ordu Bagatur — “The Valiant Horde”

(Singular: bogatyr = “soldier”) Professional armies, local police, personal security and seasonal raiding are all a prominent part of life in the Caliphate, as local politics and economic disasters cause wars between neighboring tribes and kingdoms whenever Kurgans have no immediate external threat to unite them. The Ordu Bagatur is sworn to protect anyone on the pilgrimage; so sacred is this duty that opposing armies in the midst of pitched combat are known to cease fighting, lay down their arms and wait patiently until a passing pilgrim caravan clears the field. A bogatyr may carry firearms otherwise forbidden in most Kurgan cities, and, in times of war with the Hazat or Vuldrok, may be authorized by the Caliph to use high-tech weaponry. A council of the Ordu's highest war-chiefs maintains an academy on Beliah where students from all of Kurgan space may be





instructed in the martial sciences, and where the Caliph selects the finest warriors for his personal guard, the Qashik. Bagatur stand out in any crowd, being in general bigger, stronger and more heavily armed.

Ordu Kibituk — “Wide Wagons”

(Sing.: kibitka = “merchant”) The Kibituk are the merchant class of Kurgan society, from the richest interplanetary shipping magnate to the humblest shopkeeper. The Ordu Kibituk may travel far and wide to ply their trade, and may deal in any goods not prohibited by the Caliph or the local khan. Though few restrictions are placed on the accumulation of wealth (other than heavier taxes and social pressure to give alms to the needy), the Caliph may demand money, goods and services from any successful merchant in the event of wars or natural disasters, or simply to redistribute wealth to other more depressed economies nearby. The wealthiest kibitkas gather to do business in the markets of Tsuma, where they portion off supplies and foodstuffs to be given away as alms. Obesity is considered the mark of a successful kibitka, and thus avidly cultivated by all members of this Ordu.

Ordu Kankali — “High Carts”

(Sing.: kankal = “entertainer”) The Kurgan folk are nothing if not expressive, celebrating their culture in music, dance, poetry and drama. Artistic talent and the ability to communicate well are qualities which command just as much respect from Kurgan society as skill in war or business. Professional performers and artists comprise the Ordu Kankali, which includes heralds and storytellers, local musicians’ guilds and traveling theater troupes. The Kankali pay fewer taxes and are generally considered exempt from local customs governing propriety and decorum, but at various times the Caliph may forbid them from using certain ideas, themes and depictions in their work. The master musicians and court poets of Irem are continuously on the lookout for the brightest talents to be brought before the Caliph. Although a wide variety of body types can be found throughout this Ordu, most kankali tend to be slender and attractively proportioned.

Ordu Bachinghai — “Nimble Fingers”

(Sing.: bachingh = “crafter”) Craftsmanship is a prized virtue throughout Kurga, from fashion-conscious Uighur to Khaizak whose very lives depend upon the quality of their equipment. The manufacturers of the Caliphate are the Bachinghai: carpenters, masons, smiths, potters, leatherworkers, weavers and tailors. Bachinghai are taxed according to the volume of their business; a village potter on Hira pays less than an exclusive Iremite tailor or Tsuman factory owner. The Caliph may demand the finest example of a noted bachingh’s work for his personal use, and may command a Bachinghai ordu to relocate to a region where their skills are needed. Bachinghai are often smaller in stat-

ure than most of their neighbors, with strong, capable hands from whence their name derives.

Ordu Fellahin — “Broad Backs”

(Sing.: fellah = “laborer”) The unskilled workers of Kurga, rather than being the oppressed masses found throughout history, are granted respect and autonomy by Caliphal decree, in recognition of the fact that lands could not be farmed and nothing great could be built without them. The Ordu Fellahin has its roots in the labor unions of the Second Republic, and is thus rarely found among the Khaizak. (Many brawls result when nomads visiting farms and cities mistake fellahin for slaves.) This Ordu pays a flat tax based on its wages, and, like the Bachinghai, may be commanded to relocate where they are required (usually to help rebuild after wars or natural disasters.) As their name implies, Fellahin are generally big and strong, although seldom as well-developed as Bagatur, and hereditary giantism is common.

The Great Ordus enjoy considerable social freedoms and opportunity — barring Caliphal restrictions — and are found at all levels of society, from khan to slave. Not all ordus are so fortunate, however.

Ordu Asmurdlegh — “The Stinking Ones”

(Sing.: smurd) Some professions leave an indelible mark upon their practitioners, usually in the form of an unpleasant stench, as with tanners, slaughterhouse workers and purveyors of fertilizer. Such folk are the Ordu Asmurdlegh, who are requested to keep themselves separate from the rest of the community — more as a matter of courtesy than as a legal requirement. Asmurdlegh communicate with others through written messages and intermediaries, wear heavily perfumed robes when appearing in public, and have separate quarters on pilgrim starships. Despite this, they have all the same rights under law as the rest of the Great Ordus, and then some — insulting a smurd is a greater offense in the eyes of the law than insulting anyone else. The inhabitants of Rukh have a very distinctive odor, and are considered to be Asmurdlegh whenever they travel off their homeworld; far from taking offense, however, they feel privileged and honored at this special treatment.

Ordu Hekelezai — “The Touched”

(Sing.: hekelet) Perhaps the most difficult social division to explain to a non-Kurgan, the Hekelezai are those who have been affected in some powerful way by the spiritual world. They may be ascetic hermits, bands of mystics seeking transcendence through ecstatic rites, tribal shamans or simply the village idiot who hears voices in his head. Sage or drunkard alike, the hekelet is regarded with a degree of religious awe, believed to have a special insight into the invisible workings of the universe — regardless of



whether he is capable of communicating his knowledge properly. The Hekelezai are exempt from taxation and most civic obligations, and may live off of communal alms if unable to earn their keep normally. The Hekelezai are the only Kurgans who may speak out against the Caliph with impunity (although they may not act against him), and it is not unheard of for a Caliph to seek the counsel of the wisest Hekelezai.

Ordu Kafiri — “Unbelievers”

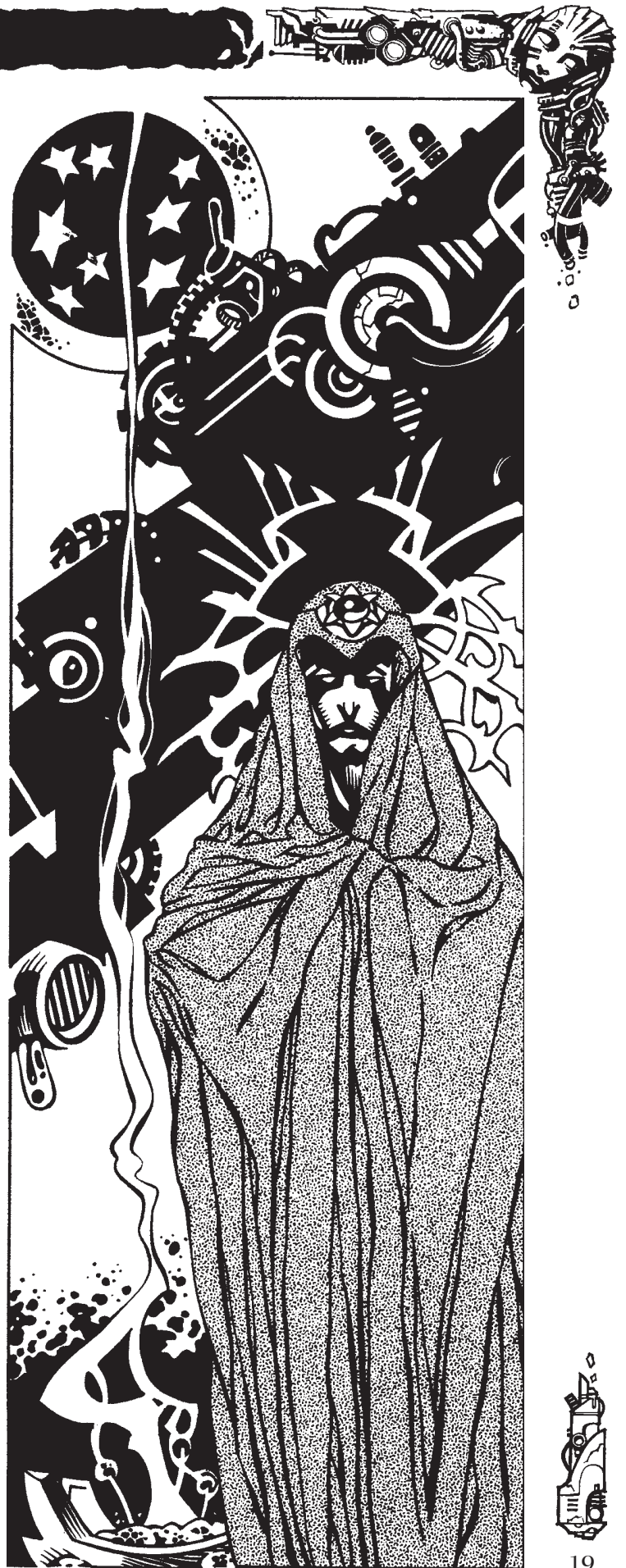
(Sing.: kafir) This is the only ordu not considered a part of the Ordu'l-Diin, being composed of anyone who does not acknowledge the spiritual authority of the Caliph but who agrees to submit to the Caliphate's political power. The Ordu Kafiri includes ambassadors from non-Kurgan worlds, survivals of other religions in more densely populated areas, and remote pagan nomadic tribes. Kafiri are required to signal their status by means of mandatory tattooing and a distinctly recognizable mode of dress or hairstyle, must live only among their own kind and are absolutely forbidden from openly expressing their religious beliefs. Kafiri may travel and practice any trade where they are accepted by local law, but no kafir may ever occupy a position of authority over a member of the Ordu'l-Diin.

These three ordus are unique in that members of the community can declare someone to be a member regardless of that person's heritage and/or desires.

Ordu Sechenim — “The Horde of Wisdom”

(Sing.: sechen = “wise one”) The Horde of Wisdom is the most heavily restricted and closely policed segment of the Kurgan populace. The Sechenim are the teachers, scholars and scientists of the Caliphate, keepers of arcane and powerful knowledge which the early Caliphs realized could be used to unfair advantage if not carefully regulated. Because of this, most Sechenim lead isolated, monastic lives devoted entirely to their field of study, seldom if ever having any contact with the outside world. Although the Caliphate has no true priestly caste, the Ordu Sechenim fulfill much the same function as the Universal Church; it is they who preserve learning and culture, and who tend to the well-being of society as a whole.

The Ulema or Collegium, established by Siyurkuktiti, is the governing body of this Ordu, composed of the highest ranking representatives of each school, or Ikhwan. Each Ikhwan is a strict hierarchy of graduated initiation whereby apprentices are thoroughly grounded in the basics of their chosen science while masters may explore the complexities of their own special interests. Sechenim are known for the plain robes and shaven heads of their lower ranks, anonymous save for the insignia of their Ikhwan; the upper echelon may dress as they please, and usually don elaborate ceremonial fashion for special occasions, but many retain



the simple garb of their student days to signify that, whatever their accomplishments, there is always still more to learn.

Any member of the Ordu'l-Diin may petition an Ikhwan for admittance, and an Ikhwan may try to recruit the most intelligent or talented members of other ordus. Admission may take up to a year, as each applicant is given a variety of tests to demonstrate their suitability. Once admitted, a rigorous apprenticeship of 10 years or more is followed by a residency in one of the Ikhwan's institutions — usually a local shrine, school, library, hospital or some office of the Caliphate. A sechen who displays exceptional judgment may eventually be allowed to practice his skills in whatever segment of the public he sees fit.

Sechenim may not offer their services to the public unless the Caliph or one of his officers in the Ulema deems them to be socially responsible enough to wield their knowledge fairly and effectively. Once licensed to practice publicly, a sechen is not allowed to accept payment for his services but will, as an employee of the Caliphate, be provided out of communal alms with a home and sustenance of simple spartan comfort.

Ikhwan-i-Hakimun — “Healers”

(Sing.: hakim) Charged with maintaining the physical health of the Faithful are the hakim — doctors, nurses, surgeons, apothecaries, physical therapists and dietitians, who must study for years at one of the Caliph's excellent medical universities but are accorded the greatest degree of social freedom once they attain mastery. Kurgan notions of health differ regionally, but always address spiritual, mental and social issues as well as the physical state. Hakim are just as likely to prescribe rhythmic breathing, memorizing verses or specific dietary requirements as medication or surgery, being trained to understand every possible aspect of the human organism. Hakim are oath-bound to serve to the best of their ability any who ask their aid.

Ikhwan-i-Waziri — “The Wazirate”

(Sing.: wazir = “advisor”) Trained primarily as librarians, members of the Wazirate not only collect, preserve and catalogue the wealth of Kurgan knowledge, but are required to make their learning equally available to all of the Ordu'l-Diin. A wazir is expected to be an expert in matters of business, law, history and religion, and is compelled by the oath of his Ikhwan to answer clearly and honestly any question put to him by anyone. Waziri often function much like counsels in court, advising their clients about legal procedure, but they may not represent their clients as Known Worlds attorneys might do. Waziri are not allowed to make any decision which affects anyone's life other than their own and their family's.

Ikhwan-i-Qadiyun — “The Qadiyate”

(Sing.: qadi = “judge”) While the Wazirate concerns itself with the letter and form of Kurgan culture, the Qadiyate tends to its moral center, cultivating the balance of compassion and severity necessary to attain the elusive ideal of justice. Figures of public trust and respect, qadiyun have the longest apprenticeship of any Ikhwan, are thoroughly versed in Caliphal and local law, are required to hear any case brought to them and empowered to enforce any decision they make upon it. The equivalent of a Known Worlds judge or magistrate, the qadi functions more as a facilitator and referee, calling a court together and making sure that all proper procedures are followed.

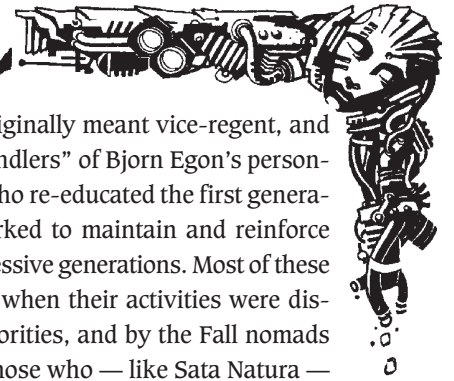
The Qadiyate and the Wazirate are expressly forbidden from communicating or interacting with each other outside of the courts or without specific instructions from the Ulema. Socializing, fraternizing and especially intermarriage between the two Ikhwans can result in expulsion from the Ordu Sechenim, and conspiring to subvert justice is a capital offense. This taboo reflects the Kurgans' distrust of the justice system of the Second Republic, in which judges and lawyers together formed a single professional class which alone was privy to the arcane workings of the law, thus excluding the layperson from any meaningful participation in the legal process.

Ikhwan-i-Takhiyun — “Artificers”

(Sing.: takhi) High technology is even more tightly controlled in the Caliphate than in the Empire, and those capable of understanding its secrets are the most heavily sequestered of all the Ikhwans. Certain tech has been deemed allowable in regions where it is crucial to survival and prosperity, and it is to the Ikhwan-i-Takhiyun that the Caliph turns for counsel when deciding such matters. A takhi is expressly forbidden to share her acquired knowledge with the public without explicit Caliphal permission. Some takhiyun are allowed to act as overseers and technical support in places where their devices see use in the world at large, but the most brilliant are kept in isolated research stations where they often give their lives testing the limits of applied science in the service of the Caliph.

Ikhwan-i-Ghamizi — “Astromancers”

(Sing.: ghamiz) Mystical scholars of esoteric lore are considered vital to the unity of the Caliphate, not only for their enlightened interpretations of theological doctrine, but also for their facility in maintaining the five-fold interstellar calendar by which the optimal scheduling of pilgrim caravans is determined. A ghamiz is held to be a guide to the invisible world, with insight into its broadest celestial rhythms and finest spiritual subtleties. Primarily trained in the sacred astrologies and geomancies of the Kurgan worlds, ghamizi may practice other kinds of divination as well, and many cultivate the Inner Flame required for theurgy. The



Ikhwan-i-Ghamizi is authorized to investigate mysteries too deep or dangerous for regular sechenim; foreign heresies, nomadic paganism, antinomy, husk plagues, Anunnaki artifacts and the like.

Ikhwan-i-Sihr — “Whisperers”

(Sing.: sahir) Not all of the sechenim can be mistaken for scribes and secretaries; some practice the sciences of secrecy, deception and intrigue, operating behind the scenes in the service of the Caliphate. They are the Ikhwan-i-Sihr, and act as the Caliph’s spy network, secret police and covert action team. While sihr are most often deployed in dealings with non-Kurgan worlds, they are also used by the Caliph to spy on his own people, to make certain that all his commands are carried out as he intended and to keep him informed regarding events, situations and public sentiments which he might not learn about through normal channels. In addition to employing the usual sorts of intelligence workers — informants, double agents, deep cover agents, cryptographers, surveillance experts, saboteurs and assassins — this Ikhwan also makes an active effort to recruit psychics and any individuals who display some kind of exceptional power or ability. The physical training of the Ikhwan-i-Sihr’s agents surpasses that of many Bagatur ordus, and its masters are said to be able to use any found object as a weapon. Every sahir must offer a personal oath of allegiance to the Caliph, and may only act on direct orders from the Caliph; the merest hint of disobedience or disloyalty automatically incurs the death penalty. Full-scale purges of this Ikhwan are not uncommon.

Rulership

Given Kurga’s nomadic ideal of independence, the governing of a star-nation that encompasses (or rather, until recently encompassed) seven worlds — not to mention several moons and countless large asteroids — would appear to be an insoluble problem. But ever-wandering tribes have their leaders just like any other society, and the nomad’s notion of leadership has been extended across the Caliphate with surprising success.

The Caliph

If the usuns are the backbone of Kurgan society, then the Caliph is its head. With such ideals of personal freedom, the position of the Caliph as supreme authority would seem to be a contradiction, but to the inhabitants of the Caliphate there is no inconsistency. The Caliph is, above all else, a religious figure, a living prophet, who occupies the intersection where human society reflects the divine hierarchy. Kurgans not only live for their prophet-king, they live through him, using his example to understand their own place in the great scheme of things. Thus, what may seem to be utter tyranny to an outsider is seen by Kurga as the most ennobling aspect of its culture.

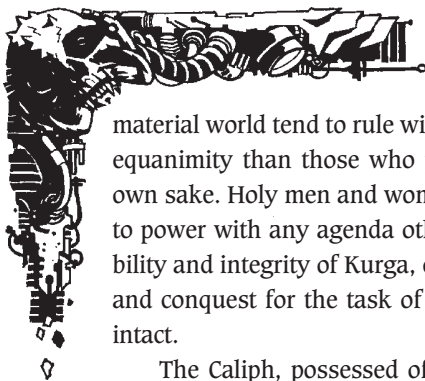
The root word khalif originally meant vice-regent, and was used by the “culture handlers” of Bjorn Egon’s personnel management division, who re-educated the first generations of employees and worked to maintain and reinforce the “Kurgan” culture in successive generations. Most of these executives were prosecuted when their activities were discovered by Republican authorities, and by the Fall nomads were applying the word to those who — like Sata Natura — fought the hardest against the encroachments of the Republic, now remembered as martyrs. After the Fall the title was given to the local healer, seer, sage or saint whose popular influence extended across kingdoms and tribal boundaries; at this time it became fused with another tradition borrowed by Egon, the Prophetic Succession, which claimed that there was a living prophet for every generation since Zebulon. (Prophetic Succession had been a recurrent heresy suppressed by Palamedes and the Universal Church since the Diaspora.)

The pre-Juhangid khalifs (ca. 4000 — 4473) were folk heroes whose blessing was courted by local rulers to lend spiritual authority to their reign and thus keep peace within their spheres of influence. Some khalifs were very provincial, contributing to the fragmentation and factionalism of the era. Others openly acknowledged each others’ validity and used their combined influence to keep peace between kingdoms and to administer justice on a grand scale through preaching revelations and working miracles. Thus began the tradition of the Seal of Prophecy, wherein an elder khalif would confer upon a younger the status of recognized successor to Zaibolu.

After Juhangiz Turhan liberated Irem, the Seal of Prophecy was passed on to him by the overwhelming majority of living khalifs on all the Kurgan worlds, the first person since Sata Natura to be so unanimously acclaimed. (Some few khalifs refused to acknowledge Juhangiz as the true Prophetic Successor; those that actively opposed his rule were persecuted as heretics, but those that acquiesced to his worldly power were allowed to carry on their own traditions among the Ordu Kafiri.) By the time of Sulayman Darumai, the modern institution of the Caliphate had taken its present form as supreme political authority and was wedded to the Seal of Prophecy. The true Caliph was one who received a divine revelation of the future of Kurga and possessed the personal qualities necessary to guide the Ordu’l-Diin triumphantly into that future.

The majority of Caliphs were holy hermits and local saints before being named to succeed the reigning Caliph. It is considered the mark of the true prophets that they have no desire for worldly power, seeking only to influence people’s hearts rather than control their minds or command their deeds. Those of a spiritual bent willing to go to great lengths to remove themselves from the hectic pace of the





material world tend to rule with more wisdom, stability and equanimity than those who pursue political power for its own sake. Holy men and women such as these rarely come to power with any agenda other than maintaining the stability and integrity of Kurga, eschewing plans of expansion and conquest for the task of keeping the pilgrimage route intact.

The Caliph, possessed of insight into both the visible and invisible worlds, has the final word on all matters, and only those who agree to submit to his or her word are allowed to exist in Kurgan space. Laws decreed by the Caliph are collected in a book called the *Yasa*, a brief document which is plainly worded and easily memorized. The *Yasa* supersedes all local laws and the strongest penalties are imposed upon those who transgress it. Caliphal commands are transmitted in a written form known as a *yarligh*, written in the Caliph's own hand or printed in expensive gold ink, using a rare parchment which makes the yarligh extremely difficult to duplicate or forge. Most printed yarlighs deal with the appointment of khans or sechenim, while handwritten commands are reserved for individual missions and unique, seldom-recurring actions.

The Secret Pilgrimage

Sulayman Darumai, the fifth Caliph, was known for traveling incognito in order to see for himself the state of the Caliphate at all levels of society, and this has become a tradition for those who came after him. Known as the Hajj-i-Sahrir, or Secret Pilgrimage, this tradition is the source of many stories in which a stranger, bystander, beggar, slave or other innocuous person is suddenly revealed as the Caliph, who then proceeds to punish the wicked or reward the virtuous as events dictate. Every ordu is taught secret signs by which the Caliph can reveal her true identity only to members of that ordu, while maintaining her disguise to the world at large.

Most Caliphs have taken the Hajj-i-Sahrir only once, at the beginning of their reign to assess the state of the Caliphate, but some few undertake the Secret Pilgrimage with great frequency, either to root out widespread corruption or simply to escape the unending stress that comes with their office. It is not uncommon for the Caliph to bring a trusted friend or member of the Kuriltai along on the Hajj-i-Sahrir. Usually, the Ikhwan-i-Sihr is employed to ensure the Caliph's safety, perfect any disguises used, keep the itinerary secret and, when necessary, train a double to take the Caliph's place. Some Caliphs, however, desire an even greater degree of secrecy, and either order off the sahir assigned this duty or elude them through their own devices. (This drives the Ikhwan-i-Sihr crazy, of course, and they still try to follow the Caliph at a discreet distance, poised to rescue their prophet-king at the slightest hint of real danger.)

The Kuriltai

The high court of the Caliphate is the Kuriltai, composed of the highest-ranking members of the Great Ordus and the Ulema, retired khans, close personal friends of the Caliph, and other individuals who display exceptional wisdom, insight or merit. The Kuriltai not only act as companions and advisors, but are empowered, to some degree, to speak and act for the Caliph in her absence. An appointment to the Kuriltai signifies that one has gained the personal trust of the Caliph and, unless that trust is somehow betrayed, the position is held for life (thereby maintaining some degree of continuity when a new Caliph comes to power). Many Caliphal successors are chosen from the Kuriltai or appointed to it before their status as the next prophet is revealed.

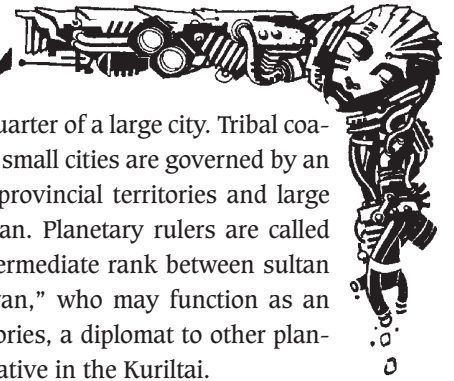
The Kuriltai varies in size depending upon the Caliph; more worldly Caliphs usually appoint large numbers of family, friends, lovers, business partners or comrades-in-arms, while the more long-lived hermits and ascetics tend to keep the Kuriltai small, making no new appointments as the previous Caliphs' friends grow old and die off. Ideally, the Kuriltai should be representative of every major group within Kurgan society. In theory, any Kurgan may hold an audience with the Caliph, whether by common petition or upon completion of the Hajj; in truth, those who can gain the sponsorship of a member of the Kuriltai, either through personal contacts or through their ordu's hierarchy, may speak with the Caliph sooner, for a longer period of time, or even in private.

Tradition holds that only a true Caliph can recognize the next in the line of Prophetic Succession, but sometimes — as in the case of Ogadai — a Caliph may die before naming a successor. When this happens, the Kuriltai is charged with the duty of discovering the new prophet, as well as quelling the power struggles and unrest that inevitably arise at such times. The Kuriltai must seek out candidates by their own efforts; anyone who presents themselves as the next prophet is automatically dismissed as too ambitious — likewise for those who seem too eager to accept a candidacy. A candidate is rigorously tested — by the khanate for his political aptitude, by the ordu heads for his understanding of their needs, and by the Ulema for his wisdom. The most favorable candidates are those who show a special link with the All-Maker by demonstrating mastery of a previously unknown theurgic path, one which could not have been taught by another but must have been developed by the candidate herself during her lifetime.

The Khanate

Rulers within the Caliphate are collectively known as the Khanate; unlike the Empire of Alexius, heredity is not a prerequisite, and the divine right to rule is reserved for the Caliph alone. As with their nomadic forebears, Kurgans rec-





ognize only two main factors in deciding who should lead: merit and accountability — the ability to do the job and willingness to take responsibility for decisions that affect large numbers of people. Kurga remembers the bureaucratic excesses of the late Second Republic and has seen the blind unquestioning obedience that Hazat lords seem to demand of their troops; rigid, monolithic power structures, entrenched by generations of mindless loyalty, strike the Kurgan mind as both distasteful and outrageous.

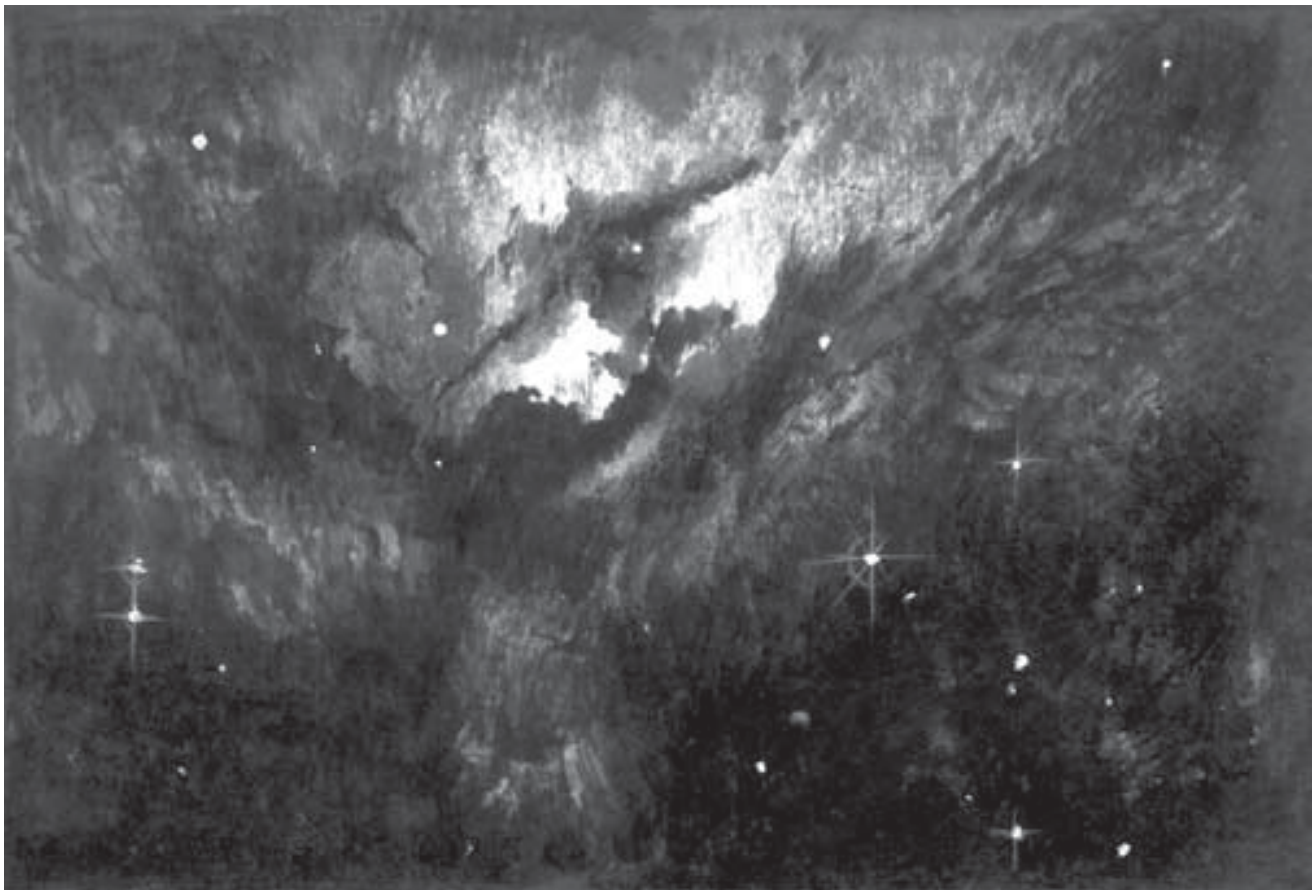
The Khaizak essentially rule themselves as they always have; leaders are chosen from among the tribal elders, some by lineage and some through democratic means, but always mindful of the ability to lead effectively and with wisdom. At the lowest level, the Khirghiz and Uighur function in much the same way, with village, neighborhood and professional leaders emerging through naturally selective processes. Known by the old Khaizak term “shaykh,” these leaders speak for their people before higher potentates, but the title is generally considered an informal one as regards the overall political structure of the Caliphate.

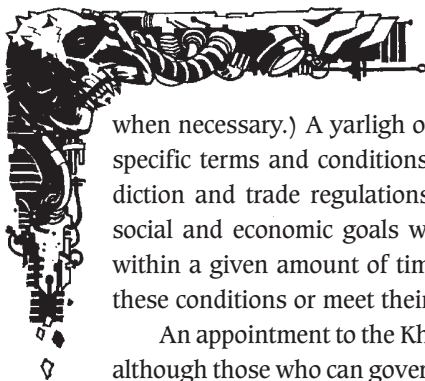
The lowest official rank in the Caliphate is that of khan, the approximate equivalent of an Urthish baronet or baron. (The word, which can literally be translated as “lord” in Urthish, is used informally to denote a ruler of any rank, and is often added to the end of a noble’s name.) Khans may rule large tribes, small provinces, a group of closely

allied villages or a distinct quarter of a large city. Tribal coalitions, larger provinces and small cities are governed by an ilkhan, and tribal nations, provincial territories and large cities are ruled by a khaghan. Planetary rulers are called sultans, and there is an intermediate rank between sultan and khaghan called a “noyan,” who may function as an administrator of large territories, a diplomat to other planets or the sultan’s representative in the Kuriltai.

Rank within the ordus is more problematic, and largely informal, based more upon superior ability in that ordu’s field than upon administrative capacity. For practical purposes, the same titles are used but an ordu rank is one level lower than the rulers’ equivalent; thus the head of an ordu for a large city is called an ilkhan, a planetary ordu leader is the khaghan, and a noyan represents the entire ordu in the Caliph’s court. The Ordu Sechenim and the Ordu Bagatur have their own names for ranks occupying a strict chain of command with the Caliph at the top.

While candidates for khan and ilkhan are usually chosen from among the local shaykhs, their position must be acknowledged by a higher authority, and a khaghan must be confirmed by the Caliph. Noyans are appointed — usually from among retired khans, ilkhans and khaghans by the sultan, who in turn is placed in power only by a yarligh from the Caliph. (The Caliph, of course, may appoint someone to fill a lower rank as well, but only exercises this power





when necessary.) A yarligh of governance always contains specific terms and conditions regarding boundaries, jurisdiction and trade regulations, as well as certain political, social and economic goals which the rulers must achieve within a given amount of time. Rulers who fail to observe these conditions or meet their goals are swiftly replaced.

An appointment to the Khanate comes with a time limit, although those who can govern effectively, maintaining stability and generating the greatest benefit to the populace, may have their term of office extended for life — sometimes against their wishes. Truly exceptional rulers are allowed to pass their title on to their firstborn child, or even to a small number of succeeding generations. These hereditary khans, of course, have the advantage of being trained since birth in the virtues of leadership and the uses of power, but often spend much their reign petitioning the Caliph to extend the appointment for a few more generations. (The only exception is the Turhan clan of Irem, whose firstborn lineal descendants of Juhangiz I inherit a sultanate containing the family's ancestral grazing lands.)

The Kurgan belief in the accountability of leaders has proven the bane of hereditary khans, whose people watch them closely for any sign of decadence or abuse of authority. Theoretically, any member of a subject population — even down to the lowliest beggar — may approach a higher authority to complain about the actions of their local ruler, and, if unable to gain satisfaction, may take their case all the way to the Caliph. In truth, few khans have ever been deposed because of the grumbling of a malcontent; only a massive outcry from the general populace reaching the Caliph's ear is likely to result in dethronement. However, khans are frequently commanded to make reparations to a minority whom they have wronged, and such incidents decrease the likelihood of gaining an extension to their reign. While preventing a complainant from seeking a higher authority is a grave offense, some unscrupulous khans try to silence their oppressed subjects with propaganda campaigns, heavy travel taxes and even spurious quarantines. Fortunately, the Ikhwan-i-Sihr and the Hajj-i-Sahrir ensure that a situation like this does not last long, and fear of discovery keeps most khans in line anyway.

Law

The basis of Kurgan law is the Yasa, a surprisingly brief document which must be memorized by all the Ordu'l-Diin. The Yasa determines what sort of interactions are allowable between worlds, regions, kingdoms, tribes and communities — all designed to preserve the unity of the Caliphate — and gives laws concerning travel in space or planetside — designed to protect the sanctity of the pilgrimage. Constitution as well as lawbook, the Yasa concerns itself primarily with the ordering of Kurgan society, defining the powers

and authority of the Caliph's appointees among the Khanate and the Ulema, delineating the responsibilities and restrictions of the ordus, and establishing guidelines for legal procedure throughout the Kurgan worlds.

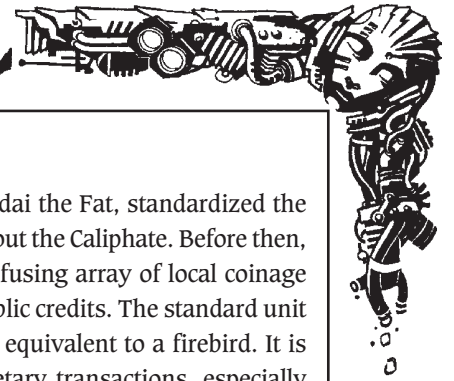
Jurisprudence in the Caliphate is in many ways the opposite of its Known Worlds counterpart; apart from the Yasa itself, rigidly codified laws with prescribed punishments are few, and rarely come into play. This reflects the original Kurgan tribes' mistrust of the Republican justice system, with its endless lists of rules (too many for any person to learn in a single lifetime), written in elaborately dense prose (so generalized it can be interpreted to mean anything) and qualified with nitpicking technicalities (usually leaving loopholes wider than most jumpgates).

Caliphal justice rejects the notion that any person or institution is capable of objectively distinguishing between right and wrong (except, of course, for the Caliph alone), and is founded instead upon the old nomadic virtues of individual responsibility and communal interdependence. To the Kurgan mind, any sentient capable of sustaining a conversation is expected to understand the consequences of her own actions (at least to the degree that finite mortal perception allows — a degree which the court must determine) and take responsibility for them. As a result, the concepts of criminal insanity and rehabilitation are not to be found in Kurgan justice. The overriding principle in all cases is the protection of the community and the preservation of order. (For example, isolated cases of outright murder can be excused if the slayer can convince the court that the slain posed a true threat to the lives and well-being of himself, his family or community. Also, mutually declared blood-feuds among the Ordu Khaizak are allowed to proceed as long as non-participants are not threatened in any way.)

Any person or group that has suffered because of the actions of another may approach a qadi and demand justice. The qadi summons all involved parties and may call upon the Ordu Bagatur to keep order, protect victims from further offense and detain those who do not answer a summons. The qadi may also deploy the Ikhwan-i-Sihr to investigate when it is deemed that insufficient evidence has been presented. In those extreme cases where the accused is sentenced to some manner of torture, mutilation or death, it is the qadi's responsibility to appoint a bogatyr or sahir capable of dealing out exactly the punishment required — no more, no less.

A jury is convened, the size and constitution of which depends upon the nature of the case. Always an odd number between three and thirteen, the jury must contain at least one representative of both the accused's and accuser's ordu, rank and gender; half must be approved by the accuser and half by the accused, with the odd member chosen by random drawing of lots. Community standards are the





single most significant factor in deciding cases, and all but the randomly chosen jurist must be from the region, town or even neighborhood where the crime was committed. Whenever possible, the lots for random jurists are taken from outsiders to the community — travelers or recent immigrants — or from those who are not of the same rank and order of either accuser or accused.

All trials are held in public, usually in an amphitheater reserved for that purpose. Testimony may be offered by anyone, or demanded of anyone by anyone at any time — jurists and audience members included. Those giving testimony are not sworn in, but an oath of truthfulness may likewise be offered by anyone, or demanded of anyone by anyone at any time. Brevity and plain speech are not only expected, but absolutely required; the qadi may penalize those who filibuster or persistently interrupt another's testimony, and may use any means to enforce general silence if chaotic squabbling erupts (as it often does).

Local Kurgan laws vary in their specifics from region to region, but all adhere to the principles of "poetic justice" set forth by the pre-Juhangid khalifs, most notably Chagatai the Just of Tsuma. Foremost among these principles are simple reparation, commonly applied to crimes of property and punished by fines, community service or short-term personal slavery, and a more complex ideal which is expressed by the phrase "balance of vengeance."

Cases of reparation tend to be settled quickly and generally leave both parties satisfied with the outcome. A key point in many such cases is whether the offended party can be convinced that a crime was committed out of genuine necessity or by unavoidable accident. For example, the proverbial pauper who steals a loaf of bread to feed his starving family may work off his debt simply by helping the baker prepare another loaf of bread. An oft-cited precedent concerns a man who killed a child — accidentally, but as the result of reckless irresponsibility on his part — and offered his own newborn babe to the family of the child he slew. If the offended party truly believes that the crime was committed with deliberate malicious intent, however, they can call for the balance of vengeance.

Cases where the balance of vengeance is invoked are usually long drawn-out affairs full of appeals, countercharges, fervent negotiations and elaborate recitations of precedents or even hypothetical examples. At the core of this principle is the old Urthish ideal of "an eye for an eye," even to the extreme of "blood for blood;" here the function of the court is to determine that the severity of the punishment equals the severity of the crime, making adjustments for the differing circumstances of the offended and offending parties. To compare with the example given above, a haughty rich brat who steals a loaf of bread — just to see if he can get away with it — may find himself legally enslaved

Money

The third Caliph, Ogadai the Fat, standardized the monetary system throughout the Caliphate. Before then, each world retained a confusing array of local coinage — including Second Republic credits. The standard unit is now the *dinar*, roughly equivalent to a firebird. It is used in most major monetary transactions, especially those between worlds. There is also the *sheql*, 10 of which make a dinar, and the *dirham*, 10 of which make a sheql. As of yet, there is no standard acceptable exchange rate for firebirds to dinars; as trade routes increase, this may change, but if a crusade erupts, neither side will accept the others' coinage as legal tender.

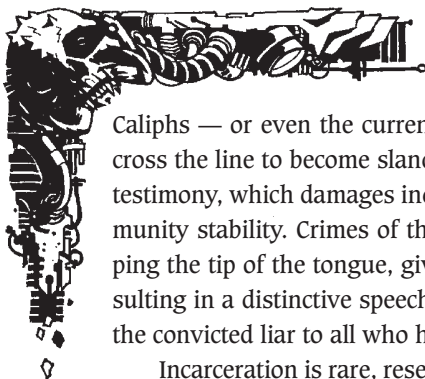
to the baker for anywhere from a week to a year or more, depending on how contrite he can appear to the court and the baker. Often cited is the case of Kriyasut, the richest merchant on Tsuma, who lost his entire fortune to a poor man whom Kriyasut cheated out of his last few coins.

The most common sentence given by Kurgan courts is that of forced servitude; slaves account for nearly a quarter of the total population of Kurga, although most are serving only short terms in the businesses, neighborhoods, or families demanding reparation. Long-term slavery can be demanded by the severely victimized, and murderers may offer their life and even that of their children. Those enslaved for life are branded for identification.

The severest punishments, those which have become infamous outside of Kurgan space, are mostly reserved for recidivists and those who obstruct the business of the courts or the Caliph. Repeat offenders are penalized with the mutilation or removal of the body part used to commit the crimes, enacted as a bloody public spectacle in most regions, although more technologically advanced communities treat it as a matter of "corrective surgery." The main idea here is to prevent the crime from being repeated, and to permanently mark the criminal, usually with an additional tattoo, brand or distinctive surgical flourish, in order to prevent the criminal from claiming that the injury was accidental or occurred in the service of the Caliph (which entitles one to a prosthetic replacement). Common instances include lopping off the hand for repeated theft, chopping off the feet for fleeing from a court summons, snipping off fingers for using firearms or advanced tech in commission of a crime, surgically blurring the vision for forging official documents, genital mutilation for rape, and plucking out the tongue for heresy.

Kurgans seem to be of two minds when it comes to crimes of speech. Hyperbole, poetic license and the telling of "tall tales" are prized skills, especially among the Ordu Kankali (who may be allowed by yarligh to satirize past





Caliphs — or even the current one), but this behavior can cross the line to become slander, libel or the giving of false testimony, which damages individual reputations and community stability. Crimes of this sort are punished by snipping the tip of the tongue, giving it a forked shape and resulting in a distinctive speech impediment which identifies the convicted liar to all who hear his voice.

Incarceration is rare, reserved for criminals too dangerous to be allowed to roam free but possessing too much important information to be executed outright. These include political conspirators, takhiyun who have yet to undo whatever threat their out-of-control machines pose, and serial murderers suspected of crimes yet to be uncovered. Such as these are tortured until they give up their secrets or die in agony. The death sentence is applied only to those for whom society has neither use nor compassion: repeat offenders unwilling or unable to cease their activities even after corrective mutilation, or those who openly defy the Caliph and refuse to repent after they are defeated.

Sexes

Gender seldom becomes an issue in Kurgan society, where sexual roles have been carefully defined in law and custom for centuries. Men and women are accorded equal access to status, property, wealth and rights under law, but practice their professions separately, mixing only when necessary and having no close contact with the opposite sex outside of their own usun. Each gender has its own customs, myths, mysteries and rites of passage, which are never revealed to the other, and those who associate too closely with the opposite sex in public become objects of scorn and scandal. (Exception is often allowed to the Ordu Kankali, and popular rulers or celebrated heroes may get away with some lesser indiscretions.) Young adults are allowed — briefly and under strict supervision — to mingle socially during tribal rituals and rural festivals, and in special quarters of large cities.

The Yasa contains guidelines concerning the differing styles of male or female rulers. Many of the oldest Kurgan kingdoms have a strong historical tradition of matriarchy, and will only accept a woman as their khan; other regions are just as strongly patriarchal. For most Kurgans, local laws — and every other aspect of society — may change drastically when a son inherits a khanate from his mother, or the Caliph appoints a Sultana to replace a corrupt Sultan.

Aliens

Some non-human communities settled on Kurgan worlds during the Second Republic, but few in sufficient numbers to thrive after the Fall. Most species known to the Republic still live on Tsuma, where they are kept as oddities by the rich; pathetic results of centuries of inbreeding due to

their dwindling population, they tend to inspire more pity than wonder. The Ur-Obun community on Khayyam has survived in large enough numbers to escape that fate, practicing a Kurganized version of the Ven Lohji faith. The Ur-Ukar of Beliah are the descendants of laborers brought in by Egon to help construct the underground mining habitats. While some racial prejudice directed against them does exist, their closest neighbors value their metallurgic skills and ability to adapt to subterranean life.

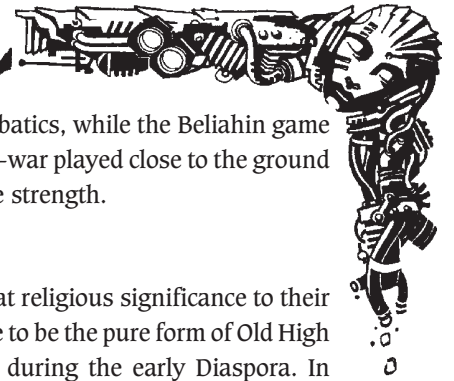
The Vorox, although known to the Second Republic, were not widely seen off their homeworld in that era, and were forgotten in Kurgan space except in legends. Since the end of the Emperor Wars, Vorox warriors hired by the Hazat have been deployed in the crusade on Hira. Jihad veterans have returned home with tales of many-armed beasts that walk and talk and fight like humans.

Technology

The Caliph alone possesses the wisdom to understand the long-term effects of various technologies, and employs the Ikhwan-i-Takhiyun to strictly regulate its uses and investigate its abuses throughout the Caliphate. Only by Caliphal yarligh may a cybernetic device be installed for one who has risked life and limb in the service of the Faith, or an advanced think machine assigned to an enlightened and responsible user, or vastly destructive weapons delivered to the Bagatur defending Kurga's holy jumpweb. Eye surgery, transplantation and prosthesis has advanced to an amazing degree, after an edict by the fifth Caliph that every effort must be made to enable all pilgrims to see the Sahab-i-Simurgh for themselves. Each great ordu has a dispensation for the tools of its trade, with the most advanced devices used only by the khans and under severe penalties for any sort of abuse or misuse. Republican or alien tech and Anunnaki artifacts must, by law, be brought to the immediate attention of the Ikhwan-i-Ghamiz as soon as they are discovered.

Most Khaizak and Khirghiz lands are forbidden to certain types of vehicles for environmental reasons, and the Uighur must abandon much of their conveniences and amenities when traveling beyond their city's limits. However, many Khaizak tribes have begun to appreciate the value of high-speed skimmers or modern medical, communication and surveillance equipment, and now petition the Caliph to have their ancient taboos stricken from the lawbooks as outdated superstition. The Ordu Kibituk are allowed only the simplest of think machines, or djinn-boxes, while the Ordu Kankali have ample license to develop communication, recording and performance-related technologies to an astounding degree. Agricultural golems, long abandoned since the Fall, were resurrected by yarligh to serve in high-risk emergency situations and are becoming more common





as a Caliphal reward to productive Khirghiz khanates, kept as valuable heirlooms or sometimes illegally rebuilt for warring upon neighbors.

Drugs

Nearly every type of intoxicant known can be found in the Caliphate, and the majority of them are legal in most regions, for most ordus. Hedonism aside, most Kurgans feel that for every social occasion, every dreaded chore or pleasant pastime, the Star-Maker has provided a substance to ease bodily discomfort or enhance necessary mental qualities, if one but understands their proper use. Hakim frequently prescribe all sorts of drugs for various conditions and ailments, but just as frequently prohibit their patients from further use of their favorite inebriants. Access to strong drugs is used by some khans as a way to control their populace, and the Caliph may condone such means if the results are pleasing. Consequently, addiction and related behaviors are common throughout Kurga, but are not identified as problems due to the social context in which they occur. (One reason the Caliphate has repeatedly tried to conquer Vera Cruz is to find the source of the wondrous painkiller "silchak" found in some Hazat medpacs. Little do the Hazat realize that, if the Kurgans were to learn how to cultivate and prepare the highly addictive and debilitating selchakah, their society might crumble within a decade...)

Most Kurgans, especially of the Uighur, smoke tubaq, an addictive weed with mild depressant effects, grown in massive quantities in the equatorial zones of Tsuma. Khaizak prefer the stronger and more subtle effects of chewing qoqa beans, a powerful stimulant which may also be prepared as a thick black tea, or smoking qunab flowers, from which potent euphoric hasheesh may be derived. Wine and various liquors are produced by Khirghiz ordus throughout the Caliphate, with the light blue vintages of Irem considered superior to all.

The only drugs uniformly restricted throughout the Caliphate are the Flesh of Satai, which is reserved exclusively for ceremonial purposes, and the ayawuzat vine of Hira, a hallucinogenic so potent that it is believed to be an invention of Erlik Khan (the devil).

The Bazkush

The national sport of the Caliphate is the bazkush, a sort of American football played on horseback or some other mount using the hide of a calf stuffed with sawdust or sand. Enthusiasm for the bazkush eclipses even the renowned religious fervor of Kurga, and the bazkush tournament circuit is responsible for a volume of travel and commerce exceeded only by the Hajj itself. The chief bazkushi rivals are the planetary teams of Beliah and Al Fashir, whose special skills are uniquely adapted to their own respective homeworlds; Fashiri bazkush is a dazzling display of high

leaps, aerial stunts and acrobatics, while the Beliahin game is more of a wrestling tug-of-war played close to the ground and mainly decided by brute strength.

Language

The Kurgans attach great religious significance to their language, which they believe to be the pure form of Old High Urthish spoken by Zaibolu during the early Diaspora. In truth, the Kurgan language is another invention of Egon's, a bastardized reconstruction of Turko-Mongolian with an extensive technical vocabulary of borrowed Arabic and Farsi terms. Egon cobbled it together from the old Urthish adventure tales of Harold the Lamb and Rabur-i-Hawar, which Egon read as an adolescent and which later inspired him to create the Kurgan culture. As a result, Kurgan is highly irregular, with wide regional variances of pronunciation and colloquial usage that form the basis of much wordplay in Kurgan comedies.

Kurgan has two written forms, one a demotic form known to all literate folk, utilizing the phonetic alphabet of Arabic and Farsi, the other an elaborate system of pictographically derived characters which is used almost exclusively by the Caliph, the khanate and the Ordu Sechen. Some of the numerological correspondences attached to the demotic alphabet has survived in Eskatonic lore, a degenerated version of which was adopted by Draconian Antinomists of the Known Worlds. (This, of course, has reinforced the Universal Church's position on the innate heresy of all Kurgan culture, and proved a severe setback when the Eskatonics were seeking legitimate recognition from the Orthodoxy.)

Pronunciation

Kurgan has many sounds which are absent from Urthish, and further confusion is generated by the fact that phonetic shifts in regional and planetary dialects can change a title of respect into a vulgar epithet without the speaker being aware of what he has said. The many accents found on Hira were influenced from all quarters of the Caliphate, so it took Hazat spies centuries to realize that "jaw-bar" and "zhibel" both referred to the same "mountain." Even in the present day, only a linguistic genius like Esteban Escovar Estancia de Vera Cruz could learn that a Khayyamite gunner talking about the "geh-deev," a Fashiri cavalry officer referring to the "huh-leef" and a Beliahin infantryman professing allegiance to the "kaw-lip" were all speaking of the one living prophet, the Caliph.

Native speakers of Kurgan are familiar with regional accents through their use in poetry and drama, as well as through contact with widely travelled hajjin. Cosmopolitan speakers often adopt a different accent to make puns or achieve different nuances of meaning, intensity or allusion. Even untravelled provincial listeners are familiar enough with





this custom to mentally correct for another's accent through context. Non-native speakers inevitably betray their origins by adhering too closely to the accent they originally learned or confusing the spoken and demotic written forms of words.

The single vowels of Kurgan are essentially the same as those of Urthish and Latin; the major diphthongs are “-ai-” which sounds like the word “eye,” “-ay-” which is usually pronounced as in “say” (except on Khayyam), and “-ou-” which resembles the shorter “oo” of Urthish, as in “took.” Doubled vowels are the long form of their Latin equivalents; i.e., “-ii-” takes the long “e” sound as in “seen.” One of the most common consonants in Kurgan is “-kh-” (also rendered as “-ch-”) which is a soft guttural sound halfway between a “k” and an “h,” as found in the German “ach” or the Scottish “loch.” Correspondingly, “-gh-” is to “g” as “-kh-” is to “k.” “-Q-” is like “-k-,” only harsher and more deeply guttural. The letter “j” when standing alone is usually a soft “zh” as in French; the harsher English “j” is distinguished by doubling it or putting “d” in front of it. (It is thus easily confused with “-dz-” which has a similar sound.) The English “ch” sound is noted by “-tch-,” and is very close to the “-ts-” sound. “-Th-” is always unvoiced, as in “thing” or “thought,” while its voiced counterpart, found in “this,” “that” or “the other” is rendered by “-dh-.” Occasionally, “-ph-” and “-bh-” are used to denote slightly more explosive versions of “f” and “v.” The letter “-h-” is always an unvoiced aspirant, and is inserted so liberally throughout the Kurgan vocabulary that only the most practiced ear can detect its presence.

General Terms

Ordu (or-DOO)

Usun (OO-sun)

Uighur (uh-WEE-ghoor)

Khirghiz (KHEER-ghiz)

Khaizak (KHYE-zahk)

Bagatur / bogatyr (BAW-gah-toor / boh-gah-TEER)

Kibituk / kibitka (kih-BEE-tuhk / kih-BIT-kah)

Kankali / kankal (kahn-KAW-lee / KAWN-kahl)

Bachinghai / bachingeh (bah-KHEENG-hye / bah-KHEEN-geh)

Fellahin / fellah (feh-LAW-heen / FELL-ah)

Asmurdlegh / smurd (ahs MOORD-laygh / SMOORD)

Hekelezai / hekelet (heh-KEL-eh-zye / HEH-keh-let)

Kafiri / kafir (kah-FEER-ee / kaw-FEER)

Sechenim / sechen (SEKH-eh-neem / seh-KHEN)

Ikhwan (EEKH-wahn)

Hakimun / hakim (HAW-kee-moon / hah-KEEM)

Waziri / wazir (waw-ZEER-ee / waw-ZEER)

Qadiyun / qadi (KAW-dee-yoon / kaw-DEE)

Takhiyun / takhi (TAW-khee-yoon / tah-KHEE)

Ghamizi / ghamiz (ghah-MEE-zee / ghah-MEEZ)

Sihr / sahir (SEER / saw-HEER)
 Shaykh (SHAYKH)
 Khan (KHAHN)
 Tarkhan (TAR-khawn)
 Ilkhan (IL-khawn)
 Khaghan (khaw-GHAHN)
 Noyan (noh-YAWN)
 Sultan (sool-TAHN)
 Sahab-i-Simurgh (saw-HAHB-ee-see-MOORGH)

Names

Male

Achmet (AWKH-met)
 Bayazid (Bah-yah-ZEED)
 Heru (HAY-roo)
 Juhangiz (Joo-HONG-iz)
 Mabhu (Mah-VOO)
 Mansur (Mawn-SOOR)
 Ogadai (OH-gawd-eye)
 Palu (PAW-loo)
 Rustam (RUS-tahm)
 Shudekh (Shoo-DEKH)
 Subotai (SOO-but-eye)
 Sulayman (SOO-lay-mawn)
 Zaibolu (ZYE-boh-loo)

Female

Gaimish (GYE-mish)
 Kutukti (Kuh-TOOK-tee)
 Satai (Sawt-EYE)
 Siyurkuktiti (See-YOOR-kook-TEE-tee)
 Turakina (TOO-ruh-KEE-nuh)
 Zeenat (ZEE-naht)
 Zira (ZEE-rah)
 Zulaykha (Zoo-LAY-kha)

Places

Al Fashir (awl fah-SHEER)
 Beliah (Bel-EYE-ah)
 Hira (HEE-rah)
 Irem Zat el-Amad (ee-REM ZAWT el-ah-MAWD)
 Khayyam (khye-YAM)
 Rukh (ROOKH)
 Tsuma (TSOO-mah)

Religion

El-Diin, the state religion of the Caliphate, has in common with the Universal Church the veneration of Zebulon — Kurganized as “Zaibolu” — as the true prophet of the Celestial Sun. Kurgan belief holds that their worlds had already been settled during the early Diaspora, and that Zaibolu and Palu (Saint Paulus) made the first pilgrimage by traversing the jumproads between Hira and Irem. Along the way, Zaibolu befriended holy hermits, local saints and reli-

gious leaders, eventually naming one of their number as his successor to tend to the spiritual needs of the peoples of the sacred jumprouse. It became the custom of each new khalif to travel in the steps of Zaibolu, and when nobles seeking the khalif's counsel added their entourages to his train, the pilgrimage was born.

In actuality, Kurgan religious history is the invention of Bjorn Egon and his personnel management executives, using the background of the Universal Church already shared by most of their employees to give a kind of spiritual credibility to Egon's autocratic rule and his efforts to keep the “Kurgan” worlds secluded from the rising Second Republic. Egon's re-educators and cultural indoctrinators were so successful that, when the Republic entered Egon's jumpweb in the 3780s, even the older generations of “Kurgans” chose life as starving refugees over any submission to Republican authority. Since the time of Juhangiz I it has been judged heresy to claim that the artificial Diasporan history written by Egon might be untrue. Bjorn Egon's name is lost to the ages, but survives in the corrupted form “Borjigun,” used to designate the fictitious First Republic settlers on the Kurgan worlds.

By the late Second Republic, foreign influences permeated Kurga such that native beliefs were seldom found in anything like their original form, either borrowing elements of other contemporary religions or being “reformed” by Urth Orthodox missionaries. Outside of urban centers the original faith survived in slightly purer form, taking on almost Gjarti-like animistic qualities as it was adapted for the nomadic lifestyle. While the wildest and most remote tribes eventually degenerated into total paganism (and remain so to this day), the nomads who reconquered the cities after the Fall kept their belief in nature-spirits and other disembodied entities, as a kind of auxiliary to the monotheism of Zaibolu. These beliefs, modified by time, uniquely embellished according to region and endlessly subjected to esoteric interpretation, became doctrine when the Caliphate came to power.

El-Diin has no priests as such, recognizing no intercessor between humanity and divinity other than the personage of the Caliph. For healing, spiritual counseling, confession, inspiration or moral instruction, a Kurgan is most likely to seek out a learned sechen, but in truth no single profession is considered more enlightened than another. The gathering of knowledge can certainly help one to know God, but so can dancing, commerce and soldiering, if practiced with the same piety and devotion. Every ordu has its own saints, martyrs and holy men, who not only serve as role models for those who follow their path but also exemplify the virtues of their ordu to others.

The ceremonial requirements of El-Diin are few and relatively brief. Each day is punctuated at seven intervals by



short prayers which mark time for meals, work, leisure and family; prayers are usually made facing the east, but some regions may direct their prayers at a local shrine or pilgrimage center. Before sleeping and after waking, liturgies are chanted, scriptures are meditated upon, and a detailed confessional prayer may be offered. Worship is generally conducted in private by each usun maintaining its own household shrine. Group worship, including mass prayer, sermons, hymns, chants, dance, spontaneous testimonial and occasional dramatic presentations, can be found on pilgrimage, at the temples of local saints staffed by sechenim and volunteers, and during seasonal festivals.

There is no scriptural equivalent to the Omega Gospels in El-Diin; the stories of Zaibolu and his disciples are an oral tradition, written down only by scholars interested in preserving regional variations. Questions of moral law and social order are addressed in the Yasa. The Caliph-Nameh is a historical record of the sayings and deeds of the Caliphs, and contains relevant tales told of the pre-Juhangid khalifs. The libraries of Khayyam have preserved what are purported to be the works of Saint Horace, written in his own hand.

El-Diin numbers the years of its calendar starting at the liberation of Irem by Juhangiz I in 4473; thus the Holy Terran year 5000 would be 527 according to the Caliphal calendar, and the Day of Revelation and Reckoning, the Kurgan version of the Eskaton, is prophesied to occur in the one-thousandth year of the Caliphate, or 5473 in the Holy Terran calendar.

Cosmology

El-Diin is the worship above all things of the Celestial Sun, called in Kurgan the Mongke Yildiz, or "Everlasting Star." Contrary to the Universal Church's doctrine, El-Diin identifies an actual position in real interstellar space as the home of the one true physically existing Mongke Yildiz, the light of which can be seen from the systems of Hira and Irem. Having this visible manifestation of God's presence has keened the Kurgan sense of idolatry; the Pancreator is never named directly but only referred to by titles, such as Maker of Stars, Light Eternal, Source of Bounty or Wonder of Wonders. Any attempt to personify or anthropomorphise the All-Maker is deemed blasphemous.

Beside existing in physical space, the Celestial Sun also occupies the center of the Mongke Tengri, a transdimensional space corresponding to the Empyrean realm in Urthish cosmology. (Meaning "Everlasting Sky," it is distinguished from the common tengri of interplanetary space.) Surrounding the Mongke Yildiz are concentric coronal layers, collectively known as Nuristan, or "Land of Light," the equivalent of the Empyrean sefiros studied by Eskatonic theurges. Nuristan is home to the *bogdo*, old pagan sky-spirits raised

to the status of angels to fit into the Caliphal monotheism; from Nuristan, the bogdo travel through the Mongke Tengri to enact the will of the Star Maker. Depicted as rays of light emanating from the Mongke Yildiz, the bogdo are identified with the immutable laws of the physical universe, and are believed to deliver visions, signs and omens to those Faithful with eyes to see, and to collect every prayer and oath ever uttered to bring back to the Source of All Things.

Another survival of animism in Kurgan doctrine is the *kelet* (singular: *kele*), elemental spirits of the landscape familiar to any Gjartin. The living souls of mountains, rivers, trees, etc., or sometimes simply disembodied intelligences identified by some striking mental or emotional quality, kelet can enter the minds of receptive mortals and teach secrets of power, wisdom and truth. Some people, such as tribal shamans and Ikhwan-i-Ghamizi spiritualist mediums, actively seek communion with the kelet but involuntary hosts may suffer from disorientation and derangement — hence the Ordu Hekelezai. Kelet who honor the Mongke Yildiz, respect the authority of the Caliph and act relatively benign are called *djinn*, as opposed to the lawless and violent *afrit* who feed on fear, rage and lust. Humans may also be possessed by *sulde*, the shades of the deceased who have neither returned to the Mongke Yildiz nor been lost to the outer darkness.

Interstellar space, the dark between the stars, is the ultimate abode of evil in Kurgan cosmology as in Urthish. Known as Kanun Khudan, the Land of Dark Gods, it is ruled by the cunning and twisted Erlik Khan and encircled by his mount, the endless serpent Mughai whose coils loop around every star except the Mongke Yildiz. The writhing of Mughai generates the Purga Buran, or Black Freezing Wind, which can cool the stars and dim their light, and causes the hearts of the wicked and faithless to shrivel and harden until the rays of the Mongke Yildiz can no longer penetrate. Erlik Khan is believed to assume a variety of forms — sentient, animal or other — and walk among the world spreading fear, grief and anger until he is recognized and his form is destroyed by the wise and righteous.

The apocalyptic lore of El-Diin states that on the Day of Revelation and Reckoning the Celestial Sun will shine through all systems which hold to the true faith of the Caliphate, filling the cold interstellar void and illuminating the vast coils of Mughai. Then shall the Caliph lead the Ordu'l-Diin into the space between the stars to cut apart the body of the monster and initiate the epoch of Everlasting Peace — unless enough of the endless serpent's body survives in the darkness of non-Caliphal worlds; then Mughai constricts its coils to swallow all of creation, including the Mongke Yildiz itself.

Hajj: Pilgrimage of the Consecrated Jumpweb

If the usuns are the backbone and the Caliph the head of Kurgan society, then the pilgrimage is certainly its life-blood, in an economic as well as spiritual sense. Since the 38th century, the Hajj has strengthened the communal bond among Kurgans from widely different worlds, encouraged interplanetary commerce and enabled Kurgan culture to flourish on worlds like Hira and Khayyam, which were never subjected to Bjorn Egon's social engineering. To claim the title of hajji — one who has completed the pilgrimage — is a great social distinction, and a virtual prerequisite for appointment to the khanate. To falsely claim the title is a tongue-plucking offense.

The Hajj embodies a mystical belief nearly identical to the Doctrine of Stellar Consecration held by the Universal Church, which states that the Prophet's death in a jumpgate accident was a sacrifice which blessed the jumpweb and made space travel safe for humanity. The Kurgan version of this doctrine focuses on Zaibolu's act of naming a successor charged with keeping the Hira-Irem jumpweb open so the doubled light of the Mongke Yildiz reaching both these worlds could be compounded and circulated via jumpgate to the rest of human space. Sulayman Darumai repeatedly asserted that the first and foremost worldly duty of the living prophet was to maintain the sanctity of the Hajj, to assure safe and free passage to all who desire sight of the Everlasting Star.

Despite what Kurgans believe, the Hajj has its roots in Egon's "underground jumproad" whereby workers were shipped through the Khayyam gate unbeknownst to Republican authorities, with many ultimately taken to what is now Irem Zat el-Amad, where the most intensive social re-education took place. After Egon's crimes were discovered and his corporate apparatus dismantled, something very close to the modern pilgrimage came into being, in the form of a unique and highly profitable tourist route. Some of the huge automated luxury starliners that plied this route are still in use in the 50th century, somewhat the worse for wear but functional nevertheless, devoted exclusively to carrying pilgrims. Such ships are staffed by Caliphal appointment; honorable captains, learned guides and brave guards stand ready to assist all pilgrims.

A short distance from the main spacedock of each world stands the caravanserai, a massive Republican hotel complex where pilgrims are lodged, fed and offered directions and transport to local holy sites, all at the expense of the Caliphate. (A rich hajji is expected not only to pay his own way, but to share his goods and the services of his retinue with all members of the caravan, as an act of almsgiving; for the poorer majority of faithful, an affordable donation earns them a mass transport "package" tour little different

than that enjoyed by middle-class Republicans.) A planet's largest bazaar is usually in or near the caravanserai, and there one can hire freelance guides, guards or servants to follow local routes. Always present are the hajjburat, an ever-growing horde of beggars, runaways and orphans who crowd the pilgrimage roads clamoring for alms.

Ideally the Hajj begins at Hira, but centuries of war with the Hazat has made this leg of the Hajj inaccessible to all but the most adventurous and heavily armed hajjin. When Caliph Sulayman first formulated the modern notion of the Hajj, the Hazat presence in the Hira system posed little threat; as their power grew, however, the Hiran leg of the pilgrimage became more and more hazardous for the average pilgrim. In recent years, the title of hajj has been extended to any who have journeyed to holy sites on Irem and any world other than their own; a special title — mahajji — was created for those few who actually completed the entire circuit between Hira and Irem.

On Hira, pilgrims arrive by watercraft at an island observatory, an ancient structure whose gigantic mechanisms are programmed to follow one single feature across the Hiran sky. One by one, pilgrims are lead to the eyepiece of the observatory's main optical telescope, there to see with their own eyes a tiny smudge of color in the constellation called the Pathfinder (so named by Diasporan colonists because its two brightest stars form a straight line pointing to Kuranese-Tsaddi, the northern Hiran pole star.) Seen through the telescope is a vast interstellar cloud of gas and dust, dubbed RAS-333W89 by the Republican Astrographic Survey and known throughout Kurga as the Sahab-i-Simurgh, or Simurgh Nebula.

From Hira, fortunate pilgrims jump to Khayyam, Al Fashir then Beliah; the majority of pilgrims must content themselves with visits to these worlds only. (In recent years, rebellions on Al Fashir and Khayyam have kept timid pilgrims away, although most of the warring factions involved still honor the tradition of the Hajj and claim to allow pilgrims safe passage, unlike the Hazat.) On each world hajjin visit shrines and temples, the homes, hermitages, birthplaces or tombs of past prophets or various lesser saints, and the sites where miracles took place. Major pilgrimage stops are within a week's travel from the caravanserai, while other sites are considered optional, reserved for those with the time, money, determination and/or faithful devotion to travel extensively planetside. At each site, the pilgrim receives a tattoo which signifies that that portion of the pilgrimage has been completed. Also, distinctive souvenirs may be purchased from local artisans, who inscribe each piece with the pilgrim's name and the date upon which the site was visited. These souvenirs may be presented to friends and colleagues or passed on to succeeding generations; an usun's status is often proclaimed by her display of such souvenirs.



The climax of the Hajj comes the moment the pilgrimage exits the jumpgate at the Irem system, for, filling over a quarter of the sky around Irem is the self-same Simurgh Nebula first observed on Hira by mahajjin. Besides the sheer scale of this interstellar panorama — seen “up close,” so to speak — pilgrims are struck with the realization that Hira and Irem are unique in all of Human Space, in that they are the only two worlds whose exact spatial position relative to each other has ever been known. (Due to the discontinuous nature of jumpgate travel, the actual locations of the stars forming the total known jumpweb have never been determined — where they exist in relation to Holy Terra and each other, or even if they are all contained within the same Milky Way Galaxy. The Republican Astrographic Survey was initiated to solve this vast cosmic riddle, but the task of modeling the skies of every star system and then superimposing the models to find matching patterns proved too great even for the supercomputers of the Second Republic.)

Many pilgrims faint or break down and weep at this point in their journey; its impact upon the sentient psyche cannot be conveyed to those who have not experienced it. The Sahab-i-Simurgh is the central image of Kurga, seared into the memory of all mature Kurgans. Named for a mythical bird which embodied every aspect and quality of all birds, the nebula is composed of billows of vibrantly colored gases forming the wings and tail, with a curl of dark dust forming the silhouette of the head and neck. It is illuminated from within by a protostar — a star in the early stage of formation — hidden behind the dust, which fans its light rays out into a distinct peacock-tail array. This protostar is believed to be the Mongke Yildiz Itself, and its eventual emergence from the dust cloud is said to herald the Day of Revelation and Reckoning.

The Cult of Rustam

The second Caliph, Rustam Khabir, is the patron saint of soldiers, and his worship among the Ordu Bagatur has evolved into an initiatory hierarchy combining the military chain of command with religious authority. The cult recognizes the Caliph as Altai Amir, or Supreme Commander, and through it he can direct the forces of the jihad, assign guards to hajji caravans and create special divisions such as the Qeshik (the Caliphal bodyguard) and the Blessed, a highly trained special forces unit comprised of the most talented members of the Ordu Bagatur, the Ikhwan-i-Sihr and other ordus with useful skills or technical expertise. The Cult of Rustam teaches that perfect mastery of one's chosen weapon is the beginning of the path to enlightenment, and at its highest levels advanced tactics and strategy are studied as arcane mysteries. Cult leaders are charged with administering many of the tests given to Caliphal candidates. Not limited to the Ordu Bagatur, this cult has initiated members of

other ordus, adapting its ethic of focus and determination to other professions.

The Cult of Satai

Sata Natura is remembered as Satai, the greatest of the pre-Juhangid khalifs since Zaibolu himself, and organized worship of her dates back to the beginning of the New Dark Ages, almost eclipsing that of the present Caliphs in remote areas. Past leaders of the Cult of Satai have been instrumental in cementing the power of the Caliphate, especially during Siyurkuktiti's reign, and the cult has its own representation in the Kuriltai. The leadership of the cult has a special role in the Ikhudur el-Diin, or Festival of Faith, which culminates when the Simurgh Nebula reaches its zenith over the dome of Irem Zat el-Amad on the winter solstice. At that time the Caliph, his selected guests and members of the Kuriltai receive a sacrament known as the Flesh of Satai, a powerful and complex mind-altering drug said to dissolve the barrier between the physical world and the Mongke Tengri, resulting in visions, revelations and the spontaneous activation of occult powers. Under the influence of the Flesh of Satai, the Caliph enters a prophetic trance state in which the future of Kurga is revealed, and the full complexity and subtlety of the prophesy is telepathically transmitted to all present who have partaken of the sacrament, thus assuring that the leaders of Kurga are divinely guided to act with one will according to one vision.

The exact composition of the Flesh of Satai is the most closely guarded secret in the Caliphate, and requires chemical technology preserved from the Second Republic, the details of the operation known only to cultists among the Ikhwan-i-Takhiyun. The primary active ingredient is derived from certain fungal matter found only on Sky Tear (the sentient Muazi; see **Lost Worlds: Star Crusade 2** for details). For this reason, the Cult of Satai is instrumental in the Caliphate's diplomatic presence on Epiphany, working to keep the source of their sacrament out of Vuldrok hands. When Sky Tear went dark during the 48th century, Salim Rahman, the 12th Caliph, ceased to invite the potentates of more distant worlds to share the sacrament as reserves of fungi were gradually depleted. The chronic unrest which escalated into the rebellions on Khayyam and Al Fashir dates back to this time.

Occult

The Ordu'l-Diin makes no distinction between psychic powers and theurgy, judging only the intent with which occult powers are used. Psychics who openly act to benefit their community are hailed as miracle workers, while a theurge who abuses her rites can be tried for heretical sorcery. The Sihr and Ghamizi Ikhwans understand the difference somewhat, and make a special effort to recruit, study



and train gifted psychics. Ordu elders often arrange marriages between particularly gifted members, resulting over the course of centuries in usuns with an inherited psychic talent; among the Bagatur and Fellahin, for instance, certain families show a special aptitude for the FarHand and Soma paths. The Favyana and the Invisible Path have no equivalents in Kurga, except in rare isolated covens that emphatically declare themselves for or against the Caliph.

Low-level theurgy rites are found in all ordus throughout Kurgan society, and more powerful rites are taught by the Ordu Sechenim. Most are identical to those of their counterparts in the Known Worlds: Brother Battle rites are found among the Ordu Bagatur (with the Cult of Rustam teaching the higher levels); Sanctuary Aeon among the Ikhwan-i-Hakimun; Eskatonic among the Ikhwan-i-Ghamizi; Avestite among the Ikhwan-i-Sihr and the Qadiyate. The powers of the remote nomadic shaman are the same as the Known Worlds Gjartin, local variants of Manja sometimes come to light, and Antinomy, in even more arcane and bizarre variations, flourishes under the Caliphate just as it does in the Empire of Alexius Hawkwood.

Sathra seems to have made a special place for itself in Kurga; cults are uncovered with alarming regularity, especially among pilgrimage ship pilots. Kurgan Sathraists share

much of the same apocryphal history as the Ordu'l-Diin, believing that the worlds of Kurgan space were discovered during the late First Republic by a mysterious personage they name Hwai Lo, reputed to be a notorious Sathraist from Sathra's Boon (Sutek). Some writings attributed to this Hwai Lo contain details of the construction and programming of the Mongke Yildiz Observatory and lyrical descriptions of the Simurgh Nebula; thus, Kurgan Sathraists honor the Nebula and practice the pilgrimage with the same fervor and piety one finds in El-Diin. Elements of Sathraic belief can be found in certain Kafiri ordus which are prohibited from space travel, and some of the tenets of Sathra, carefully revised and reworded, were included in the Kurgan version of the Doctrine of the Consecrated Jumpweb.

El-Diin Theurgy Rites Bal-Buhlul: Work Song

(Level 1, Passion + Impress or Performance, LG, sensory, prolonged, 1W)

With this rite, a theurge of the Ordu Fellahin can add his victory points to the non-combat physical rolls of all within earshot who synchronize their movements to his song. (The liturgy of this rite contains the lyrics of the Galley-Slave Shanty from the *Jumping To Nineveh* soundtrack.)



Qitub-i-Hafzah: Writing the Pages of Memory

(Level 2, Wits + Observe, GP, sight, prolonged, 1W)

This rite grants the theurge a photographic memory, with perfect recall from a short glance at targeted information and victory points applied to Wits or Introvert rolls for attempting to remember untargeted details. Developed primarily by the Ordu Sechenim, it has seen widespread use by both Kibituk and Kankali.

Nafs-i-Shemshir: Soul of the Blade

(Level 3, Extrovert + Focus, LGP, touch, prolonged, 1W)

This rite is used by a bogatyr to bless her weapon with the victory points from casting the rite. Daily observance of this rite is part of the Cult of Rustam's practice of forming an intense metaphysical bond and union with one's chosen weapon, and a blade or gun which has been blessed regularly for years may have a permanent bonus when used by its proper owner.

Jeldun Ihzim: Satai's Lesser Pleasure Trick

(Level 4, Passion + Physick, LG, touch, temporary, 1W)

Traditionally attributed to Sata Natura, this rite causes the target to enter a state of orgasmic ecstasy so overwhelming that no other action — physical, social, mental or occult — may be taken for at least 10 turns plus the caster's victory points. The target may contest the rite with a roll of Ego or Calm + Stoic Mind. This rite is known only to the Ordu Kankali, who use it mainly for hedonic purposes, despite entreaties by the Ordu Bagatur and Ikhwan-i-Sihr who wish to adapt the rite for use in combat and law enforcement.

Juldna Hazam: Satai's Greater Pleasure Trick

(Level 5, Calm + Vigor, LP, self or touch, prolonged, 1W)

Although similar in nature, this rite has nearly the opposite effect as that previously described; far from incapacitating the target, the Greater Pleasure Trick keeps the target in a suspended state of physical arousal — awake, alert and pumped. Targets gain plus one per victory point on all non-combat physical rolls and ignore wound penalties for the duration of the rite.

Raqs al-Waghe: Dance of Faces

(Level 6, Extrovert + Vigor or Disguise, LGP, touch, prolonged, 2W)

Once credited to Satai but thought lost since, this rite was demonstrated by the current Caliph as part of his tests for candidacy. Similar to the level six Soma power Masking, it enables the theurge to physically alter his appearance;

unlike Masking, the caster may radically change his entire body at once — size, weight, posture, age and even gender. This rite does not alter trait ratings and cannot be used to gain abilities which the caster does not already possess.

Mus'hab-i-Aql: Clouding the Mind

(Level 7, Wits + Sneak, GP, sight, temporary, 1W)

By performing a complex hand gesture in front of a target's face, a theurge can cause a target to "blank out," making him unaware of the theurge's presence for 10 turns plus 1 per victory point. While not unconscious, the target will forget the previous few minutes (number of minutes also equal to victory points), and may even continue with a task the theurge might have interrupted with this rite. Once the duration of the rite has elapsed, the target may realize that something has happened, especially if the arrival, appearance and behavior of the theurge was incongruous enough to merit attention. Targets who are expecting some trickery may resist with Ego or Wits + Focus. Mus'hab-i-Aql was developed and used by the Ikhwan-i-Sihr, and remains their exclusive secret.

Shinjuqa-Dhu: The Invisible Blade

(Level 8, Faith + Melee, LP, touch or throwing distance, instant, 1W)

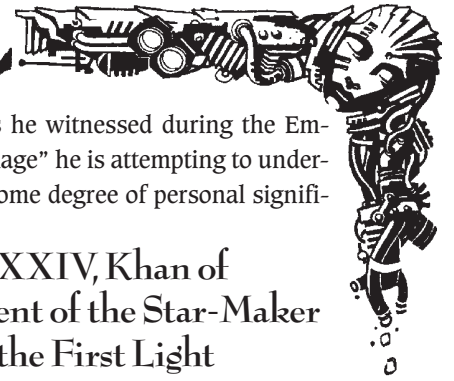
This rite enables the theurge to use any object as weapon, inflicting damage of three die plus one die per victory point from casting. Tales of Shinjuqa-Dhu are replete with heavily-armored men felled by hair-ribbons, broomstraws and pages torn from books. One theurge on Al Fashir is said to have pierced an enemy's heart with a skillfully flicked grain of sand. Shinjuqa-Dhu was developed and used by the Ikhwan-i-Sihr, but has spread among the Ordu Bagatur by the Cult of Rustam.

Amr al-Djinn: Command of the Spirits

(Level 9, Faith + Impress, LGP, sensory, prolonged, 1W)

The Ikhwan-i-Ghamiz have made extensive study of the kelet, and have learned to invoke the authority of the Caliph and the power of the bogdo to force spirits to do their bidding. This rite exists in many variations, and can be used to materialize servitors, call up sulde, exorcise afrit and even redirect some of the lesser forces of nature. The version given here was made famous by Sulayman Darumai, who was said to command an ever-present entourage of djinn.

This rite calls into being a number of invisible, immaterial servitor-spirits who have no intelligence or will of their own but may carry out complex tasks according to mental instructions from the theurge. These djinn may not attempt any action which the caster does not know how to perform herself, and will only act in the caster's presence. Although invisible and incorporeal, they can manipulate objects —



including technology or weapons for which the theurge has been trained, but are immune to physical attacks or interference. When a djinn is required to roll for an action, the relevant traits of the caster are used. The djinn are susceptible to some psychic powers and countertheurgic rites, and appear in Wyrd vision as undersized surrealistically deformed humanoids composed of vaporous billows.

The number of servitors called — i.e., the number of actions which can be remotely performed through use of this rite — equals one per victory point, plus one per extra Wyrd point spent.

Personalities

Mabhu Baliyam

Once a wealthy merchant of Hira trading in carpets, livestock, drugs and slaves, Mabhu Baliyam's fortune has been decimated by the Hazat war. Now that the Hazat conquest of Hira is nearly assured, Baliyam has chosen to keep himself solvent by doing business with the invaders while pretending to pledge his loyalty to them. Enticing them with his vast knowledge of Hiran politics and economy and his mastery of the impenetrable jungle dialects, he keeps the Hazat safely misinformed about Kurgan culture, always directing them away from the exact location of the Mongke Yildiz Observatory while sending the Caliphate information on the Hazat via the Ordu Kibituk. Meanwhile, he covertly strikes out at the Hazat by getting them addicted to inferior grades of tubaq and qoqa, and offering them the intimacies of his most attractive slaves, whom he has infected with the Hiran pox.

Shaydekh el-Tuqiyya (a.k.a. Esteban Escovar Estancia de Vera Cruz)

To the casual observer, Shaydekh el-Tuqiyya appears to be a tall, handsome Kurgan, probably of Khayyamite descent, who dresses and behaves like a veteran of the Vera Cruz Jihad. In reality, however, he is a highly accomplished spy for House Hazat, a commoner who earned a knighthood for his service during the Emperor Wars. Now he has turned his acumen upon the Kurga Caliphate, and travels the Balif kingdoms of Hira seeking a band of pilgrims with whom he can travel deeper into the unknown Kurgan jumpweb. Esteban is continually astonished at the piety demonstrated by Kurgans who have suffered the most in the war with the Hazat; his own faith in the Universal Church

was crushed by the horrors he witnessed during the Emperor Wars, and the "pilgrimage" he is attempting to undertake has begun to acquire some degree of personal significance.

Caliph Juhangiz XXIV, Khan of Khans, Vice-Regent of the Star-Maker and Reflector of the First Light

Born Juhangiz Urdai Mangu-Batu Turhan, 24th in the direct line of descent from the founder of the Caliphate, this Caliph is the third of his line to be named the living prophet (the previous being Juhangiza XVII, who enjoyed a brief and volatile reign in the 49th century.) Trained to rule since birth, Juhangiz was also rigorously tutored in the mystic arts by teachers from the Ikhwan-i-Ghamizi. When the previous Caliph, Hulagulu the Hekelet (formerly the Beggar-Sultan of Tsuma) perished without naming a successor in a mysterious jumpgate accident after a state visit to Tsuma, Juhangiz was prodded into candidacy by his family and friends among the Kuriltai. Despite initial misgivings and feelings of unworthiness, he passed all the tests with what seemed to him surprising ease, and when the jumproute to Vera Cruz reopened on the day of his ascension, he had a clear vision of his future: he would be the Caliph who would finish Khahir's Jihad and take Vera Cruz. To this end, he has poured much of his resources into the development of advanced starships and machines of war, and authorized the Ordu Bagatur to carry lasers, blasters and other high-tech weaponry. Unfortunately, the rebellions on Al Fashir and Khayyam have rendered the fulfillment of his prophecy problematic. Although he has offered spectacular rewards to any who can bring these wayward worlds back under his sway, no progress has been made, and the recent near-conquest of Hira by the Hazat has cut him most deeply. Convinced that his military commanders are bunglers and his advisors are fools, Juhangiz XXIV is determined to examine the state of these worlds with his own eyes, and has launched upon the Secret Pilgrimage over the strident pleas of the Kuriltai. Accompanied by a horde of Whisperers and a plethora of disguises, he wishes to look upon the faces of the rebels and the Hazat, in order to see for himself just what sort of opponents these are. He has sworn to himself and to the Mongke Yildiz that he will not be remembered by history as The Caliph Who Failed To Keep The Hajj Intact.



Kurga Caliphate



