

# LORE FOR BEGINNERS

1.0



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**INFINITY**

# INTRODUCTION

Infinity is epic science fiction. The Second Great Space Race swept humanity out among the stars. We have emerged from the womb of our homeworld and scattered across the galaxy, only to find ourselves balanced on the brink. Society has fractured into powerful factions sharing a tense truce in the wake of colonial wars. Beneath the delicate peace they've wrought, a seething turmoil of covert operations constantly test interstellar relations. Direct action military operations explode in flash conflicts. Remote dronbots dart between bioengineered super-soldiers. Hackers dance through the invisible tactical maelstrom of hellfire military cybersystems. Titanic TAGs – Tactical Armoured Gears – tower above infantry wearing military-grade exoskeletons.

Infinity is a wonderland of technological marvels. The quantronics revolution remodelled a society electronics. Humanity now lives in a true symbiosis between tool and toolmaker. Pervasive domotics have automated virtually every aspect of modern life. Comlogs implanted into the forearm provide a link to local holoprojectors, mesh nets, and the interstellar Maya network. Augmented reality technologies mean that the physical world is no longer the limit of the human experience. Social clouds broadcast by every individual – made up of memetags and patina cues – allow simultaneous physical and digital interactions between people, rooms, buildings, streets, and even entire communities.

Infinity is an adventure on the frontiers of space. Alien warriors seek victory on the battlefields of broken worlds. Space pirates cruise through the shattered planetoids of the Human Edge. Scientist adventurers delve the oceans of Varuna. Mysterious assassins dance among the desert sands of Bourak. Deep in the jungle battlefields war which was already heavily dependent on its correspondents dash amidst gunfire and bounty hunters pursue rogue AIs through the shadowy corridors of Nomad Motherships.

Infinity is the destiny of mankind. Our bodies are pushed to the transhuman cusp through bioengineering and cybertechnology. Our memories are recorded in quantronic Cubes and hosted in artificial Lhost bodies. The creation of ALEPH, humanity's first true Artificial Intelligence, is an enigma which promises either the great hope of human civilisation, its greatest existential crisis, or both. And, from beyond the borders of our space, the alien Combined Army has invaded, threatening to destroy everything which we have built.

Three key technologies have propelled mankind into the vast voids of the Milky Way, expanding the scope and power of the Human Sphere while transforming the very definition of humanity in their wake: The discovery of wormholes and their transformation into gateways to other solar systems. The discovery of neomaterials and the quantronics revolution they unleashed. And the discovery of Silk, which has revolutionised biotechnology and the meaning of what it is to be human.

## THE GATEWAY TO THE STARS

Following the discovery of GA6037283, the first viable wormhole, as its turbulence tore through the misty outer reaches of the rings of

Saturn in the early 21st century, there was a general upheaval in the academic halls of physics. The unique and unanticipated properties of the wormhole, as observed by the rapidly retasked Cassandra probe, were radically inconsistent with the so-called "Standard+ Model" of particle physics which had become the accepted view of reality over the previous twenty or thirty years. As the Brazilian physicist Leandro Rocha famously remarked, "The storm around Saturn was Einstein's guillotine. It lopped the head off of physics."

Saturn's Storm raged for ten years before the Sorel sisters – Cécile and Émeline – realised that within the spatial topography of the wormhole it was possible to derive a partial theory of quantum gravity based around what would later become known as Sorel fields. More importantly, they were able to hypothesize how these fields could be manipulated in order to "smooth" the unstable topography of the wormhole.

Without Sorel field manipulators, ships encountering one end of a wormhole would simultaneously become refracted throughout the total volume of the wormhole and tidal forces would rip the vessel apart into degenerate matter. But with a field manipulator, the wormhole could be contained and stabilised, allowing for safe passage. As Cécile Sorel would later commemorate it while receiving the Nobel Prize with her sister, the wormhole had been transformed from a violent enigma into a Gateway to the Stars.

By this time several other wormholes had been found in the outer reaches of the solar system. The earliest Sorel manipulators only allowed for the transit of small probes (followed by short bursts of information before the field channel collapsed), but these probes were diligently sent through the wormholes, giving mankind their first close-up peek at alien star systems.

As the first reports from the probes captivated the solar system, new technology was granting superior control over the Sorel fields. The larger field channels they created raised the possibility of sending manned ships through the 'holes. The result was Project DAWN: a joint effort between NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Russian Cosmonautical Agency to establish an extrasolar colony. The early Lapérouse probe had already identified the system on the far side of Saturn's Storm as Delta-Pavonis, and, using the new Sorel field manipulators, Project DAWN launched Lewis & Clark, a pair of probes designed to survey the system and ascertain the potential for terraforming.

The biophysical reports were even more promising than had been hoped: The fourth planet of the system was actually capable of supporting human life. Named Dawn, this planet became a symbol for the dawning of a new age for Humanity. Huge colony ships were constructed and colonists were recruited from across the European Union, United States, and Russia.

Sadly, however, Project DAWN ended in tragedy. During the wormhole transit of the Aurora, the second colony ship sent to Delta-Pavonis, there was a catastrophic failure of the ship's field manipulators. Not only did the ship's channel rupture (almost certainly resulting in the instant death of everyone onboard), but the entire wormhole collapsed and vanished. Saturn's Storm had at last been calmed, and the entire human race mourned its loss.

For most of the world, the failure of Project DAWN clearly spelled the end of humanity's extrasolar ambitions. The rising superpower of PanOceania, however, saw opportunity. Under the auspices of the Cretan Enterprise, perhaps the greatest of the PanOceanian empresas, a team of military physicists and engineers created a theoretical breakthrough: Instead of directly manipulating the Sorel fields at the mouth of the wormhole, they could use revolutionary quantronic nanomachinery to create an energy lens near the wormhole that would bring it into "focus". The result was the Minotaur Motor.

On the cusp of the 22nd century, PanOceania launched the Mandella. Powered by the Minotaur Experimental Compact Model Series 1 and built by Giffard Industrial Motors, the Mandella was the first manned vessel to use a Minotaur Motor. Punching through a trans-Plutonian 'hole, the Mandella discovered the lush and vibrant world which would become known as Neoterra, the future heart of humanity.

The fuse of the new space race had been lit.

## THE QUANTRONICS REVOLUTION

Teseum was first discovered as an impurity in the atmosphere of Jupiter by hydrogen skimmers in the mid-21st century. Ironically, it was originally considered an industrial nuisance, frequently causing shorts in the magnetic skim-filters. Carol Arnold was the first researcher to study the metallic accretion in any detail, and she quickly realised that it defied conventional explanations. She referred to it as a "neomaterial" and named it after Teseu (the Portuguese name for the Greek hero Theseus), describing its subatomic structure as "maze-like".

Teseum's unique properties allowed for the construction of sophisticated nanomolecular interfaces, which made possible the first true molecular assemblers and revolutionised the manufacturing industry. But of even greater importance was the ability for Teseum-based processors to perform complex and precise computation using quantum-mechanical phenomenon. The resulting quantronics remodelled a society which was already heavily dependent on its electronics and moulded it into a true symbiosis between tool and toolmaker.

Comlogs, quantronic processors often implanted into the forearm, have become the common interface between a citizen and the world around them. Wrist-worn link bracelets provide a firewalled connection between the comlog and various networks (local holoprojectors and mesh nets, as well as the global Maya network) while simultaneously providing a limited haptic interface. The primary interface, however, is through augmented reality which is generally projected directly into the user's retina by means of special contact lenses or inconspicuous eye implants. These AR interfaces often take the form of complex radial designs combined with heuristic interfaces that use a combination of physical input and eye focus for selection and manipulation.

These AR technologies also mean that the physical world is no longer the limit of the human experience. Instead, the world is made up of overlapping digital patinas, delivered through Maya, the data network of the Human Sphere. Named after the first ubiquitous

standard for augmented reality, Maya not only delivers content (either by specific request or subscription) to the individual user in the fashion of the outdated internet, it also pervades the user's perception. Every individual broadcasts a social cloud, made up of meme-tags and patina cues, allowing them to automatically share in the augmented perceptions of those around them while simultaneously interacting both physically and digitally. The same is true of rooms, buildings, streets, and entire communities.

This comprehensive reweaving of the social fabric only set the stage, however, as the second phase of the quantronics revolution unfurled: Quantum programming allowed for major breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and the creation of incredibly intelligent microminds. Shockingly sophisticated heuristic systems allowed microminds to be almost instantly retasked for any purpose and they quickly permeated Maya, serving as personal assistants in the digital world and robotic servants in the physical.

The result is what experts refer to as pervasive domotics, the intense automation of virtually every aspect of modern life: Alarms that are keyed to personal sleep cycles. Showers that turn on at precisely the moment you need to step into them. Kitchens that prepare meals before you become hungry. Personal agents can often anticipate the desires of their users so that, for example, their automated car will arrive to pick them up at precisely the moment they decide to walk out of the restaurant (where, it goes without saying, their bill has been automatically attended to).

And all of that was before the creation of ALEPH, the first (and only) true artificial intelligence. The extreme networking demands created by the combination of social clouds and pervasive domotics – on top of the ever-rising computational needs of the major governments, scientific projects, and corporations – began to outstrip the existing Maya infrastructure. Localised network collapses known as whiteouts became increasingly frequent and, in a world accelerating its dependence on the network, increasingly dangerous.

Project: Toth was established to solve the problem. Initially an effort to link supercomputers into a geographically distributed mega-processor that could be trivially expanded by adding additional computers to the cluster in order to sustain "essential services" during whiteouts, the project eventually became focused on developing an AI to manage the massive amounts of data in the network, discriminating the packets and prioritizing difficulties and emergencies as they arose.

As Project: Toth grew in importance, however, it also grew in quantity of hardware and complexity of software. And it became apparent that the system's AI was rapidly evolving towards what had been theorised as Artificial Life: an intelligence that not only mimicked human learning and adapted to new circumstances, but which was also self-conscious and capable of evolving noticeably beyond human control.

The Project: Toth AI became ALEPH, named after the first letter of the Kabbalah that symbolises the place from which all other places in the universe can be seen. Today it permeates every layer of society. It has not only been given control over macro-systems (like traffic control, surveillance networks, communications systems,

terraforming platforms, electoral processes, life support, and social programs), but Aspects of ALEPH frequently replace many of the roles formerly filled by dedicated microminds.

ALEPH has been so successful in fractally subdividing its attention that there is simply no need for additional AIs. ALEPH is more than capable of addressing all of the human needs that can be serviced by an AI. It would, in fact, be dangerous to allow the creation of additional AIs: Where ALEPH has proven itself loyal to humanity, each additional AI would carry with it the risk of creating a powerful, unbridled AI hostile to its creators. As a result, the Sole AI Law, passed by the O-12 Senate and fiercely enforced, prohibits the development of self-aware artificial intelligences.

## SILKEN IMMORTALITY

The colonisation of Bourak by Haqqislam was immediately followed by the building of a whole network of bimaristans – research hospitals which covered the healthcare needs of settlers while also researching new technologies, healing protocols, and pharmacological patents. Certain eminent names, such as Qasim Azmi and Khalaf al-Attebâ, earned unmeasurable prestige in the scientific community with their advances in the cultivation and preservation of organic tissue. No other scientist of the time, however, has become a household name to the degree of Qayyim Zaman, the inventor of the method to synthesize Silk.

Originally developed and sold as a gene therapy courier, Silk invisibly weaves its way through a host's body (like silken threads through a tapestry), creating a non-disruptive network which can interact with individual cells down to a genetic level while being controlled and monitored remotely. This allowed for unprecedented precision in gene delivery and activation, utterly dwarfing the precision capable with the previous retroviral techniques. Radical new gene therapies and anti-agathic techniques began pouring out of medical laboratories from across the Human Sphere.

But it was the Silk 2.3 software updates that were delivered twelve years later that were the true revolution. These allowed a Silk network to be manipulated in heretofore unimaginable ways: Selective stem cell reversion. Replacement organs grown in situ. Programmable immune responses. Nerve regeneration.

Of course, Silk's applications weren't limited to merely therapeutic treatments. Cosmetic applications like targeted fat flushing and 24-hour face morphs casually re-sculpted humanity into seasonal beauty fads (or their counterculture equivalents) while military augmentations like bone-lacing and lactic-acid cleansers supercharged soldiers across the planetary battlefields.

Nothing more fundamentally altered the human condition, however, than Silk's ability to track neuronal synapses and record perfect digital images of the brain using the specially designed quantronic implant known as the Cube. The first Cubes offered the promise of true immortality, and these promises were fulfilled when the consciousness of Annie Xanthopoulos was successfully transferred into a Lhost – a clone-like biosynthetic body rapidly grown onto an artificial skeletal structure using overlapping Silk networks.

The Lhosts, in turn, opened new doors. Under the auspices of Project: Maid of Orleans, A PanOceanian empresa, ALEPH developed a lesser artificial intelligence (LAI) to serve as a military leader capable of inspiring modern troops. The personality of the Recreation was modelled on Joan of Arc, a French saint and heroine of the 15th century. Once Joan was in the field, however, it quickly became apparent that ALEPH had delivered more than the symbolic propaganda personality that PanOceania had requested: Joan was possessed of a keen strategic and tactical insight, and once she was in the field she quickly rose through the ranks. PanOceania was also surprised when ALEPH immediately followed up on Joan's success by developing Project Counsellor – a Recreation of the legendary Sun Tze – for Yu Jing.

Spearheaded by the huge propaganda successes of the early military Recreations, ALEPH began developing additional personalities to serve as diplomats, soldiers, spokespeople, and artists for any nation or corporation capable of justifying and financing their creation. Criticised by historians as being nothing more than glorified caricatures, the extremely charismatic and talented Recreations have nevertheless proven extremely popular on Maya and ALEPH is riding the wave of their celebrity to continue wedging them into every facet of society.

## WORLDS OF THE HUMAN SPHERE

Scientists discovered the first viable wormhole in orbit around Saturn in the early 21st century. Ten years later, the Sorel sisters unlocked its secrets and opened the Gateway to the Stars. Project DAWN – the first attempt to colonize an alien world – ended in catastrophic failure when the wormhole leading to the neophyte colony permanently collapsed. Humanity rallied in the wake of failure, though. Pan-Oceanian vessels using powerful Minotaur motors punched through trans-Plutonian 'holes and took us to the stars. A race once confined to a single planet now call eleven star systems home.

## EARTH

The cradle of humanity. A place of natural and cultural treasures. The cities here are full of history, but severely depopulated as a result of the star tide. The Sol System in general, however, remains more highly developed than any other system of the Human Sphere.

Neoterra: The first system to be discovered and colonized by Pan-Oceanian explorers, Neoterra is now the capital of Pan-Oceania and the seat of the Christian Church. It is home to the most important technology companies of the Sphere and is a daily destination for business travellers and tourists alike.

## ACONTECIMENTO

Pan-Oceania's breadbasket and the third planet to be added to the Sphere, Acontecimento saw massive colonization by Latinos. Famous for its garotas, particularly the spectacular women from the city of Portobelo, Acontecimento is a planet of contrasts. Endless crop fields and pastures alternate with vast, sprawling factory compounds that meet most of the agricultural and industrial needs of Pan-Oceania. Acontecimento also has one of the largest national parks in the

Sphere, the Great Arboreal Reserve, the last remnant of the planet's original biome.

## VARUNA

The ocean planet. The third extra-terrestrial planet found and the first populated with a semi-intelligent native species, the amphibian Helots. Home to the water gods, Varuna is a planet of small islands and soil is scarce. Visitors will be amazed by the sea platforms, subaquatic buildings, and artificial islands. Varuna harnesses the full potential of its oceans in the form of biotechnological research and sea factories and farms that employ numerous Helots. The quiet charm of the planet is disrupted, however, by the violent acts of Libertos, a group of Helot insurgents.

## SHEN TANG AND YU TANG

Two tidally locked planets within the habitable zone of their star, the first discovered and claimed by Yu Jing as they struggled to catch up with PanOceania's deep space capabilities. The two planets were colonized at a rapid pace and Yutang now serves as the capital of Yu Jing.

## BOURAK

A harsh desert world, discovered by the prophets of Haqqislam and named after the Prophet's Horse. In struggling to master its harsh realities, the Bourak Academy of Planetology has become the leading authority on terraforming technologies. Their goal is to transform their sun-blasted world into the gardens of Al-Andalus, or of lost Nineveh and Babylon. But that reality lies far in the future.

## CONCILIUM

Claimed by O-12, the international and pan-planetary organization which theoretically has ultimate jurisdiction over the totality of the Human Sphere, Concilium is lightly populated. However, it is also home to the O-12 Senate and the various O-12 bureau headquarters. O-12 is an international organization born to succeed the already obsolete U.N. and ensure peace and security for all the denizens of the Human Sphere. Its main seat is on the planet Concilium Prime, even though their representatives are scattered among the different nations of the Sphere.

## SVALARHEIMA

Discovered by Pan-Oceania, Svalarheima has become a snowball of discord. It is so distant from its star that freezing temperatures make life nigh impossible save between its tropics. Despite its extreme climate, Svalarheima is coveted due to its abundance of resources, particularly Teseum. During its early settlement, despite Pan-Oceania's initial claim, Yu Jing established a competing colony here. Pan-Oceania now controls roughly two-thirds of the planet and Yu Jing one-third. Svalarheima is not a popular tourist destination due to its drab, snow-covered landscapes, its functional, industrial-looking towns, and its status as a contested land always on the brink of an open confrontation between superpowers.

## HUMAN EDGE

Also referred to as the Edge of Humanity, this shattered system of asteroids and gas giants orbits at the furthest reaches of human exploration. Human Edge is studded with small orbital fortresses,

laying claim to the rich resources which have whetted the mining appetite of every power and corporation in the Sphere.

## PARADISO

The emerald jungle. When it was discovered, Paradiso was almost immediately fiercely contested between the Great Powers, becoming a triggering point for the Neo-Colonial Wars. Its wounds had scarcely had time to heal when the Combined Army invaded, turning its jungles into an endless battlefield and the testing ground of humanity.

## ARIADNA

Nearly two centuries after the Project DAWN colony had been lost, it was rediscovered by the Pan-Oceanian scout ship POS Nirriti and, much to the surprise of the rest of the Human Sphere, the colonists had survived and even thrived. A conservative people, driven behind defensive walls by the assaults of the native Antipodes, the Ariadnans now strive to stave off the iconoclastic assaults of the advanced societies they have fallen out of step with.

# FACTIONS OF THE HUMAN SPHERE

## ARIADNA

Long years of bloody war – against both each other and the native Antipodes – forced the four nations of the lost colony world together through the imperfect weld of violence. These disparate national factions are united, however, in their struggle to catch up with the rest of humanity. Their agents seek technological advantage and astropolitical leverage.

## HAQQISLAM

The neo-Muslim renaissance of Haqqislam followed their Search for Knowledge to the hostile alien world of Bourak, but their economy has become dominated by the byzantine Merchant Guilds. Their commercial interests extend throughout the Human Sphere along the trade routes which they founded. And, above all, they strive to protect the secrets of Silk.

## NOMADS

The Nomads have no planet to call their own, instead being primarily a coalition of three colossal Motherships – the Bakunin, Corregidor, and Tunguska. Some applaud their fierce advocacy for personal liberty, while others name them dangerous anarchists who threaten to weaken the Human Sphere when its strength is most needed. Some see their resistance to the insidious, tyrannical control of ALEPH as a bastion defence of humanity's identity, but others point to their illegal gene-experimentation and radical body modifications as a relentless drive towards an incomprehensible post-humanity. Regardless of your point of view, the Nomads stand apart from the rest of human society, even while their far-flung Commercial Missions – which serve as embassies and trade delegations – insinuate their presence throughout the Human Sphere.

## PANOCEANIA

The Hyperpower. Larger, richer, and stronger than any of the other Great Powers. The people of PanOceania put more trust in ALEPH than anyone else in the Human Sphere, and as a result, life in their lush, garden-like Living Cities is automated, comfortable, and luxurious. Unsurprisingly, they champion a defensive astropolitical agenda which strives to sustain the status quo which they currently dominate.



## YU JING

PanOceania's largest rival is Yu Jing, the Pan-Asian alliance which has forged its diverse cultural groups beneath the unified banner of the new Imperial System. The StateEmpire of Yu Jing has been rapidly closing the gap with PanOceania by aggressively seeking out every possible advantage and ruthlessly exploiting it.

## O-12

As an international and pan-planetary organisation, O-12 strives to hold humanity together. O-12 is functionally a "neutral" faction, but in practice that often means the goal of O-12 is a spoiler to the goals of the other factions.

## ALEPH

The Human Sphere would not exist without the AI's oversight. It is mankind's beneficent protector, managing their daily necessities, ceaselessly seeking to improve their lives, and providing for their common defence (particularly now that they face the existential threat of the Combined Army). Those loyal to ALEPH see its will as the will of the Human Spheres. Many serve openly in the Special Situations Section, but the galaxy is a dark and dangerous place, and ALEPH needs eyes and agents that can go to all the places it cannot yet reach.

## CORPORATIONS

The chartered companies used by PanOceania to rapidly develop its colonial prospects, the Merchant Guilds of Haqqislam which blazed the trade routes of the starways, and the keiretsu spun-off from the centrally controlled economy of Yu Jing's StateEmpire became the seeds of the new hypercorporations. Corporate agents seek technological revelations, trade secrets, unique access to natural resources, and anything else that might yield a profit.

## MERCENARIES

In an era of interstellar war, the free mercenary companies (FMCs) and private military corporations (PMCs) have flourished. In the employ of state armies, O-12, and private corporations they can be

found almost anywhere: capitals and colonies, orbital stations and deep space patrols, the battlefields of Paradiso and the security of corporate compounds. Their services are traded on the well-regulated War Market, a mercenary stock exchange in which employers can find companies available for hire and the mercenary companies can find individual soldiers or squadrons ready for recruitment. Characters receiving covert objectives from a mercenary faction may be loyal to a specific Warmonger, or they may be an independent freelancer with multiple markets for the information they have to sell.

## SUBMONDO

Petty and violent crimes obviously have not vanished in the wake of interstellar flight, but if you're talking about criminals as a faction, then you're talking about organised crime. Some of these organisations have become incredibly large, spanning not only planets, but the interstellar breadth of the Human Sphere. O-12 uses the codename Submondo (meaning "Underworld" in Esperanto) to refer to these criminal syndicates, which include mob families (like the Acontecimiento Mafia), criminal brotherhoods (like the Triads), pirate consortiums (like the Grey Band of Human Edge), terrorist groups (like Eko-Aktion), and Maya clusters (like Aug-Neon).

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE HUMAN SPHERE

A decade before GA6037283 was discovered, the world had already begun to change. China's so-called Jingji Imperialism saw the economic powerhouse gobble up a half dozen ASEAN nations, transitioning them rapidly from economic satellites to politically annexed provinces. In response, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, and Malaysia formed the Neo-ASEAN alliance to counter China's economic hegemony.

Few realised it at the time, but the seeds of the new superpowers had been planted.

## ENERGY CRISIS

Meanwhile, the old world was beginning to crumble away. The transition from fossil fuels and other legacy sources of energy was badly mismanaged at a global level and the damage wrought was complicated by the devastating consequences of unchecked climate change. This was particularly true in the United States and Project DAWN was, in many ways, the last great work of a dying superpower. When the post-service economy Stock Market Crunch arrived, the bloated North American economy collapsed, dealing a crippling blow to the already receding European markets.

## PAN ASIAN ALLIANCE

On the other side of the planet, in response to increasing Chinese belligerence, additional nations were flocking to the Neo-ASEAN banner. This notably included the Philippines and, shortly thereafter, India. These brought the critical mass of manpower necessary to keep pace with China's immense population and the resulting motley assortment of nations supplemented their economic ties with a series of mutual defence treaties which rapidly developed into a centralised military command known as the PanAsian Alliance.

Japan and South Korea were left as the only two independent nations in the region. The economies of both countries had been wrecked by the Stock Market Crunch, however, and were perched on the brink of complete collapse. Although they, too, might have sought support from the PanAsian Alliance, unfortunate diplomatic mistakes had alienated Japan while South Korea's leaders believed that the PanAsian Alliance would not be strong enough to defend them against the military might of China (which had already occupied North Korea and were perched on their border). As a result, both nations decided to tie their futures to China's.

## BIRTH OF THE STATEEMPIRE

The cultural transition of Japan, however, proved more difficult than the political one. It quickly became apparent that the majority of Japanese citizens felt that their national pride had been sold out, and China's early attempts to apply their homogenization programs only inflamed the problem.

And the truth was that Japan, although the fiercest centre of resistance, was not alone in its protests. Similar cultural movements were gaining strength across China's imperial acquisitions. At the same time, under a corrosive barrage of Western influences, the cultural cohesion of China itself was also eroding.

To solve both problems simultaneously, the Party decided that the nation needed a new identity which could blunt the inflamed passions both at home and abroad. The result was a new Cultural Revolution, creating a collective identity which would aggregate the best virtues from the entirety of the Far East: Koreans, Vietnamese, Mongols, Thai, and all the rest could sustain their unique cultures while also being citizens of the new nation.

Although they remained the central authority of the new nation, it was recognised that the Party had also become inherently alienating to the new mass of foreign citizens and young dissidents. In order to find a unifying symbol of power around which the new nation could coalesce, therefore, the Party reached into the past and restored the Emperor.

Instilled with immense opulence and reinforced through pomp and protocol drawn primarily from the ancient Chinese Imperial court but also influenced by the royal traditions of many Asian nations, a potent mythology of power was woven around the Emperors and their Jade Throne, forging them into the focal point for a new nation which was itself baptised Yu Jing (literally the Jade Capital).

## DAWN OF THE HYPERPOWER

As China was reinventing itself as Yu Jing, the PanAsian Alliance was also transforming itself. Reaching across the Pacific Ocean, the PAA successfully drew Chile and Brazil into the fold. The new treaties formally reorganised the economic and military alliance into a unified nation state, which christened itself PanOceania.

With the collapse of the United States and the European Union continuing apace, it rapidly became clear that these two new nations were the global superpowers of tomorrow. But whereas Yu Jing unified itself by looking to the past and trumpeting economic surety, PanOceania – with its global and transcontinental reach – became gripped by the Destino Tecnológico: the belief that technology was the road to the future and that the destiny of mankind would belong

to the nation which relentlessly pursued that technology. This philosophy would drive much of PanOceania's foreign and domestic policy for decades to come, and remains an indelible part of its national character.

## EQUATORIAL SURGE

The catalyst for the recovery of the still struggling global economy was, much to the surprise of economists everywhere, the orbital elevator. A private research consortium perfected the material science required to construct the prodigious cable for the elevator and then promptly open-sourced the technology. Construction almost immediately began on a chain of orbital elevators all along the equatorial girth of the world.

Even before they reached orbit, constructing the elevators required a vast infrastructure on the ground. A massive influx of would-be employees, for both the orbital construction companies and the support industries surrounding them, flooded the regions around the elevators. This demographic groundswell became known as the Equatorial Surge, and while some of the nations involved handled it well (smoothly rolling out infrastructure and capitalising on the economic boom), many did not. This was particularly true in the so-called "host countries" allowing foreign nations to build elevators on their soil: Inadequate, underfunded reception camps were almost immediately overwhelmed, triggering a humanitarian catastrophe which destabilised many of the governments involved. (It was during this time that Ecuador, for example, became functionally a client state of PanOceania.)

As the orbital elevators were completed, the Equatorial Surge only grew in size as the population of the planet was funnelled into the heavens. The Lunar Colonies became a waystation to the solar system, the population of Yu Jing's Martian colonies boomed, and the number of orbitals reaping the wealth of the asteroid belt and outer system multiplied.

## RELIGION CRISIS

The roots of what came to be known as the Religion Crisis were laid decades earlier: The collapse of the heart of the Muslim world during the Energy Crisis. The fervour of transnational digital revivalist movements fuelled by economic collapse. PanOceania's growing global influence stirring a turbulent Pan-Pacific cultural mix. The vast population migrations of the Equatorial Surge.

All of these contributed to a profound destabilisation of global religions, particularly the two largest in Christianity and Islam, and set the stage for the radical transformations of those religions which were to come. But when historians speak of the beginning of the Religion Crisis, they are almost always referring to the Roman Apocalypse.

## ROMAN APOCALYPSE

During a papal conclave, a biological weapon was detonated in Vatican City. Most of the upper leadership of the Catholic Church was killed (either immediately or over the next five years from the lingering effects). Vatican City itself (along with part of Rome) was lost for a generation, inflicting a substantial economic blow to the Church as well. The images of the Church being led by frail figures behind plastic sheets emblazoned with biohazard sigils haunted the world for years to come. Christianity was left reeling.

## BIRTH OF A NEW ISLAM

The Muslim world was simultaneously undergoing a schism into seemingly endless chaos. The economic collapse of the Middle East in a post-oil world was almost complete, and the power vacuum left behind was echoed in Islam by a fractious theological tumult of would-be prophets, microsects, and extremist cults.

In the midst of this tumult, the religious leader Farhad Khadivar spoke of the need to seek the True Islam described by the Qur'an; an Islam that was built upon the central tenet of the Search for Knowledge. The result was Haqqislam – a populist movement which was, importantly, also successful in reaching out to the Muslim elite who saw a return to prosperity in its scientific and technological idealism.

## SECOND GREAT SPACE RACE

While wars of religion and deprivation still raged back on Earth, in the depths of space at the opposite end of the human experience, PanOceania discovered the Earth-like world of Neoterra. It was the ultimate realisation of Destino Tecnológico and PanOceania enthusiastically concluded that colonisation – expansion on a grand, interstellar scale – was literally written in their stars.

It wasn't hard to find colonial volunteers eager to escape the hellholes back home and these, mixed with young PanOceanian patriots eager to participate in their nation's hegemonic rise, formed a veritable tide of immigrants to the new world.

Six years after first sighting Neoterra, and as the first colonies were being established there, PanOceania's Space Exploration Division discovered Acontecimiento. Additional colonies were soon being established there, too, and the remarkable economic benefits quickly began to accrue back on Earth: PanOceanian unemployment, which had been soaring, abruptly plummeted as population pressures were eased. This resulted in a significant economic stimulus even before the raw wealth of two virgin planets began flowing back into PanOceania's coffers.

## NANOTECH WARS

The discovery of Teseum's unique properties caused the nascent field of nanotechnology to explode and unlocked undreamt of possibilities. As is human wont, however, these wonders were quickly turned to the practice of war. The military arsenals of the world were soon stocked with devastator swarms, genome plagues, microscopic drones, nano-poisons, monofilament munitions, and other heretofore unknown horrors.

The United States had spent half a century attempting to recover its glory: After the expensive boondoggle of Project DAWN, their SDK destroyer program (which they had hoped to use to ensure U.S. interests in the inner solar system) had also failed. Now they doubled down on nanotechnology, but their laboratories – no longer at the cutting edge – couldn't keep pace.

A failed attempt by the CIA at industrial espionage in the labs of Harris NanoSciences in Canberra resulted in a nanocatastrophe with casualties in the hundreds. The scandal rapidly escalated into a casus belli between the once and future hyperpowers.

## PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

When the First Nanotech War broke out, PanOceania's naval fleet quickly won the Battle of Hawaii and then erected a blockade of the

United States' west coast. As the blockade took its toll, the United States, in a desperate effort, attempted to release an experimental nanodevourer from a secret lab near Monterey. Unfortunately, the nanomachines were unstable and another nanocatastrophe resulted.

At the request of O-12, the PanOceanian blockade fleet landed to lend humanitarian assistance. Uncontrolled elements within the U.S. Army refused to stand down and a series of guerrilla confrontations ensued, but eventually the war was brought to an end with the San Diego Truce.

## ATLANTIC CAMPAIGN

In the Battle of the Bloody Gulf, the American and PanOceanian surface fleets fought to a devastating stalemate. Neither fleet would fully recover before the end of the war, and the Atlantic Campaign became a quiet-yet-deadly struggle of submarines beneath the waves.

## FIFTH RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Russia, like the United States, had seen its prestige fade. It attempted to force its way back to being a superpower by creating a massive military machine. The weak central bureaucracy was unable to directly control the military monster they had created, however, and attempted to keep it in check by factionalising the army under a number of largely independent generals. All they succeeded in doing was creating a series of rebel generals seeking to aggrandise power to themselves as brutal warlords armed with tactical nukes (often several at a time).

## SECOND NANOTECH WAR

At the end of the First Nanotech War, a cabal of American nanotech engineers (many guilty of war crimes) fled and took refuge in Russia's Siberian provinces. With Moscow's central control weakened by the Fifth Revolution, these provinces became concerned by Yu Jing expansionism and launched an assault using the terrible weapons developed in their secret nanotech labs.

The war, although relatively brief, descended into a hellish broil of technological terrors and uncontrolled nanoweapons unleashed upon fellow soldiers and innocent civilians alike. Yu Jing eventually won a clear victory against the dysfunctional provincial governments, but only at the cost of the Jishù de Běi'āi (the Technology Sorrow).

## CONCILIUM CONVENTION

The world had looked on in seemingly helpless horror at the atrocities of the Fifth Revolution and the Second Nanotech War, but as the wars came to an end it was clear that action needed to be taken.

At the end of the First Nanotech War, O-12 had been instrumental in negotiating the Nanotech Limitation Protocols and it had then accrued the muscle necessary to make sure the Protocols were enforced on both Earth and beyond. It took the opportunity of the Second Nanotech War to expand its power and prestige even further by negotiating the Concilium Convention – a comprehensive treaty governing the rules of war and, particularly, the weapons which nations are allowed to use in its prosecution whether internally or abroad.



The implicit legal authority of both the Protocols and the Convention, combined with the hefty, interstellar enforcement powers granted to O-12, made the pan-national group a de facto government of humanity, possessed of far greater independence, authority, and practical strength than the League of Nations or the UN had ever dreamed of.

## BIRTH OF ALEPH

Another technological upheaval, however, awaited humanity when Project: Toth created ALEPH. The disparate Neo-Luddite movements which took root during the Nanotech Wars reacted poorly to what the most deranged panic-mongers referred to as a “posthuman Baal” and a “digital Antichrist”, but as ALEPH permeated itself throughout the Maya datasphere as a pervasive, helpful presence that proved – repeatedly and en masse – that it had nothing but altruistic intentions towards the Human Sphere, these fears were quickly lampooned as ludicrous.

Where the ideology of the Neo-Luddites did find mainstream credence, however, was the fear that the next AI might prove less beneficent. In response, O-12 passed the Sole AI Law (which banned the research or creation of self-aware AIs) and the Utgard Accords (also known as the Non-AI Proliferation Treaty, which notably authorised the creation of the Special Situations Section for enforcing the Sole AI Law throughout the Human Sphere).

## EXODUS

As the influence of ALEPH spread, the rivalry between Yu Jing and PanOceania had not dimmed due to their independent struggles in the Nanotech Wars. PanOceania’s success on Neoterra made it clear to Yu Jing that they had miscalculated in dismissing the search for exoplanets as a foolhardy fad. Yu Jing’s economists had considered deep space investment a black hole capable of consuming federal budgets and destabilising entire economies. While they had invested heavily in developing colonies in the inner system (particularly on Mars), they had allowed PanOceania to effectively leapfrog past them to Jupiter and Saturn, using them as launching pads for exploiting the trans-Plutonian wormholes.

The StateEmpire was at least a decade behind the Hyperpower, but their centralised economy turned on a dime. Research funds were redistributed, and entire universities were repurposed in concert with private industry to close the gap.

The effort, with a little bit of luck, paid off when a Yu Jing probe discovered a pair of binary planets orbiting each other in the habitable zone of their star. In a blaze of propaganda, the new worlds were christened Shentang and Yutang, and all of Yu Jing celebrated that the “gap had been closed”.

## INTERSTELLAR EMPIRES

In reality, of course, the gap remained. Yu Jing may have discovered two habitable worlds to match PanOceania’s, but the Hyperpower’s development of their colonies still outstripped Yu Jing’s efforts.

In fact, PanOceania’s confidence and investment in their colonial worlds was about to be dramatically demonstrated. The activation of Russia’s nuclear arsenal had terrified world leaders: Earth had become too small a playground and, as existential threats proliferated during the Nanotech Wars, it became clear that even the mightiest of nations could no longer protect their capitals. PanOceania decided to solve the problem by literally putting their

government on a different planet and declared that San Pietro, on Neoterra, would be the new capital.

This was somewhat easier for PanOceania to achieve because it had never really invested strongly in an Earth-side capital due to its amalgamation of formerly national interests. But once the precedent had been set, Yu Jing (perhaps fearing that PanOceania would exploit the strategic strength of their new position) followed suit within just a few years. (This required some muscling from the StateEmpire’s strong central control, but it was also consistent with their cultural imperatives of investing Yu Jing in an identity separate from its member states.)

## WORLDS OF WATER AND ICE

Within a few years of moving the national capital to Neoterra, PanOceania discovered and established its third exoplanet colony (although the term “exoplanet” was dropping out of popular use for much the same reason that America was no longer referred to as the “New World”). Varuna was an aquatic planet, which posed certain unique challenges for the colonial effort. It was also home to the Helots, the first alien sentients encountered by humanity (at least, as far as they knew).

Nine years later, Midgard – a PanOceanian exploration vessel – discovered the icy world of Svalarheima. Although most of the surface was only barely habitable, it was yet another jewel in PanOceania’s colonial crown. Frustrated by the continued failures of their own planetary searches, Yu Jing sent a massive fleet to the planet two years after its initial colonisation and claimed the Niflheim region for itself (renaming it Huangdi).

## IMPERIAL TRIAD WAR

Although PanOceania quickly embraced the full integration of ALEPH into their society, military, and government, other nations were more cautious in accepting the “foreign” AI. One by one, however, they fell like dominos as the overwhelming advantages of ALEPH’s assistance became undeniable. Unsurprisingly, one of the largest hurdles came in the form of Yu Jing, where the Party felt that the AI represented an incorrigible danger to their central control. The door which finally opened Yu Jing to ALEPH was the Imperial Triad War.

The aggressive acceleration of Yu Jing’s colonisation efforts had created a social disorder ripe for the criminal activities of the Triads and their dark influence over the StateEmpire’s society had waxed to its greatest heights. In their pride, however, they had aggrandised not only power but arrogance. The pinnacle of their presumption came when the Golden Dagger Society mounted an assault on the StateEmpire Courthouse in order to liberate one of their members during his trial. One hundred people died in the attack, most of them civil servants of the Empire.

Under immense public pressure, the Party demanded that the Emperor – a kind and even-tempered man named Shao Ming – resolve the situation: The Emperor’s job was to control the Yu Jing system of justice. And if the Emperor could no longer accomplish that, then the Imperial Service had become redundant and would be eliminated.

An old Chinese proverb advises, “Beware the wrath of a gentle man.” Emperor Shao Ming seized the carte blanche authorisation being offered by the Party and issued an internal memorandum: “Hostile situations demand vigorous action. We must cease our hollow words and indirect approaches. The time has come to send a clear message.”

By Imperial Edict, the Imperial Service was restructured. The first Imperial Agents were recruited, the first Special Reclusion Units (Invisible Prisons) were built, and, crucially, a strategic alliance was formed with ALEPH and the Special Situations Section in order to analyse the Triad's criminal enterprises and cut them off from off-world safe havens.

A curtain of silence was drawn over the early stages of the Triad War. The Police Organised Crime Department started losing track of Triad leaders and lieutenants. Thousands of low-level members were simply never seen again. The Imperial Service was wielding Orwellian powers to track them down and eliminate them (either through secret arrest or summary execution). Journalists making inquiries found them turned aside.

Despite the full weight of the Empire being brought to bear, the Triads didn't simply surrender. The war boiled out onto the streets of the Three Nations. There were assassinations and shoot-outs. People were caught in the crossfire.

The resolution of the Triad War, however, was as quiet as its beginning. In a show of realpolitik, the new bossmen realised the true goal of the Emperor: It had never been to eliminate the Triads entirely. Such a thing would be impossible, for the Triads were entwined into the very fabric of Yu Jing society. He simply wanted them to resume the invisible – and tolerable – presence they had once possessed. One by one, the Triad societies swore oaths to the Emperor and vanished back into the underworld.

In addition to opening Yu Jing to ALEPH and breaking the pride of the Triads, the Triad War was also an important cornerstone in increasing the real power of the Imperial System. Even the strongest Emperors prior to Shao Ming had been kept on a leash by the Party. After Shao Ming, the Emperors had enough power to stand on their own (albeit within the strictures of Party doctrine).

## THE THIRD NATION

To the surprise of many, it was Haqqislam which became the third interstellar nation.

In the destabilised Middle East, Haqqislam's khaniqahs – social service and educational centres – had expanded in scope until they were providing a network of essential social services. They were the foundation on which Haqqislam had established itself as a stateless nation.

In time, however, it became clear that this state of affairs could not continue indefinitely: Haqqislam needed a land to call its own, and there was no space for them on Earth. Instead of turning to war in order to carve out a place for themselves, however, Haqqislam turned to the stars. Following a mixture of science and prophecy, they used the wealth of their religion to purchase or hire the mothballed remnants of NASA and began a search for a new homeworld.

They were not immediately successful, but eventually a stable wormhole was located and the Nailah probe was sent through. On the far side they found Bourak, which was named after the mystical creature which had transported the Prophets to Heaven.

## CONCILIUM

In the wake of the Concilium Convention, O-12 launched Project Odissea. The goal of the project was to find a location beyond Earth on which O-12 could establish their headquarters – a truly neutral

location that would isolate O-12 from the corruptive legacies of Earth and embrace the new, galactic legacy of mankind.

It was the height of the Second Great Space Race and it seemed as if success were assured. But while PanOceania, Yu Jing, and even Haqqislam discovered new worlds, Project Odissea dragged on for decades without success. When a suitable planet was finally discovered, it was named Concilium Prima in honour of the diplomatic treaties which had brought O-12 to such prominence a generation earlier. O-12, however, lacked the resources necessary to directly develop a full-scale colony.

The G-3 interstellar nations all competed fiercely to get a toehold on the new world, further delaying the colonisation effort. Eventually a compromise was struck in which Haqqislam withdrew from the dispute (in exchange for diplomatic concessions granted to its caravanserai across the Human Sphere), and the Tripartite Colonisation Accords would ensure that both PanOceania and Yu Jing interests were equally represented in the development of the planet under O-12 control.

Thirteen years after its initial discovery, O-12 finally moved its central bureaucracy to Concilium Prima. The heart of humanity had finally left Mother Earth.

## RISE OF THE NOMADS (1 NC)

The transition of humanity into an interstellar species also saw the emergence of robust counterculture movements embracing the newfound liberties made possible by the rapid advance of technology and space travel. Of these, two were most significant.

First, a collective of anti-establishment groups which considered themselves oppressed by ALEPH issued the 1st Radical Bakunin Manifesto (named after the influential anarchist Mikhail Bakunin). Following the precepts of the Manifesto, they bought a military surplus transport, loaded it to the brim with habitation modules, and paid for the entire enterprise by selling space to a variety of spherewide cults and political movements that were being harassed by various authorities.

The movement captured a seething zeitgeist of resentment and their anarchist shipbuilding project bloomed to truly mammoth proportions. They called the bulging monstrosity a Mothership and they named it the Bakunin. Then they issued the 2nd Radical Bakunin Manifesto, which launched the Legal Entity Establishment Campaign and declared them to be an extra-national territory subject to the laws of no nation.

The other was Tunguska. A group of crooked investors specialising in tax exploitation, ghost companies, leveraged buyouts, the transfer of extra-official goods to licit soil, and other forms of money laundering created a Mothership of their own to serve as a financial safe harbour. Their need was great: with the aid of ALEPH – which was rapidly burrowing into every computer system and transaction – the governments of the Human Sphere were cracking down on their activities.

All of this might have been largely irrelevant (just another criminal enterprise), except that the need to keep their financial escapades free from ALEPH's ever-grasping CLAWs caused them to ally with several groups of cryptohackers (including the Zone of Truth and the mythical Deep Divers). The cryptohackers transformed the ideological core of the Tunguska project and drastically expanded its scope by

creating a mobile, independent, data crypt – the largest ever built. Their goal was nothing less than to solve the underlying faults in the socio-economic systems of the Sphere by freeing them from the whims of the State and the stifling control of ALEPH.

## NOMAD NATION (6 NC)

Even as Bakunin and Tunguska grew, however, ALEPH was using a variety of guises – cracking down on rogue AIs, eliminating illegal nanotechnology, responding to national security threats – to put relentless pressure on the plethora of extra-national entities which had taken advantage of the limitless infinities of space to carve out independent fiefdoms for themselves free from State (and AI) control.

The leaders of Tunguska proposed a third way: Instead of facing a choice between destruction or kowtowing to ALEPH, a strong coalition could petition O-12 to recognise them as a legitimate nation state, with all the protections that came with it.

Initial scepticism at Tunguska's proposal was swept away when Corregidor enthusiastically endorsed it. The venerable Mothership of hardened meteor heads brought much-needed industrial weight to the coalition, and they had political and corporate connections forged from a century of "building the Human Sphere".

It was more difficult to convince the Bakunin to come onboard, but no less important. The cryptohackers of the Tunguska knew how to protect data, but the techno-anarchists of Bakunin knew how to use it. They were the ones who coined the name "Nomad Nation", and they seized the attention of the Human Sphere when the 4th Radical Bakunin Manifesto – signed by the Praxis Revolutionary Intervention Committee – was broadcast throughout Maya in the form of an instant message virus.

The vigorous campaign which followed was one-part ruthless, backroom political dealing and one-part grassroots guerrilla meme-slugging. But in the end they were not only recognised by O-12 as an independent nation but, with the unexpected aid of Haqqislam, they were placed on the G-4 council (on the basis that the three Motherships constituted a legitimate interstellar power).

## EQUILIBRIUM PHASE

The Equilibrium Phase of the Nomad Nation dates from the founding of Bakunin in 1 NC.

The first half of the Equilibrium Phase was characterised by the vicious conflicts which erupted within the Mothership as the number of habitation units rapidly rose, creating unpredictable, multidimensional ideological conflicts. The 1st Radical Manifesto had triumphed the "manifold heterogeneity" of the Bakunin ideal, but the reality proved more problematic.

A resolution was reached, referred to as the Simple Law, which banned radical behaviour in the ship's common areas: Each ideological faction could do whatever they wanted within their own habitation units, but a code of "mundane conduct" would be honoured in those spaces (both physical and digital) where those ideologies were forced to interface with each other.

Despite the law's simplicity, conflicts continued to erupt. After a disastrous flash mob conflict degenerated into a common riot which ended in a hull breach that killed nearly one hundred people, the leaders of Bakunin – in order to "seek equilibrium" – founded the Moderator Corps to enforce the Simple Law and govern the ideological interfaces of the Bakunin.

The second half of the Equilibrium Phase is generally understood to date from either the Mothership's decision to join Tunguska's political alliance or from the first announcement of their identity as the Nomad Nation. Bakunin's struggles continued (with harsh punishments being meted out by the Moderators and the expulsion of several groups), but the Nomad Nation as a whole recognise the Equilibrium Phase as being a time of slow cultural cohesion between the three Motherships.

It was during the latter end of the Equilibrium Phase that Arachne was first created. Originally meant as a common, secure data network for the three Motherships, the Nomads quickly realised the opportunity for it to be something more. Using their commercial contacts and the new powers of diplomatic immunity granted to them by O-12, they began spreading Arachne nodes throughout the Human Sphere, creating a completely alternative datasphere immune to ALEPH's interference.

## VIOLENT INTERMISSION (10 NC)

It is likely that the proliferation of Arachne was a primary instigator of the Violent Intermission. Although no "valid proof" ever substantiated ALEPH's direct involvement, and despite the alternative theory promulgated by ALEPH-aligned agents that it was the action of disaffected elements alienated by the tyrannical actions of the Moderator Corps, no Nomad has any doubt about the truth of what happened: During the tenth anniversary celebration of the founding of Bakunin, ALEPH infiltrated S.S.S. commandos onto the Mothership with the goal of crippling the Nomad Nation.

Disparate Bakunian militia forces managed to repel the assault, but not before multiple Praxis modules were destroyed and thousands of Bakunians were killed.

## PHANTOM CONFLICT (14 NC)

In the wake of the Violent Intermission, the Nomad Nation enjoyed a peaceful lull of sorts, although they suspected it wouldn't last for long. The Bakunian militias, brought together by the Violent Intermission, formalised their relationship into the Nomad Military Force (NMF) and began coordinating with the other Motherships to assure mutual defence.

The neophyte NMF was still being put through its paces when the first skirmishes of the Phantom Conflict broke out. The failure of the Violent Intermission had convinced ALEPH that the threat of the Nomad Nation could only be eliminated by all-out assault, but rather than formally declared hostility, Yu Jing and PanOceania launched a secret, undercover war.

The Nomads, of course, were a mobile and disparate nation. They were spread across the Human Sphere, and the major powers pursued them wherever they went (with a particular focus on major Arachne nodes in an effort to disrupt the Nomad datasphere). Although the Phantom Conflict was never officially acknowledged, it boiled away just beneath the surface on every planet and in every system of the Human Sphere.

The Phantom Conflict was a very real threat to the existence of the Nomad Nation. They had no hope of winning a full-scale war, and the military leaders of the NMF realised that the only possible solution was to relentlessly escalate the scale and severity of the conflict: PanOceania and Yu Jing, unwilling to declare open warfare, stepped down in an impasse which ultimately bolstered the Nomad Nation's legitimacy as an interstellar power.

## CRISIS DECADE (21 NC)

The Nomads were not the only extra-national newcomers to wormhole diving. A number of the larger hypercorps funded small exploration corps to seek out exotic resources in alien solar systems. It was expensive work, but – as neomaterials and a vast wealth of bio-resources had already amply demonstrated – the rewards that could be reaped were equally large.

It was a corporate probe which first discovered the Human Edge system in 10 NC. It contained no human-habitable worlds (and therefore held little initial importance for the colonial interests of PanOceania or Yu Jing), but its shattered planetary accretion disc was overflowing with asteroids rich in resources. The wormholes in the system were also discovered to be in a particularly advantageous alignment, effectively trimming weeks off of a key trade route. This meant that a Circular was scheduled to pass through the system, making transportation into and out of Human Edge incredibly cheap.

### HUMAN EDGE CORPORATE CRISES

Hypercorps and megacorps from PanOceania, Yu Jing, Haqqislam, and a multitude of minor nations flooded in, eager to exploit the virgin territory. Dozens of orbitals became hundreds. Claimjumping and piracy grew common. The corps called in mercenaries to protect their interests. The mercenary forces grew, clashing with both each other and the pirates. The major powers became involved, using covert military teams to further the interests of their favoured corporations.

Many predicted that the Corporate Crises would escalate into full-scale war, but they never did. Instead, they made “crisis” the watchword of the decade – complex conflicts that confusingly mixed corporate and national interests into a potent mix of brushfire militarism, mercenary actions, and politionele acties.

### INNER SOL CRISES

The long-suffering Negotiation Phase of the Solar System Inner Area Free Trade Accords proved to be a slow-burning powder keg which directly or indirectly triggered the cascading Inner Sol Crises when the various major powers involved began taking what were referred to as “coercive actions”. (The ironic use of the term “negotiation phase” to refer to intelligence operations and special ops missions dates to this time period.)

Perhaps the most significant of the Inner Sol Crises were the Lunar Colony Revolts. These were the last gasp of the Dome Cities which had been bypassed and rendered obsolete by modern transportation technology, and the damage wrought by the conflicts only served to seal their fate.

### JOVIAN CRISES

Further out in the Sol system, the Jovian Crises were a struggle for industrial primacy, with various corporate interests serving as a proxy for Yu Jing’s desire to dislodge PanOceania’s influence over Jupiter and its moons.

## DISCOVERY OF PARADISO (29 NC)

The Crisis Decade came to a close with the discovery of Paradiso in 29 NC. The cynical, but probably accurate, assessment is that the

fractious conflicts which had previously been scattered across the galaxy instead became solely focused on the new colonial prize.

PanOceania was once again responsible for the discovery but, as with Svalarheima (and despite PanOceania’s best efforts to keep the planet’s location classified), Yu Jing soon arrived with their own colonisation ships. Unlike Svalarheima, however, Paradiso was the best colonial prospect since Acontecimento. That meant the stakes were higher and over the next decade tensions in the Paradiso system slowly ratcheted up. Although open warfare had not yet broken out, it will perhaps never be known how much blood was shed beneath the jungle canopy during the first decade of colonisation.

Ironically, the quiet conflict between PanOceania and Yu Jing was an opportunity for Haqqislam. As a “neutral” party they were able to lay claim to several equatorial regions in the name of building an uncontested space elevator (which also expanded the reach of their mercantile empire).

## ROAD TO THE NEOCOLONIAL WARS

Tensions in the Paradiso system were growing, but the first flares of violence were found elsewhere.

### BLIZZARD SKIRMISHES (35 NC)

Occurring mostly along the borders of Huangdi (the province Yu Jing claimed on Svalarheima), with the exception of a few minor naval engagements and the significant Submarine War in 39 NC, the Blizzard Skirmishes were a prelude of the wars to come. Collectively, their outcome had little impact on the political borders of the planet, but the propaganda teams of both nations painted the major incidents as nationalist triumphs.

### HELOT REBELLION (40 NC)

In 40 NC, there was a major uprising of the native Helot population on Varuna. Minor uprisings had occurred before, but this rapidly proved to be something different: a coordinated, global organisation calling itself Libertos claimed credit for the attacks. Although the PanOceanian Military Complex was able to quickly quash the Rebellion, the Hexahedron discovered that Yu Jing had been secretly funding and supporting the Helot terrorist group.

## NEOCOLONIAL WARS (42 NC)

A rapid intervention by O-12 on Varuna managed to avert immediate war, but it was only a temporary delay. The sabres were rattling and both PanOceania and Yu Jing, frustrated and bellicose, were merely waiting for a clear-cut casus belli.

On April 3rd, 42 NC, the PanOceanian cargo ship Wink of the Rohini was destroyed above Svalarheima. Despite protestations of innocence, PanOceania blamed the StateEmpire Armada. It was an act of war and would be answered in kind.

### INITIAL STAGE (FIRST NEOCOLONIAL WAR)

The war erupted simultaneously on several fronts. Although the First NeoColonial War was largely restricted to Svalarheima, Paradiso

(which became known as the “Meat Grinder”), and Human Edge, theatres of operation were spread out across entire star systems.

It was the first total war of the interstellar era. Humanity had never seen anything like it before, and thanks to Maya images and experiences from the front lines it could often be viewed in real time (particularly when civilian population centres were involved). Public opposition to the conflict swelled, and O-12 was able to capitalise upon it to force PanOceania and Yu Jing to agree to a ceasefire in the neutral city of Accra.

## CENTRAL STAGE (SECOND NEOCOLONIAL WAR)

But the ceasefire only lasted ten months. PanOceania discovered that Yu Jing was continuing to supply the Libertos terrorists on Varuna with weapons and gear, a direct violation of the Accra Truce. O-12’s diplomatic teams might have been able to resolve the situation except for the Libertos bombing of a Tidal BioResearch facility. One hundred and eight people died, half of them Helots (Libertos condemning them as collaborators), inflaming PanOceania’s citizenry and abruptly swinging popular opinion in favour of the war.

In the beginning, however, the Central Stage of the NeoColonial Wars proved a struggle for PanOceania. During the Initial Stage, Yu Jing’s old military paradigm of fielding massive quantities of barely trained infantry soldiers were exposed as inadequate for the realities of modern warfare. Tseng Huan, their Minister of Defence, authorised an aggressive overhaul of their military paradigm, investing heavily in the development of servo-powered armours. The results were the Invincibles – flexible, mobile, and well-protected troops which amply demonstrated their effectiveness during the Shé (Snake) Offensive.

Yu Jing simultaneously used their superior naval power to force the war to the Sol, Varuna, and Acontecimento systems. PanOceania was reeling. The war had been unexpectedly carried to their homeworlds and there were some who felt the Hyperpower’s dominance of the Human Sphere was coming to an end.

That’s when PanOceania launched the Mahisa Total Offensive. Hexahedron’s top-secret military research programs had perfected the Metatron transponders, allowing them to launch inter-system infowar attacks. Now they used them, launching more than three hundred simultaneous attacks on Yu Jing positions across the Human Sphere. With its civilian and military dataspheres crippled, Yu Jing was caught completely off guard, and the Total Offensive eventually culminated in bombing Yutang itself. This was the beginning of total quantronic war, and it forced Yu Jing to sign the Peace of Río Negro.

## TERMINAL STAGE (FINAL NEOCOLONIAL WAR)

A new conflict was sparked when a PanOceanian research team discovered a pair of pre-human ruins on Paradiso. At the behest of the other G-4 nations, O-12 attempted to arrange an international group to study them, but PanOceania refused their overtures and claimed sole ownership of the site (dubbed ZuluPoint). Yu Jing launched an assault on the site in an effort to claim it, triggering the bloodiest (and last) stage of the NeoColonial Wars. Several factors contributed to bring an end to the slaughter: A Haqqislamite-Nomad alliance formed within O-12 to stage a direct intervention. The Yu Jing Emperor died unexpectedly. In response to social and media pressure, key PanOceanian lobbies withdrew their support. The NeoColonial Wars ended with the Peace of Concilium. The final,

negotiated balance of power closely resembled the pre-war situation, with the exception that the area around the ZuluPoint ruins became an O-12 protectorate known as the NiemandZone. PanOceania and Yu Jing both agreed to share colonisation of Paradiso, and their naval presence in the system was severely limited to ensure the peace.

## RETURN TO DAWN (52 NC)

One year after the Peace of Concilium, the PanOceanian scout ship POS Nirriti jumped through a previously unexplored wormhole and found itself in the long-lost Ariadna system. And much to the surprise of the entire Human Sphere, the original colonists on the planet Dawn had not died out. Overcoming tremendous odds, in fact, they had conquered a large swath of the planet.

## ARIADNAN COMMERCIAL CONFLICTS (53 NC)

Two months after the rediscovery of Ariadna, the Yu Jing military ship Lei Feng arrived in the system to “secure the interests of the StateEmpire and to ensure PanOceanian compliance with international law”. Fearing the outbreak of another war, Haqqislam and the Nomad Nation moved quickly to have O-12 declare the Ariadnan government a major power.

The action stalled out for several months, however, until the StateEmpire proposed the Yu Jing Compromise: The Ariadnans would be declared a major power, but they would only be able to claim ownership over the portion of the planet which they actually controlled. The Ariadnans considered this a travesty, but they literally had no say in the matter.

Unfortunately, even with Ariadna added to the new G-5, the situation on Ariadna was not resolved: The Colonial Commission was almost instantly corrupt and favoured Yu Jing land claims. PanOceania continued operating under the legal pretense that the planet actually belonged to the native Antipodes. Haqqislam and the Nomads bought deeds from the Ariadnan government. All of these claims conflicted with each other, and megacorps with conflicting leases or purchases began fighting by proxy: Mercenaries would be hired by the corporations, the Ariadnan government would attempt to disarm the mercenaries, and one of the other G-5 nations would use the confrontation as a pretext (or would be forced by their corporate interests) to intervene.

After half a decade of fighting, Bureau Aegis dispatched troops to lock down the situation. O-12 took possession of the border areas originally covered by the Yu Jing Compromise, establishing an Exclusion Zone around the Ariadnan sovereignties. The economic and logistic damage wrought on Ariadna, however, left the local government in a weakened position from which they have never fully recovered.

## LOCAL WARS

After the end of the Ariadnan Commercial Conflicts, there were several years in which the great powers were each primarily dealing with small, localised conflicts. These included the Outer Mercantile Crisis between PanOceania and Haqqislam, the Union Revolts of the Jupiter-Pluto Circuit, and the Fourth Antipode Offensive on Ariadna. This, however, was merely the calm before the storm.

# INVASION

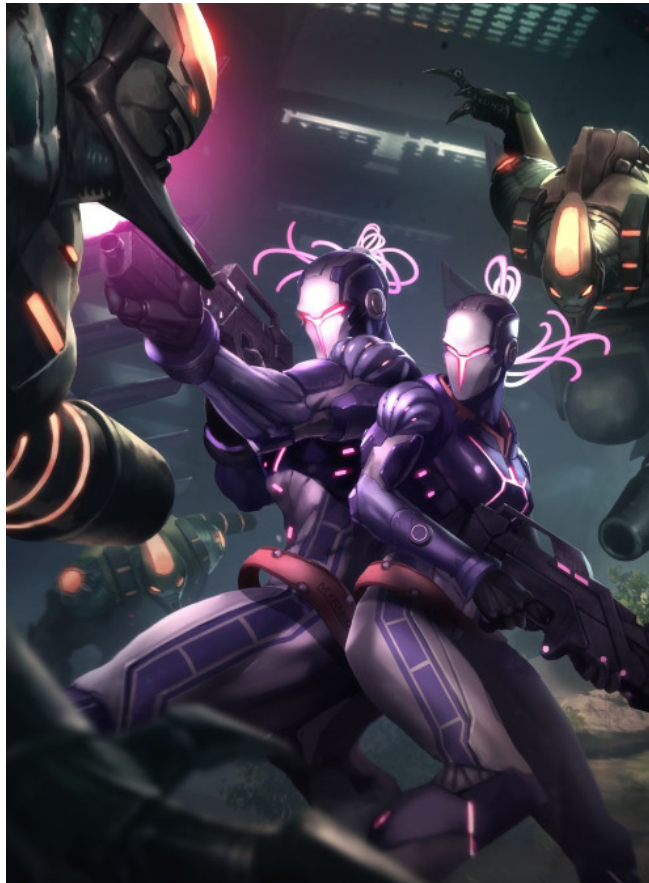
At the height of the Terminal Stage of the NeoColonial Wars, PanOceania abruptly lost all contact with the ZuluPoint Research Centre. The security team sent to investigate discovered the staff dead and the lab almost totally destroyed. PanOceanian High Command attributed the incident to a Yǎnjīng intelligence operation, although even after the war Yu Jing denied all involvement.

At roughly the same time that the ZuluPoint Research Centre was being destroyed, several ships throughout the Paradiso system detected a strange stellar phenomena moving at astounding speeds.

Only years later, and with the benefit of hindsight, did anyone in the Human Sphere piece together what had happened: The Ur-Probe, the only technological alien artefact found at ZuluPoint, had somehow been activated by the research team. Its advanced nanotechnology had infected the ZRC's systems and used them to create a drone rigged with an impulsion engine and a trans-system emitter. The drone had then travelled to the wormhole that the Ur-Probe had originally used to enter Paradiso and sent a signal back to its master: the Evolved Intelligence and its Combined Army.

## FIRST PARADISO OFFENSIVE (60 NC)

The Combined Army arrived in the Paradiso system through a previously unknown wormhole. The POS Terpsichore, POS Olhada do Bom Jesus, and the Yu Jing frigate Long Qi were obliterated as soon as they attempted to greet the unidentified fleet, and the small naval presence in the system allowed by the Peace of Concilium could do nothing as the invaders landed at ZuluPoint and established a beachhead.



Humanity was caught completely off guard. All of their defensive efforts were focused on guarding against each other, leaving them unprepared for an existential threat and incapable of coordinating

their actions. Things might have gone much worse if not for the heroic actions of the Paradiso Control Force. The PCF was the PanOceanian planetary army and, by virtue of where the aliens had staged their invasion, they were on the front lines. Although they were ill-equipped to deal with the fearsome Morat legions, they fought hard and distinguished themselves with an honour and tenacity that echoed across human space.

When the end came for the short-lived ZuluPoint Campaign, it came fast and hard. The exhausted PCF, already buckling and running out of room for their strategic retreats, suddenly collapsed into complete chaos. Only later was it discovered that the PCF had become the first victims of the sinister, shapeshifting Shasvastii. They had infiltrated the PCF and systematically dismantled it from the inside.

The PCF was functionally extinct, but they'd bought precious weeks of time during which millions of civilians were evacuated from threatened areas and the reeling Human Sphere had rallied its forces. The First Paradiso Offensive ground on, with the conflict also spreading to the Septentria Continent.

## SECOND PARADISO OFFENSIVE (64 NC)

The end of the First Paradiso Offensive wasn't the result of the ground battle, however. Instead, it was the naval forces of humanity, pouring in through the wormholes leading to the rest of the Sphere, which won decisive victories – first at the Second Battle of the Outer Orbit and then again in the Acheron Attrition – to establish the Paradiso Blockades which cut off Combined Army reinforcements.

Once the Blockades were raised, the Combined Army forces on Paradiso pulled back from their hyper-aggressive campaign and settled into a quiescent period during which they reinforced the gains they had made during the First Offensive.

Paradiso Coordinated Command realised, of course, that this would only be a temporary respite. Despite their best efforts to prepare, however, they nevertheless struggled to contain the Combined Army when it boiled out of its strongholds eighteen months later. Multiple cities fell across the Norstria and Septentria Fronts before their advances could be slowed.

## COMING OF THE TOHAA

On August 9th, 66 NC, a massive spaceship of clearly alien design docked with the EveningStar Orbital, the Paradiso headquarters of O-12. It was impossible to hide. Aurelia Cardoso, a freelance journalist with the Maya investigative aggregate Eye on the Sky, was the first to break the story, but soon the orbital space around the EveningStar was swarming with reporters while others focused powerful telescopic lenses skywards from Damburg and Horselberg.

Panic began to spread as rumours flew that O-12 was negotiating a surrender with the Combined Army. All the worst horror stories of how badly things were going on the front began to circulate anew. For a long, horrible moment a terrible reality began to be accepted as the truth: Humanity had lost the war.

Ninety minutes later, O-12's Paradiso High Commissioner Natalia Hesse issued a public address. The alien vessel was not from the Combined Army. It belonged to the Tohaa Trinomial. They, too, were at war with the Evolved Intelligence. Humanity had just gained a powerful ally. "This is a new time," Commissioner Hesse announced. "Full of opportunities."

## PARADISO AFFAIRS (65 NC)

In a series of events referred to as the Paradiso Affairs, O-12 came into possession of an alien device known as the "Black Box". Efforts to fully decrypt and interpret the contents of the Black Box continue even today, but among the earliest information obtained from the Box was the knowledge that there was another race at war with the EI, a race named the Tohaa. The Black Box also yielded coordinates leading to a new wormhole in the Paradiso system which apparently led to star systems controlled by the Tohaa. This information was turned over to the O-12 Öberhaus and, following a series of tense, secret debates, the Öberhaus ultimately decided that, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Or, as Senator Eduardo Baez infamously declared as the vote was called, "In the darkness, even the unknown light is welcome." Humanity needed an ally.

Construction began almost immediately on the facilities required to open a portal through the wormhole. The portal, now codenamed Daedalus, was opened. A message probe was sent. The Tohaa responded.

## TOHAA CONTACT TREATY (66 NC)

After three weeks of intense negotiation on the EveningStar Orbital, the Tohaa Contact Treaty was signed on August 30th, 66 NC. This was only the beginning, with the Alliance Summit which would hash out the exact operational parameters and responsibilities of the agreement scheduled to last for at least several more weeks.

A sneak attack on the EveningStar by Combined Army forces, however, destroyed the orbital before the Summit could be completed. Despite the catastrophe, the cowardly attack only stiffened the resolve of the Tohaa, and humanity's new allies poured onto the battlefields of Paradiso. It was the end of the Second Offensive.

## TODAY (67 NC)

The battlefield on Paradiso has stabilised, but the Combined Army still controls vast swaths of territory and the Acheron Blockade is constantly tested. There is no peace to be found here, and analysts are certain that this is merely the prelude to an inevitable Third Offensive.

Elsewhere, while the Paradiso Offensives have created an apparent calm throughout the Human Sphere, tensions are arguably higher than they have ever been. Secret operations, fast missions, infiltrations, exfiltrations, and special actions have proliferated. The G-5 nations inflict murder, theft, aggressive espionage, sabotage, and kidnappings upon each other.

In some circles, Paradiso seems far away and pales in comparison to the dangers of a Sphere in a position every bit as precarious as the days leading up to the NeoColonial Wars. And through it all, O-12 struggles to keep the peace.



Infinity can be difficult to get into. Unlike some other wargames, the rules are free, but the lore is very inaccessible. "Unfortunately" though, said lore is fascinating, and new players should not be turned off by the lack of it.

This document was created to help encourage and guide new players to the worlds of Infinity. Most want to know why their little toy soldiers are making "pew-pew" at the other little toy soldiers.

This info was shamefully ripped from the magnificent Infinity RPG Core Book. Full credit to the team at Modiphius and Corvus Belli. It goes far greater into depth with lore, is much prettier, as well as giving you a full RPG to play, or simply inspirations for games or campaigns. Help support Infinity by purchasing the pdf from:

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/231540/Infinity-Infinity-RPG-Core-Book>

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Infinity is a fantastic game so I distribute this with the intent to grow the hobby, and hopefully give Corvus Belli the success they deserve.