

# Traveller

## The Sky Aflame



**R. E. B. Tongue**

# Introduction

Two great powers face off across a great void. In between, as throughout history, the smaller states are used as puppets to fight wars that the superpowers cannot. In Exonidas Subsector, at the fringe of civilized space, the greatest world has torn itself asunder in atomic flame. An open universe, an open world. Filled with opportunities for adventure and excitement. Filled with chances for profit, and glory. Filled with chances for death, and slaughter.

This campaign is to be run using GRIP, by Richard Tongue ([methuslah@ntlworld.com](mailto:methuslah@ntlworld.com)). If there is a theme, it is this – anything goes. Characters will be rolled up randomly using the Advanced Character Generation System from *Mercenary*, *High Guard*, *Merchants & Merchandise* and *Scouts & Assassins*, the latter two from Paranoia Press. 'Rogue' and 'Police' advanced generation systems are also available on request. Although default characters will come from the Federation, characters from the subsector are also perfectly appropriate. The characters will start out on the highport of Exonidas Station, with whatever equipment and/or ships they have obtained during character creation. Where things go next...is up to you...



# Long, Long Ago

*“There are those who believe that life here, began out there. Far across the universe, with tribes of humans – who may have been the forefathers of Egyptians, or the Toltecs, or the Mayans. That they may have been the architects of the Great Pyramids, of the lost civilizations of Lemuria, or Atlantis. Some believe that there may yet be brothers of man, who even now fight to survive...somewhere across the heavens...”*

The origins of humanity are shrouded in ancient mystery. Despite the efforts of many archaeologists, no common homeworld has been found – and within the Atlantean Federation alone, there are as many as a dozen possible candidates. Theories range from an ancient race which seeded a similar type of life on several worlds, to a diaspora from an ancient homeworld tens of thousands of years ago. The confusion of the early waves of interstellar colonization makes any history difficult to describe. It is known that several waves of ships were dispatched from at least five focal points, and possibly more. As these were sublight, it took centuries for these ships to reach their destination – long enough for the civilizations which dispatched them to rise and fall.

The Jump Drive changed all of that. Suddenly the stars opened up, and a great land rush took place over the following decades, a rush which culminated in a long series of wars, lasting many centuries. Finally, unification was attained, though at a cost – expansion into outer regions slowed to a crawl.

The destruction of the Dark Century took centuries to repair. Whole worlds had been rendered uninhabitable, and terraforming techniques were learned to repair shattered biospheres, and resettle scattered populations. First contact with alien races came again during the war – and it is fortunate for humanity that no alien race with spaceflight was contacted at this time. Indeed, within the borders of the Federation, no alien race with interstellar capability has ever been contacted. What little is known of the internal workings of the Lemurian Empire corresponds with this, though at least half a dozen races have since been identified with such technology beyond the Twin Powers.

Contact with another Great Power was inevitable. The Lemurian Empire had grown as the Atlantean Federation had grown, though with less bloodshed. A

misjumping Free Trader was the first herald from the Empire – and true to form, the first contact took the form of a ship battle.

Although the Twin Powers coexisted for a short time, both quickly began expanding into the twenty parsecs separating them. The Federation sold huge tracts of land to licensed companies, with powers to bring civilization to the Rim through the familiar artifice of trade. The Empire simply sent its second sons, equipped with second-line naval units, to conquer. War was inevitable.

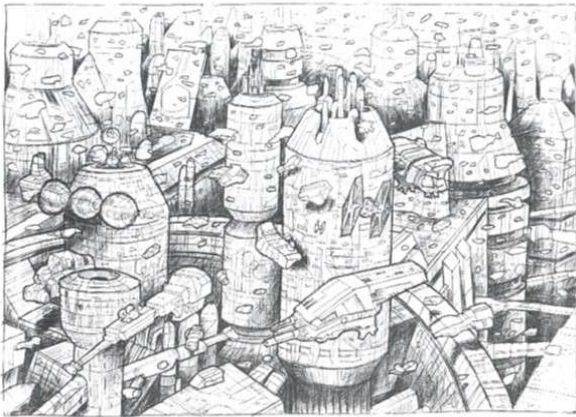
It lasted for nine, long years. The battle-lines moved far and wide, though never penetrating into the Core systems of either power. The Empire had a larger fleet, and a stabler economy – the Federation had a long history of war and military experience. The Imperial fleet was based around huge battleships, dreadnoughts of 30,000 tons or more, each with the firepower of a dozen Federation cruisers. The Federation had destroyers, hunting in packs, and maintained greater strategic flexibility.

But neither side won the war. The economies of both sides were strained to the limit, and beyond. As other borders were stripped of ships, raiders began to harry other frontiers. After nine years, an Armistice was signed -but nothing had been settled. Both powers rearmed, trained, and prepared for the next war.

The Armistice was a year ago. The Austerity may last another decade yet. Millions of men, released from military services unable to afford them, stream out into the far reaches of space. Ships mass-produced at the height of the war, scouts and light transports, and being sold off at cut-prices to anyone that will buy them. For the first time in a millenium, the frontier is opening up again – and no-one can say just what might be found out there.

# The Atlantean Federation

The Atlantean Federation has its origins more than a millenia ago, in the Dark Century of almost total war in the sector where the Federation now resides. The Treaty of Atlantis which founded the Federation laid down a tricameral elected system of government; an Executive, Legislature and Judiciary all directly elected by the citizens of the Federation. The Executive is elected on straight vote; Ministers for each of the eight ministries of the Federation – War, Commerce, Education, Industry, Science, Exploration & Colonization, Diplomacy and Agriculture. The Legislature consists of five representatives of each world of the Federation, elected in whichever way the world sees fit, and the Legislature elects a President from within its number, who sits a one-year term. The Judiciary is also elected, with a 'Subsector Judge' serving as a collective Supreme Court of the Federation.



Atlantis is the capital of the Federation, and has been since its foundation. The world was originally a major population center, but has become less so over time as the population spread throughout the local area. The planet has been transformed into a 'garden world', and what was originally a tendency has become a plan to reduce the population to a level which will not interfere with the planet in any major way.

The Federation has, by long tradition, broken down its primary services into five; the Marines, Army, Navy, Scouts and Merchant Service. The Army has never been a combined service, but is organized on a

planetary level depending on the technology and location of the world. More of a planetary militia, there is a regrettable tendency for the Army to be treated as an 'inferior service', in terms of recruitment, enlistment, and public attitude.

The Federation Navy is, and always has been, the glamorous service. It is still organized in nine fleets, the forces of the nine polities which originally founded the Federation. Each fleet has one Command Cruiser, a ship dedicated to the control of a larger force, but the major part of each fleet consists of 400 or 1000-ton light or heavy destroyers, hunting in packs in time of war. The Federation chose not to rely on larger spacecraft, but in the aftermath of the Federation-Empire War is reconsidering this policy.

The Federation Marine Corps has the longest, and oldest tradition, with a history dating back for several millenia. The elite ground forces of the nine founder states were all amalgamated into the service, but it rapidly became apparent that their original role would not have so major a purpose. The force changed its role, and now serves as a garrison force for ships and ground stations, and as a ceremonial service – though considerable action has been seen during the recent war. There are some fleet vessels run by Marine forces, instead of the Navy; a dual function that has caused problems in the past.

The Scout service has recently seen a major revival. In the early days of the Federation, the Scout Service acted as pioneers and explorers, but as the desire to expand died, the force faltered in strength. It found a new role as an intelligence-gathering organization, but has recently been forced to revert more to its original role – leading to agents trained for espionage now getting their feet dirty on uncharted alien worlds.

The Merchant Service is somewhat different. The Federation trains these personnel, which are then allowed to find their own berths where they can. There are several major shipping lines, but their operations concentrated on those areas untouched by the war. In other areas of space, the free traders are the only means of commerce between the worlds.

# The Lemurian Empire and Other Powers

## The Lemurian Empire

The Lemurian Empire is a state at least as powerful as the Atlantean Federation, but has a far more stable history. Instead of the chaotic development of the Federation, the Empire was founded by one world under a noble family. They were careful to share out power gradually, and keep the Empire flexible. First Contact was the only time of major fear; but this was resolved quickly.

The positive side – an Empire which evolved patiently and carefully, taking almost as long as the Atlantean Federation but without the hostile. On the debit side, the Empire was not ready for an encounter with an enemy on its own scale. The Imperial Grand Fleet was designed more to impress than for actual combat, based around twelve titanic dreadnoughts – each capable of inflicting major damage to the enemy, but lacking tactical flexibility of a smaller fleet. This combined with the lack of experience of the Navy meant that the Federation was the early victor in the war, but this did not last. The Grand Fleet learned to compensate for its disadvantages, and began to break up into smaller, more mobile units, as well as designing smaller craft. The next war is certain to be more deadly than the last.

## The Exonidas Confederation

The Confederation was once a force for peace and order in the subsector, but of late this has changed. In its original form, the Confederation was essentially a series of trade and mutual defence treaties, tied together by the Exonidas Navy. In effect, it was a pocket empire ruled from Horltheur, though the benefits of membership were manifold.

Two months ago, however, Horltheur collapsed into internal dispute, which culminated in a nuclear war. Five billion died instantly, billions more over the next days. Half of the planet was devastated. The Confederation can do little to aid the capital world, and the Exonidas Navy is understandably more concerned with matters at home. Delegates from Peponi, Klutis and Fenris are now meeting to decide what the next step might be.

## The Realm

The Realm has often seemed to be a comic government, the butt of jokes over the years; but on the quiet has formed an adequate interstellar polity. The Realm is ruled by a Grand Duke, but he only has direct control over his own world. The other worlds have sworn fealty to the Grand Duke, but this only translates to the provision of troops where needed, as well as a free trade pact. Originally arising in the chaos of the Cathadonian Civil War, the state still follows the Old Faith of Cathadonia, long after it has left that world.

## The Sangre Development Company

Fifteen years ago, the Sangre Development Company were given the charter to develop the Exonidas Subsector, though with the mandate that they could not interfere with the (Federation-supported) Exonidas Confederation. The Company based themselves on Sangre, not on the world itself but on its moon, and began the process of economic takeover. The slow, steady development worked until the war began, and the Federation withdrew both economic support and military protection. As a result, the Company pulled back to the Sangre Cluster, and has since taken on more of the aspects of a government, imposing trade tariffs to pay for the defence of its trade routes. Unsurprisingly, some of the worlds are not content with this relationship, especially since the end of the war – there is a growing terrorist movement, based on Delmark and Tyree.

## The Caliphate of Cathadonia

The Caliphate of Cathadonia is an Empire which has had its day. The state's origins lie in a religious sect which took control of Cathadonia, and inspired a 'crusade' to claim the stars. At its height, five centuries ago, the Caliphate ruled twenty systems in this and the adjacent subsector – but a religious war ended that Golden Age. Although the ruler of the Caliphate still calls himself the 'Sun Lord', there are no remaining religious aspects of the government, which now encompasses only two systems. The state is still respected in the cluster, however, and echoes of the past are visible as far away as Delmark.

# Strangers in the Sky

This setting is designed to permit great freedom in the introduction of alien races. The majority of aliens, as in the Imperium, have not developed jump drive, and are primarily found on their homeworlds; this is not always the case, however, and there are exceptions. There are four alien races native to the Exonidas subsector; a selection of other major Federation races are also presented.

## Major Alien Races

The **Lhasinu** are not of the Federation, and have proven to be one of the greatest thorns in its side. A lizard-like race of cold efficiency and a sense of racial superiority, they burst from beyond the Federation borders and launched an attack during the Consolidation Years. They were outnumbered, and outgunned, but still proved a difficult adversary. Nevertheless, the war was won. As was the second. The third saw the Federation move to occupy the planet, but by then it was too late – the Lhasinu had spread out too far. They are fast-breeding, and fast-building; waves periodically launch themselves at human space, destroying all in its path. Worryingly, the early signs of such a wave are building in the Exonidas Subsector.<sup>1</sup>

A race that has become widespread throughout the Federation and nearby space is the **Tiratans**, a small rodent-like species which has an impressive ability with technology – and are widely sought-after due to their ability to micromanipulate components. They were on the threshold of developing Jump drive when they were contacted by humanity; Tiratan scientists proved instrumentally in the later development of higher Jump velocities. The Tiratan homeworld has become a huge city-hive, covering most of the planet, with a population in the hundreds of billions; indeed, it is thought that there may be more Tiratan in the Federation than humans.

The long-lived **Braaden** are the historians of the Federation. Their homeworld has become a repository of knowledge, and although the majority of their race elects to remain on their homeworld, their observers roam Known Space, as far as Lemuria itself. Some rumours whisper that the Braaden are seeking the original home of humanity, perhaps in the hope of finding a weakness they might be able to exploit.

## Aliens of the Exonidas Subsector

There are four alien races known to exist in the Exonidas Subsector. Of them all, the **Web** of Arachne are perhaps the most alien – a spiderlike hive mind, covering half a continent, linking up with their gossamer webs. Although peaceful enough, and technologically advanced, they cause revulsion in many they come into contact with.

The proud **Te Sarna** of Jandort are another question entirely. Magnificent winged beasts, they have wholeheartedly adopted the feudal pattern of the Realm and become stalwart warriors. Many have already been knighted for their exploits on other worlds, and they are hurriedly developing the technologies they need to develop spaceflight – which has resulted in a world with some TL6 elements and some TL1.

The **Lonadorians** are a race cursed by evolution to take a passive role in the affairs of the galaxy – for they have evolved with no means of manipulating their environment. Best described as a cross between a shark and a frog, they have extremely fast reactions and three-dimensional perception, but the technology required to allow them to interact with the real world is expensive and dangerous.

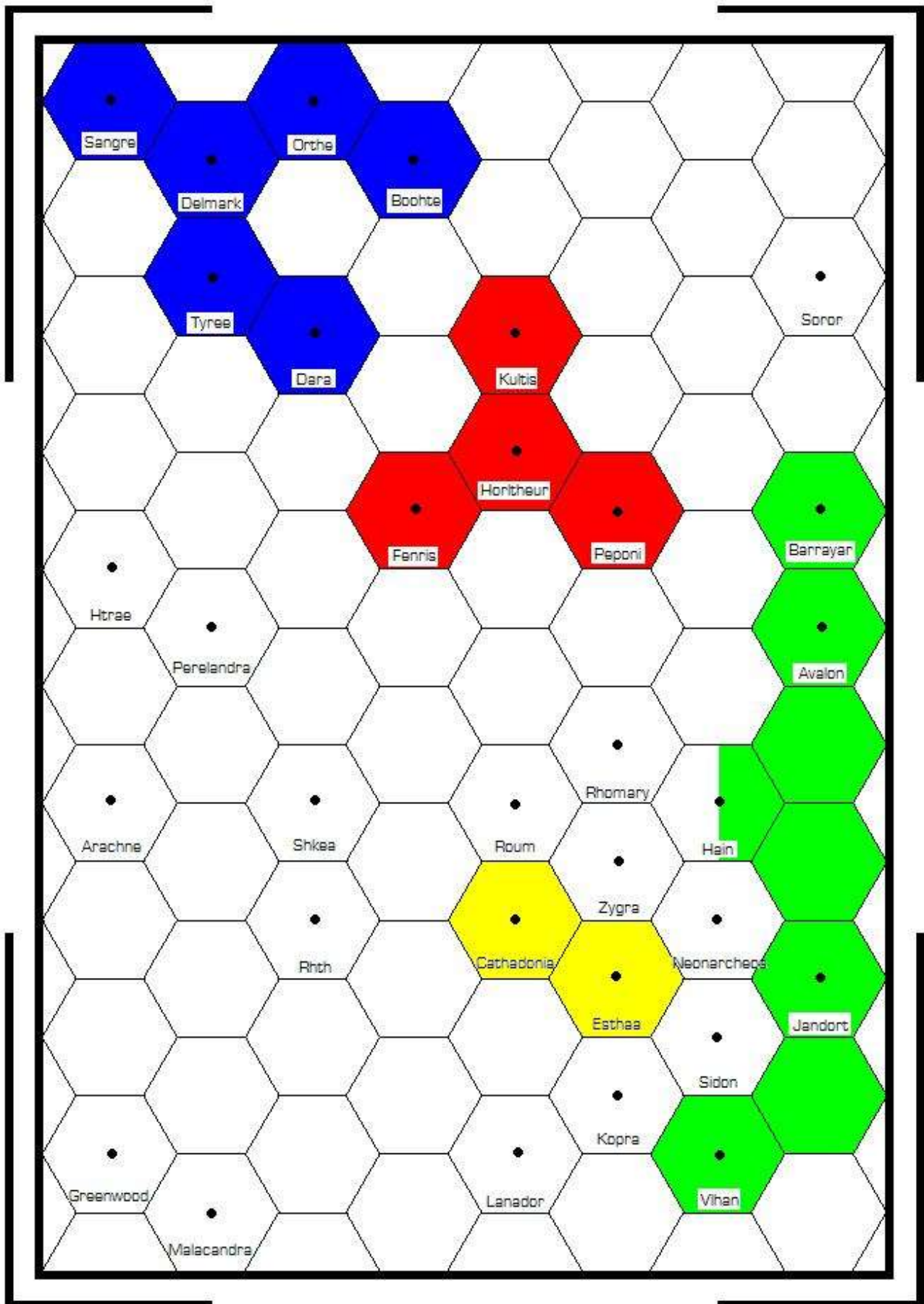
Finally are the **Wolfen** of Delmark, a primitive race being bootstrapped by a Company research team. They show some similarities to Primitive (Neanderthal) man, but with a highly intelligence quotient and better reflexes. Psionics is more widespread among these people than in common Federation society.

Finally come the **Precursors**. Those who walked among the stars and now do not. There is some evidence of their activity in this subsector – the near-identical worlds of Perelandra and Malacandra, for example, though no artefacts have yet been discovered – no clue as to their appearance, psychology, or their disappearance.

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<sup>1</sup> With thanks to Isaac Asimov – the Lhasinu are taken from 'Black Friar of the Flame'.

# Exonidas Subsector



<u>Hex</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>UPP</u>	<u>Bio</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>GG</u>	<u>Trade</u>
0101	<b>Sangre</b>	B333796-B	7	Y	Na, Po
0105	Htrae	E629000-0	8	N	
0107	Arachne	C310756-8	A	Y	Na
0110	Greenwood	C667354-9	6	N	Ni
0201	Delmark	D633766-6	A	Y	Na, Po
0202	Tyree	D331579-5	5	Y	Ni
0205	Perelandra	D416100-6	2	Y	Ni
0210	Malacandra	D416244-7	2	Y	Ni
0301	Orthe	C875110-8	3	Y	Ni
0303	Dara	X537420-3	6	N	Ni
0307	Shkea	E74658A-5	5	N	Ag, Ni
0308	Rhth	X768435-2	7	N	Ag, Ni
0401	Boohte	D3C1100-6	1	Y	Ni
0404	Fenris	D9A2455-8	3	N	Ni
0503	Kultis	X451435-0	6	Y	Ni
0504	<b>Horltheur</b>	A866978-F	9	Y	Ag
0507	Roum	C468200-9	5	Y	Ni
0508	<b>Cathadonia</b>	B6668BA-9	9	N	Ag
0510	Lanador	D441553-9	A	Y	Ni, Po
0604	Peponi	D654410-7	7	N	Ni
0606	Rhomary	X637388-0	1	N	Ni
0607	Zygra	C876543-9	6	N	Ag, Ni
0608	Esthaa	C75266A-9	9	Y	Ni, Po
0609	Kopra	E000300-9	0	N	Ni
0707	Hain	C62377C-8	1	Y	Na
0708	Neonarcheos	D241634-1	6	Y	Ni, Po
0709	Sidon	C000430-C	4	N	Ni
0710	Vlhan	D554562-3	8	N	Ag, Ni
0802	Soror	E373000-0	0	N	
0804	Barrayar	B692457-7	6	N	Ni
0805	<b>Avalon</b>	B633683-A	5	Y	Ni, Po
0808	Jandort	X778754-1	A	N	Ni

The Exonidas Subsector is divided between four powers, though none has sufficient strength to project naval force beyond their capital system on any scale. **Sangre** has undergone a recent population boom due to the introduction of advanced medical techniques from the Federation; this has failed to correspond with industrial development, however, and the planet is now in a depression. **Horltheur** suffered a total nuclear war just two months ago, the long-term consequences of which are yet to emerge. All relief efforts are thought to have collapsed, and the planet threatens to collapse into anarchy.

The desert plains of **Avalon** are some of the most beautiful sights in known space, inlaid with crystal and rare gems, with castles spread about the planet, guarding the precious oasis – now long since replaced with moisture vaporators. **Cathadonia** remains a cultural center for the subsector, despite the loss of temporal power – its universities and museums attract students from as far away as Stygia and Atlantis. **Htrae** has long been an anomaly – a planet almost entirely covered with water, but with an incredibly active biosphere that seems to resist any attempt to colonize, or even land on the planet. The **Kopra** Belt has a long and interesting history – the area has been used as a dumping ground for old ships since jump travel came to this region; a huge 'spaceship graveyard' containing relics said to be thousands of years old.

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<sup>2</sup> A Biological code, indicating the level of development of the native planetary biosphere. 0 = None, 1 = DNA, 2 = Coacervates, 3 = Bacteria, 4 = Protozoa, 5 = Worms, 6 = Fish, 7 = Reptiles, 8 = Avians, 9 = Mammals, A = Sentient beings, B = Starfaring beings.

# Miscellany

## Psionics

Psionics began to emerge on several worlds at about the same time, as Jump travel became commonplace, though no definite connection has ever been established. Although technically legal, psionics is tightly regulated, with all proven psions drafted into a branch of the Federation military until retirement. There is no legal stigma, but there is a social one; several colonies for the resettlement of psionics have been established, including at **Rhomary** in the Exonidas subsector.

Imperial attitudes towards psionics are somewhat more draconian – it is believed that there was an attempted Psionic Insurrection in the recent past, and this has coloured their attitudes somewhat.

## Civilian shipping in the Federation

Civilian shipping in the post-war period is generally confined to a few standard craft. As the war intensified, more and more civilian ships were

requisitioned, and mass-produced types were constructed in shipyards throughout the Federation – built as Scout/Couriers and as Light Transports. As many as twenty thousand were built, and many of them have found their way into private hands.

## Nobility

Although the Federation itself has no official noble class, many of the worlds within it do – as did two of the polities which originally founded the Federation at the end of the Dark Century. As a result, titles are used quite freely, though they are all hereditary in nature – no title can be granted, for there is no-one left to grant them in Federation space.

In the Realm, however, titles are given quite freely. Given the small population, perhaps 30% of the population has some claim to be one of the noble families; Lords and Ladies abound, even if their estate is limited to the cantina down the road from the starport.

## Filmography/Bibliography

Alien

Aliens

Star Trek: Wrath of Khan

Star Wars: A New Hope

Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back

Star Wars: A Phantom Menace

Firefly

Starhunter: 2300

Battlestar Galactica: Original & Reimagining

Babylon 5

Crusade

Indiana Jones & the Raiders of the Lost Ark

The Rim of Space

Star Loot

The Star Fox

Trouble Twisters

Foundation

'Black Friar of the Flame'

Space Viking

Cosmic Computer

On Basilisk Station

Future History

Agent of the Terran Empire

Hammer's Slammers

*A. Bertram Chandler*

*A. Bertram Chandler*

*Poul Anderson*

*Poul Anderson*

*Isaac Asimov*

*Isaac Asimov*

*H. Beam Piper*

*H. Beam Piper*

*David Weber*

*Jerry Pournelle*

*Poul Anderson*

*David Drake*

