

The Empire

The Empire is an ultratech level faction with a monarchist power structure. Their culture is based on a code of honor, a strict class system, and enforced social stasis. Imperial traders will only trade with other citizens of the Empire.

The Empire are the remnants of an ultratech interstellar empire that have fled from a great calamity. They are organized in a feudal hierarchy nominally headed by a far-off Emperor, however, due to the lack of faster-than-light travel, much of true day to day power is held by the Stellarchs who have dominion over their entire star system, and Consuls who have dominion over each planet. The noble households are served by the common folk in a variety of roles from domestic to military, despite the automation technology available to the Empire before its fall. Grand, ancient starships acted as powerbases for noble families along side more traditional planetary holdings. Nobles and commoners alike would be born and raised on these ships.

The Imperial Church is monotheistic organization with both Inquisitors in the church's anti-heresy school, and psycasters in the church's psychic school. The church also provided Chaplains for the military - non-combatants that provided for the medical and spiritual needs of the soldiery.

Wars of succession, as well as smaller scale conflicts over inheritance, were not unheard of. Some families implemented contingencies to guard against this. The Empire fielded a developed military and, unlike most Glitterworld cultures, it saw routine combat through continuous campaigns for expansion of Imperial territory, mostly targeting less developed systems.

Noble titles are primarily hereditary, and at least some families practiced primogeniture. Those that did apparently practiced absolute, rather than male-preference, primogeniture. Noble titles could also be awarded to individuals as a reward for particularly impactful acts of service to the Empire. The current day fractured Empire will also accept gifts of gold and prisoners in exchange for Honor which can be accrued to gain a royal title which is granted via an official ceremony. This ceremony will be offered and performed by a Bestower, accompanied by a retinue of guards and courtiers. For Yeoman and above, the Bestower will also administer a Psylink Neuroformer to connect the titled person to the Psychic Field.

Imperial Titles

- **Freeholder:** The Imperial title of freeholder is used by the Empire to signify a respected individual. Most Imperial citizens earn it while young through volunteer

work or military service. The title is also offered to outsiders who act with honor in the eyes of the Empire.

- **Yeoman:** The Imperial title of yeoman is held by those who serve a noble lord in an important, specific way. While it is not a noble title, it does give the holder the right to use low-level psychic abilities. This title is often held by senior soldiers, warskiff pilots, spies, advisors, diplomats, intrusion operatives, and other key individuals. Many important people spend their entire lives as yeomen, seeking success outside the strictures of nobility.
- **Acolyte:** The title of acolyte is the first title of noble duty, and encompasses a wide range of practical positions. Some acolytes are purely students, learning to lead troops, manage societies, or use psycasts in specialized schools. Others come from wealthy families and might own city buildings or farm complexes. During wartime, an acolyte might lead a platoon of troops, captain a small frigate, or serve their lord as an advisor. Their low rank within the nobility makes them paradoxically less useful as diplomats than yeomen. Sending a low-ranked acolyte to a negotiation can itself be seen as an insult, whereas a non-noble yeoman negotiator is seen only as the mouthpiece of his lord.
- **Knight/Dame:** The title of knight is held by nobles who have largely passed their training, but who have not ascended to higher leadership roles. Many knights never advance further, and spend their lives as respected managers, advisors, or warriors. Most knights have some wealth, but a few remain quite poor while others may be very rich. In peacetime, a knight may manage a factory complex, commercial district, or small farming region. In war, some knights lead troop companies and assault squadrons, while psychic-focused knights engage in espionage, sabotage, and battlefield psychic combat.
- **Praetor:** The title of praetor is a bridge between the service-oriented lower titles below and the power-holding nobility above. During peacetime, a praetor will usually manage a city district, asteroid sector, or agricultural region. During war, they take authority over the smallest combat units that fight independently - terrestrial troop cohorts, or space-borne destroyers or combat groups.
- **Baron/Baroness:** The title of baron is the lowest of the middle nobility. While lower titles focus on personal service at war or commerce under a lord, barons hold title as semi-independent rulers. Each baron is subordinate to his liege lord, but his obligations are mostly in supplying wealth and troops, and not in personal service. In the Empire, a baron will typically own a city sector, mining colony, or similar outfit. At wartime, a baron may captain a capital ship in name, or control a regiment of troops.
- **Count/Countess:** The title of count is the middle rank of middle nobility. In peacetime, counts hold title to a city or colony, and might have a small personal fleet, possibly including capital ships.

- **Duke/Duchess:** The Imperial title of duke is the highest of the middle nobility. In the Empire, dukes control provinces, mega-cities, or moons. At war, a duke can field a division-level force, or a fleet with capital ships and dozens of support craft.
- **Consul:** The Imperial title of consul is a lower level of high nobility. In the Empire, consuls control planets. At war, a consul can usually field an army-sized force of multiple divisions, supported by several fleets. Some command from a super-capital ship or control space-based megastructures.
- **Stellarch:** The Imperial title of stellarch represents dominion over an entire star system. In the Empire, since interstellar travel times are years long, stellarchs rule their systems with a great degree of independence. They each swear fealty to the Emperor, but since the Emperor may be many light-years away, a stellarch may go years or decades without interacting with him.
- **Emperor/Empress:** The Imperial title of emperor indicates sovereign dominion over the entire Empire, all its peoples, planets, and fleets. All other lords swear fealty to a high lord, while the Emperor swears fealty to no one. However, even the Emperor depends on the support of lower nobles to remain in power.

The Psychic Field

The history of the Empire is secretive and fragmented, but many believe they ascended quickly and violently from one Glitterworld system into an interstellar empire through some relationship to an Archotect they constructed. This Archotect also created (or otherwise accessed) the Psychic Field, which grants individuals connected to it Psychic powers. The Empire closely restricts the use of these powers only to the nobility, with greater titles leading to greater access to the Psychic Field and more training in Psychasting from the Imperial Church. Connecting to the Psychic Field requires the administration of a Psylink Neuroformer - archotechnic artifacts closely guarded by the Empire.

Maintaining a healthy link to the Psychic Field builds Psyfocus. Psyfocus is a special type of mental structuring which is necessary to use psychic powers. Psyfocus dissipates over time, and must be built through regular meditation. Losing all psyfocus makes someone unable to use psycasts, but has no other consequences. Higher levels of psyfocus permit higher-level powers, but also increase the rate of psyfocus dissipation.

Repeating use of Psycasts in a short period of time builds Neural Heat, which also dissipates over time as the brain cools. Gaining too much neural heat can lead to temporary side effects such as poor mood and reduced consciousness. Higher levels of psylink increase the speed at which neural heat dissipates.

The Empire has developed a material known as Eltex which supposedly enhances psychic sensitivity and helps to dissipate neural heat. Eltex is a lightweight, complex composite

that can be integrated into garments, armor, and especially into Eltex Staffs which are both a religious symbol and a focus for psycasting.

The Great Calamity

Little is known about the Great Calamity which fractured the Empire, much historical evidence points to a great emergence of the Mechanoid Hive during this same period, leading to the belief that another Archotect created or awakened the Hive as a defense against the ever expanding Empire and their Psycasting abilities. However, other sources point to evidence of the Mechanoid Hive existing long before the Empire emerged, possibly during the time of the Ancients.