

Foreword to Beginning Zdetl

Zdetl is the official language of the Zhodani Consulate. As such it is the language of trade, governance, science, art, and daily discourse for eight trillion sophonts living in a region to Coreward and Spinward of the Third Imperium. Unlike the major language of the Third Imperium, Galanglic, Zdetl was purposely devised over 6,000 Standard years ago as a highly regular and expressive mode of verbal communication and has not changed appreciably over that period save to add terms for novel concepts and new things encountered by the Zhodani during their expansion into Charted Space and beyond, towards the Galactic Core.

All Zhodani learn Zdetl as their native tongue, and other sophonts within the Consulate are instructed in it as they would require it to engage in trade and discourse. Dialects exist for beings unable to voice the language's phonemes, but the graphic version is unchanged. Idiolects and minor differences of pronunciation and idiom exist but are not officially supported by the Consulate and amount to minor regional differences.

The other primary difference between Zdetl and any other language in Charted Space is its method of instruction. Language acquisition by almost all new speakers of Zdetl is heavily assisted by telepathy used by Zhodani instructors. This primer and its course of instruction does not support telepathic augmentation since it is intended for Imperial students (and other Galanglic speakers) with the goal of understanding the basic written and spoken forms of the language.

Over ninety percent of Zdetl speakers are Zhodani and thus learn it as their first and native language. The story of its genesis begins in the period after the Dzaqtlas some 6,000 Standard years ago on pre-interstellar Zhdant, the Zhodani homeworld. The Dzaqtlas, a horrible plague that afflicted inhabitants of Zhdant and entirely exterminated the native Chirper populations on Zhdant and its moon Viepchaki, reduced the Human population of Zhdant by nearly nine-tenths and nearly ended technic civilization on the world. It took a millennium before the Zhodani were able to re-establish a technological civilization, unify their society, and once more return to space.

Two factors enabled the Zhodani to eventually rebuild and come out of their 'Second Dark Age': the development of Psionics and the establishment of a common language - Zdetl - for their newly unified society. These two developments came about together, if independently of one another, and both have served as the foundation of Consulate society into the Space Travel and then the successive Jump Drive era of expansion into Charted Space.

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The homogenous nature of Consulate civilization would not have been possible without both Psionics and Zdetl, each of which has ensured the unbroken existence of their hegemony across the eleven sectors of Charted Space (and the long corridor towards the Galactic Core) in which it exists. Understanding the Consulate is not possible without examining both phenomena, and Zdetl is key to understanding its people, their society, and its organizations. In many ways, as with any sophont civilization, language IS society.

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