

## [Drawing Maps 06 Audio: Season 6 Faction Creation Pt. 5 - Regions](#)

Transcribed by Ril (@kaorukeihi)

AUSTIN: Hey everyone! Welcome to another episode of Drawing Maps. This is Austin, obviously.

Today we are going to do the final of the five Stels, but I will say up top that this is probably not the last of this pre-PARTIZAN Drawing Maps updates. I suspect there will be two more. There will at least be one more, which will be the next one that will go over the independent squads, and probably will go over and show off a kind of work-in-progress map of PARTIZAN itself, so get excited for that, those are both things I'm super-excited about. And then that episode will probably also be a summary episode if I don't have enough material to do a follow-up one. So, it will either be independent squads + going over what the whole map looks like, and then on top of that a summary of one, or a summary one that also talks about independent squads and shows off the rest of the map. And then before the first episode I will probably do a prep episode, and I might do that live, I'm not 100% sure yet, that might also maybe just be a text episode, a text update for the Drawing Maps, we'll see. But I just wanted to let you know that this is the final Stel, but it is not the final one of these updates. I'm gonna take a sip of water.

So. Today's episode is about Apostolos, and about creating regions. I hope that I can do kind of half-and-half, like I've been doing: half the episode about updating you on what these different Stels are, and half the episode on what it means to create a region. My guess is it'll probably be like 70/30, but we'll see. I say that partially because of all of the Stels, Apostolos is the one that has been kind of grinding in the back of my brain for the longest amount of time. Obviously they were a secondary faction in COUNTER/Weight—if you haven't listened to COUNTER/Weight I'm not gonna spoil anything, don't worry—but they were a kind of secondary faction, similar to something like the Rapid Evening, you know, they were not one of the two major player factions, that were kind of where the player characters came from, nor were they kind of the major antagonist in any way... They existed, they existed kind of mostly historically, and that meant we didn't really get a lot of camera work on them.

And then a lot of time happens, you know? Twilight Mirage is 50,000 years after COUNTER/Weight, PARTIZAN is another 5,000 after that. And much of that 5,000 years was spent in war, part of it against the Branched, part of it against the Divine Principality, part of it against the Branched when they became part of the Divine Principality. And so, they have changed a lot over time, but also there are things that are core to them, that I wanted to both evolve without necessarily throwing away. And in some ways that motiv, or that, like, impulse has become the core of what Apostolos is now at the core of their ideology. And so I'll get to that in a second.

First, in terms of gameplay categorization for the type of government that they are, they are an autocracy, which is one of the kind of types of factions, you may recall. Particularly they are a

monarchy, which is kind of the alternate version of an autocracy in *Beam Saber*, that kind of leans towards good relations with their people. You know, obviously, you and I can debate the value of having an autocrat in any form, but it's... the kind of designation between autocracy and monarchy that *Beam Saber* and Austin Ramsay make, are that your kind of monarchic form is not necessarily despotic, right?

In terms of gameplay terms, this means that if you do work for Apostolos, you end up getting +materiel, and +trust with the employer. I think in terms of fiction we know from the *Microscope* game, that Apostolos still has something called an Apokine, their leader is the Apokine. I believe that that would be a elective monarchy, which is to say that there are some people in power who have the ability to elect an executive figure, an Apokine—lowercase e “executive”, not throwback COUNTER/Weight term Executive—but someone who has that ability to make big executive, and the kind of unilateral decisions.

And in this case the Apokine is Dahlia, who is also the Living Princept of the Divine Principality and the elect of Commitment, who—again, that story was all kind of told a little bit in the *Microscope* game. We'll get more of that probably as we get into this season, at least a little bit. Again, the focus of PARTIZAN will not be the kind of grand politics across the entire Galaxy, across the entire Divine Principality. But you will see as even we go through this stuff today the ways in which the kind of big world touches this one location.

Dahlia mostly leads as the kind of beloved autocrat, people really support their vision for the future of the Divine Principality—when I say people I mean people of Apostolos, the rest of the Divine Principality... we'll see, we'll see how it goes.

They have a kind of a low Corruption, Corruption level 2, similar to Columnar, and I think that that mostly reflects not necessarily things that are true innate to the structure of the Apostolosian government but to the way that Dahlia and Dahlia's predecessor were running the nation. This is very much a system that could go bad, right? Especially as we get into this, you'll see all of the ways in which that's possible. It's also maybe more than most the sort of society you could imagine turning and rectifying itself in certain key ways. My thing that's kind of true in most of these Stels—you can imagine where a revolution might happen, where radical thought might take hold, and where reforms might improve things for people, or where more dramatic changes might be necessary but possible—if people can develop that sort of ideology.

Their goal is the most straight-forward of all the Stels, and it is to soften up Kesh's Verglaz Taiga for an upcoming, full offensive. They are a military faction.

In terms of what the factions are, if you wanted to like break them out... If you were playing a card game, or a 4X game, and you were like “Okay, well. Stel Orion is the economic win, and Stel... Stel Orion would be the economic win, and Stel Columnar would be the tech win, Stel Nideo would be like the theocratic or enlightenment win, Stel Kesh would be the diplomatic win... Stel Apostolos would be the military win.” I didn't mean to make that style of like “Hey, you

could make a game where each of them lines up to that type of victory”, but it turned out that way. Stel Apostolos—definitely the most militaristic of these groups, and so choosing their goal was the most simple. They want to bloody Kesh’s nose, they want to prep it for a full offensive, where they will take that territory.

In terms of aesthetic touchstones, we’ve already now gone over Past, Present, Future, and Space, all that is left is Motion. And so while... You know, again, if you go back, and listen to what we’ve talked about and look at past notes where I described, you know, Stel Columnar as grad school, or Stel Kesh, as, you know, university... Stel Apostolos is definitely like military academy. But also, thinking about Motion in a kind of... the sort of... I kind of attached logistics to Stel Orion before, because they had to be about Space, but I think you could have that here too. The sort of like big picture understanding and study of aerodynamics, of supply chains, stuff like that.

They are experts in security, in logistics and transport (both on ground, you know, on the ground, in air, in sea, and in space). In terms of like the sorts of traditional methods of subsistence that they’re interested in, and industries that they’ve invested in—it’s all stuff that’s on the move. Fishing, hunting, that style of like—again, this is about having a touchstone, right? So it’s like “Hey, what type of food company do you want to interface with in the Apostolosian territory?” Maybe it’s a fishing tanker or something, a fishing hauler, maybe it’s some sort of like hunting company, etc. They definitely do some tourism work, they do... You know, we’ve talked about Orion as having lots of infrastructure for travel, lots of like... When you think about highways and space highways and stuff. Well, Apostolos is much more about kin of private travel, much more about, you know, getting you from place to place not on the established highways, so to speak, or over established infrastructure, or doing that but much quicker than anyone else, or taking shortcuts that other people don’t have access to. Also, private communications here too. You know, hand-delivered stuff, the sort of stuff that’s like all about, you know... Think about someone thing like... think about a military stealth operative touching their neck to speak through their subdermal communicator. That is Apostolos style communication. That may not be super long-distance, it might not be instant, but like that is the style of stuff that you would lean in for them.

They are also defined by their aptitude for flexibility, quick thinking and executive decision making, the sort of like “Yes, we’re gonna do this thing, let’s fucking *do* it. And then if we need to adjust, we will adjust.” They’re big at striking from the dark (both literally and figuratively), they both have that technology to still travel through dark space at fast speeds—the only Stel that can do that is Apostolos, everyone else is kind of stuck on the Portcullis System that we talked about in a previous episode, this system of like big space gates that connect certain points in space together. Apostolos probably wouldn’t be able to travel that distance as quickly through the dark systems, through the black—I don’t remember what I actually called it, it was through the black, or through the dark, or dark travel, I don’t fucking remember. I have it written down somewhere—they wouldn’t go as fast, but it’s actually so competitive and opens up possibilities for striking that would not otherwise be available.

They are motivated by a philosophy that isn't like a proper school of philosophy, or it isn't... Maybe it's unfair to it, but it's not like a competing school of thought next to the two Churches, right? There is not... You don't subscribe to Dynamism the way you might to Received or Progressive Aesthetics, and...

Just as a note about all of those things: those things are such... It's interesting to build a world, because what happens is you have to ask questions about it, and why people believe the things they do, and why people act the way they do. But when the time comes to inhabit that world, a lot of that stuff ends up fading backwards. So like if you wanted to tell a history of American criminal justice, you would have to talk about the ways in which the Protestant Church was at the heart of certain parts of criminal justice law in the early colonies. But you don't need to talk about that when you're like telling a crime story. But if you're building a world from scratch, and you need to think about what criminal justice looks like, you need to do that, right? And so, to some degree, in the same way that not all squads will be used, not all of the weird worldbuilding I do will come to the surface, but I need to write it, and I need to think about it, so that I can inform my decisions down the line.

And so this, Dynamism, might be something that we *never* talk about this season, but it's important for me because it helps me understand who Apostolos *is*. So. What is the thing I just said, the word I just said without any introduction? Dynamism. I've written that Dynamism... I guess I've written: The dominant ideological school in Apostolos is Dynamism, which has the engine of Futurism, but without even vague interest in a destination. Across art, architecture, and technology, design leans towards the appearance of speed, violence, a blurring of the self (and of the self and other). Apostolos is interested in traditions only so long as they embody these ideals or if they can update them, bringing them forward into the now.

So, one of the key words I said there was Futurism, and I said that Dynamism, this kind of school of thought that's at the heart of Apostolos, even if many Apostolosian may not be able to point their finger at it and say "Yes, I'm a Dynamist." There's kind of like hidden curriculum of Apostolosian taste and thought, though it is also actively a school that people are studying and blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. It's based on and kind of adjusted from Futurism, which is a real thing that happened here in our world at the beginning of the XXth century and I would say... I mean, people still use the word "Futurist" now, though I would say that the Futurism of the first... People colloquially will say "Oh yeah, that person is a Futurist" to mean that this person is a technologist, they wanna make new technology, etc., and in some cases these people are actually Futurists. I think you could make a case for Elon Musk secretly being like a crypto-Futurist...

But when we say "Futurist" what we tend to mean is the movement that Filippo Marinetti kind of kicked off with The Manifesto of Futurism, which is the kind of first document in a corpus that lead to Italian Futurist fascism.

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Futurism is like exactly one of those schools of art and philosophy, where if you took any single piece in isolation and you didn't know what the context was, you'd be like "Yo, that's a cool painting!" And then you would understand underneath it is a motivating ideology that is interested in destruction, you would recognize suddenly that maybe there is an underlying motivation that ends up being not only nationalistic and ethnocentric, or ethnonationalist, but also like interested and accepting of things like genocide in a way no good movement should be. And yet—and this is the terrible power of Futurism, and art, and aesthetics—you look at certain Cubist, you know, paintings, you look at certain sculptures, you think about the ways Futurist vehicle design looks, and you go like "You, that's pretty cool looking!" and then you go like "Yikes!" And I think that part of this is because one of the things that motivates Futurism is this notion of change. And this idea of a commitment to changing people in the world with an interest in immediacy instead of incrementalism, a sort of like dismissal of all of the politeness that has held us back. All of the things that I think many of us in justice communities are desperate that the rest of the world will take seriously. Like, "Hey, we cannot get caught up in bullshit conversations around respectability politics, people are dying, we need to change the world now!"

So I can see why Futurism, that impulse, is attractive. But also underneath it is this deep interest in violence. And I think that that deep interest in violence, for me the place that like, cemented this kind of push and pull of like "Wow, the beauty here, and also what a terrible thing, a terrifying thing!" is a Marinetti quote that the actually great philosopher Walter Benjamin call out at the end of a piece that is probably Walter Benjamin's most famous essays, which is called *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. It's a fairly short essay, it's worth reading, and then reading a summary of or reading a breakdown of it if you don't get it, which is totally acceptable, totally valid to read Walter Benjamin and to end up scratching your head, because his prose is beautiful, but also can be confounding.

So, the quickest version of the summary of that essay that Walter Benjamin, who is a Jewish philosopher, is writing about how the history of art, the history of mass-produced art, the way in which fascist have begun to mass-produce art to kind of give the fascist state a certain special quality that attracts people to it. And it ends, obviously, with a call for action to oppose fascism, to politicize your art, and to push against it. But it also ends with an illustration of the kind of terror of the Futurist philosophy. It does that by quoting Marinetti who is, again, kind of the father of Futurism from a kind of manifesto of his, where he writes:

"For 27 years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as antiaesthetic... Accordingly we state" ... War is beautiful because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metallization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns.

War is beautiful because it combines gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony. War is beautiful because it creates new architecture, like that of the big tanks, the geometrical formation flights, the smoke spirals from burning villages, and many others... Poets and artists of Futurism!... remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art... may be illuminated by them!"

It's a fucking nightmare! And so Benjamin is basically making the case after he reads this piece, this excerpt from Marinetti that like, "Okay, they are aestheticizing politics and war, we need to politicize our art, we need to turn it around on them and make art that counters what they've done here, what the fascists have done here."

So, that paragraph from Marinetti is still fundamentally at the heart of what the Apostolosian ideology is. It is a belief in the power of war, and it is a deeply militaristic state, it's a belief in the power under that, though, of speed, and change, and motion, and, yes, violence, which is like, speed turned to a 1,000, it's motion where you don't care if you hit something, right? And the difference between Futurism and Dynamism, the difference between Italian fascists and Apostolosian Dynamists, the thing that makes it maybe less susceptible to a fascist urge though still very much interested in militarism and therefore kind of susceptible to imperial urges more generally, is that Futurism has an end goal in mind. Futurism thinks people can be pushed further to "better themselves" or to "better humanity" in a deeply fascist way that ends up with the death of millions of people. But Dynamism doesn't have an end goal. Dynamism is not interested in getting somewhere, Dynamism is interested in movement, in change. And that means that it's also interested in improvement in a way that is about constant improvement or constant reflective, you know, reevaluation. And so, it's interested in blurring the self and the other, but not necessarily... but in a way that is about continually thinking about the ways in which you could be a different person than you are. And, you know, there's a way to frame all this that sounds very New Age and posy, and I think that happens here, along with a call to...

You know, there's a draft, there's a permanent draft in Apostolos. There's a mandatory military service that is a part of culture that no one ever doubt, that no one ever pushes against—or not enough people to have a huge mass movement against it, not "no one". But it's like "Hey, we've been at war for thousands of years, we've lost Apostolos and regained it countless times, we're at the frontlines against the Golden Branch, against the Branched, we were at the frontlines against the Divine Principality, this is just in our blood—we fucking serve." And you could be the best soldier you can be, but violence and this idea of like a constant belief in putting yourself through it, changing via catalytic, you know, hostile circumstances, is part of what their identity is.

And like, that is terrifying, and terrible. And also it leads to like the belief of sentences like this one that I've written down: "Let no one stop you from being your best self. Kill them if you have to. Kill the old you if you must." There's some big, big ways in which this ends up spilling out, the

kind of smaller ones in some instances... I guess it's like... Is architecture as big as identity? Is infrastructure as big as identity? Who could judge?

In terms of infrastructure, and design, and all that stuff, this comes up in a couple of different ways. First is: architecturally, that's lots of buildings that change and move, what's called Kinetic and Responsive Architecture. These are buildings that have, like, solar panels that follow the sun, and I don't mean they have them on their roofs, I mean that like... It's as if buildings can open up like flower petals that, you know, can kind of like... Imagine like a bunch of window shades opening up outwards, giant window panels opening up outwards and following the sun. Imagine a whole building—maybe not a giant one, but a two- or three-storey building—turning to stay shaded and stay cool without needing to have an expensive air-conditioning systems, just kind of using the natural shade nearby. Or, you know, moving with the sun in that way.

It has lots of investment in rapid transit lines, and that style of a deeply connected city. Buildings that are prefab... There's a cool video that I saw today that I'm gonna link in this part of my notes, where there's a building dropped from space... Okay, the video is not of a building dropping from space, the video is just of a building that's like a square box unfolding itself and kind of building itself. In PARTIZAN, they can do that from space. They can drop down these boxes that then will unfold into the entire base structure like it's a fucking RTS game.

I have more notes here about street fashion that blends military wear and practicality—you should just read through all this stuff 'cause it's all dope and it's not the focus of this episode, and I have big stuff to get to. So, definitely go through all these notes that are in the description to read about how in Apostolosian culture military dress uniforms are high fashion, and people have like dress spears that they carry around as if they're accoutrement. Like, it's dope. Anyway, you read about that and street wear, and all sorts of shit that I've written down below.

In terms of mechs, this is... I've written my favourite group of sentences that I've ever written: "Transforming mechs. Mechs that fly, mechs that swim, mechs that burrow! MECHS THAT MOVE! VIOLENT MACHINES OF SPEED AND POWER AND BRILLIANCE." And this is where I said "Marinetti, and of course Benjamin on Marinetti". And so those are, like, the things that I think are super-important, and are like how to reference Motion.

The other big thing for us... I think, two elements of Apostolos that have been important but not necessarily fully defined are, one, it's kind of multiculturalism, I think especially in Season 6, in PARTIZAN it's going to be the most ethnically diverse, partly because Apostolosians are an ethnic minority in terms of the larger Divine Principality, and so this is a very like, "If you serve you get citizenship" model of statehood, and that is not a model that is applied everywhere else. You know, if you're organic or synthetic, if you're a human or not a human, or humanoid, rather, if you're humanoid or not, here's a place where if you serve, if you fight, you will be granted citizenship. Which is terrible, and also maybe preferable to the like "If you sign you and your entire family and your children's lives away as indentured servants to some shitty, you know, mining company, then you get healthcare" from Stel Orion. Or the kind of implicit prejudices

against different types of people that might pop up in other Stels. But it also sucks, because again, this is the military arm of an expansionist empire.

The other place where I think this gets complicated and interesting—in that like it ties in with something that I've always wanted to do more of, or speak more directly to, that we failed to speak more directly to in COUNTER/Weight and Twilight Mirage—is what is the deal with pronouns in Apostolosian culture. And so, I've sat down, I've written this out, I've talked with my players, I've talked, you know, to people who I know have thought about this a lot. And I've got a system that I'm really happy with, and that I'm very interested in, and that feels very unique. And it feels kind of in line with some of my broadest science fiction influence for sure, especially for this season. And mostly it feels in line both with a history of neopronouns which had been tied to Apostolos but which we haven't necessarily seen on screen enough; and it ties to this ideology of Dynamism, to this idea of improvement, of change, of the constant turning over of the self, and a constant interest in changing where you are in the world and who you are in the world.

So, I'm just gonna read from what I've written here, because I've written it all out and I don't want to forget something.

“The tradition of choosing pronouns based on one's chosen, aspirational Eidolon has remained important, but it's also has evolved over the tens of thousands of years since COUNTER/Weight.” For people who don't remember, or who didn't listen to COUNTER/Weight yet, Eidolons are, or were in COUNTER/Weight, a group of five individuals who were sort of like saints or kind of legendary figures in Apostolosian culture, and in COUNTER/Weight the idea was you would pick one of them and, for as long as you were kind of associated with that Eidolon, you would choose, you would have pronouns derived from their names. This very rarely came up, like when I say “very rarely” I don't mean “once an episode”, I mean like “three times in a season”, and I never internalized those pronouns, we defaulted to they/them for Apostolosians. We still primarily are donna that, again, I'll get to that in a second, but I wanted to represent part of the culture textually, and talk about how it's maybe changed.

And so, “In the last few thousand of years of war against the Branched and the Principality,” and also against the Branched for the Principality, “hundreds of new Eidolons were born first out of people's desires to find new heroes in their own histories...” So you have to imagine if you were born as an Apostolosian in an era where Apostolos was not held by Apostolosians, but was held by the Branched or the Divine Principality, part of your instinct is like... Or part of maybe the cultural impulse is to dig through the history books, and find and idolize new people, people who are more recent, people who have more direct relation than this Eidolons from before COUNTER/Weight's era. You know, it was 50,000+ years ago, that's so far. We can't even name anyone from 50,000 years ago!

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So I think that's part of it. The other part of it is that I think there was this sort of interest in kind of worshiping, or praying to, venerating people who you directly saw as legendary, as people you would aspire to be. And so I've written down here "as Battlefield Saints became canonized as full Eidolons," so I imagine general, and medics, and ace pilots, and all that stuff... People who did incredible things could ascend to Eidolon status. And people would say, "You know what? I wanna be like my fallen comrade, or this or that hero from this fucking unending war more than I wanna be like Apole, someone who lived 57,000 years ago, or 60,000 years ago, or whatever. Who the fuck is Apole?" A funny story with that, read the notes here. [He laughs a bit.]

"There are now," as of PARTIZAN, as of year 1423 of the Divine Principality's Perfect Millennium, "hundreds of gender-neutral pronouns, each tied to an Eidolon of Apostolosian past and culture. A person tends to choose their first Eidolon before their tenth birthday, and will choose to revise that any number of times throughout the rest of their life. Once a decade is the average", I would say, but it's not an enforced norm by any means either legally or culturally. People sometimes go through three Eidolons in a year, sometimes they go through one that lasts them 40 years.

The way that these new hundreds of pronouns work is that you affix them, you affix the basic pronoun form of your Eidolon to the front of your given or chosen name, which is also called a "rootname", with the point of affixation marked with an apostrophe. So, I will give an example from lower on here just so that we have one.

Phy'lon Antiphone. Phy'lon is the first name, Phy is the pronoun, so "Phy does this", "phys lunch", you know, "I saw phys lunch in the refrigerator, I wonder if phy is going to eat it, or if I can steal that cupcake." With Lon being the rootname, and Antiphone being their surname. So, there's an example. Gp back, scroll back and keep reading.

"...Individuals affix the basic pronoun form of their Eidolon to the front of their given or chosen "rootname", with the point of affixation marked with an apostrophe. Sometimes, people will change their given name to integrate their Eidolon prefix more smoothly or rhythmically." I will get to an example of that later.

"This affixation began..." This affixation, this idea of "the pronouns connects to the rootname", "began as part of the era of integration with the rest of the Divine Principality hundreds of years ago." I think internally, inside of Stel Apostolos there is debate as to whether that was bad or good, whether that was Apostolos bowing to pressure from the Principality or if it was a way for Apostolos to ensure that the Principality would recognize and respect this part of Apostolosian culture. Regardless of what that was, and in truth it was probably a combination of both of those things, like most things, as was already determined, the effect, long term, was undeniable across the Principality. "Apostolosian culture's focus on understanding, determining, and changing "the self" led to the import and spread of legal protections in issues of gender and self-determination of identity."

Things like name changes, things like pronoun changes, a breadth of new opportunities to define yourself in the legal system, spread because being part of Stel Apos— going from foreign enemy Apostolos to Stel Apostolos, who fights on the front lines for us, gave Apostolosian politicians the necessary force to change this aspect of life throughout all of the Stels, which is like this weird knock-on effect of being assimilated. Which is not a defence of imperialism, to be clear, but it's one of these things where it's like, this is one of the ways in which history unfolds, is that things meet and synthesize in interesting and strange ways.

Also, it's just like, this is going to be a season where we're juggling a lot already. We're going to be talking about war, and politics, and, you know, empire... And, you know, I've said so many times now that the character here begin as complicit by their very nature of being part of this empire, in the same way that you and I are likely complicit in imperialism in some way even though—speaking just for myself—even though I'm both a queer black man in America who grew up under the poverty line, I'm still also complicit with America's violence worldwide. And this is a game that's interested in that overlap, and you could add gender to that also, and it is added to it no matter what. But what I wanted partly here was, one, to retain Apostolos's unique nonbinary-primary gender culture; two, to develop it in a way that felt respectful what we've already established in COUNTER/Weight, but also allow it to evolve; and also just kind of like showed the joy and the value in being able to define yourself. And three, give us a narrative reason for why we're not gonna have a fucking season that has gendered slurs all over it, right? Like, but also can still have shitheads in it, right? I want to be able to produce shitheads without necessarily including people who are gonna use gendered or homophobic or queerphobic slurs, so. You know, that's part of the inspiration here, anyway. I'm going to continue reading this thing instead of trying to figure out how to phrase all of this. Because I've written a lot already, and I can just rely on what I've written.

“As a culture, Apostolos is largely gender neutral. They/Them is still widely accepted generic pronoun for referring to any Apostolosian person. Again, I know that this was super important to a lot of people in the creation of the Apostolosians in COUNTER/Weight. It's a thing I think internally we all wish we got better during COUNTER/Weight. I love COUNTER/Weight, but this is like one very clear thing that we fucked up on, was not sticking to this close enough. And so I don't want to erase that as part of their history, but I do want to augmented with this inclusion of these new neopronouns.

So, also, that said—and this is something we touched on in Twilight Mirage, but I wanted to reemphasize it here—some Apostolosians do choose to use pronouns from other cultures (like he/him or she/her, or other neopronouns that we have in our own lives in... you know, on the Earth today. Some use those pronouns along with other pronouns (either they/them or Eidolon prefixes), and others use Earth pronouns in place of an Apostolosian pronoun. So you definitely have Apostolosian who use she/her, and who go by their rootname which they've chosen. Those...

It's important that for Apostolosians whatever you do there, the cultural norm is to respect whichever pronouns and name form a person chooses for themselves, regardless of their origin. Because it all comes back to this idea of understanding and changing the self in this aspirational way. And while there's a huge interesting cultured system for that, it is also fundamental to that core ideology of Motion and Dynamism that motivated this acceptance of someone forging their own path. Someone who decides "You know what? Fuck it, I'm not going to take an Eidolon form name, and I am going to go by ze/zir", like, that's a person who might end up being an Eidolon one day, that is the sort of like moxy or whatever that the entire culture is interested in to the degree that there is this openness around identity.

The full Eidolon+Rootname form is used—like, this is now not even a pronoun thing, this is just like what is communication like? So, the full Eidolon+Rootname form is used in formal and public communications.

So, again, an example from below here:

Phy'lon Antiphone. If Phy'lon was getting up to give a speech, Phy'lon would be announced as "Phy'lon Antiphone", you know. And Phy'lon would be getting up to give a speech, because they are an Apostolosian, like, admiral or something, I forget exactly what I've written, but I'm pretty sure Grand Admiral Phy'lon Antiphone.

But when you're close to someone you may choose to use just the rootname, or you may have established a sort of... rootnames as nicknames, or some blend thereof. So, for example, generally you would say that "Phy went shopping yesterday." or that "They went to the store." But for someone who is close to Phy'lon, they might say "I saw Lon at the store yesterday", because Lon is their rootname.

Another example here, Cas'alear Rizah - Before choosing the ancient Apostolosian warlord Cassander as their Eidolon, Cas'alear went by the rootname Lear. And this is an example of someone changing the way that their rootname is formed in order to produce a sort of certain flow. So they went from Lear to Cas'alear, and so you might say that, you know, "Cas was injured on the frontline." or— Again, this is one of those things that if you know them well, you'd be like "Hey, can you bring me Lear's bag?" But you would also say if you didn't know them particularly, "I saw cas on the screen last night, and cas gave a great speech," or "Cas was on the screen last night," or "I read cas's words on the Palace last night, and they..."

There's also this thing I've written here just because I got to a place I really liked and I wanted to use it, which is: If cas decides to shift to the Eidolon Bernice, they may adjust their name to something "Ber'lear," "Ber'alear," "Ber'ylear," etc. And then, you know, it's names, people have names and they change, so maybe you still use the rootname Lear for your friend (who is now Ber'ylear), but they might also adopt a smooshed-together contracted version of their entire public name, not just the rootname. So, they might be Ber'ylear, and they might go by Beryl to their friends instead of going by Lear or Ber, you know. Though, again, the pronoun forms "ber" would be acceptable, "they" would be acceptable.

More than any other Stel—this part I’ve already read, this is about ethnic diversity, let’s skip past that. So that’s it, this is where we’re at with pronouns, and you’ll see this with characters on the sheet here, again, I’ll just scroll down. We got Phy’lon here, which is Phy and then Lon, we have Cas’alear who I’ve just mentioned, we have Tes’ili Serikos, we have people much lower down here who have not actually been developed as full characters, but like Ami’ra Kiani, Khi’deimos, Khi as their Eidolon prefix or khi as their pronoun, Ver’ati Bol—all sorts of cool names here. I really love what the effect is because it really unifies Apostolosian names in this way that we’re always kind of like at the edge, and it really makes them distinct, and it makes the culture feel a little bit more like it has a history. And I want that especially since Apostolos is such an old culture in this universe.

So, after that there are squads. I’m not gonna go over squads bit by bit, squads was last week’s thing, or last episode’s thing, but they’re dope. Long and short, this is a military-focused thing, right? This as a faction is the most military-focused one, and that’s why I’d say 8 of the 9, or 7 of the 9 things here... 9 of the 9 things here, are pretty focused on militarism, and military value, and military focus. You know, even the ones here that are about infrastructure, the Divine Motion—the only of those five that is actually on this world—even the Divine Motion is tied to war machines. So go ahead, and you can read those.

Today’s actual update—45 minutes into this episode—is about regions. And what regions are, and what they do, and how you build them. You don’t necessarily have to build a region tied to a faction, but my plan had always been—and, you know, I’ve already done this, so actually... shoutouts to Beam Saber Discord for letting me bounce this off people to make sure that I wasn’t doing this completely wrong—was to build one region for each major Stel, though I’ll probably also do one major region for just kind of like... not free-for-all, but an independent region, that isn’t tied directly to any one Stel. And then I will continue to build minor regions, or I’ll list minor regions out and develop them if the story takes us there.

So, what are regions? I’m just gonna read from the book here. “...A region is an area that the factions want control of to expand their influence and resources. The size of what qualifies as a region varies with the scale of the campaign. If the game takes place in a single city then each district of the city would likely be a region. But for a game that crosses the stars, entire planets might be a single region.”

“They are also where squads (such as players) operate. The squads are used to capture hostile regions, hold captured ones, and exploit their resources.” I’ll jump ahead a little bit here. “Each region should have a name, description, and scene, if the squad is just passing through.”

[00:45:00]

So, base thing that you need every region to have is a name. “The name should be something memorable that speaks to the nature of the region, for example, the Broken Bank is a riverside

region filled with ruined buildings. Even without the scene description it paints a quick picture of the world.”

So if you go back and look at something like the Verglaz Taiga, of the Memoria Teardrop, there’s a certain emphasis here, or certain rhythm, or a certain poetry, I hope, that produces an effect close to what I want there to be. The one for Stel Apostolos that I’ve build out that you can see in the notes here is Barranca, which... is a word already that is just... It was one of the words that we looked at while trying to name the season, it was one of the many words that we tried to find and use. It is a Spanish word, there’s a specific place called Barranca, but basically a barranca is Spanish for a canyon or a ravine, and there are places just called Barranca Whatever, or just Barranca, but it’s just such a fantastic word that has such a cool rhythm to it that I’ve never heard before, and that I think speaks to this specific place that is literally a big canyon area, or primarily a big canyon area. So, Barranca.

“The description of a region provides the recent history, why it’s important, and how it looks. It does not need to be more than a paragraph, as there should be room for details provided by the players.” Draw maps, leave blank spaces. So, what’s up with Barranca?

It is to the northwest of the Prophet’s Sea—again, in Maps coming next week, or whenever the next update is—to the northwest of the Prophet’s Sea lies the Apostolosian—I’ve spelled “Apostolosian” wrong here—Apostolosian province of Barranca, where mediterranean subtropical shores give way to a vast latticework of canyons and crags. There, military bases and civilian settlements sit in the crooks and alcoves, shaded by high canyon walls. Rising above it all is the famed Barranca Loop, a massive suspended cable system that runs up above the atmosphere like a giant bridge, and which allows Apostolos to launch ships and cargo into space.

So, that is like the big defining thing about this place: it’s canyons, it’s like mediterranean cities leading to canyons and deserts, above which is this giant loop—I forget the launch loop, did I write down the type of launch loop it is?.. I don’t think I did... But there’s a... there’s a particular name for these... [typing] Launch loop... Lofstrom, Lofstrom loop is the name of the device which is like a big cable that runs high up into orbit, and when I say “big”, I mean it’s big enough for a plane to be dragged up on it and launched into space on it. It’s not big just like a building is big, it’s like gigantic.

“After the description is the scene. The scene is three or so sentences that provide a description of the region through the lens of everyday life. Anyone who reads the scene should know what that part of the setting is like when the pilots aren’t tearing things up.”

And so I’ve written here: A cool ocean breeze comes to a halt all too soon, as the sun’s light, reflected by the giant Girandole [girəndɒl]—[dʒirəndɒl]? [dʒirəndʌl]? I think Girandole [dʒirəndɒl]. It’s the name of the gas giant that Partizan orbit around—bakes the desert sand. Always, somewhere in the distance, the sound of artillery fire or of practice maneuvers or of the

all-aboard blare of a naval horn. On the people you pass, you count grins from those eager to win glory on the battlefield, and grimaces from those that know what such a reward costs.

You know, it is a region of the world where everyone has directly felt or is eager to learn the feel of what war does. It is... I think a lot about being in America after 9/11, and this fervor I saw from people who never once had an interest in the military, friends of mine, who were like suddenly just like transformed in front of me in a way that seemed arbitrary and like cruel, because they were convinced by propaganda that they... the best thing they could do as people was to fight. And there are people in my life who I don't, who... There are people in my life who went off to do terrible things, and are not in my life anymore. And I think about that motivating spark, and how, like, joyous they were at finding something to believe so strongly in, and what a terrible thing it was that they fell into and that they were consumed by. These are people who had, you know... These are people who were not, again, patriots by any means until this moment, and the ways in which they transformed themselves, or allowed propaganda and militarism to transform them, and nationalism to transform them, is a terrifying thing.

And so like, that is at the heart of Apostolos in some ways here. You know. The heart of Apostolos, the place that's like also the heart of gender diversity in the Galaxy, also the part of the place that has the most openness around ethnic identity, the place that has one of the two lowest Corruption scores in this game, in this setting. Again, compromised and problematized in every possible way, is definitely the watchword here. These are complex, you know, this is a complex society, much like our own, where like, yeah, we live in a society. [He laughs a bit.] I live in America, a place where I am free to be a queer black atheist who will not have, you know... Who is free to be those things, but each of those things produces resistance, and each of those things, like, aligns in certain ways with the world around me, where that freedom can be imposed upon, where that freedom is supposedly... Where a politician will tell me that that freedom is earned by someone who is shooting a rifle, you know, overseas right now. And like, it's all such a fucking mess, and so I want to capture some of that messiness here.

So that is the scene. Trying to paint a picture.

"If a squad will be spending a lot of time in a region, you need to do more than give just a name, a description, and a scene. You need, first, 2-3 notable NPCs, 2 to 4 landmarks, and then points in the region ratings, and maybe a special rule."

So, 2 to 3 NPCs. First is Tes'ili Serikos, who is a kind of skeptical messenger, info broker, and transport specialist. Tes is from one of the squads, the Silver Fennecs which is a kind transport squad, it's kind of a logistics squad. That group can... I've actually written "Tes'ili Serikos can get anything anywhere for a price." Or, theoretically, get *you* anywhere for the right price. Tes is large framed, brown skinned, and hiding scars from a life on the front line. I think that they... They're someone who a decade ago was on the front lines, and now, you know, they are someone who has managed to get away from that, and build a successful enterprise being a slightly independent operator inside of what is largely a nationalized infrastructure.

Next up as an NPC in Barranca is Khi'deimos de Beros—I wanted at least one of these names to have some of the things that we saw in Twilight Mirage where we had an Apostolosian whose name was not simply a Greek name, where we were looking at places that have names that have overlap between Greek culture and other, mostly Southern European culture. So, Khi'deimos de Beros is a mid-tier diplomat from a wealthy family, who hopes to convince the galaxy that their family has more to offer than vulgar wealth. I think merchants are not thought of very highly in Apostolos, it's, you know... Merchants exist and are a part of what, you know... They are the veins, they are among the veins in which society's blood pumps, but in such a militaristic culture it is not a valorous thing to be famous because you're rich. And Khi'deimos hopes to earn some degree of honor for his family, and I hope that we get to actually visit these people, because I like all of these NPCs that I've written up, and I have no idea if they're gonna actually show up. Because I'm already invested and I'm like "Damn, I hope Deimos gets what they deserve, I hope that they can figure out a way to get some dope honor." [He laughs a bit.]

And finally, Ver'ati Bol, who is the operations and acquisitions lead for the Hopping Hares. The Hopping Hares is the lowest rank squad I've written here, they are a dedicated kind of intelligence and reconnaissance unit with a chip on their shoulders, partially because every other squad just has their own intelligence and reconnaissance people, so it's weird to be the dedicated one. They're also just like... They're the Hopping Hares, you know? They're that episode of Home Movies where they've got a camp and everyone says Rabbit Troop sucks, but Rabbit Troop doesn't suck, and the Hopping Hares are kind of Rabbit Troop but for Apostolos.

There are 2 to 4 Landmarks, I've written three down here.

The Barranca Loop is the Barranca Loop, it's the loop that launches things into space.

There is Lion's Rest which is a bustling seaside port town, housing hundreds of thousands of civilians along with the bulk of the Apostolosian navy and diplomatic forces. The reason it's "navy and diplomatic" is because the Serpent's Head is the Tier V squad, where Grand Admiral Phy'lon Antiphone rules from, and that is like the de facto leadership of Apostolos here. And that group, the Serpent's Head is both the naval corp, and also the lead diplomatic corp. So that's a fun division of duties... or non-division of duties, I guess.

Finally, the third landmark is Fort Icebreaker: A mobile fortress and battle station which patrols the northeastern border with Kesh. It moves—I think it's like treaded, it's like a big treaded city-sized fortress that moves between a dozen different smaller, subterranean bases. Like, it kind of goes to where those subterranean bases are located, and locks up with them to get resupplied. And each of those dozen bases are themselves connected to each other through a network of underground transport tunnels. In a sense, that entire network, that entire system is "Fort Icebreaker." It's not just the treaded megafort battle station, it's not just any one of those smaller fortresses that have this big underground chasms, or cavern bases, it's that the whole network together is Fort Icebreaker.

So, that's my landmarks. Then, ratings. Wealth, might, crime, and tech. "These ratings are used to give numerical value to the qualities of a region so that they can be compared if needed, and also can be used as the number of dice for a fortune roll that is relevant to the rating." So, sometimes, you'll be listening, and I'll go, someone will say: "Can I find a luxury car here?" And I go, "Shit! Give me a fortune roll." And the number that I would give... Maybe I would say "You can use your..." you know, a certain skill, but what I might actually do if they're just looking for one is say "Give me the wealth roll of this region, so that we can see if something like that is even here." Excuse me. "So that we can see if something like that is even here."

These numbers, these ratings "should be from 0 to 4, and players should select values that make sense from the description of the region. The squad can benefit from these ratings if certain moves come up, so record these ratings in your notes or on the region sheet if you're using those." I'm using Google Docs, so.

"Wealth indicated how rich the areas businesses and residents are, their political power, and the quality of mundane infrastructure such as hospitals, roads, power grid, etc. Wealth determines the amount of supply points that region provides during the COLLECT downtime activity." So, if you're in a rich place, you are able to leverage that wealth during downtime by kind of "collecting taxes". The COLLECT maneuver, the COLLECT downtime activity is fucking rude, fyi. [He laughs a bit.] So, the Barranca, Apostolos here, the main Apostolosian region, has a Wealth of 2. It's not a particularly wealthy region. You know, that is not where Apostolos's strength comes from.

"Might indicates how much of an armed presence is in the area, and the intensity of the surveillance systems. The Tier of local security forces not affiliated with the squad is equal to the region's Might. It provides bonus when trying to acquire a cohort." So it's easier to get a powerful cohort if you're in a high high region, because there's more kind of unaffiliated strong military or armed presence in that region. In this case, Barranca has a Might of 4. This is a military powerhouse, it is their major region on the moon. And that means that even if they're not up against a particular squad, that squad is pretty fucking strong. Like, again, the tier of local security forces not affiliated with the squad is equal to the region's might.

[01:00:00]

That means that there are Tier IV enemies—I've spoiled... The players are not going to be from Apostolos—Tier IV... I'm leaving that in. This is the real shit. This is... I know this is 60 minutes or something into a podcast of me talking about some bullshit, you deserve to know, to scratch one thing off the list, and it's: right now, as it stands, the players are not from Stel Apostolos, and may even go against them. And so, if that happens, and the party somehow ends up, you know, pulling in non-squad-based enemies, they come in at Tier IV. That's a high fucking Tier, don't fuck around in Barranca!



“Crime indicates the regularity and intensity of illegal activity. It can be used to adjust the entanglements the squad suffers at the end of the mission.” Crime is only 1. Barranca is not a particularly crime-filled town, or a region. I say “town”, but it’s like, big, it’s the size of... I don’t know, I don’t know how big the moon is all around, so... It’s big, it’s a big area. But low Crime. Not no Crime, not 0 Crime. You know, there’s plenty of spaces in those alcoves to have a smuggling den or whatever. Again, even if you look at someone like Tes’ili Serikos, like. Tes is an info broker, and transport specialist, and messenger, who probably moved some dirt.

Finally, Tech. “Tech indicates the ubiquity and intensity of AR, advanced technology, and digital security systems. It provides bonus dice when trying to acquire gear.” This is a weird score for us. It’s tech 1 here, and I’ve put that there because 1 feels like it’s not 0, but it might... By the time we launch this season, actually, I might drop Tech here down to 0. And the reason is, we’ve talked about this before... Things like AR just don’t exist here in the way that they did in *Twilight Mirage* or even *COUNTER/Weight*. People are not wearing Google Glass, people are not seeing augmented reality stuff, like the Perennial Wave knocked that shit out.

So, for me, Tech is almost like the Magic stat. [He laughs a bit.] As much as it is the high Tech stat. In some ways Might represents pure technological might, and Wealth represents pure technological strength on average. You know, Wealth would be like “Well, how fancy are the cities?” right? Might would be how powerful are your weapons. And so Tech, which is about, in *Beam Saber*, how much cool AR shit is around, is this thing that’s even rarer, right? Like, we’ve talked about low touchscreens, or limited touchscreens. Something with high Tech would have like way more limited touchscreens, or maybe even have something that is like super-Divine or was not hit by the Perennial Wave, or is something like a relic that somehow has some additional strange power. So, that’s gonna be really low across the board, and where it’s high, it’s not just going to represent “they have a lot of scientists,” it’s going to represent weirdness, right? And so, when the final region list comes out, you will be like “Oh, okay, there’s some weird shit there.” That is how you should read Tech. So. The Tech here, only a 1. It provides bonus dice when trying to acquire gear. I may end up house ruling that towards Wealth instead because of the way this goes, but we’ll see.

Finally there’s the special rule. “The special rule is something that is unique to the region, that evokes the essence of it, and will have a direct mechanical effect on squad’s actions.” I love writing these, these are really fun. The example in the book is that the Broken Bank from the Izya region in *Beam Saber* has “Start a 4-step clock when you enter the region “App focus”. Add a tick you are delayer from moving forward. This represents the crown of rampant proxies and apps that are drawn to the living.” People should read *Beam Saber*—which, again, you can get from [Austin Ramsay's itch.io page](#)—because the base setting is really dope, and this idea of there just being crowds of apps that slow you down is great.

“Not every region requires a special rule, many are not unique in the ways that require special rules. Even when a region does have a special rule, it does not always need to be implemented as the pilots may not encounter it.”

Barranca does. “In Barranca, backup is never far away. After “going loud”... So, that will be a judgement call from me as the GM—“the GM will start a 4 step clock. When it completes, additional enemy forces will arrive.” So it’s like, reinforcements are built into this place in a way that will be very quick, 4-step clock is not a very long clock for me to fill as people make rolls, easy for me to get backup here. And remember, if it’s not from a nearby... if it’s not from a particular squad, that backup will be Tier IV. Do not fuck with Barranca.

Just to show that you don’t need to do the big, long region description, I’ve also gotten a tighter region for Lion’s Rest.

Lion’s Rest, again, I’ll just read the description: “a bustling, terraced seaside town run by Ami’ra Kiani, where many sailors and soldiers take shore leave. It wraps around an entire continental inlet towards the south of Apostolosian holdings, bordering the Prophet’s Path. It is the home of the Serpent’s Head.” What is the Prophet’s Path? Stay tuned to find out.

The scene description here is: “Twisting alleys lead like tributaries to packed avenues, where civilians hock their wares to passing service members. Shouting from a bar is prelude to a “friendly” fistfight. Smoke brings the smell of charred food and the sea provides the salt. From the corner of your eye, you catch a ship sliding into port.”

If you’re like sketching out the world, you don’t need to start by doing like “Here are thirteen different regions.” I don’t even really need more for Lion’s Rest than what I have above when I mentioned it as a landmark inside of the big region. If I want to develop it into like now it’s a mid-sized region in case we go there, or not a mid-sized region, but a midway-developed region, it’s not just a landmark, it’s like, hey, there’s a description and a scene, but then beyond that you can then say: “Hey, we’re gonna do a whole game in Lion’s Rest,” and at that point maybe I do wanna give it its own unique ratings, its own unique landmarks, its own unique special rule. And that sort of modularity is what I love about building this system, or about building regions in this system. You know, if I go back up to the Memoria Teardrop, the Columnar region. You know, that’s a region that already just has... let me find it here. I’ve already written a description about it, it’s super-easy to figure out what those ratings look like. I already know that Vigil City is one of its subregions, I already know that Lake Timea is one of its landmarks, you know? And both of those could become their own regions if I needed... if the action was gonna go there.

My plan is to fill out the five main regions—or I guess, the six main regions, one for each Stel + one that would be an independent one, which is where the Prophet’s Path is going to be, and then to have like maybe one subregion half-developed in that kind of like description, and scene, and name sense, for the key Stels that I think the camera would be focused on first. And then as the game continues throughout the season if I want to come back and add to those regions, I can just do that, that’s not that hard to knock one of these out during the prep of a

session. Something like a special rule can add so much flavor for the players, so I'm super-excited to get to that stuff.

As always, thank you for listening to me ramble for over an hour, an hour and eight minutes on this one... One day these will get shorter, because... I don't... Okay, listen, I've been working on this stuff for weeks on and off, and just today I put—what time is it? It's 10—I started working on these notes, and like continuing to build out all of the stuff that you see here at 2 pm, and it is now 10:30, so between writing it and recording it, it has taken me 8.5 hours. [He laughs a bit.] By the time I finish the edit and upload it it will probably be 11. If I'm being honest, I should eat dinner. So, again, apologies if I've been rambly, but I hope that this was enjoyable, I hope that the notes are helpful.

I'm super-excited to see all of these Stels finally, like, exist against each other, to build this world that I think has been... is already one of my favorite ones that we've put together. The whole process of the Road to Season 6, now the Road to PARTIZAN, has been so rewarding for me, because it's so organic, and so different from anything else we've done before in terms of putting the world together.

You can hear I'm losing my voice, so I'm gonna cut it off there, and go eat some fucking food. I hope everyone has a good remainder of your weekend. We should have some new stuff coming soon, I have to write and record a Bluff City intro this weekend, but then Bluff City: season 2, episode 1 will hit, and I think we're recording the second half of the second game of Bluff City: season 2 tomorrow. So we're in it, everything is kicking off very soon. Someone just messaged me moments ago to say: "My mech description is in there also now, so shit is coming the fuck together."

So look forward to all that we've got going on, I hope everyone has a good weekend. Peace!