

GUIDE TO THE TRIBES UNIVERSE

(v. 2)

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1. INTRODUCTION

WELCOME to the TRIBES Universe! This document is designed to help people who want to know more about the TRIBES background. It provides a summary of what we envision becoming a rich and expansive science-fiction setting. With input from the TRIBES player community, we hope the backstory and universe will evolve and gain momentum so that the story becomes a living part of future TRIBES games.

In the future, we plan to provide expanded material on the Four Great Tribes, but we're not going to make or post packets on player groups. People can travel to your websites for that information.

Drop us a line at the following e-mail address and let us know what you think:

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CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION

This is an updated, second version of the original Universe Guide. If you've read the original version, you won't find many differences here. We've taken out the rank and organization material, since it's replaced with updated material in a separate packet. There's new material on holdings and settlements, population, and tribal slang. Again, much of the content is intended to

provide an overview. We haven't thought of everything, and there are a lot of areas that we can expand. Send in your comments, and we may be able to work your ideas into the weave of the Universe.

2. THE TRIBES OF MAN

Hundreds of human tribes have scattered across the galaxy, each numbering anywhere from a few thousand to over a million members. A true census of the Tribes of Man is virtually impossible. The largest groups are the Four Great Tribes: The Children of Phoenix, Blood Eagle, Starwolf, and Diamond Sword. These large tribes each have populations of at least one to five million, and can field at least 150,000 warriors, before counting in allied tribes, reserves, mercenaries, and the like.

A proper way to regard larger tribes – and certainly the Four – is as tribal *nations* united by a common culture and spiritual history. Nevertheless, the honor-based culture of the wilderzone hearkens back to the Old Earth of the Cybrid Wars, and tribal allegiances can mutate rapidly. Almost all of the flux of tribal politics can be explained by perceptions of honor. If a tribe loses too much honor, its membership will shrink as disaffected groups defect to form their own tribe or even join another that offers a new place of honor. Leaders who embody the principles of honor – and who can lead wisely – gain many followers in a short time. However, loyalty is a key component of honor, and those who shift allegiance find they must work hard to earn the trust of their new allies.

The independents are the most prone to shifting alliances, and it is said that they hold the balance of power in the wilderzone if they were to unite. Certainly it is true that the Four forge alliances with independents to one degree or another, and that tribal alliances are an important factor in securing critical Hyperweb junctions.

The Tribes of Man, as they collectively refer to themselves, are hardy explorers. They exist on the frontier of the Great Human Empire, in the wilderzone far from the core of civilization. They recognize themselves as part of the great body of Humanity, but they pay only token heed to the sovereignty of Imperial rule. Tribal emissaries negotiate with the Imperial legate at Rho Silvanion IV, but in truth, the Empire exercises no power in the lawless wilderzone. There are those who claim the Empress would like to send magistrates and the dreaded saar-marines to tame the Tribes, but cannot because of the great battle against the enemy called the Scourge.

Still, as Imperial settlers and refugees from the Scourge begin to enter the wilderzone, tension increases. The Tribal nations raid the newcomers, and those Imperial groups who can muster forces retaliate. Taken together with the constant raids and the new political tensions building between the Tribes themselves, the wilderzone is ripe for an explosion.

BLOOD EAGLE

Heart of Darkness

Nicknamed "butchers" or "buzzards," the Blood Eagle claim descent from an Order of Imperial Knights sent to pacify the tribes long ago. Their past is said to hide a dark secret, and the Blood Eagle still seem motivated by ancient shame and a deep, abiding fury. One story claims that the

ancient Emperor Caanon I, on his deathbed, sent the Blood Eagle to find his immortal brother the Phoenix and return with him to Terra. After swearing a great Oath, the Order searched deep among the stars, but failed to capture the Phoenix by the time Caanon died. Suffering from the dishonor of failure, the Blood Eagle fell upon the so-called Children of Phoenix. The ensuing storm of war was the genesis of the Tribes of Man. The story ends by saying the Blood Eagle cover their shame with rage and exaggerated honor. It also says they still search for the Phoenix, and that if they ever find him, they will take him to Terra and thus fulfill their Oath.

The Blood Eagle maintain a formal military hierarchy marked by Byzantine politics. Succession always involves great uncertainty, as the rank of Great Eagle goes to the candidate who can best seize power. As with most other Tribes of Man, leadership passes by blood unless a rival family seizes power. Heirs to the Great Eagle find themselves under great pressure to build a reputation for strength early.

Some among the tribes say the Blood Eagle maintain close contact with the Imperial High Command, but the Blood Eagle vehemently deny these rumors. Nevertheless, Blood Eagle are a common sight on the world of the Imperial Legate, and they seem to have little difficulty in acquiring new equipment. Some stories whisper that one Blood Eagle faction has ambitions of returning to Terra and taking the Imperial Throne, but most tribesmen scoff at such outlandish tales.

In battle, the Blood Eagle display unbridled ferocity, raising the flayed bodies of fallen enemies as banners and following a scorched earth strategy. Their code of honor closely resembles that of medieval samurai from ancient Earth, and they never break their sworn word. They teach their enemies to fear them, and they obliterate their foes completely. Despite their brutality, Blood Eagle are surprisingly courteous hosts during a parley.

Blood Eagle units commonly adopt colorful titles, for example, the Second Pennant, Third Talon, is known within the Blood Eagle as "the Eviscerator Talon of the Wolfslayer Pennant."

CHILDREN OF PHOENIX

The Ancient Saviors

Nicknamed "preachers" or "crusaders," this oldest and most traditional of the Tribes of Man traces its ancestry back to the legendary Harabec, the immortal Phoenix. The Children's ultimate goal is reunification of all tribes under the Phoenix banner. The Children adhere to a body of custom called "The Tenets of Harabec" and expect other tribes to follow it as well. They were the ones who started the Firetruces, and they are the consummate diplomats of the wilderzone. They also pay the greatest respect to the legendary Immortals, those mysterious beings said to guide humanity through the ages. Many Tribes are curious as to the secrets the Children of Phoenix hide, and wonder whether the Children speak the truth about being protected by the Immortal Harabec himself.

Though the Children constantly urge peace among the Tribes, they are also warriors without peer who finish their battles with terrifying finality. They respond to raids when necessary to protect or avenge their people, but they seldom engage in all-out feuds or long-term wars. "*When the*

Phoenix wakes" is a tribal expression for "when hell freezes over." This phrase comes from recognition of the potential threat posed to tribal independence should the Children of Phoenix cast aside their history of restraint.

The Phoenix take pride in their elite status. So far, no other tribe has succeeded in shattering that reputation. Though they more arrogant than any other Tribe, even the Blood Eagle, the Children of Phoenix are also the most compassionate. Their regal leadership is the closest thing to a unifying force among the Tribes of Man.

Lately, the Children of Phoenix struggle with division in their own ranks. The Harbingers of Phoenix argue for a great Crusade to unify the other Tribes by force, while the Keepers of Phoenix maintain the best way to achieve true unity is to lead by example. So far, the Keeper faction continues to hold power, and the Harbingers are content to argue in the tribe's councils.

DIAMOND SWORD

Strategy and Mystery

Nicknamed "Sworders" or "sandrakers," the Diamond Sword craft the most innovative and dangerous strategies of any tribe. They say the mind is the greatest weapon, and practice a philosophy derived from the Zen Buddhist teachings of ancient Terra. Tribe members tend to be enigmatic, even cryptic. When not fighting, they meditate on obscure riddles. The phrase "*talking to a sword*" comes from the Sworders' reputation for answering a question with a question.

An interesting tale links the origins of the Diamond Sword to the Empire. Long ago, the story goes, the Emperor of Earth used as bodyguards a force of Imperial Knights so hard and elite that people called them *The Diamond Sword*. These Knights served with honor and distinction until one day a mysterious figure addressed the Imperial Court. This man, the Enlightened Master, foretold a day when the Empire would have need of a weapon in a faraway place, a weapon of surpassing hardness and strength. His words moved the Court, and the members of the Diamond Sword petitioned the Emperor to allow them to be that weapon. The Emperor agreed, and the Diamond Sword followed the Enlightened Master into the wilderzone. When warriors who hear this tale claim the Diamond Sword are lackeys of the Empress, Sworders typically answer, "Can the hand made of smoke draw a sword?"

If the Diamond Sword have a weakness, it is that they rely overmuch on their elaborate plans. If caught unprepared (a rare event), Diamond Sword warriors are said to have difficulty adapting to circumstances. They become surprisingly vulnerable in those situations. Of all the tribes, the Diamond Sword are the ones least likely to enter feuds and protracted wars.

Diamond Sword forces fall into three main armies: the Unyielding Facet, the Reflective Facet, and the Pure Facet. Each follows its own particular philosophy on battle.

STARWOLF

The Deadly Hunters

Nicknamed "howlers," the Starwolf tribe sprang from harsh, mysterious origins. Some tales tell of a band of Blood Eagle and Children of Phoenix stranded on an icy world, of a truce that became true friendship. Other tales tell of a great hunter of Cybrids, an errant Knight or a lost soul, a woman who found new life among enemies and gave her name to the tribe born under her leadership. Many of the stories add mention of a vision or a visit by the Great Wolf. Whatever the truth, adversity bred strength. When the Starwolf eventually exploded into the tribal struggles of the wilderzone, they carved out a large holding with predatory swiftness.

Their symbol is the most ancient among all the Tribes, taken from the aboriginal American tribes of ancient Terra. Though other Tribes ridicule the "Starpony," the Starwolf smile in the knowledge that the others use shallow symbols empty of meaning. The corpses of those who jested about the Starwolf banner litter the wilderzone, giving rise to a common tribal expression for foolishness: *"to mock the wolf to its face."* However, Starwolf factions that have ventured beyond the Cassopeian Gate have reportedly adopted a new sigil that departs from the original tribe's traditional look.

The Starwolf follow a shamanistic religion, honoring "The Great Wolf" as their tribal totem. Warriors who fall in battle are said to "walk with the Great Wolf." Starwolf holdings sprawl across vast regions of space, and Starwolf warriors are the first to explore new worlds and follow jumpgates into the unknown. This great dispersal makes massing large armies difficult, and so the Starwolf favor fluid, guerrilla-style tactics and mobility.

Of all the tribes, the Starwolf are the most independent. This independence has been both a great strength and a great weakness, for they distrust powerful leaders even within their own ranks. Their own clan-feuds are the stuff of legend, and they do not cooperate well in large groups.

Starwolf organize themselves into Packs named for their world of residence.

THE INDEPENDENTS

Nickname: "Indies." Hundreds of minor tribes populate the wilderzone, constantly fighting for precious space among the relatively few livable planets or filling a niche in the wilderzone's economy. Some indies ally themselves with the Great Tribes, sometimes even joining them. However, most of these small tribes are just as proud and independent as the Four, so alliances are usually somewhat prone to flux.

Most indies can only field about 10,000 warriors under the best conditions. Only coalitions of indies are capable of challenging one of the Four, and only then in a limited conflict, since to draw the ire of one of the Four is a dangerous thing. Nevertheless, these so-called "lesser" tribes frequently bloody warriors of the Four in small-scale conflicts and raids.

3. SOCIETY AND CULTURE

CLASS STRUCTURE

The typical tribe divides itself into three basic groups. The names of these classes vary from tribe to tribe, but the generic terms are *Warriors*, *HOLDERS*, and *Stringers*. A fourth class may be present depending on the particular tribe: the *Thralls*, or slaves.

Warriors

Warriors are the active soldiers among a culture where everyone has combat training. >From an early age, tribesmen and women train with all manner of weapons and styles. Prestige and power come through success in battle. When not in battle, Warriors of most tribes are expected to assist in maintenance of the holdfast. Some tribes use thralls instead, but then a portion of a holding's warriors monitor the slaves to prevent revolt.

Holders

This class is composed of the technicians, nurses, cooks, farmers, and other non-combat roles. They are responsible for maintenance of a tribe's holdfast, labor, construction, and any necessary terraforming.

Stringers

These are the spacefarers and pilots of the tribes, those who control transportation of warbands and settlers between star systems. They also handle the trade among the Tribes of Man. Stringers have a reputation for gaudy attire and equipment. They can be just as touchy as the Warriors in their own way, and are reportedly famous for their love of gambling.

Thralls

Slaves, pure and simple. Depending on the tribe (many tribes abhor slavery), a thrall may be well treated, almost a member of the family, or he may be subjected to abject humiliation. An entire tribe composed entirely of escaped thralls is rumored to exist. Some tribes use brutish, inhuman thralls called "BioDerms," creatures said to be grown in vats instead of born from the loins of humanity. These things are somewhat rare, however.

SETTLEMENT

The Tribes of Man rule over spheres of influence composed of holdings. A "**holding**" refers to a planet controlled by a single tribe. A "**contested holding**" refers to a planet where two or more tribes battle for domination. A "**pax holding**" refers to a planet where multiple tribes have divided the territory by treaty into two or more holdings. A "**ghost holding**" refers to an abandoned planet no longer settled, but still considered in the control of a tribe. *Ghostheld* worlds may have garrisons or bases or mines, but no settled holdfasts.

The complexity of the trans-galactic jumpgate network called the Hyperweb means tribes think of territory less in terms of a volume of space and more as a network of worlds. Each Tribe's holdings form a web of territory within the larger Hyperweb. They tend to be contiguous, except when the fortunes of war separate one net of holdings from another. While it is more accurate to refer to the Diamond Sword's "webzone," most tribesfolk speak of "the Diamond Sword territories" or "Sworder holdings."

Holdfast

(aka Hold, Toring [SW], Polis, Vár [CoP], Arx, Chapterhouse [BE], Sentaken, Tazan, Chuo [DS])

Holdfasts are settlements where the Tribes of Man make their homes and raise their crops and families. Since terraforming and agricultural conditions are primitive enough to limit food production, holdfasts typically stock up on fundamentals in case of a siege. This wealth makes them attractive targets for raiders.

There are comfortable quarters in holdfasts, though greater effort goes into making attractive common areas for the tribesfolk to gather in. A heavy deployment of autoturrets and guards defend holdfasts. Holdfasts typically consist of a central stronghold, sentry posts, a landing pad for dropships, and a surrounding city or town. Other holdfasts may indeed be a city with several smaller citadels. However, if a settlement lacks any citadel fortification, it cannot properly be called a holdfast.

Each of the Four has its own customs and outlook regarding holdfasts. Though “holdfast” is a universal term throughout the wilderzone, the Four also substitute or add unique terms that fit within their particular culture. The Starwolf add “Toring” after a holdfast’s name if it is the primary settlement on a world and has a Thane in residence. The Children of Phoenix add Vár as a suffix to any holdfast where a Wing is stationed. The Blood Eagle add Arx as a prefix to their most heavily-fortified holdfasts. The Diamond Sword sometimes add a prefix that fits with the particular facet to which the holdfast is considered “attuned.” Many independents also add their own linguistic twists.

In terms of holdfast planning, the Children of Phoenix prefer wide streets and many public places in their spacious urban grids, whereas the Diamond Sword make theirs more temple-centered and district-oriented. The Blood Eagle maintain a strong fortress at the center of their holdfasts, a place usually called the Chapterhouse, but aside from a few main cross-streets that center on the Chapterhouse, the tribe allows a snarled knotwork of growth with few regulations. The Starwolf vary greatly, but seem to prefer compact settlements with easy access to open spaces and parks. Many Starwolf holdfasts are simply a citadel surrounded by agridomes.

Fortresses (Bases, Bastions)

These are the outposts raised to establish a defensive perimeter around tribal settlements. Tribal honor codes mandate that an invading force attempt to penetrate the fortresses before reaching the holdfasts and attacking the Holder populace. That doesn't always mean engaging. If a raiding group can slip through the defenses, they can honorably lay waste to any holdfasts the raiders find. Honor only requires that they not drop directly on the holdfast. Instead, they must begin outside the defensive ring. If the invaders cannot detect a defensive ring, custom requires they drop at least three kilometers from their target. Tribal mobility is so great that holdfasts would never be safe otherwise.

Fraytowns

The most populous holdings sometimes support a patchwork cluster of businesses and residences located outside the largest holdfasts. These so-called “fraytowns” hold non-tribe settlers, traders, and frays of all kinds. A fraytown provides a locale for commerce to take place without violating

the security of the holdfast itself. The bazaars, souks, and cantinas of a typical fraytown are a good place for mercenaries and other outsiders to advertise their services. If the holdfast can be likened to a castle, a fraytown is akin to the village that lies under the castle's shadow.

Camps

Camps are field outposts for tribal patrols. They usually have a perimeter picket line of sensors and autoturrets, unless the warriors are trying to move extremely swiftly and stealthily.

Building Materials

Tribes most commonly build with prefabricated slabs of teralloy or stahlplast; antigrav machinery and nanotech constructor sequences allow permanent prefab structures to be raised quickly. These buildings typically appear somewhat crude and blocky. They're built to be durable and defensible, not comfortable. However, tribal architects often set holdfasts and fortresses into cliffsides or mountain slopes, and in these settlements, the additional excavation allows leeway for considerations of comfort.

POPULATION

The Tribes of Man are spread across hundreds of worlds that span the wilderzone. Despite the great distances and the relative wealth of worlds, the tribal population remains relatively small, and the wilderzone is a sparsely populated region. The Four major tribes number only between twenty and thirty million in total population, whereas most of the independent tribes have populations of under 100,000.

No one has successfully executed a census of the wilderzone, but estimates by Imperial sociologists place the total human population at approximately 100 million. Reasons for the low numbers are twofold, as with all population trends: a low birth rate combined with a relatively high mortality rate. The population of the wilderzone grows only at a snail's pace. Two major factors keep mortality rates high in the wilderzone: **(1)** the martial culture and constant raiding, and **(2)** Xeno-pox.

Low Birth Rates

Most hard labor is done by thralls, robots, and entek, so there is little need for many children to provide workers. In addition, the warrior culture permits female warriors, and practical necessity requires these women to take either oaths of chastity or contraceptive implants. No leader wants soldiers off-duty due to pregnancy. Inevitably, the result of allowing women to take combat positions means a delay in having families, even if many women later give birth to several children.

A State of War

The constant conflict in the wilderzone means there are always raids or small-scale wars going on. Ritual warfare like the famous Flag Contests keeps collateral damage to a minimum, but still results in death of warriors who could become parents. The potential devastation of a large-scale war could cripple even the larger tribes with high casualties.

Xeno-pox

Another factor that keeps wilderzone populations under control is the spread of viral

microorganisms from world to world. Few quarantines exist in the wilderzone, and even with panimmunity treatments, epidemics are almost as common as they were in the preindustrial days on old Earth. Medical technology is much better than it was then, of course, but the time required to implement a solution still means a fast-moving virus can decimate a small holding. Some worlds have fallen silent in a matter of days.

These scenarios represent the worst cases. The greatest impact of the epidemics is a dramatic increase in infant mortality rates, which in turn hinders population growth in the wilderzone. Tribals call this fact of life “Xeno-pox.” Traders and most tribals do take precautions, but nothing has completely eliminated the danger.

TERRAFORMING

A higher-than-predicted number of jumpgates (see [Hyperweb](#), below) connect terrestrial worlds, worlds that are already capable of supporting human life. Terraforming in those typically involves bringing in soil with the appropriate microorganisms, and then killing off any harmful indigenous lifeforms that threaten settlements. The tribes push deeper into unexplored regions of the Hyperweb, searching for new worlds to serve as population bases and sources of wealth.

A WARRIOR SOCIETY

Tribal life and culture revolves around the glorification of the military. The constant struggle for resources and worlds has forged a tough and deadly warrior class. Leaders and tribal chiefs are almost always famous warriors; the culture bears a strong parallel to the feudal period on ancient Earth, or even far more distant past of Homeric Greece. The fluid, mobile raids typical of tribal warfare and the extension of the Imperial honor system to the diffuse clan culture of the various tribes have forged a unique society.

Warnoms

Tribal warriors customarily — but not always — take *warnoms*. A warnom is simply a colorful callsign that operates as a handle on the battlefield. Some warriors become so well known that they go solely by their warnom, with only their intimate friends using their birthnoms. Warnoms are bestowed in a variety of ways. Some warriors choose their own names, others receive names from their superiors or from the senior warrior in their first unit. By tradition, a newblood becomes eligible for a warnom only after performing some notable deed on the field of battle. It need not be a heroic deed, but should represent the “blooding” of the warrior to real combat. For that reason, a warnom is also called the “bloodnom,” though that is a far rarer term.

Armor and Honor

In the early days of tribal battle, winners stripped equipment and salvage from the losers. As time passed, the reasons for defense of a fallen comrade and her gear shifted from practicality to honor. Now some of the fiercest fighting in a tribal battle may be over a body. Stripping the gear of a fallen foe is considered a victory in itself. Likewise, defending a fallen comrade from being plundered maintains the honor of the tribe. Some warriors wear trophies of their kills, using weapons and armor parts taken from other tribes.

The Role of Women

Except in a few tribes dominated by matriarchal rulers, most tribes adopt an egalitarian ethic.

With the equalizing effect of powered armor, there is no rationale for women not fighting, especially since every blaster counts in the wilderzone. Indeed, most of the best warriors among the Tribes of Man are female. However, the practical need to keep up population levels means many women retire from the battlefield to bear children. In that case, they take up defense of the holdfast.

Imperials who come from a planet with male-dominant cultures are like fish out of water among the tribes. Tribal women have a reputation for being forward from an Imperial perspective. The tribes consider sexual relations a matter of individual choice. The only real constraint is maintaining the honor of the family and the tribe. Another consideration is not stumbling into the middle of someone's blood feud, since lovers often become secondary targets in the grim wars of vengeance that break out in the wilderzone.

Martial Honor

Prowess in battle is the primary measure of honor, though the greatest honor typically goes to successful commanders. Nearly everyone is armed, and everyone in a tribe knows who outranks whom. Even in tribes that use a loose hierarchy, there exists this sense of division between "commanders" and "grunts." Elevation depends on combat competence initially, then derives from tactical skill, then proven strategic aptitude and command potential.

Differences of opinion may be settled by duel or by adjudication. Tribes tend to be practical so long as honor is not involved. Personal honor is extremely important in the frontier societies of the tribes. A warrior's word must often serve as bond; there are no Imperial courts and contracts used. This custom does not mean the Tribes of Man are ignorant or illiterate. Records are kept of transactions, and all warriors are expected to read. However, the bond of honor comes from the spoken oath, not electronic chits in a clipboard's memory.

When engaging the enemy, anything is allowed. Only when a challenge sets particular limits does personal combat shift to a restricted format. These duels of honor may occur in close proximity with hand-to-hand weapons, with or without armor, or they may take place across sweeping terrain as each warrior stalks the other with spinfusor and laser rifle.

The primary motivation behind tribal war is raiding for technology, honor, or territory. Since multiple tribes on a particular world typically engage in severe raiding, some tribes have adopted a zero tolerance policy for intruders on their worlds, and respond to any incursion by mustering maximum force and mounting a full-scale assault.

FAMILY TIES

Kinship ties are extremely important, but most tribesmen and women travel extensively. One reason is the constant raiding, but another reason is to seek out mates and lovers. The sparse population of many holds encourages a tribe's various branches to mingle. Cross-tribal marriages are common, with the marriage negotiation settling in advance which tribe the couple will settle among. The practical effect of marriage is to keep members of some families from fighting one another. For example, if Hektira of the Gorgon Killers marries Valevan of the Ancient Rage, they may agree to live among the Gorgon Killers. Valevan is honor-bound to function as a Gorgon Killer in every conflict except with those of his original tribe (battles in which he may

decline to participate). His family in Ancient Rage and his holdfast in Gorgon Killers will typically try not to raid or battle one another. If a couple separates, each returns to the original tribe.

TRAINING

Physical fitness is necessary among the Tribes of Man. Though the battle armor enhances strength, speed, and mobility, it does nothing for stamina. Consequently, the tribes place great emphasis on physical conditioning as a necessary component of warrior training. Think a combination of track and field and Highland games. Long distance races and athletic competitions are almost as important as weapons training and tactical drills. One reason the tribes hold a scornful attitude toward the Empire is the typical lack of such conditioning in Imperial citizens visiting the wilderzone.

THE TENETS OF HARABEC

The Children of Phoenix drew up the Tenets in an effort to set some controls on the scale of tribal conflict, as well as to provide the Tribes of Man with a set of laws for resolving disputes. Some tribes, such as the Blood Eagle, flout the Tenets openly, but other tribes follow them closely. The major Tenets are:

- **Challenge Honorably.** When duels take place, the challenged chooses weapons. The challenger sets the time. Each combatant must select approximately the same level of weapon, i.e., not bring a gun to a knife fight. Either party may waive his or her rights (may choose to take a knife to a gunfight). Unless provoked, it is dishonorable for a superior warrior to challenge those of lesser status. It is also dishonorable for a lesser status warrior to challenge far above her station unless the provocation was severe. Victory over an opponent who uses superior equipment earns the victor great renown.
- **Accept Honorable Surrender.** When a warrior throws down his/her arms, that warrior's surrender should be construed and accepted as an Oath to cease resistance. As a practical matter, however, tribes view surrender as cowardly unless terms are offered first. The Blood Eagle maintain that any surrender is dishonorable, but they accept "cessation of hostilities" with warriors who have fought honorably enough to earn their respect, and they have "ceased fire" themselves when permitted to save face. Payment of ransom customarily redeems prisoners to their tribe.
- **Torture of prisoners is dishonorable.** This tenet is widely ignored by many tribes that frequently use torture to extract information from prisoners. The Blood Eagle use it as a test of courage for some captives and for those of its own warriors who seek to regain their honor through a display of fortitude. Contrary to reputation, the butchers' grisly customs use dead bodies — with rare exceptions.
- **Submit disputes to the elders of the Tribe.** Practically speaking, this Tenet is ignored where honor is sufficiently involved.
- **Slay warriors in battle, spare the innocent.** One of the cardinal rules of tribal war is that warriors fight warriors. Surprise raids are allowed, but wanton slaying of non-combatants is considered vile and dishonorable. This rule often falls prey to the problem that nearly everyone is a trained fighter. During planetary invasions, the level of resistance is so high that virtually the entire populace functions as warriors. During raids and invasions, the custom is to have the invading warriors seek out and engage the enemy

warriors first. Only Pirates drop onto villages and holdfasts and avoid confrontation.

- **Remember the suffering of our Ancestors on Terra. Do not tolerate the existence of Cybrids. Do not destroy the ability of Man to make any planet a home.** This rule forbids the use of ecocidal weapons and other strategic weapons of mass destruction on any inhabitable planet. Biological warfare is forbidden. All tribes are expected to unite against Cybrid attack, though the Cybrids have never ventured into the wilderzone and appear to have all but disappeared from human ken.

"Without the Tenets, we'd be nothing but rabble."

- Kellion Hasekawa, Diamond Sword Ku-Mori-Soumon

Virtues among the Tribes of Man

Courage, generosity, courtesy, honor, martial prowess, hospitality, wit, eloquence, and a sense of humor are all prized qualities. Tribesmen who display knowledge of art, history, and craftsmanship also receive respect.

THE TRIBELESS

There are those who do not belong to any Tribe, but who wander the stars from hearth to hearth, taking news and trade down string and fray, sometimes sowing mischief or carrying dark secrets. Because these tribeless people are outside the social fabric, the Tribes of Man refer to them as "the Frayed" or "frays." There are wild rumors that the Frayed have begun to form their own tribe, a diffuse brotherhood of sorts, but this has not been confirmed. Below are listed the major fray groups, in rough order of their social standing from the tribal point of view.

Free Traders

Free traders are the lifeblood of tribal commerce. They are often on friendly terms with tribal Stringers. Some are Imperial citizens, but they all share a rough independence and canny judgment. Traders have to be tough and strong. The weak ones vanish, victim to pirates or tribal raiders. Many have earned respect from the Tribes of Man.

Scholars

Wise men and women in search of the answers to great secrets also travel extensively in the wilderzone, exploring alien ruins, surveying newly discovered planets and stars, or studying the ways of various tribes. Some tribes even sponsor scholar expeditions as a way to gain prestige (and possibly new knowledge the other tribes lack). Many scholars come from the Empire.

Minstrels/Jongleurs

Wandering musicians bring song and story to the various settlements scattered throughout tribal space. Most minstrels remain with the tribe of their birth, but some quit their tribes and begin a life of wandering and exile. Reasons vary. Some minstrels serve as spies, though this occurs rarely, and most tribes take care not to allow visiting minstrels to obtain any useful intelligence. Other minstrels accept exile as punishment for a crime against the tribe. A few leave their tribe for political reasons following a leadership dispute. Minstrels are sworn to neutrality, and any harm done them absent strong evidence of spying tarnishes the honor of the host. True minstrels are well-respected in the wilderzone.

"Thank you for the honor of your hospitality, warriors. Let me tell you the story of

Ranarkin Soulstain, and how he fought off a Children of Phoenix company at El Cid, in the Beta Janus system."

- Besicca James, Jongleur

Mercenaries

Some bands of warriors become mercenaries, selling their skills for payment. They are not fully trusted by tribesmen, though more for reasons of prudence. At the end of a contract period, mercenary groups may go to work for an enemy, so wise leaders limit what the mercenaries learn. During a contract, mercenaries are considered as reliable on the field as any tribesman; treacherous merc groups are cast out and hunted down like dogs.

Fraytowners

These tribeless people settle around a particular holdfast. They often provide a center for commerce and profit for the controlling holding, so they are tolerated as a necessary evil. When the local tribe moves on, sometimes the Fraytowners go with them; at other times, they stay and try to build their community into a true city — assuming another tribe does not take control of the holding.

The Broken Ones

These poor souls are those who have left their tribes for reasons of broken honor and do not have the talent or inclination to become a Frayed Minstrel, a Free Trader or a Scholar. Instead, they wander as solitary mercenaries, ronin who hope to redeem themselves in battle. Fierce warriors, Broken Ones are only useful in certain situations. They usually do not take orders well, and their past leaves them burdened with guilt or self-loathing. Most tribesmen look upon a Broken One with a mixture of pity and scorn, and regard them as one might a savage, barely-trained dog.

Grievors

Originally dispossessed scavengers who picked over battlefields and mourned the dead in the aftermath of the Cybrid Wars, the so-called "grievors" have evolved into loose clans of pirates and smugglers by the 40th century. Some griever bands are mere traders and scavengers, the gypsies of the wilderzone who are a common sight in fraytown bazaars and auctions. Others — called *peshtûl* by the "true Grievors" — are composed of tribal outcasts and murderers who turn to outright piracy.

Imperials claim they cannot tell the difference between piratical Grievors and tribal raiders. The Tribes of Man know the distinction is simple: Grievors have no honor. They raid and kill indiscriminately, like maddened beasts. The Tenets of Harabec do not apply to Grievors. Nevertheless, those tribals who treat Grievors well may win themselves valuable and useful allies, for the Grievors have contacts across the wilderzone and accumulate much gossip and interesting data.

4. THE EMPIRE

The Tribes of Man have a complex relationship with the rest of the Empire. Contrary to popular Imperial holovids that portray the Tribes either as ferocious barbarians or noble, free savages, the reality is that most tribes consider themselves a breakaway part of the Empire. However, most tribes also hold a deep contempt for what they see as a bloated society that fosters weakness and

dependence in its people. The lawlessness of the wilderzone is freedom to the tribesman, but anarchy to the average Imperial.

TECHNOLOGY

Imperial technology far outstrips what the Tribes of Man have. Imperial military might is far superior to Tribal capabilities. However, the tribes have developed the most mobile infantry in human history. An apt historical analogy for the relationship of the tribes to the Imperial Legions and Navy might be the Apache light horse in the nineteenth century. The advanced nations of Earth at that time could field cannon, mortars, heavy cavalry, infantry, gatling guns, and ironclad naval vessels, as well as far superior troop numbers. The Empire also possesses superior aerospace capability, grav tanks, medical technology, and other advanced technologies. If the Great Human Empire of Terra ever chose to go to war against the Tribes of Man, the outcome would be certain. The Tribes would undoubtedly make the war a bloody, lingering, extremely costly affair for the Imperial Legions, but in the end, they would not prevail.

Hercs still exist in the 40th century, though they have much changed from the 29th century days of Starsiege. Modern Imperial Hercs are equipped with antigrav components and fast-twitch exo-muscle systems of polybraided neurocrystal. They are far more nimble than the antique models, and they wield incredible firepower. However, the most common armored vehicle in the Imperial Legions is the far cheaper and more easily piloted grav tank.

POLITICS

The Empire has a base in the wilderzone, ostensibly to provide Imperial law to the "tribal sector." However, outside the base's immediate zone of control, the Empire has essentially no voice. The Legate, as she or he is called (to reflect a status of ambassador, not governor), offers arbitration services and provides a neutral territory for the Tribes to use for meetings. The Four have a presence on the Imperial planet, though the Starwolf and Diamond Sword groups are merely token emissaries there to observe. The Children of Phoenix and the Blood Eagle compose the main tribal presence here. The Blood Eagle remain unusually quiet, and treat the Legate with courtesy despite having little respect for the Imperial garrison. The Children maintain a strong, diplomatic stance, and offer themselves as advisors on the vicissitudes of the wilderzone.

The Empress

The current ruler of the Great Human Empire of Terra is Her Imperial Majesty Catherine Solontha Lewis VI. She is 29 years old, still unmarried and without heir. She is said to be incredibly beautiful, though some stories paint her as tragically disfigured and claim the holos of her unblemished face are fakes. Her nickname among the Imperial military is "The Lioness."

On the advice of the current Legate, Empress Catherine has not demanded tribute from the wilderzone. She reportedly devotes all her energies to battling the Scourge. Many songs and jokes feature the Empress. Only the Blood Eagle and the Diamond Sword tribes refrain from any of the latter. The characteristically calm Diamond Sword have even fought duels against those whose jests portray the Empress in a vulgar or utterly demeaning light.

"The Empire's soft, all right, but this girl's got claws. Don't insult her name in front of me, hear?"

TRADE

Imperial trade is sporadic, since the Tribes of Man have little the Empire desires beyond some raw materials or unusual works of tribal art. Nevertheless, many free traders have vast networks in the wilderzone, doing brisk business between the Tribes themselves and between Imperial corporations and the Tribes.

THE SCOURGE

The Empire is at war. Reports vary, but the Empire apparently struggles against a merciless foe, one that threatens the heart of Sol itself. The enemy is the Scourge, a revolution by humanity's artificially bred servants, the BioDerms. Originally cyborgs created from convicted criminals in the 27th century, BioDerms referred to a vat-grown artificial humanoid by the 32nd century. By the 38th century, genetic engineering rendered form only remotely human. For centuries, they were the slaves of humanity, but finally, under the leadership of an exceptionally charismatic member of their kind, they revolted against the Empire.

The Legate and the Imperial garrison seem calm enough. However, reports from an ongoing trickle of refugees tell a story different than the Imperial media line. The Minstrels sing tales of crushing defeat deep within the Empire, and whisper stories of desperate battle.

THE KEPLER MARCH

The Tribes consider themselves part of the Empire, but they also resist any incursion by the soft side of Imperial civilization. The Children of Phoenix have skirmished with Imperial troops over the Kepler system and its Starburst jumpgate for centuries. Imperial settlers currently hold the Kepler system, seemingly at the whim of the Children of Phoenix. Given the growing number of war refugees coming into Kepler and the protective stance of the Children's Hell Lantern sub-tribe, some observers argue a quid pro quo has been reached between the Phoenix Prime and the Empire.

5. WILDERZONE TECHNOLOGY

In general, tribal technology lags behind that of the Empire. The tribes favor durable and mobile materials that can permit quick deployment and repair. Anything that requires extensive training and resources to maintain is considered a drag on the tribe. Still, there are startling contrasts. A tribesman may heal himself with a nanotech spray one moment and ride off on his lumbering Hve'Sphinx the next.

JUMPGATES AND THE HYPERWEB

The discovery of artificial wormholes called jumpgates triggered the *Diaspora*, the great exodus of humanity that ultimately formed the Tribes. The structures that afford entrance and egress to the wormholes not natural, the jumpgates' origin remains a mystery, although some religious cults whisper fearfully of the Masters and an apocalyptic reckoning.

Jumpgates allow near-instantaneous transfer across interstellar distances. Not all jumpgates are created equal, however. Some lead to only one exit point, whereas others have many possible destinations. A destination is referred to as a "thread." Through precise quantum-field manipulation, specially equipped "spindleships" weave a coherent exit point in any jumpgate, allowing travelers to select destinations when using the more thread-gifted jumpgates. A jumpgate's location in the web and the number of threads it possesses contribute to its importance.

- **Starburst** jumpgates boast six or more threads. These are highly sought-after locations, the rarest and most-prized class. One in twenty jumpgates is a Starburst. One in fifty Starbursts is a Grand Starburst, with twelve or more threads.
- **Cardinal** jumpgates have more than two but fewer than six threads or establish a particularly distant or long-term, strategically important threads. Cardinals are uncommon; four out of twenty jumpgates belong to this class.
- **Open** jumpgates possess two threads, allowing "entry" and "exit" to no more than two stars. This group is the largest of the four classes. Nine out of twenty jumpgates qualify as Open.
- **Terminal** jumpgates have but one thread and represent dead ends in the larger Hyperweb. The worlds or settlements located at the end of these "frayed" threads are called "frays," a slang pun that also refers to the type of battles said to occur on these worlds. Approximately seven of twenty gates are Terminal.

The Hyperweb

Jumpgates stretch through the galaxy like a spider's web, some threads travelling far longer than others. This vast network was dubbed the *Hyperweb*, a term that originally referred to the ancient Imperial communications network.

The known threads of the Hyperweb include the following classifications:

- **Grand Axis** - A thread that connects two Starbursts across distances greater than 10,000 light years.
- **Axis** - A thread that connects two star systems across distances greater than 10,000 light

years.

- **Thread** - The standard connection between two jumpgates.
- **Fray** - A thread that leads to a Terminal gate.

The types thread connection include:

- **String** - A linear series of threads. Another common slang term for jumpgate travel is "stringing" or "riding the string(s)." Likewise, career space travelers are called "stringriders" or "stringers."
- **Trailing** - A string with branching Frays.
- **Unravel** - A string that ends in a Fray.

The types of networks created by thread connection include:

- **Lattice** - A network of star systems that forms a tightly linked region in the Hyperweb. Lattices typically exist around a high concentration of Cardinals or a Starburst.
- **Tuft** - A Lattice that expands from the end of a single string and has no other connection to the Hyperweb aside from that one string. Also referred to as *Plugzone* or a *Shatter*.
- **Snarl** - Where two or more lattices intertwine with no direct jumpgate connection or intersection between them. Grav-warp travel from one lattice to another may be possible between stars that lie particularly close together. *Fluxstorms* occur in what appear to be damaged threads, increasing the risk of jumps through them. Fluxstorms usually happen in Snarls.

"Yeah, rode the Hellcrest Axis to Bira Marduk, out in the McCrae Lattice. From there, we followed the Tsuni-Ko Trailing out to Meridian. Then we tucked up into Avachel's Shatter and went to ground at Ogden-Ur. Hell of a trip, I can tell you. The Shatter has a few bad snarls in it, and we hit a fluxstorm on the Abanax thread. Blew one of our spindle arrays. If we hadn't had our backup ready, we'd be spread all through the Web by now. The Great Wolf was with us."

- Cinderion Riley, Starwolf Stringer

POWER GENERATION

Tribal settlements obtain their power from two archaic sources: photovoltaic solar cells and reliable cool-fusion generators. By no means state-of-the-art compared to Imperial engineering, these provide all the power the tribes need, producing little in the way of excess heat or environmental damage. Both types of device incorporate standard superconducting material, and are portable. When a tribe leaves for a new home, it pulls up all the power generators first, along with water filtration systems and agricultural plasm.

ARMOR

The Tribes of Man rely on powered armor equipped with integral superconducting batteries, phased-shield generators, and nano-threaded exo-muscle weave. Typical material is a fusion of advanced alloys and polycarbons that produces enormous tensile strength, hardness, and heat resistance. Each armor generates a flickering shield aura that cycles perhaps a thousand times per second. This aura provides the primary component of an armor's protection. Excessive damage to

the aura overloads parts of the shield array and reduces the shield's strength. Nano-repair of armor specifically prioritizes restoration of damaged shield arrays. When the shield drops, death usually follows immediately after, unless the warrior is very lucky. Tribal weapons are designed to penetrate shields and advanced armor, and are more than sufficient to kill an unarmored human being with one hit. Some warriors choose to enhance their shields through supplementary modules.

The armor itself does add protection, chiefly in deflecting damage that penetrates the shield aura. The heavier the armor, the larger the shield array it can support. Otherwise, armor's role is to provide strength and mobility. The nano-thread flexors grant enhanced strength, whereas an antigravity mesh and thrusters give the Tribal warrior unparalleled personal maneuverability. The T-grav components in armor and in many weapons themselves allow a warrior to maneuver an ungainly weapon easily with one hand, keeping the other hand free for other tasks.

Armor is a very important part of Tribal culture, both for its military value and its symbolic worth. Minor raids have escalated into ferocious battles as warriors battle to keep the armor of a fallen comrade. The victor will strip the armor later and either add it to her Tribe's plunder or return it to the dead warrior's family.

WEAPONRY

Tribal weapons are extremely powerful for their size. Most are advanced models of designs created centuries earlier by the Empire. Not much progress occurs in Tribal weaponsmithing. Gunsmiths receive honor for crafting reliable or esthetically pleasing weapons. Weapons containing some improvement of balance, sighting, or accuracy are prized, but overall, the Tribes of Man hand their weapons down through the generations, carefully maintained and honored with names and histories. A few tribes, such as the *Forge of Hephaestus*, specialize in smithing and weaponcraft, and engage more in commerce than in battle. Famous Gunsmith families include the Telamon of the *Photonic Horsemen* and the Sabot-Styx of the *Blood Eagle*.

VEHICLES

The Tribes of Man use a variety of transports, ranging from sleek grav attack speeders and APCs to tracked gun platforms to riding beasts. Even given the incredible mobility of the armored warriors, vehicles offer greater speed or altitude, more protection, or heavier weapons. Most transportation is mechanical, but animal use is common in some holdings. For example, the agile bipedal beasts called *Chakrunners* offer the advantage of a trained steed able to react quickly and independently in the midst of tribal skirmishes. They are rarely used in tribal raids, however, due to the difficulty of transporting them across light-years to a target planet.

"One of the Scar Captains wanted to bring a squad's worth of Chaks along, and you can bet the pilots threw a starkissin' fit. 'No way we're gonna turn our dropship holds into stables,' they said. Turned out the raiders seized cattle from the Sworders on Oberon's Veldt, so the Dee-ships had to be hosed out when they got back, anyway."

- Abrazos Genn, Children of Phoenix Tanar

MEDICINE

Tribal field medicine is nanotech-based, using "knitterbeams" to project dedicated "nanodocs"

onto injuries together with an analgesic mist. The nanodocs use dead skin, plaque, hair, and other material to close wounds and regenerate tissue. Though the Four have access to nanodoc production, many other tribes do not. Medical resources are a principal target of raids, and destruction of an opponent's nanodocs carries nearly as high a priority as destruction of nano-repair devices.

Drugs and other medical materials are in sporadic supply. Most tribal medicine involves dealing with battlefield injuries. It is highly advanced in terms of tissue regeneration and shock treatment. Otherwise, tribal medicine is not far removed from late twentieth century levels. Only the larger tribes have facilities to train new doctors. Some Imperial-trained doctors have settled among the Tribes of Man, but these are rare.

CYBERNETICS

The same technology that makes the powered armor possible makes cybernetic limbs and other implants possible. However, the Tribes maintain few advanced medical facilities compared to the Empire, and neurosurgery facilities on most worlds are generally quite primitive. Thus, only cruder implants are commonly performed, such as limb replacement, limited subdermal armor, HUD links, and the like. Deep conversions and neural remappings are not within the province of most tribal technology.

GENENGINEERING

The strong live, the weak die. The Tribes of Man do not manipulate the Original Plasm, except to bolster immune systems or assist healing. Instead, they concentrate on breeding strong children and training them well.

COMMUNICATION

Radio communications represent the predominant transmissions among the Tribes of Man. The larger tribes possess a number of transcomms that use quantum reed technology for faster-than-light communication, but these are somewhat uncommon since Q-reed manufacture is an art lost to the tribes. Existing transcomms are obtained through trade with the Empire or through taking them from Imperial outposts. The Children of Phoenix are said to have seized a large number of transcomms from the Imperials in the Kepler systems.

INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL AND DROPSHIPS

Spindleships travel the Hyperweb between stars. Starships use the gravity warping Xavier-Ryu drive to move between star systems off the Hyperweb. Warp travel functions by orders of magnitude more slowly, travelling at a maximum speed of a parsec (3.25 ly) per week. Once in a star system, strikeships, troopships and landers (collectively "dropships") transfer personnel to a planet's surface.

COMPUTERS

Computers are typically tiny in the tribal era, most of their size remaining for ergonomic purposes only. Interfaces utilize advanced neural conduction with holographic icons and displays. Storage occurs on the molecular level in wilderzone units, and is said to have reached the subatomic level in current Imperial technology. Portable storage occurs in "shards," which are picocrystal matrices embedded in a synthex cover, typically comparable in size to an

inch-long toothpick, though the actual matrix cluster matches the size of a pinhead.

T-GRAV

Anti-gravity technology is commonplace, and can be made small enough to float something as small as a porcelain vase, though most tribals see such use as ostentatious and frivolous. Tribal armors incorporate T-grav components and stabilizers.

6. SLANG

N.B.: All the usual swearwords and slang terms are part of the TRIBES Universe. However, the Tribes of Man have their own particular slang and cusswords for those who wish to avoid "real world" swearing.

Ayia: Emphasis word, usually added at the end of a sentence. (“*Should be easy, ayia?*”) Also used as an exclamation. (“*Ayia! They’ve got us pinned!*”) Also an affirmation, like sure, OK, yeah. (“*Ayia, I can do that.*”)

Battle-rattle: Powered armor.

Bitch, The: Vulgar term for the Great Wolf. Strangely enough, it’s a uniquely Starwolf term rarely used by other tribes.

Bleed, The: Slang term for the “command circuit” used in powered armors.

Butchers, butcherboys: Blood Eagle.

Carps, crabs, redboots, stickers: Blood Eagle security (*Order of the Cardinal Spear*).

Catchers: Counter-Intel or border security agents with the power to arrest.

CC: Command Circuit, also term for “Roger, acknowledged.”

Clunkers: Hercs.

Cube, cubed: Cool, or a lot. (“*That’s totally cube.*” “*There were butcherboys cubed all over the plaza.*”) Comes from the mathematical term to cube a property, e.g., 2³.

Cube that: Affirmation, sure, OK, absolutely.

Cut an eagle: Finish things with finality.

Gate: To use a jumpgate.

Hop, Hopper: Medium (hoplite) armor. Also used to mean movement in armor using the on-board jets, e.g., “Ferox, you and Chill hop over to the ridgeline and scan the far side.”

Hunchin’: Cussword. Vulgar, vaguely sexual epithet used as an adjective/adverb.

Hypercast: A reference to the radio arrays that beam signals through jumpgates, the most common form of interstellar communication. Also called “hype,” as in “we hyped the message to Bira Marduk.”

Jimmies, the Juma, pathcops, pure-pukes: Diamond Sword security (from *Junshin-Masamichi*, the “Correct Path to Purity.”).

Lac: (1) Short for “Neolac,” the dialect of Cantonese-influenced Anglic spoken in the wilderzone. (2) A vaguely great number, such as “*a lac of sheks*.”

Lice: General term for Imperial military. Said to be an ancient insult.

Mock the wolf to her face: Do something foolish.

Newblood: Newbie warrior.

Pop: Kill.

Popjell: What's left of a body after a mortar or direct spinfusor hit.

Q-Reed: FTL communication device, the “quantum reed.” Also “squirt.”

Scan: OK, to check stuff out, to understand, e.g., “*I scan you, brother*,” or “*It scans fine*,” or just “*Scan*.”

Scrof, scroffing: General-purpose swearword. Comes from skin pustules some settlers got from alien microorganisms.

Sharp: Good, ready, prepared. Originally “when the knife is sharp enough, you cut,” this expression has shortened drastically. Sometimes used as an mild cussword.

Sheks: Money, cash. From “shekels,” the unit of currency used in the wilderzone.

Shell: Powered armor. Also known as “*hardshell*,” “*armor*,” or simply “*suit*.”

Skads, SVD, the Clap: Starwolf security (from *Skaduvarg Directorate*). Skaduvarg means “Shadow Wolf” in an Old Terran dialect. However, some say it stands for “Security and Counter-Intel Directorate and Variance Guardians.”

Slug: Heavy (myrmidon armor).

Slide, spin: To travel to another star.

Squik: Kill. An ancient term said to have been coined by Harabec himself. That's why it's still around. Also a universal swearword.

Starkissin’: Cussword. Mild, the equivalent to “darn.” Bad, lousy, or awesome, depending on context. Also sometimes used as a mild emphasis.

Stinksuit: The skintight layer of entek-impregnated clothing commonly worn under a powered armor to recycle bodily fluids and prevent chafing.

String, stringing: To travel the Hyperweb’s “strings.” Usually used by tribal stringers. Also known as “threading.”

Synner(s): Synthrall(s).

Talking to a sword: Doing something pointless.

Threadbare: Isolated, no way out, not many options. (“*Situation’s threadbare, sir!*”)

Tin, tinny: Light (peltast) armor.

When Phoenix wakes: When Hell freezes over. With more devout tribes, however, this means “when the reckoning comes.”

Wings, EGV, the Vuur, e-gees, flappers, hotbirds: Children of Phoenix security (from *Erényr Gondanokos Vuur*). The name is said to mean “Bright Guardians of Virtue.” The nickname “wings” comes from the winged badges carried by EGV personnel.

7. CALENDAR

The Tribes of Man have adopted a variant of the Empire's Current Era calendar, which is based on the old Anno Domini reckoning of Old Earth. Tribal Reckoning, abbreviated "TR," (aka Terran Reckoning) retains the 24 hour Terran day and the 365 day Terran year. However, that is where the similarity ends. Each of the eighteen TR months consists of twenty days, and a five-day festival called **Convergence** falls at the end of the year. The parentheses contain the short form of the month's name for less formal use. The colorful tribal calendar terms are supposed to have come from Phoenix himself, who desired to break with the sterile, overly precise version of the Imperial calendar, which by the time of the Cybrid Wars had become purely a decimal number which tracked the year to the ten-thousandth part. Even today, Imperials prefer to use their chronometers and reckon their year purely numerically. Common Imperial custom still retains days of the week, but all other calendar references have been outmoded.

1. **Jeweled Door (Jewel)** - Month of Openings. This is an auspicious time for swearing oaths of allegiance or making great decisions.
2. **Burning Swan (Burn)** - Month of Glory, a time of music and storytelling among the Tribes of Man.
3. **Scarlet Bat (Scar)** - Month of Passion, considered auspicious for young lovers and secrets.
4. **Barbed Knife (Barb)** - Month of Rites, this is the traditional month for newbloods to join their first raids, and for children to become adults.
5. **Shadowed Suns (Suns)** - Month of Silence, considered a holy time by the Diamond Sword.
6. **Jaguar's Hunt (Hunt)** - Month of Vengeance, some say of Justice. Said to be connected to the Immortal called "the Jaguar."
7. **Eagle's Oath (Oath)** - Month of Honor. Curiously, this is said to be an inauspicious time for bloodfeuds, but auspicious for honorable war. The Blood Eagle celebrate their origins during this month, though some outsiders report that these festivities are more akin to a ritual of penitence.
8. **Wolf's Passage (Tail)** - Month of Journeys. Auspicious time for pilgrimages and other travels. During this month, the Starwolf commonly seek the holy places of the Great Wolf and offer newborn children to the elders for naming.
9. **Phoenix Wept (Tears)** - Month of Sorrow. Said to be named for the reaction of the Immortal Harabec at the outbreak of the first war between the Children of Phoenix and the Blood Eagle. The Children of Phoenix consider this a time to rededicate themselves to unification of the Tribes. The *Firetruces* always begin on the first of this month.
10. **Lost Sword (Lost)** - Month of Patience. This is an auspicious time for preparation and planning. The Diamond Sword gather before their philosophers during this period, asking questions and receiving riddles as answers.
11. **Starry Cloak (Cloak)** - Month of Vision, this is an auspicious month for dreamers and mystics. Artists also see this as a time for inspiration and appreciation of beauty.
12. **Void Executioner (Void)** - Month of Vigilance. Tales are told of the ancient Cybrid Wars, and children are frightened with the bogeyman of Prometheus, the great enemy.
13. **Seventh Sky (Sky)** - Month of Prosperity. The Free Traders hold their Great Bazaar on the Imperial Legate's world during this month. The time is considered auspicious for repaying debts, inauspicious for incurring them.

14. **Emperor's Curse (Curse)** - Month of Testing. The name of this month is said to come from the ancient Emperor Petresun I, who some believe still lives as an Immortal. The story says he used his dying breath to pronounce a terrible curse: that humanity would endure ten thousand years of chaos before being found worthy.
15. **Jade Laser (Jade)** - Month of Crafting. This is a month said to be auspicious for the making of weapons or the focusing of purpose. Many tribes call it the Month of War.
16. **Chained Breath (Chain)** - Month of Obedience. This is the time of restraint and of submission to authority. Tribal squads use traditionally use this time for drills that focus on cooperation and precise teamwork.
17. **Cobalt Orb (Orb)** - Month of Remembrance. Also known as the Month of the Rooted Tree, the Tribes of Man take this time to look back to a common origin on Sol III, Mother Terra. Traditional celebrations include gathering to listen to the histories and ancient tales of Earth.
18. **Ashen Scroll (Ashes)** - Month of Endings. This is a good time to complete business, close out affairs, and end feuds (one way or the other).