



# HOUSE HAWKWOOD

(Imperial Dossier series)

A FADING SUNS™ SOURCEBOOK

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## Pilgrims:

*Patience.* This be the virtue of the lioness crouched in the grass, waiting... waiting for her prey and the time to pounce. Thus did the Lion House seize an empire. The plots of the mantis were for nought. The talons of the hawk, too late. To the lion went the spoils.

Endure patience beyond all insult, and the Pancreator will reward thee and damn thy prey.

— Archbishop Lyander, *Address to the Delphian Senate* (sermon delivered in response to the assassination of senate leader Lord Harcourt)

## THE IMPERIAL DOSSIER SERIES

These books examine in-depth the main factions of the **Fading Suns** universe. Each is presented as a primer written by a member of the faction, commissioned by Emperor Alexius' Imperial administration for the education of its members: everyone from diplomats, bureaucrats, soldiers and star-sailors, to Questing Knights and their Cohorts. Scholars of the Imperial Eye, the Emperor's information agency (i.e. spies), serve as editors and have added commentary to correct the primary author's biased perspective (and to drop telling clues about deeper conspiracies and mysteries). Some of these are classified "eyes only" — secret, "behind-the-throne" information.

Each book also includes a "factbook" about a topic closely related to the dossier's faction. These are compiled from multiple sources and edited by the Eye, to prepare Imperial functionaries for dealing with all manner of matters under the rule of the Phoenix Throne. As with the faction primer, these often include classified commentary.

Finally, there's a rules section for players and the gamemaster. These might include new Callings, perks, equipment, NPCs, and even alien creatures.

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# HAWKWOOD: THE LION ROARS

*It has been a generation since the end of the Emperor Wars, and much has changed since my Imperial Survey report on House Hawkwood and its fiefs. We saw then a hemming in of the Empire, by the Vuldrok barbarians on one front and the Kurgan Caliphate on another. Yet now, there has been a partial cessation of Vuldrok incursions with the Emperor's efforts at Hargard, and the Kurgan Wars have reached an unexpected interlude with the closing of their sally point at the Hira jumpgate. Even the war against the symbiots appears to be winding down with our recent victories on Stigmata. All around us, new opportunities open for house and Empire.*

*As Hawkwood influence has expanded abroad, our worlds have undergone radical social and political upheavals unknown for generations. Further, the reemergence of the aggressive and technologically advanced planet, Twilight, nightside from Ravenna, has created both a tempting target for Hawkwood military energies, as well as a near endless source of paranoia.*

*Baron Geoffrey Hawkwood, Gwynneth*

## History

Through its long history, House Hawkwood rose to its position as First House among the Ten through military persistence, diplomatic finesse, and personal honor. Coupled with an unshakable belief in our own destiny, these qualities have seen House Hawkwood through periods of ascendancy and decline, propelling it to the heights of temporal power and preserving it in the face of near disaster. Now with one of our own as emperor, new horizons stretch before us. The stars themselves, it is said, await our next decision. ...

## Origins and the First Republic

But how did we get here? The First Republic, with its own history of discoveries and struggle, was three centuries old when the planet Delphi was discovered in 2395 (about a century after the discovery of the first jumpgate). Rich in needed resources, Delphi swiftly became the focal point for competing corporate and political claims. The ruling powers of the fraying republic sought to hold the new planet under their sway, while break-away elements saw it as a place to seek opportunities unavailable on more-developed worlds.

Bloodshed severed Delphi's ties with the First Republic when revolutionaries stormed the capital city, executing the republican governor. Almost every child raised on a Hawkwood world knows what happened next. How Gervaise Windsor-Hapsburg, heir to a lineage of old Urth pre-spaceflight nobility, brought order to the planet by imprisoning the leaders of the warring factions, but then convinced them to put their grievances aside and serve in his new government. Through clever economic diplomacy, both the revolutionaries and remaining republican elements quickly became dependent on him as he built

his political base. Keeping the lion's share of power among his family and closest confidants, he built a royal legacy. His philosophy of pragmatic idealism was perpetuated by his heirs long after his death.

As our embryonic house gained influence on Delphi, humanity continued to spread. The next planet that would eventually come under Hawkwood influence was Leminkainen. Discovered from Byzantium Secundus (then New Istanbul) in the mid-25th century, Leminkainen was a primordial planet with a yellow sun. From the start, it became a scientific laboratory for the First Republic's wealthiest conglomerates. Details of these years are incomplete, but some of the better-known concerns were Agricorp Interstellar, major mining corps, and Dextrite Medical Interplanetary, which built bio-weapons for various military factions. It was an axiom of the time that Leminkainen did not have citizens, only employees. Agricorp seeded the world with experimental plants and fertilizers, turning it into one of the largest food exporters of the day. This arrangement lasted for over 1,000 years, surviving the dissolution of the First Republic, Diaspora, and much of the Second Republic. Corporate wars took the place of nationalist conflict, making much of Leminkainen a battle zone for centuries.

## Diaspora (2500-3500):

## Exploration and Expansion

As the First Republic crumbled in the early 2500s, newly independent planets engaged in wars of expansion and defense. Delphi's ruling nobles remained mostly aloof, content to consolidate their planetary holdings. Their first foray beyond Delphi was accidental, or providential, when independent explorers

came across Ravenna in the year 2505. The world was the richest mineral find to date, but stormy and hostile. Its severe axial tilt created extremes of hot and cold. Earthquakes wracked the planet's rocky crust and primitive life forms, many inimical to humans, roamed its surface. Along with the Hapsburgs, several other prominent families — including the Hawkwoods (a then rebel family, with their own storied past) and surviving First Republic conglomerates — staked their claims. In 2525 Gervaise's grandson, Sir Robert Hawkwood (born to Gervaise's daughter through marriage into the rebel line), formally founded House Hawkwood, solidifying the family's territorial claims.

As the newly minted lion house consolidated Delphi and expanded its influence on Ravenna in the 26<sup>th</sup> century, a corporate science ship was returning to Delphi from the Ravenna system. Instead of arriving in Delphi, however, the jumpgate delivered the ship's crew to a bizarre binary star system orbited by a fertile forest world. This was Gwynneth, my beloved homeworld, but to these early discoverers it was a deadly enigma. The ship suffered serious navigational problems as it explored the system, and several of its crew members were mysteriously incinerated. The centuries since are a sad testament to what happens when ships get too close to the Paracelsus Belt.

## FIRE IN THE HOLD

*You want to know what I saw?! It all started when we entered that cursed system with its blue and red suns, and those fiery red bones scattered through space like some demons' graveyard. Then we got the strange readings and malfunctioning systems. Navigation, communications, life-support, the works! Computer panels scorched, little at first, accidents. But then monitors belching smoke, access terminals melting into pools of molten metal! Our drinking water exploding and scalding us from our taps! And then fire and shapes! Men and women, sleeping in their bunks, suddenly incinerated and shrieking and running up and down the halls! Chasin' me so as I could help them, but I couldn't! I got out — got in a pod! Saw the whole ship burning in space like a torch! I escaped! Just me! But I'm never going back there again!*

— Star Sailor Jack's report, Second Gwynneth Expedition

The planet, with its strange red and blue shadows, proved more confusing than deadly to the first explorers. Later colonists encountered its more sinister secrets, most notably its original inhabitants, known as rock trolls. Anunnaki ruins were scattered throughout the planet and some remain undiscovered. Settlers and fortune hunters from numerous neighboring planets flooded to the frontier world. The planet's trackless forests made it easy to hide from the authorities. Gwynneth quickly gained a self-perpetuating forest population, many of them pagans who reject outside authority, worshipping instead a false god they call the Queen of Sun and Shadow.

When Sir Robert died in 2610, his daughter, Zenobia Hawkwood, became head of House Hawkwood. A tumultuous political situation greeted her. The space around Ravenna and neighboring planets erupted into conflict between the governing corporations and a resistance movement of Sathraists and other dissidents. The remnants of a rebel fleet fled through Ravenna space, closely pursued by a corporate armada. The ships desperately jumped through the Ravenna jumpgate in the hope of making it to the Gwynneth free zone. Instead, the revolutionaries found themselves in a strange new system containing a hospitable Urthlike planet orbiting a young, white star. The fleet went about setting up a small colony, and Twilight soon became a magnet for dissidents from multiple systems. Despite the chaotic times, Zenobia Hawkwood finally cemented full control of Ravenna through a host of family and business alliances. In less than a century, House Hawkwood had mastered two worlds.

Common citizens, still disenchanted with the fallen republic, were also suspicious of the new noble families. When the Prophet Zebulon first spread his teachings, his philosophies found welcome adherents on Delphi. Yet, this was nothing compared to the religious sensation he caused on Ravenna. The planet's harsh environment bred an apocalyptic furor and its people welcomed his words of salvation with the ardor of true converts. From then on, Ravenna became the most devout of Hawkwood worlds. When the Prophet died on his embassy to the vau, the planet went into deep mourning. One of his most pious followers, Lord Cato Hawkwood, followed the Prophet's lead, taking a ship full of the devout into space and crashing it into the jumpgate. Saint Cato's image remains a prominent fixture in Ravennan stained glass windows. Leminkainen was less receptive to the Prophet's teachings, birthing a bizarre animistic "Universal Mother" philosophy (called Gjarti), which still holds sway there.

In 2849, the Delphian patriarch, Lord Cyprian Hawkwood, pledged his daughter, Analise

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Hawkwood, to wed Fergal ap Llwyn, scion of a powerful colonial family on Gwynneth. On the morning of the ceremony, Analise was discovered dead in her chambers, her throat cut. The intended groom admitted he had received a similar offer of marriage to the sister of Duke Zgismund Decados, along with veiled threats of dire consequences should he refuse the offer. Naively believing the threats hollow, the young noble proceeded with the marriage without sufficiently reporting them. Enraged, Lord Cyprian invaded, defeating the other planetary powers in a bloody war of attrition. Gwynneth became the third world to fly the lion banner, and House Hawkwood never really trusted the Decados again.

Humanity next reeled before the onslaught of a united ur-ukar nation. The ur-ukar sought to sweep humanity from a host of planets, many of which they claimed as their own. Ukar ships bombed Criticorum and concentrated much of their forces on Gwynneth. The ukar seemed to have a special interest in the forest world, making unwholesome alliances with the lumbering rock trolls. Many historians believe the ukari's nearly suicidal obsession for Gwynneth made them waste resources better spent elsewhere.

## Second Republic (3500-4000)

With the rise of the Second Republic in the 35th and 36th centuries, the noble houses embarked on a period of intense diplomatic and social maneuvering to secure their place in this new era. With other institutions now managing interstellar governance and a million new power centers, social trends, and influences — a great, growing raft of technologies,

discoveries, and pleasures to be had in this frequently secular, republican age — nobility struggled for simple relevance and family continuity. Many nobles became party members, patrons of the arts, media stars, and scandals in a time that valued novelty and sensation over the more solid norms of society today. It is said we shouldn't too harshly judge even some of the most frivolous examples from that long-ago era. It is the age we must judge, not our wayward ancestors who had to maneuver such heathen times. Celebrity culture and tabloid fodder were, seemingly often, the best things to which they could aspire.

### RED CARPET

*Here comes Antonius Vivaldi Hawkwood, the "Bright Prince of Delphi," wearing a daring ensemble of peacock feathers and Severan blood gems! While dazzling on the runway here at the new Anschok Pleasure Plaza, he has denied spending almost a third of his planet's fortunes in the casinos of Criticorum! And behind him, is that Lady Caihong? Borne aloft by six oiled and muscular men of her 600 estimated "brother husbands" from her religious compound on Ravenna, she's bound to make a splash at the Republic's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations tonight!*

— Unearthed 3900s holo-doc "Kingz & Queenz of Spaze"



Despite its extremes, that age was not as shallow or benighted as is sometimes claimed. Along with the many Hawkwoods of that era, born to privilege but little responsibility, there were others who put both family name and the serious governing institutions of the Republic at the center of their efforts. Even in an era that largely repudiated the very concept of nobility, Hawkwoods took trusted roles in the civil service and other ministerial positions. Alliances with respected Church families also strengthened the Hawkwood position with that increasingly powerful institution.

Delphi rose to the pinnacle of Second Republic power as a regional, if not truly galactic, power. Still considered nearly perfect in terms of weather and natural surroundings, its people spurned weather control technology; many modern Delphians have come to regret this decision. Pilgrims and tourists crowded Gwynneth to observe its twin suns and majestic haunted forests. Gwynneth architecture was grand and soaring, yet its crystalline agorae and cathedrals never overshadowed the planet's natural beauty. In this age of super-science, Gwynneth created a synthesis of nature and technology to both master and harmonize with the planet.

Twilight became a center of commerce and learning that soon rivaled Delphi. A prime beneficiary of the Republic's progressive philosophies and monetary largesse, Twilight thrived as a liberal democracy and vigorously resisted the growing encroachment of Church power and noble ascent.

Ravenna underwent a physical metamorphosis to match its spiritual transformation after its grand acceptance of the Prophet. Fantastically prosperous because of its mineral wealth, Ravenna invested in the most advanced terraforming technology, remaking the hostile world into a garden paradise that would be the envy of the most pious Li Halan. Even more amazingly, Second Republic scientists used force fields and colossal gravity engines to correct the planet's flawed axial tilt, making its current changing rotation virtually unique in the Known Worlds. Many today view this as an act of ultimate hubris, altering the Pancreator's work, and blame it for the fading suns phenomenon noticed a century later.

For many centuries, Leminkainen had operated as a corporate laboratory and cash cow for a host of mega-corps. All things must come to an end, however; the combined might of the corporate powers could not hold sole possession of the planet forever. As the planet continued to transform under their control, space around them also changed. Leminkainen's neighbors — among them Byzantium Secundus, Ravenna, and Aylon — were no longer content to leave such a strategic world solely in the hands of irresponsible corporate powers. A now-empowered

House Hawkwood seized control of the planet, putting its land and people under noble stewardship.

## New Dark Age (4000 - 4986)

As though on schedule, the end of the Republican Era came precisely in the year 4000. House Hawkwood was seemingly in good position to solidify its leadership of the Ten Houses during the chaos following the collapse. This is not to say, at least initially, that they were engineers of the fall. Refusing to join the "Rogue Worlds" in seceding from the Republic, Prince Roderick Hawkwood — whose affair d'amour with the renowned star pilot Milanza Goforth had already achieved the stature of legend — spoke loudly in denouncing the rebels. When the Rogue Worlds joined with alien forces to seize Byzantium Secundus, however, Prince Roderick's sister, the Duchess General Alexandra (considered the best military mind of her age), led the assault that liberated it. With the retaking of Byzantium Secundus and the formation of the Ten Houses, the death knell of the Second Republic sounded throughout the Known Worlds. The age of the Nobility had arrived.

As the collapse of the Second Republic rippled throughout the Known Worlds, Delphi was one of the first planets to observe the fading suns phenomenon. The planet's Urth-like yellow sun swelled and turned orange within two generations; instead of growing hotter, however, the planet cooled precipitously.

In the face of this new age, Twilight openly rejected the Church's edicts on technology and fielded an advanced fleet to preserve its autonomy, and ultimately closed its gate — seemingly forever.

Despite rampant unemployment and political turmoil, Delphi successfully resisted the mass dissolution of its urban centers that occurred on other planets, bending to Church mandates just enough to avoid heresy charges.

In the early years of chaos surrounding the fall, Prince Roderick appeared an ideal candidate around whom to build a new galactic order. Charismatic, educated and earnest in the pursuit of his duties, he was popular among the family and respected abroad. His strange suicide was a sudden blow to Hawkwood ambitions. An inquiry conducted by the Church concluded that the Hawkwood leader died from self-administered poison aboard his personal starship. Though House Hawkwood consented to the holy verdict, much was made of the presence of the Scraver assassin known as "The Dark Blade" (a known hireling of the Decados). At the same time, other fingers pointed closer to home, blaming Roderick's son and heir, Gordon Hawkwood, for his death.

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*What makes a company a better neighbor? What makes your employer your best friend? Caring. Here at Agri-corp, sure, we've made some mistakes. They call it Germ-X, a "poison" that killed over 125,000 on Byzantium Secundus. "That's what they say." What they don't say is that this "germ" was really a new miracle seed that would have made barren moons bloom, bringing food to millions and prosperity to all, if it hadn't been stolen from our labs and weaponized by nobilist-terrorists. What they call Germ-X, we call: Hope! Don't let irresponsible noble families control Leminkainen's future! Support Defense Initiative 26!*

*— Agricorp holoivid advertisement, 4028*

## Civil War

Despite its dependence on high technology, Ravenna was among the first planets to heed the Church's call and discard Republican rule, avoiding the mass violence of the time. The faithful abandoned the cities and returned to a holier way of life in the country. The planet only reserved some technology to defend itself and to "help its less agreeable neighbors" (e.g.; Gwynneth, Leminkainen, and Velisamil) to follow its path to a more agrarian existence. Unlike Ravenna, Leminkainen resisted this trend. Leminkainen's reputation as one of the most iniquitous of worlds drew the Inquisition's wrath in the years that followed. The Church excommunicated Leminkainen's leaders and persuaded nobles from more devout planets (including Ravenna and the Li Halan) to bombard the planet during the early 43rd century. Abandoned by Delphi and unable to receive adequate aid from Gwynneth, Leminkainen was on its own. By the time it recanted, its cities were in ruin.

Maintaining many of its technological advances, Gwynneth, like Leminkainen, drew the Church's ire by refusing to adopt a pastoral existence. The same noble fleet that bombarded Leminkainen soon attacked Gwynneth's technological enclaves. Gwynneth resisted stiffly and local Hawkwood cruisers repelled the attacking fleet. The Church excommunicated the planet's leaders and put the world under quarantine for almost 300 years. The blockade proved ineffective and the Church eventually negotiated a settlement with the hold-out planet.

## Reconstruction

Its plans for building an empire on hold, House Hawkwood concentrated on its planetary holdings. Justine Hawkwood (who wore the title of queen and was called the Golden Sovereign) methodically took the reins of power for almost four centuries. Citizens of the time blessed the Pancreator for her preternaturally long life, though historians now credit her longevity to a now lost battery of DNA re-editing procedures that made her one of the most long-lived individuals in human history.

What followed was a period of retrenchment and re-assessment. The military continued to grow, but with the house's attentions now closer to home, its people largely profited during a period that was, on other planets, known as an age of fear and darkness. House Hawkwood kept many of the Second Republic's most popular institutions alive, while building its own. Medicine, education, and sanitation would seem to be the minimal necessities for a civil society, yet these were badly disrupted on many planets during the decades after the Republic's final collapse. House diplomats reached concord with Orthodoxy. This was not merely a calculated acquiescence to the Church's new power in this post Republican era. Burning with newfound piety, many nobles became patrons of the faith. Some ostentatiously funded the building of great new cathedrals, while others quietly and piously supported the Church's mission of feeding and clothing the poor in uncertain times. Although its place in the Church's hierarchy of supporters would later be supplanted by House Li Halan, in the early years following the fall of the Second Republic, Hawkwood enjoyed a reputation as the most faithful adherents to Orthodoxy.

It was the brilliant Leminkainen diplomat, Duke Lawrence Hawkwood, who later negotiated the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, removing the technological sanction on the clergy. Leminkainen was an early beneficiary of this holy writ, and one of the earliest planets to regain its technological edge. Despite the Church's eventual blessing in this matter, however, something soon went very wrong with the planet's sun. The star turned blood red over several generations and expanded to twice its normal size. The oceans evaporated; plant and animal life died off in mass numbers. Drawing upon deeply buried botanical secrets, hardy strains of fauna developed that could thrive in the planet's hot house conditions. These biological miracles have super hard skins, fibrous water-stingy interiors, and live for years without rainfall. The faithful see these tenacious plants as blessings from the Pancreator, while Gjartin pagans see it as the bounty of their "Good Gjarti."

Ensnared in what it considered a new holy age, Ravenna's conservative populace was slow to adopt the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, allowing the clergy (and eventually nobles and guilds) freer access

to technology. It was only the advent of the Barbarian Invasions in 4525 that partially shifted most people's thinking on the matter. All Hawkwood planets suffered during the ensuing wars, though Ravenna, buffered by Leminkainen and Gwynneth, avoided the worst of the invasion. Critics of the Ravennan ethos of spiritual primitivism and technological abnegation, point not only to its shielded position behind more frontier Hawkwood planets, but also to its rejection of technology while still reaping the benefits of the peak of Second Republic terraforming and weather-control technology.

By the middle of the fifth millennium, it seemed House Hawkwood was once again poised to gain galactic preeminence, and nothing short of a full-scale invasion from outside the civilized worlds could stop it. As if on cue, the Vuldrok Invasions of the 46<sup>th</sup> century provided just that impediment. The border world of Leminkainen received the worst battering, holding out against overwhelming odds and absorbing much of the barbarian assault, giving other planets a chance to defend themselves. Even though the planet fell briefly during the Emperor Wars, it was later liberated by a combined Hawkwood and al-Malik fleet. The invaders fully justified the label of barbarian, employing outlawed biological weapons, killing over a third of Leminkainen's population, and further poisoning the environment. Even now, centuries later, some of these diseases resurface and combine with older native plagues, enforcing a gruesome legacy on the cursed planet.

## Rehearsals to Empire

In 4540, Vladimir Alecto announced his intention as leader of the Ten to bring peace and unity to the Known Worlds, stamping out once and for all the barbarian threat. Prince Gervaise Hawkwood II threw our house's support behind him and Vladimir was crowned in 4550 as the first Galactic Emperor; he was assassinated the same day. Due to the ravages of Vladimir's campaign against the barbarians, many houses (including House Alecto) lost most of their power or went extinct. The number of houses in contention for the vacant Imperial throne was reduced to five.

Other aspirants to imperial power surfaced in 4684 when Ravenna's ruler, Lady Avyryl Hawkwood, married Bishop Halvor Li Halan of Kish, throwing her political weight behind his bid to become both Patriarch and Emperor. The rest of the family, fearful that she might bring Ravenna into the Li Halan fold (and generally opposed to a theocracy) blockaded Ravenna. Challenged by Halvor's forces, the combined might of House Hawkwood destroyed the invading fleet and arrested Lady Avyryl. Her supporters claimed she renounced her Hawkwood allegiance out of love; her detractors that a lust for power caused her to cast her lot with the power of the Church and the Li Halan.

*Say not that I cared for power, for as ruler of Ravenna, I already had more than I ever wanted. When I first saw Bishop Halvor Li Halan of Kish preach, it was not a lust for worldly influence that drove me, but the desire to see the power of the Pancreator shine in every face, as it did in the thousands who flocked to Halvor's sermons. Despite the hateful lies of my family, I never sought to bring Ravenna into the Li Halan fold, and the word "theocracy" was never spoken between me and my beloved. If the forces of hate and jealousy had not been galvanized against us, a new and blessed age would have shone out from Ravenna, second to only Holy Terra as most sacred of worlds.*

— *The Diary of Duchess Avyrl, Convent of the Hidden Veil, Jualwa (4702)*

## The Long 50<sup>th</sup> Century

Since Vladimir's assassination, it was only a matter of time before the houses would again clash in pursuit of the crown. But in the year 4900, the Symbiot War put all other considerations on hold, as the resources of the Known Worlds were marshaled against an existential threat. Rivals were forced to work as allies, and House Hawkwood again distinguished itself in battle. A new generation of Hawkwood heroes arose, notable among them Grania Maizière Hawkwood, whose psychic abilities made her an ideal combatant in the war against the parasitic enemy. The exploits of the Penitent General, as she became known — combined with those of her close companion, the Eskatonic priestess Mariah Juandaastas — elevated the house's reputation for bravery and daring. By the time the symbiot threat was declared officially "over" (at least for the present), Hawkwood had again worked its way to the top of the political heap.

It was not from politically energetic Delphi, but from the more placid world of Ravenna that House Hawkwood's new standard bearer arose. Born to the family matriarch — the Duchess Regnus-Octavia and her paramour, Duke Utar Vincius Hawkwood — Alexis grew up in a house at war. His uncle, the Regent Darius Hawkwood of Delphi, vied against the other Royal Houses for the throne. After his death, Lady Octavia threw her support to her son. With the dowager mother's backing, Alexis quelled family dissension and out-manuevered other rivals in what became known as the Emperor Wars.

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After solidly defeating House Li Halan in several major battles, Alexius received not only their support, but the blessings of the Church as well. The defeat of Houses Decados and Hazat was never preordained, but Alexius' forethought and the growing support of the other factions prevailed. Through his military prowess and the clandestine maneuverings of his close friend, Baron Chamon Mazarin, Alexius managed to defeat both the most militant and most devious of the Royal Houses. With the eventual backing of House al-Malik, Alexius' ascendancy to the Imperial throne was finally assured. In 4995, the Decados and Hazat admitted defeat, accepting Alexius Hawkwood as Emperor.

### THREAT ASSESSMENT, TWILIGHT

TOP SECRET

While initially considered a plot to divert our Aragon initiative, it has become clear that the re-opening of the Twilight jumproute to Ravenna is purely coincidental to current military exigencies. Night Station intercepts and initial humint assets report a planet that has deteriorated markedly from the planet recorded in historical archives.

A nuclear conflict has occurred and the planet suffered massive environmental dislocation, and is now in a permanent state of nuclear winter.

The dominant power there, a poorly understood multi-continental power known as the Citadel, has crushed most opposition to planetary dominance. One of their few standing enemies, the Heidgards, are our planetary cousins from before the Fall. It was they who re-opened the gate in 4989 in an attempt to secure outside aid.

The consensus of this office supports the prince's decision to quietly aid the Heidegards while warning the Citadel that any further attacks against them will entail a military response from us.

The Citadel is not knowledgeable of the current astro-political situation beyond their planet and has been largely quiescent in the two years since the prince's ultimatum. This office urges that the reappearance of Twilight remain top secret throughout the rest of the war.

- War Department memo, Rooks Military Intelligence (4992)

### A NEW MILLENNIUM

With Emperor Alexius on the throne, House Hawkwood looked forward to its just reward, expecting to share the governance of the Known Worlds alongside its greatest son. Alexius' decision to disassociate himself from his house, to avoid favoritism, came as a rude awakening. Some members of the house feel that they have been abandoned by their Emperor and now taste the bitterness of finding themselves sidelined as Alexius courts the expertise of the Church, the League and the other noble houses. Others point to the fact that the Emperor has salted his council of advisors with its fair share of Hawkwoods, including Baron Chamon Mazarin as chief of Imperial Security, as proof House Hawkwood is far from forgotten.

Hawkwood's current head, Princess Victoria, has kept silent regarding the Emperor's policies. Her quiet administration of house affairs seems to proclaim that, whatever the circumstances, House Hawkwood will conduct itself with its customary sense of propriety. Many younger Hawkwoods have actively sought service in the Emperor's fleets or as Questing Knights and ambassadorial staff. They welcome Alexius's indifference to their position as cadet or morganatic kin, recognizing instead their individual merits. At the same time, in this new era of dominance, many young nobles appear aimless and dilatory, or have displayed a parochial arrogance (popularly called "imperial imperiousness") that exceeds the family's traditional self-confidence. Fops, dandies, and bullies may be found in any house and era, but modern social observers have noted the trend. This behavior is not just limited to the nobility, but has also permeated many walks of life.

For a time, the barbarian Vuldrok Star-Nation increased its raids on Hawkwood worlds in an apparent desire to test Alexius' mettle. Neither turning a blind eye toward these attacks, nor prosecuting a full-out attack against them, the Emperor took a third and unexpected tact. Marrying the Vuldrok warrior princess, Freya Eldridsdottir, the Empire received the planet Hargard as her dowry. This has seemingly, at a stroke, mostly ended centuries of raids from that planet and beyond — a welcome development, especially on Leminkainen. While the Vuldrok threat has receded, that of Twilight has come to the fore.

# Hawkwood Traditions

At the dawn of the 51<sup>st</sup> century, House Hawkwood seems, to the casual reader of history, much like it was at the end of the 45<sup>th</sup> or, even, at the time of the First Republic. This continuity of behavior and adherence to “proven Hawkwood virtues” has largely served the house well, though the house has also been flexible enough to admit new ways and peoples.

## Appearance and Fashion

Nobles of House Hawkwood consciously project an image that inspires confidence in subordinates, admiration among peers, and respect from foes. This attention to “style” comes not from a devotion to superficialities, but from an understanding of privilege and responsibility. Eschewing transient fashions for classic attire, both men and women of the house cultivate stylish conservatism in their dress. Even young members of House Hawkwood are expected to conform to the “house look,” and excess in any aspect of clothing or hairstyle receives strong disapproval (especially from the older generation).

Many Hawkwoods affect a military or quasi-military cut to their clothing. Combat armor follows the same lines as their general apparel and, regardless of technological sophistication, is often of the highest quality.

Young children on Hawkwood worlds, even freemen and serfs, often seek to emulate Hawkwood or Imperial styles, at least on special occasions. Many homes on Hawkwood worlds will have a photo of the family with their young son or daughter dressed in knightly garb or the uniform of the noble armada. Hawkwoods place great emphasis on physique and fitness, encouraging its members to train their bodies for peak performance — whether in combat or on the ballroom floor.

## Codes and Customs

From childhood, all Hawkwoods learn the finer points of etiquette and manners, how to behave with composure and dignity in any imaginable situation. Titles, forms of address, rules of precedence, heraldry, and family lineage are all part of a basic Hawkwood education. Cultivation of arts and letters is encouraged as a mark of a well-rounded individual. House Hawkwood is renowned for its gracious hospitality. Though they are not as lavish as some other houses,

Hawkwood hosts ensure the comfort and protection of their guests. Despite Church disapproval, duels of honor are common among younger Hawkwoods. Any Hawkwood caught cheating or using underhanded tactics in a duel receives the full brunt of family disapproval.

Courtship and marriage within House Hawkwood likewise follow proscribed paths, and most marital unions are arranged early in a young Hawkwood’s life. Alliances with friendly (or even rival) houses are not uncommon, though alliances with House Decados are virtually unknown. This fact goes a long way to explain the consternation that ensued when the Duchess Salandra Decados was considered, however briefly, as a possible paramour for Emperor Alexius. Marriages between House Hawkwood and the League are rare, though dalliances with Charioteers are frequently romanticized and occasionally end in marriage. In the cases of arranged marriages, amorous liaisons outside of marriage are de rigueur, provided both parties are discreet.

## Rank and Promotion

Although the lines of inheritance of Hawkwood lands and property generally follow the custom of primogeniture, in which the oldest child receives the bulk (if not all) of the estate, House Hawkwood also tries to ensure that future generations earn what they inherit.

All Hawkwoods spend their early adulthood in some form of military or ambassadorial service to the house. Here they practice the traits that have been drilled into them from youth: courage, self-discipline, patience, diplomacy and, above all, honor. Before exercising any real administrative power within the house, young Hawkwoods embark on a “tour of duty” that takes them to all the Hawkwood controlled worlds, where they acquire an on-site education concerning the house’s holdings, resources, and subjects.

Service with the Imperial Fleet provides one avenue for achieving honor and glory, and many young Hawkwood knights take advantage of this opportunity to defend the Empire. Others, desirous of attaining truly legendary status, seek their fortunes on the frontiers of the Known Worlds, hoping to discover Lost Worlds to add to their house’s holdings. The elite Questing Knights promote the expansionist aims of the house, while also channeling the more reckless and adventuresome Hawkwoods’ energies to constructive ends.

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# Holdings

## Delphi

From space, Delphi stuns observers with its painterly contrasts of polar white and vibrant greens and blues, all suffused in an orange glow. As one grows closer, concentrated stretches of maxicrete gray and, at night, star cluster patterns of electric light give evidence of the planet's large and vibrant human population. Spiral cyclone cloud formations corkscrew their way through the planet's atmosphere, betraying its tempestuous climate.

Delphi is a cooling planet and has been since the fall of the Second Republic. Its sun was one of the first to exhibit the fading suns phenomenon. Delphi's star has become a large, bleached orange-white color, delivering steadily less warmth to the planet with each century. As a result, the world is now divided into three horizontal bands, with a deciduous green and ocean blue mid-section sandwiched by great icecaps.

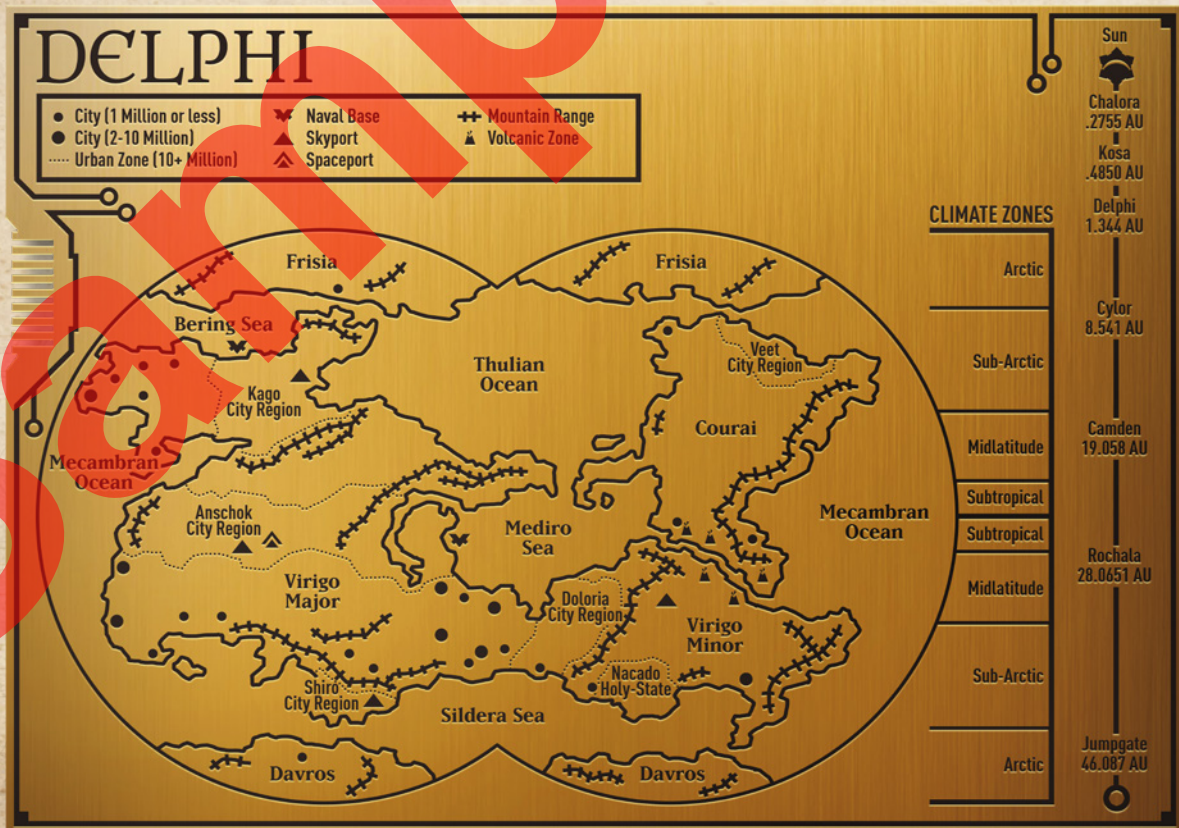
Despite the eventual doom this transformation portends, the lengthy process by which it has occurred has allowed the people to adapt and even become

proud of their planet's precarious position, with pugnacious gospels predicting the eventual reversal of the sun's demise.

## Recent Events

The cradle of House Hawkwood from its earliest days, Delphi has long stood as a powerful nexus of military, mercantile, and political power. Even with the devastation of the Emperor Wars, Delphi is stronger than it has been in years. Delphi was the leading military and diplomatic force behind the Hawkwood bid for the throne in the Emperor Wars. Benefiting greatly from Alexius's ascension, it remains the Ravenna-born Emperor's most solid base of power.

Still, all is not well. The recent assassination of Lord William Granville Harcourt, a stabilizing presence for the past 75 years and confidant of Princess Victoria, has sown confusion on the usually confident world. The planet has become increasingly advanced technologically, a matter of no small concern to the Church.



## Solar System

**Chalora:** Chalora is a medium-sized, rocky planet with a slow axial spin (rotational cycle is three Urth months). The day side was originally molten, while the night side was frozen. Since the fading suns phenomenon, the molten side has cooled somewhat. Temperatures are survivable near the wide day/night perimeter.

**Kosa:** Kosa is a small rocky planet, formerly rich in precious metals. There were numerous mining operations on the planet in past centuries, though all but one have closed. Cetus-12 is a joint Justinian/Charioteer mining concern, eking out a tenuous existence under archaic environmental domes.

**Delphi (Miercoles):** Delphi is the system's third major satellite and the only planet with a life-sustaining atmosphere. Delphi's moon, Miercoles, is roughly 1/5th Delphi's mass and houses several Hawkwood military installations. Miercoles is off-limits to unofficial personnel.

**Cylor:** Cylor is a large, volcanically active planet and is occasionally used in Hawkwood fleet war games.

**Camden:** Camden is a blue and purple Jovian planet.

**Rochala:** Rochala is a small frozen rock in space. The planetoid once served as a Hawkwood listening post until several successive crews went mad and killed themselves. The house has recently reopened the installation.

**Jumpgate:** Delphi's jumpgate, orbiting at 46AU, is one of the largest gates in the known worlds. Four great alien faces with glowing eyes, one of which has an eye that has gone out, dominate the gate's surface.

## People & Places

Despite the world's tempest-tossed nature, many on the capitol planet remain a bold, industrious, and strangely optimistic lot. Tested by the elements, there is little the planet's citizenry — from the highest lord to the lowest serf — feel they cannot handle. Largely urban and sophisticated, Delphi's population is highly educated; even the remotest villages receive the latest news through the planet's excellent system of town criers.

Politically stable, but with a hint of anti-Imperial sentiment, the world has traditionally distinguished itself for its pragmatic governance. Delphi is dominated by the Gervaise-Hawkwoods, who are known for their sophistication, intelligence and almost supernatural political acumen, as well as their belief that the rest of their family is somewhat retrograde.

Delphi's main landmass is the Virigo super-continent, divided along two political boundaries: Virigo Major and Virigo Minor. Together with Courai

(separated from Virigo by a thin expanse of water), this continental grouping constitutes 80% of Delphi's landmass. The remainder is in its two polar continents, Frisia and Davros.

## DELPHI TRAITS

Delphi's sun is badly affected by the fading suns phenomenon and has a bleached orange-white tint, radiating far less heat than usual for a star of its kind.

**Rulers:** Princess Victoria Gervaise-Hawkwood (Virigo Major), Duke Montgomery Hawkwood (Virigo Minor), Lady Regnus Octavia (The Dowager Empress, mother of Alexius)

**Major Cathedrals:** Domaldo Cathedral (Orthodox, Anschok City Region), Temple of Hombor (Amalthean, Kago City Region)

**Major Agorae:** Charioteers/Reeves

**Capitols:** Anschok City Region — West

**Jumps:** 2 (Byzantium Secundus > Tethys or Pentateuch > Delphi)

**Adjacent Worlds:** Tethys (dayside), Pentateuch (dayside), Ravenna (parallel)

**Solar System:** Chalora, Kosa, Delphi (Miercoles), Cylor, Camden, Rochala

**Human Population:** 2,125,000,000

**Alien Population:** 180,000 (mostly ur-obun)

**Resources:** Granite, gold, deuterium

**Exports:** Granite, gold, deuterium, politics

**Landscape:** Delphi is a cool, windy planet with temperate conditions near the equator and in mid-latitudes during the summer months, although snow along the equator is not uncommon. Deciduous forests blanket the equator, while boreal evergreen forests, steppe, and arctic tundra cover most of the rest of the planet.

## VIRIGO MAJOR

From space Virigo Major appears as a great expanse of green, crisscrossed with maxicrete gray and segmented into geometric patterns of farmland. The continent's biome ranges from deciduous forests and tall prairie grasses at the equator to evergreen forests, alpine tundra, and boreal forests. Strong winds blow across the continent. Although Virigo Major is evenly populated by noble properties and free farms, most of the continent's population resides in its three major urban regions. Tying the continent together is one of the best maintained road systems in the Empire. With the planet's burgeoning economy, motorized vehicles now almost outnumber brute carts and sleighs,

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