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# Teenage Wasteland

This is another post open to suggestions and critique.

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The childermoot is the basic reproductive unit in society. It consists of between 2 to 12 breeding individuals. That number must be equally divided among males and females for a viable womb-nest to form. The childermoot is itself a member of a larger troop/pack/skulk/IDK what the proper collective noun for monkey foxes should be.

The responsibility of raising pups is largely confined to the childermoot they were hatched into, but pups gradually gain more presence in the wider community as they get older. Upon reaching sexual maturity, adolescents are ejected from their childermoot as an inbreeding prevention mechanism. They join an interstitial "teenage wasteland" of maids and bachelors that receives little to no help from the established community in order to encourage them to establish a childermoot of their own. They compete and cooperate amongst themselves as the situation dictates. This second layer of uncommitted but sexually mature adults flows more seamlessly between adjacent territories, although things stay largely "in house".

Adolescent males engage in activities that are considered taboo for established males, such as raiding rival territories and, at least among tree dwellers, killing and cannibalizing their members.

New childermoots form out of this more nomadic layer of society. The new moot will attempt to join an established territory, usually the one that the majority of parents come from. This is done by currying favor with the patriarchs, a group of the oldest males in the territory.

Once the pups are raised, the moot disperses but the individuals remain part of the wider territory, acting as mentors for younger members. The oldest males among these empty-nesters become patriarchs.

The role of shaman is completely absent among tree dwellers, and shows up among the yinrih along with the transition from territory marking to true written language as the yinrih cross the threshold of reflection. Shamans form a female counterpart to male patriarchs. Tree dwellers do not have control over fire, which also shows up alongside writing among the yinrih. Evidence suggests that males may not have known, or been allowed to, start or tend fires, meaning the roots of the Bright Way's monopolies run very deep indeed.

Females, especially empty-nesters, among both tree dwellers and pre-sapient yinrih are responsible for foraging. Zoopharmacognosy behavior is found here, which is how the healers get started. It's likely that the greater knowledge of plant life among females is what allowed them to discover how to control fire as well.

Male empty nesters go on defense against attacking adolescent males from other territories. Sires with developing womb-nests are responsible for guarding their gestating offspring from both

overraptors and rival males from other groups.

So in summary, you can divide primitive monkey fox society into two groups: a sedentary society of childermoots and empty-nesters, and a nomadic society of newly mature males and females seeking to establish a childermoot of their own.

# I Like Trains

While the Bright Way held a monopoly on *interplanetary* travel during the age of decadence, terrestrial transport and logistics lay outside their control.

Personal vehicles are much rarer in yinrih society compared to ~~my terminally car-dependent hometown~~ Earth. Fixed route public transit dominates in large urban centers, especially trains. Some train lines are owned by private companies, others by municipal governments. It varies by region. Trains and train infrastructure are almost entirely automated, meaning timeliness is rarely an issue.

# Natural Philosophy

Yinrih don't separate the concepts of science and philosophy. They see science as depending on philosophy as it rests on what are ultimately axiomatic assertions, above all that the senses accurately reflect reality. For them this is even more of a leap of faith given that they can fake sensory input while in suspension to a degree that would make René Descartes shudder.

They have a single word that denotes a body of knowledge regardless of how that knowledge was obtained, by direct observation, indirect inference, introspection, or divine revelation: <rNg> /chuff, long high strong grunt, short low weak growl/, which is often translated as "lore" in English.

# The War of Dissolution Begins

It's said that converts are the most zealous, and Firefly was certainly no exception. When he returned to Focus, he began a campaign of extermination against, not only Wayfarers, but anyone not sufficiently godless. Of particular note was his treatment of the Misotheists, whom he pursued with as much hatred as his former coreligionists. To despise The Light was to acknowledge its existence, and Firefly would brook no compromise in that regard.

So ruthless was his persecution that many of his own advisors entreated him to stop. Some were genuinely disgusted by his actions, while others simply realized that the Traditionalists could be a valuable ally against the ruling hierarchy and knew that slaughtering their fellow Wayfarers was unlikely to convince them to render aid. Reluctantly, Firefly took their advice, but not without quietly noting which of these advisors was the quickest to gainsay him.

Meanwhile, the disparate traditionalist movements on Hearthside were beginning to gain momentum, helped considerably by the new influx of refugees on Hearthside fleeing the secular warlord states in the Outer Belt. Two individuals are credited with finally bringing these disorganized movements together, both of whom were moved to act by the scandal of Firefly's apostasy and subsequent rise to power among the secularists.

Iris the Hearthsider was a traditionalist hearthkeeper known for her fiery sermons condemning the hierarchy's acedia and greed. She was the first cleric to call the faithful to take up arms to overthrow the ruling clergy. Many heeded her call, but the war had yet to begin in earnest.

The other figure responsible for lighting this powder keg was Greenleaf the steadtree hermit. Steadtrees were mystics who dwelt in the trees along the banks of The River on Yih. Some hermits would gain enough fame to collect a few disciples, who would sit at the base of their tree to hear their wisdom, but most kept to themselves. Greenleaf, moved by righteous anger, descended from his steadtree and confronted the High Hearthkeeper in person, going so far as to call her a heretic, accusing her of abandoning the Great Commandment in the pursuit of worldly power. His show of defiance was the crack that finally caused the dam to burst.

Iris, buoyed by Greenleaf's actions, was able to convince nearly half of the Knights of the Sun to join the Traditionalists against their former brothers in arms defending the Bright Way's worldly possessions. Thus were born the Pious Dissolutionists, who formed a second battle front at Hearthside working outwards, just as the secularists pushed inwards from the Outer Belt. The knights, considerably weakened thanks to the internal schism, were unable to hold the line against the secularists, who were finally able to break through the border of Moonlitter. The War of Dissolution had begun.



# Terraboos

Human culture is far more varied compared to Yinrih culture thanks to the fact that we scattered into isolated communities long before inventing writing, and longer still before eventually rediscovering each other and initiating the process of globalization.

Sure, there are Yinrih myths, legends, and stories, but they're nowhere near as diverse. Human culture also changes more rapidly compared to Yinrih culture, meaning we're churning out epics, ballads, lays, and sagas by the dozen at a rate that monkey foxes could only dream of.

Scary obsessive fandoms are just as likely to crop up among yinrih as humans, and human culture has its scary obsessive fans among monkey foxes. Yinrih refer to these people as HrBqMqmg, from HrBqg (nerd) + qMqmg (human) i.e. one who is a nerd regarding humans. The word has a neutral connotation among yinrih, but its most common English translation, terraboo, has all the negative associations you'd expect from such a word.

Terraboos are infamous among humans for a number of things:

- Trying to speak English or other human languages. No, I don't mean learn the language and use a keyer to synthesize it, I mean actually try to utter human speech sounds. The result sounds a lot like a husky trying to have a mid-checkup conversation with his dentist.
- Wearing human clothes, or at least trying to. Our clothing isn't really designed for quadrupeds with tails. Savvy humans can make a killing selling suitably sized pet clothes and passing them off as modified human garments, which they kind of are, but still.
- The truly obsessed will even try to walk on their hind feet for extended periods. This is horrible for their back. Terraboos will even buy Partisan military surplus powered armor because it has a bipedal locomotion mode, originally to free up the forepaws to hold more guns. It doesn't work very well, by the way, and looks just as creepy and uncanny as you'd expect.
- Using the term "cynoid" to refer to themselves when speaking English, this is especially common among fans of human Sci-Fi.

There are also straight-up weeps among yinrih. The misotheists in particular are fans of JRPGs for obvious reasons.

# Ear Notch

The term <HKrqFdqg> /long rising strong growl, chuff, huff, late high weakening whine, huff, short low weak growl/ literally means "ear notch", and is used as a derogatory term for a firearms enthusiast in an analogous manner to the English term "gun nut".

Older yinrih firearms are worn on a saddle mounted on the back, and are fired using a remote trigger wired to the gun assembly and held in the tail or paw. Depending on the length of the gun barrel, it's possible for the user to accidentally lose a chunk from an ear if they don't assume a proper firing posture, hence the nickname "ear notch".

Modern firearms are incorporated into remotely operated drone capsules such as those used as part of most powered armor, and these don't carry the same risk as older back-mounted firearms.

# The Healer's Paw

Image

This symbol is referred to as the "Healer's Paw". It's meant to resemble the distinct pattern of palmar pads on a female yinrih's forepaw. The Healer's Paw is the universal symbol for health and medicine across Focus, serving a similar role as the red cross or the caduceus do on Earth. It's colored maroon to symbolize yinrih blood.

# A Brief History of Commonthroat and Linguistic Overview of Focus

Commonthroat, or one of its ancestors, was the principle language of the area around Newmans' Dale (The equatorial river basin where the yinrih first emerged) around the end of the Age of Decadence. As such, it was also the administrative language of the Bright Way.

It was already a prestige language throughout Focus when the secular government on Yih reasserted itself during the War of Dissolution, and was adopted by the newly formed Allied Worlds as their official standard language. Minority languages slowly died out among the Allied Worlds, although regional accents and substrate vocabulary remain.

Hearthside, not being an official AW member state, retains a distinct language, although nearly all its citizens are also proficient in Commonthroat. Moonlitter and Partisan territory likewise share a distinct language, with separate varieties used by each polity. L2 Commonthroat speakers are as abundant on Moonlitter as on Hearthside, but most residents of Partisan Territory are monolingual.

The Spacer Confederacy does not have an official language, in keeping with its hyper libertarian tendencies, but Commonthroat is the de facto lingua franca, and is used by the Federal Council and Federal Police. In fact, there are several city-states within the Confederacy that have developed and speak conlangs unique to them alone in an effort to further assert their independence.

Wayfarer's Haven, being an SC city-state formed by refugees from Moonlitter, speaks a variety of Commonthroat heavily influenced by the language of Moonlitter. Iris, Lodestar, Stormlight, and Pascal all have Moonlitter accents, while Sunshine speaks with a Hearthsider accent, and Tod has a Welkinstead Moony accent.

The *Split Horizon*, another SC city-state, and the first Human settlement at Focus, speaks English.

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I've been thinking of developing a relex of Commonthroat mapped to Human-pronounceable speech sounds called Monkey Fox Pidgin (or ██████) that would be spoken by Human residents of Focus. Probably won't get around to it, but it's still rattling around in my head.

# The Black Paw

Image

A possible symbol for the Partisans. I'm going for something like the White Hand of Saruman.

I should try to expand the Partisans beyond being a purely anticlerical faction. The Commies at least had other planks in their platform...

# One Man's Trash...

Yet another possibly non-canon idea:

Waste reclamation is a big deal on Hearthside since most of the planet is desert.

A polymer can be extracted from yinrih excreta that can in turn be made into a durable plastic.

Hearthsider currency is made of this plastic.

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You may have noticed that Hearthside is very anti-corporate. That's partly thanks to the legacy of the Pious Dissolutionists, and partly due to injunctions placed on the Bright Way after the war by the other winning factions. One of those injunctions is that any discoveries or inventions that come out of research monasteries must not be commercialized. Everything they do is now put under what humans would call an Open Source license.

The mass router is a product of a research monastery (Hearthfire, Morningstar et al. being research monks), and thus there is no patent restricting who can manufacture mass routers.

# The Dawn of Sapience

It is a matter of debate whether the earliest extant example of written language was in fact the first instance of true writing. Both yinrih ink and the steadtree leaves they wrote on are very biodegradable, lasting mere decades in all but the luckiest of circumstances.

It is also a matter of debate whether sapience was monogenic or polygenic, that is, whether a single individual was born sapient and passed the necessary traits to his or her pups, or whether the necessary precursors to self-reflection were latent in the population as a whole, and true sapience was kindled in multiple places. Polygenism is currently the most popular theory, as the traditional markers of sapience as far as monkey foxes are concerned, language and ritual, appear almost instantaneously across the yinrih's range around 100 millennia prior to First Contact.

Whatever the case may be, the earliest writings appear well before the deaths of the last nonsapient yinrih. Text accounts seem to indicate that sophonts would be born into otherwise nonsapient litters to nonsapient childermoots, and only realize their uniqueness upon meeting other sophonts after leaving their shires and joining the interstitial nomadic teenagers.

These primordial scribes used the same glyph to refer to the tree-dwellers across the river and to their nonsapient parents and litter mates. The earliest writings already speak of taboos around soponts and non sophonts forming childermoots, but it's possible this wasn't the case in the beginning.

Early monkey fox religion seems to have operated on a simple syllogism:

1. My movements are the result of an act of will.
2. Other things also move (leaves, wind, water, clouds, etc.)
3. Those things must also possess a will of their own.

And thus was born the yinrih's natural religion upon which The Bright Way draws its most ancient rites. This is not only not scandalous to the most orthodox Wayfarer, but the Bright Way regularly defends its claim to being the rightful inheritor of the shamans' legacy against neoshamanists who say otherwise. Claravian teaching holds that this animism was the necessary groundwork upon which their monotheism was built.

It is also a matter of Claravian doctrine that the Theophany occurred before the deaths of the first sapient yinrih. While this is a controversial claim among secular archaeologists, it is well established that the first surviving example of written language and the oldest accounts of the Theophany are dated to within a single yinrih lifetime, a fact recognized even by the staunchest opponents of the Bright Way.

As for the Theophany itself, the texts differ in minor details, but certain themes are ubiquitous:

1. Despite occurring at midday, the skies were said to darken and the stars were described as unusually bright.
2. Despite the canonical text using plurals as though the whole species was being addressed collectively, the earliest texts speak as though the voice was addressing each individual directly, although context makes it clear the whole species was given the Great Commandment.
3. The voice identifies itself as the Creator of the universe, and the yinrih specifically, and links their origin to the tree dwellers.
4. The actual Commandment itself differs slightly from text to text, which results in some minor disagreement about its meaning among Wayfarers, but it boils down to this: The Light has created other sophonts among the stars, and the yinrih are to find these sophonts. Most texts include something to the effect of "let them know they aren't alone" or "offer them your friendship."

One of the strongest arguments Wayfarers have supporting the supernatural nature of the Theophany is how the Bright Way shows up nearly instantly, and is nigh ubiquitous across the yinrih's range, following the Theophany. Even those who rejected the content of the message agreed that SOMETHING happened. Modern secular scholarship, especially among the Partisans, chalks the whole thing up to mass hysteria, possibly aided by the novelty of self reflection.

Lastly, I'll touch on why neoshamanists are called NEOshamanists and not simply shamanists. As stated before, the fledgling Bright Way was ubiquitous, but not quite unanimous. Despite claims by neoshamanists of Claravian persecutions, no such evidence exists, either among surviving Shamanist writings or among early Claravian accounts. Indeed, the closest thing we have on the matter are shamanists mistrusting the rapidly developing Claravian technology. (keep in mind this was still the monkey fox stone age, so said 'technology' would be things like novel fire-tending methods and food preservation strategies.)

The reason why Wayfarers outstripped their shamanist peers is that it was basically a whole religion of ADHDers hyperfocusing on the task of getting to the stars. It didn't hurt that it helped them advance in other areas, too.

Anyway, it seems as though what few shamanist shires remained were content to remain in Newman's Dale, while the Bright Way exploded outward to the rest of the continent. Over time, it was simply an unspoken rule that you left these primitives alone and they wouldn't bother you. Archaeological evidence of shamanist activity abruptly ceases well before the yinrih leave their cradle continent. Two theories exist surrounding their demise. Both pin the blame on natural causes rather than internal strife or external antagonism, and both theories involve the tree dwellers.

A particularly severe drought struck Newman's Dale immediately prior to the last shamans vanishing. I know what you're thinking: they must have all starved from the lack of food and water brought on by the drought. Would that they were so lucky...

During the drought, the River's water level lowered to the point that a ford developed between the northern land inhabited by the tree dwellers and the southern land where the yinrih lived. Evidence of large-scale southward migration of tree dwellers exists. It is thought that the tree dwellers brought novel diseases that were communicated to their sapient cousins, and they all died as a result.

But another theory, and currently the most widely accepted, is that the two species, occupying the same niche as they did, came to blows over the limited food available, and the sophonts were killed and eaten by their nonsapient cousins.

In any case, the next time we see non Claravian groups claiming to be descended from the original shamans is a few centuries prior to the dawn of the space age, a gap of several yinrih lifetimes, and they appear geographically far removed from Newman's Dale.

# Visual Adornment

While yinrih primarily rely on perfumes to communicate things like social status and rank, visual adornment isn't unheard of.

Scoring or painting designs onto the writing claw, which is flatter and broader than the other claws, is probably the most common of these practices, and it is done by both males and females. Designs include religious symbols, floral patterns, and tiny passages of text.

The other common visual accessories are tail rings. These are more often a flexible cloth sleeve rather than a hard metal ring. Abstract designs are prevalent, but scenes depicting the life of a saint are also common among the devout. The stereotypical image of the seminarian includes a tail ring depicting the patroness of students, Saint Aurora, who was said to have passed her final exam, which was delivered electronically and whose questions were drawn randomly from a pool, by receiving mainly questions pertaining to the spiritual side of hearthkeeping rather than technical electrical engineering questions.

Some yinrih dye their fur. Tod's friends have encouraged him to dye the rest of his coat black to avoid the stigma surrounding redpelts, but he has so far declined to do so, citing the hassle of maintaining a presentable coat. After arriving on Earth, he grows to like his vulpine appearance, even if he'd rather people not point it out constantly.

Permeant body modifications, such as tattoos and piercings, are unheard of.

# Commonthroat's Original Autonym

Languages don't usually have names so on the nose as "Commonthroat". Sure some official dialects have such names, like Putonghua for Mandarin, but those are introduced later.

Commonthroat was originally spoken around the River on Yih, so *rDBGHqBdp* "River speech" or *rJhqBdp* "River throat/River language" sound like decent autonyms, keeping in mind that, unqualified, the term *qBdp* "the River" refers to the equatorial river where the yinrih first emerged. There's also *rDBGHsfqp* "Yih speech".

"Commonthroat" itself would be *qBdqjHcp* where *qjHc* means "pertaining to the whole" or "universal".

# I Find Your Lack of Fur Disturbing

On some parts of Hearthside, it's illegal to deliberately shed one's fur as it's considered impersonating a healer. This becomes a problem when a fad for emulating human hairlessness arises after First Contact, and a black market develops for healer's balding drugs.

# Why Red is Unlucky

Posted this in the Commonthroat thread, but this is pretty significant lore so here it is in the worldbuilding thread.

**qfBqg** /huff, early falling weakening whine, huff, short low weak growl/ refers to the fruits of two distinct species of tree. The two species are almost impossible to distinguish visually. One species uses its juicy bright red fruit to attract animals in order to spread its seeds. It's a favorite of tree dwellers, and was likely so for pre-sapient yinrih as well.

The other species evolved to mimic the fruit of the first species, but uses its fruit in a much more sinister way. Instead of using its fruit to attract seed dispersers, this fruit contains an extremely fast acting deadly neurotoxin. Smaller animals die before they can even finish the fruit, and larger animals are dead within a few minutes. Their dead bodies drop to the forest floor at the base of the tree, and the tree feeds off of their decomposing corpses.

The dangerous tree is counting on animals to mistake its fruit for that of the innocuous species in order to lure them into a deadly trap. So it's risky to eat red fruit because it may be tasty or it may be deadly. From there the concept of risk evolved into misfortune, and that's how red came to be associated with bad luck.

These trees also helped yinrih to move from scent marking to written language. Whenever a yinrih would find a good red fruit tree, they would draw a specific ink pattern on the leaves to tell other yinrih that the tree was safe to eat.

# Some Body Language and Paralinguistic Vocalizations

There's a bit of a shibboleth between spacers and yinrih who live planetside regarding body language. Spacers are more prone to gesticulate while talking. They may do this with only their front paws, or use all four paws and their tail at once. When on a planet's surface, they'll often stop and rear up when having a conversation in order to free up their paws to move around. Sometimes their rear paws and tail will even twitch as though they would be moving them too if they didn't have to support their weight and maintain their balance. If they can't rear up they might do a "tippy-taps" style motion while talking.

When casually greeting someone, most yinrih chuff (the same trilling nasal exhalation used as a phoneme). It fills the same niche as a human smile.

Yinrih can hiss, although this isn't used as a phoneme, at least in Commonthroat. A hiss can be either plain or trilled. A trilling hiss is used to express unwelcome surprise, similar to saying "ouch!" or "arrgh!". A plain hiss can express other mostly negative emotions like frustration.

Quickly flicking the ears back and then returning them to their previous position is the equivalent to a shrug. Flicking just the left ear is like a wink. Tilting both ears forward and opening the eyelids wide is a sign of strong positive emotion.

Moving their head such that the muzzle traces an upper half circle or arc is the same as a human rolling the eyes.

Since yinrih don't have a concept of romantic love, prolonged physical contact between adults isn't a thing, but some gestures do involve brief contact between individuals. Flattening the ears and briefly touching the top of both individuals' heads together is somewhat similar to a handshake, but it's only done between previously acquainted individuals of equal social status. A similar gesture is performed between a subordinate and a superior, with the subordinate pressing the top of his or her head against the side or chest of the superior.

Adult yinrih are, as a rule, much more particular about their personal space, which causes problems when humans mistake them for dogs and try to go in for a pat on the head or scratch behind the ears. "I'm a person and I have personal space!" is the common response. This often goes unheeded by humans who don't know Commonthroat and mistake their annoyed protest as quiet yipping and grunting.

When kits are very very young, they will often be carried on their dam's back, yet another contributor to the yinrih's "dog possum" nickname. Older pups will intertwine their tail with a parent's tail while out and about, similar to holding hands for safety. Intertwining tails is also a

comforting gesture, and may be done between adults, for example when comforting someone after a traumatic event.

Running the claws of the front feet through one's tail is a common way to fidget, as well as being a self-soothing gesture. Thumping the tail on the ground repeatedly is either a threat or a way to release pent-up frustration. Flicking one's own side with the tip of the tail, like a horse shooing a fly, is similar to a dismissive hand wave. (The word for this gesture is even used in the same way we would use the term "handwave" to brush off an inconsistency.) Flicking *someone else's* side with the tip of the tail is a very rude gesture indicating the the person so flicked is both a nuisance but is easily "dealt with". It's the closest the yinrih have to flipping the bird.

The yinrih equivalent to kneeling in prayer is to lie flat on the ground, tail extended straight out behind, and all four limbs flat on the ground, getting as much contact between the belly and the ground as possible. Less pious humans refer to it as "the sacred sploot". Another meditative posture, done in microgravity, is to coil the tail around a tail bar, face the the palms of the front feet outward with the inner and outer thumbs crossed over one another, and the rear paws either clasped together or with the palms of the rear paws pressed together. This is the usual posture taken by clerics during torpor. Being in microgravity means they don't tire out while doing it, and can maintain it for the whole 24-ish hours of their torpor.

The traditional introductory greeting gesture is to rear up on the hind feet and pat one's belly with the left forepaw twice. If you're familiar with the origins of the boy scout handshake (a normal handshake but done with the left hand) it's supposed to indicate trust. In the yinrih's case you're demonstrating that you trust the other party by exposing your belly. This is the gesture that goes with the traditional greeting "Light shine upon you, friend."

# Slavery

There are a number of socioeconomic conditions that could reasonably be called slavery around Focus.

One practice during the age of decadence was a form of debt servitude whereby those who could not pay their tithes to the local lighthouse would be pressed into service in order to pay their debt. The alternative was to have the power to their home cut off.

If you were a woman, this could actually turn into a career building opportunity, especially if you were thinking of entering the seminary anyway. Women would be put to work as acolytes, maintaining transmission lines and other power infrastructure, but eventually they'd be granted the privilege of helping tend the star hearth along with the hearthkeeper.

If you were a dude, things could get dicey depending on where you lived. If there were no other Bright Way institutions around, you'd get the worst job of all: a page, which was basically an errand boy or gofer. There was little in the way of transferable skills associated with being a page. If you lived near a chapter of the Knights of the Sun, you could become a squire--a mechanic repairing the knights' mechs. A grease monkey fox, if you will. As with the female acolytes, there was a fair amount of upward mobility here, and many sainted knights started out as indentured squires.

If the Farspeakers had a presence in your city, either men or women could be pressed into becoming an apprentice for a master admin. Master admins were typically bitter misocynoidic recluses who preferred machines to other yinrih, so the experience wasn't usually very pleasant for either party.

The overall experience of these serfs could vary wildly. Hearthside was generally the most favorable, with many people entering into serfdom deliberately if they couldn't find a job elsewhere. Yih was likely the worst, with serfs being treated nearly as chattel.

# St. Aurora's Draft

Saint Aurora's Draft is a drink made by drying, crushing, and brewing the seeds of a certain bush. This concoction is nigh undrinkably bitter, even given the yinrih's feeble gustatory system. It is both a diuretic and an aperient, in addition to causing heartburn.

Its only virtue is that it is a stimulant. Unlike certain Terran beverages to which it is often compared, the draft is only consumed by students on exam days in order to improve concentration, albeit at the cost of frequent trips to the restroom. Though it is singularly acerbic, it is seldom consumed with sweeteners or creams to make it more palatable, as drinking it unadorned is said to bring good luck.

In spite of being a psychoactive substance, it is not a drug of abuse, since the negative side-effects are far more potent and long lasting than the mild boost in concentration it offers.

While the drink is named after the patroness of seminarians and students, she had nothing to do with the drink, its invention having predated her by some millennia, only gaining the appellation some time after her death and canonization.

# farts

Yinrih have microbes in their gut that aid in digesting food. This process produces gas as a byproduct. Monkey foxes have a similar taboo (and consequent humor) about farting as humans do.

This humor is indulged in by both child and childish alike. In particular, pups (and pups at heart) play a game called rMPqg, which literally means the hem or fringe of a cloth. In this case, it refers to the hem of a curtain hung in a doorway. Upon farting, a pup must yell "rGHrGHg!" ("Safety!"). If he fails to do so before a second pup can yell "rMPqp!", the second pup may hit the first until the first pup touches the hem of a curtain. This game is also played by military grunts with too much time on their paws.

Wind Fruit is so called because it produces a large amount of gas when eaten. It's high in a particular sugar that gets rapidly fermented in the yinrih's gut, to the point that one can get drunk by eating the fruit raw.

# The Shakeoff

It should not be surprising that the yinrih attempted spaceflight long before they fully understood what was required to put a person in space and bring them back alive. It wasn't as though Wayfarers didn't conduct experiments and unmanned trials, but they were much more willing to take very big chances, make a lot of mistakes, and get very, very messy.

Unpowered flight was the first step toward the starry firmament. Early vulpithecine attempts at flight used hot air and later hydrogen balloons to reach the upper atmosphere, with many aeronauts dying of exposure. As the Claravian understanding of celestial mechanics improved, balloons gave way to manned projectiles (and no, I don't mean rockets, think giant bullets), with an exponential increase in the number of Wayfarers happily making the ultimate sacrifice to get a little closer to fulfilling the Great Commandment. These brave souls are known in English as the Cannonized Martyrs.

While science progressed at a (literal) breakneck speed thanks to these monkey foxes tossing themselves into the air with reckless abandon, the fact that they had yet to achieve their goal of leaving Yih's atmosphere caused some yinrih to question the wisdom of the Bright Way's actions, and eventually, the Bright Way itself. It is at this point in yinrih history that we see the first Neoshamanists and Atavists emerge in a movement known in Commonthroat as the `rpsKjHGp` (literally an act of shaking dust or water from ones fur). With no shortage of resource rich virgin territory remaining on Yih, these heretics simply struck out on their own rather than remain among their former coreligionists.

After some introspection, the Bright Way concluded that they were perhaps a bit too careless with the lives of Wayfarers, and subsequently to the Shakeoff, research monasteries dedicated more manpower to making sure test subjects walked away with their legs and tails intact, albeit with no shortage of singed fur. While their approach to crew safety would still make any NASA scientist balk, there were a lot fewer maroon splatters on the ground.

# Dumb Black-ears

Dying one's fur began as a practical way to adapt to different environments. Hearthsiders often dye their whole coat white, or just their ears, in order to reflect more sunlight. They also may adopt a black mask pattern on their muzzle and around their eyes to prevent glare. In colder climes or on planets far from Focus, thermally absorbent black coats, whether on the whole body or just the ears, are preferred for similar reasons.

Just as Terran clothing tends to grow from practical tool to fashion statement, so too the act of dying one's fur became a means of self-expression. In particular, dying one's ears black grew from a practical way to cope with a colder climate to a fashion statement. It became so popular, in fact, that it became associated with vanity or self-absorption. Over time, vanity became stupidity, and merely dying one's ears black became having black ears at all.

While not common, naturally black ears do exist, usually accompanied by black 'socks' on the front and rear legs. Those with natural black ears became guilty by association. To be sure, black-eared yinrih weren't stigmatized any more than blonde humans are today. Bottle black ears are still quite popular in certain circles. However, those unlucky enough to be burdened with both naturally black ears and a red coat, an exceedingly rare phenotype, were cursed twice over, as they were not only stupid, but also chronically misfortunate.

While First Meeting didn't completely efface the former stigma, adopting black ears, in addition to a red coat with white countershading and a white tail tip, became popular among Terraboos who wanted to affect a vulpine appearance.

# More on primitive society, the Kindling, and language

Just some brainstorming on how vulpithecin social structure works and how it handles conflict. Just as a reminder, The childermoot is the basic reproductive unit of society. It consists of up to twelve sires and dams. The resulting offspring are called a *litter*. Several childermoots taken together form a *shire*, which is a group that controls a defined geographical area and its associated resources. A shire is lead by the oldest males in the group, called variously *sheriffs*, *reeves* or *patriarchs*. When a litter reaches sexual maturity, they are ejected from the shire but the empty nesters remain to help younger moots raise their pups. The patriarchs are taken from this group of empty nesters.

As a rule, conflict *within* a shire is settled nonviolently, with patriarchs and other older males usually acting as mediators. Inter-shire competition uses threat displays that escalate to violence when displays don't work. In addition to other shires, danger can come from the interstitial group of nomadic maids and bachelors—the newly mature adults that were ejected from their natal shires. These nomads may raid resources from shires for themselves, or they may give those resources to a shire they wish to join once they form their own moot. These maids and bachelors also compete and cooperate among themselves. This social interaction helps these young adults decide who they wish to form their own moot with.

Moot selection highly favors exogamy, with prospective sires and dams being from as many different shires as possible. A newly formed moot may do one of two things. usually they will join a pre-existing shire, at which point the sires and dams will lay their eggs and incubate their womb nest. The shire the moot joins may be the natal shire of one of the sires or dams, or it could be a completely different shire. For any number of reasons a moot may choose not to join an existing shire, and may strike out on their own to form a lone childermoot. This lone moot, if successful, will form the nucleus of a new shire, but it may also simply dissolve without other moots joining them.

One difference between tree dwellers and presapient yinrih is that tree dwellers passively deposited their ink by walking and climbing, with more frequented spots accruing more ink, but presapient yinrih actively marked using their ink. Males would mark the watering holes of potential prey, and females would mark trees that were safe to eat from. Maids and bachelors also marked to advertise their desire to form a moot.

The Kindling was essentially instantaneous, with sapient pups being conceived by nonsapient parents. Language developed rapidly. Sapient maids and bachelors would usually encounter one another after leaving their nonsapient littermates. A simple pidgin formed among these nomads, with a spoken language growing from their vocalizations and a written language growing in parallel from their marking behavior. Sapient yinrih highly preferred other sophonts to form moots, making their litters contain only sapient pups. These second-generation sophonts picked up the spoken and written pidgins of their parents, developing new grammar and syntax. In rare cases, two or

more first-generation sophonts were born to a single litter, or sapient pups from different moots within the same shire would encounter one another before their nomad phase, whereupon a pidgin would develop much earlier.

# Oubliettes

It's spooky season, so how about some good ol' fridge horror regarding metabolic suspension?

What do we know about Amnions thus far?

- They halt a person's metabolism while keeping the brain active.
- They can present a simulacrum to the suspended person.
- They can alter a person's time perception.

What do we know about yinrih neurology thus far?

- They can't go unconscious without dying.

Amnions were originally designed to allow Claravian missionaries to cross the fathomless distances between stars, speeding up their time perception to make the journey pass more quickly and presenting a simulacrum to their active brains to stave off insanity. As seen in my stories, the simulacrum need not be a Matrix-like experience. It can just as easily be an abstract 3D space representing a womb ship's systems, and there's no reason the amnion can't present a real-life sensor feed to the suspended person's brain.

There's nothing stopping the amnion from simply not presenting any form of sensation to the occupant either. Keep in mind it's impossible for a yinrih to go unconscious, so they're still aware, but they lack any form of sensation, including proprioception. If you combine this with slowing down the occupant's time perception so they experience perhaps centuries or even millennia while mere minutes pass outside, and you've got the spitting image of The Void, the Claravian version of Hell.

The Partisans jump on this as a method of punishment for a few reasons. It's comparatively cheap to chuck a convicted murderer in a suspension capsule for six measly minutes while the prisoner experiences a thousand years or more of ultimate isolation. Of course the Partisans, devout materialists that they are, love the fact they're able to perfectly simulate Hell with no pesky metaphysics ruining their day. There's also the fact that it angers the Bright Way, since they regard amnions as sacred objects used to carry out the Great Commandment, and view their use as instruments of torture as sacrilege.

Then again, perhaps this is too grimdark even for the Partisans.

# Yinrih proxemics, familial gestures of affection, and grooming

Adult yinrih are much more particular about their personal space compared to humans. There are a few expressions of affection involving contact shared between parents and their pups, as well as between littermates or unrelated playmates, but never between parents in a childermoot.

Intertwining tails is similar to a hug. It shows emotional closeness and expresses a desire to give comfort and protection. Sires or dams often intertwine their tails with young pups when out and about, similar to holding hands for safety. Parents may also rest their tail across a pup's back to express a similar sentiment.

Touching the wet tip of the nose to the muzzle, cheek, top of the head, or the back of an ear and quickly exhaling (AKA "kissing") is an affectionate gesture that pups give to their parents and vice versa. Kissing is also used by Wayfarers to show reverence to sacred objects such as the star hearth, holy relics, or the bones of their deceased loved ones.

Between pups, gentle headbutting and tail pulling are common ways to initiate play. A quick thump across the other's back with the body of the tail expresses fraternal affection.

As pups reach their adolescent years, they stop giving these gestures to parents and littermates, and stop tolerating them from others. As they progress into adulthood, however, they may resume more mild gestures of affection from parents and now adult littermates depending on cultural norms.

Aside from the above, physical gestures like this are likely to be interpreted as violations of personal space when they occur between adults, including between members of a childermoot. Adult vulpithecins, including tree dwellers and yinrih, do not engage in social grooming, as their jungle home has a variety of bristly plants they can rub against to dislodge loose fur and skin parasites.

Synthetic recreations of these bristly plants are used for personal grooming by modern yinrih. Such tools are called brush boards, brush mats, rubbing boards, and the like. A common simple variant is a bristled surface lying loose on the floor or mounted to the wall. Yinrih will rub their back, tail, and sides against these wall-mounted boards, or wallow on the floor-standing mats. Tools very similar to Terran hairbrushes held in the tail are favored by spacers. Rotating drums covered in bristles are also used.



# Fellwinds

Tornadoes are called <rpLqqkjg>, from <rpLqg> (wind) + <qkj> (fell, evil). This term is the standard word referring to a tornado in Commonthroat. Yinrih synthesizing English often refer to tornadoes as *fellwinds*. The word comes from a particular branch of Misotheism. The misotheists, as mentioned earlier, believe that the ideas, beliefs, and emotions of sophonts manifest as entities with agency from the noosphere, with particularly potent emotions or widespread beliefs having more agency over the real world. Fellwinds are said to be incarnations of existential dread or the fear of mortality. They exist only briefly, and spend their fleeting existence causing as much chaos as possible.

Tornadoes (tornadic waterspouts if you want to be pedantic) are common on Sweetwater, where the increased insolation and abundant moisture provide fertile conditions for them to form. The surface of Sweetwater is also where many misotheist groups make their home.

# Indigenous Yinrih etc.

Here's another brainstorming post.

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Unlike humanity, the yinrih don't have a concept of native or indigenous peoples. This is especially true on worlds other than Yih which were terraformed from lifeless rocks and populated by yinrih from scratch. There are a lot of groups that appear to be uncontacted tribes, especially on Sweetwater's many islands and floating vegetation rafts, but they all started out as bands of Atavists, Primitive Wayfarers, Neoshamanists, or other miscellaneous groups who chose to isolate themselves from wider yinrih society.

If you've ever seen the movie *The Village*, that's how these groups start out. A group of people claims, buys, squats on, or takes over a difficult-to-access bit of land, then forms a group of childermoots, becoming a little insulated shire. They tell their pups that there's nothing beyond the trees/waters/mountains/whatever, and over time history becomes legend becomes myth.

Some residents of the Spacer Confederacy or Outer Belt have the moxy to do this on an orbital colony, which results in a ctrl+C ctrl+V of every sci-fi story about generation ships ever. i.e. the residents believe the colony is the entire universe, with upkeep of the ships systems handled by "machine spirits" (leaseminds and drones) or by a cargo cult.

Before First Contact a subculture of regular yinrih existed that was interested in these self-isolated cultures. The first Terraboos emerged from this subculture after First Contact.

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Given what Neoshamanists believe about the noosphere and consciousness, they'd be the ones of all yinrih groups to try for strong AI. They don't get there, but perhaps they pioneer things like machine learning algorithms and leaseminds.

Yet another theory about Yinrihcron™ is that it was built by a group of neoshamanists trying to make an AI god.

# Making Mistakes

Many offices in the Bright Way have a master-apprentice dynamic. Hearthkeepers have acolytes, Knights of the Sun have squires, Farspeaker anchorites have apprentices.

All of these have a similar tradition when showing a newbie the ropes. While demonstrating a routine task, the master will deliberately make a small but visible mistake. A senior squire may strip a screw head, a hearthkeeper may replace a fuse with one with a lower current rating causing it to blow, an anchorite may mistype a network address causing a loop in the network. The master will offhandedly comment on the error, almost as though talking to herself.

"Oops, I used the wrong fuse..." etc.

She will then correct the error. This is to teach the newbie a lesson.

- Even seasoned professionals make mistakes.
- You're new, so I expect you to make mistakes, too.
- I want you to feel comfortable asking me for help if you think you've made a mistake.
- Don't wallow in your failures, but rather learn from them and grow.

# Yinrih Social Media

“[HolyHandGrenade!](#) wrote: 2024-11-04T13:44:54+00:00 What's the yinrih equivalent to social media?”

With the exception of their lack of libido and their less private bathroom habits, yinrih have the same social impulses as humans, so they have similar social media... if your conception of social media were frozen in the late 90s.

The sort of rich multimedia experience we have with the modern internet is restricted to planet-wide internetworks. The ansible network is a purely text-based affair, meaning you're limited to bulletin boards and text chat if you want to reach a system-wide audience. Hearthside is aggressively anti-corporate, so their internetwork is much more "rural" for lack of a better term. there are many small niche communities operating independently rather than a handful of high-traffic platforms.

These small communities are usually members of any one of a number of larger fediverse-like systems that streamline identity management, allowing a single account to work across any site in that particular federation. These federations differentiate themselves by what content they permit, their community management style, what demographics they cater to, etc.

The Allied Worlds is much more business-friendly, so their social media landscape looks much closer to ours, with a few sites accounting for the lion's share of traffic.

The Spacer Confederacy is much too fragmented to make blanket statements, but the immense cultural gravity of the AW means that most city-states use services headquartered in the AW, much like how YouTube and Facebook have a global presence.

Partisan Territory has a tightly controlled internetwork similar to the PRC, with your online identity being tied to your government ID. They have a handful of social media planforms that uncannily mirror those of the AW, but they're all run by state-sanctioned companies with strong ties to the ruling party.

Moonlitter, caught as it is between the AW and the Partisans, has a hodgepodge of cobbled-together systems reflecting the ever-shifting loyalties of its government over the centuries, with the state exerting more or less control over the internetwork depending on whose favor they want to curry.

# Rediculously Sour Breakfast

Image

Steadfruit juice and some steadtree fruit. Size may not be final.

# The Partisan Perspective

Woo that was 600 posts! Who knew that my hyperfixation on these maladaptive daydreams would teach me so much. I didn't know anything about Blender before, and I'm certainly still not good at it, but it's fun to mess around with.

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Anyway, here's some lore on the Partisans.

The Outer Belt during the age of decadence was originally home to the missionaries, its location at the edge of interstellar space making their work easier. Over time, however, many former ecclesiastical slaves, both freemen and runaways, came to the Outer Belt to get as far away from their former masters as possible.

For a time, the two groups got along well enough, both having a shared dislike for the ruling hierarchy, but tensions were always bubbling under the surface. Their perspectives on the Bright Way were fundamentally at odds. The missionaries, inspired by Hearthside's success, wanted to get the organization back on track by dissolving the Bright Way's corporate arm while maintaining its religious character. The former slaves, however, felt that whatever new clergy rose to replace their former masters would simply grow corrupt themselves and perpetuate the cycle. This group's animosity toward the Bright Way slowly grew to encompass religion generally, giving rise to the various secularist groups that Firefly would eventually unite under the Partisan banner.

Regarding Firefly's genocide, there is a small but vocal group of historians ~~both inside and~~ outside Partisan Territory who argue that the worst of the genocide happened before Firefly returned to Focus. Rather than instigating the atrocity, only pulling back at the plea of his advisors, these historians argue that the still mostly disorganized secularist warlords were the ones responsible, and that Firefly was the one who put an end to the matter after he returned from his missionary journey and officially constituted the Partisans. This is a very controversial stance, obviously, but the Lichlord is such a magnet for conspiracy theories and historical revisionism that pulling the facts out of the mess of speculation and rumor can be difficult.

**Edit:** Silly me. Making up lies about our Great Leader. There was no genocide. It's all filthy Allied Worlds propaganda.

\*angry banging on the door and muffled shouting\*

Oops, brb looks like I'm spending six minutes in an oubliette.

# Moots and Inheritance

A moot is a legal entity within yinrih society. Imagine all the non-romantic functions of a spouse--sharing finances, providing emotional support, care when sick, etc. Legally, childermoots are a special kind of moot, and the vast majority of moots are simply childermoots whose pups have grown and whose members have chosen to stay together as empty nesters. Moots can persist across generations, with younger members joining to fill the ranks left by those who have died or left.

The key legal requirement of a moot is that one may not be a member of more than one at a time. Joining a moot involves a contract between the new member and the moot in which the member promises to contribute to the mutual wellbeing of the other moot members. In the case of a childermoot, the contact is implied when the members' eggs are gathered together into a nest, hence the phrase "You put your egg in this nest" meaning to make a long term commitment.

Moots are the chief mechanism of inheritance in yinrih society, and there are moot-run farms, moot-owned companies, moots involved in organized crime, dynastic moots within politics, etc.

The length of a member's commitment to the moot varies, but 36 Yih years is the minimum across most yinrih cultures, being the length of time to raise a litter.

Individual moots never get so large that any given two members don't know one another personally, but many lesser moots may be affiliated indirectly with a more powerful one in what is sometimes called a "metamoot". Social climbing involves joining one of these lesser moots in hopes of one day gaining entry into the more powerful moot.

# A bit on teenagers

“[Khemehekis](#) wrote: 2024-12-24T21:12:05+00:00 Do any yinrih cultures have a concept of adolescence?”

I brought it up in the Commonthroat thread a bit. <scBmg> (literally "sojourners") are a close analog to teenagers. Yinrih are cut loose at around 53 Earth years of age, which is when the ovary is fully developed, but this phase can bleed through to their later puppy years as well. This phase can last for up to a century. This is the period when the newly adult yinrih establishes themselves as an independent adult and starts searching for others to form a childermoot with if they are so inclined.

Child rearing styles vary widely throughout place and time at Focus, but the traditional Claravian view emphasizes obedience and filial piety when young, but with the understanding that the child will ultimately make their own choices as an adult. In other words, parents pour a firm foundation during puppyhood and leave it to their adult children whether they want to build on it or not.

The phrase *rnL rfCrl qfdr qP sfcqn*. (literally "I [sad] do not stand in your [child] way.") is a traditional way of saying "I don't approve of what you're doing but respect your agency as an adult to do it."

This is also the time when a yinrih chooses whether or not to affirm the faith they were raised in or reject it. the semantic similarity of <scBmg> (sojourner) to rDmg (wanderer/apostate) is not coincidental.

# Yih Calendar Sketch

One Yih year is 1.47 Earth years long. One Yih day is 24.39 Earth hours long. There are exactly 528 Yih days per Yih year.

Since Yih has no moons, there are no months. Rather, a year is divided into four quarters of 132 days each that align with the seasons. The new year starts on the Southern Hemisphere's vernal equinox.

The next time division lower than a quarter is the "week" which is based on a yinrih torpor cycle of 12 days, making each quarter 11 weeks long. Dates are generally given year, quarter, week, day.

Before First Contact, the traditional epoch is the Great Kindling, which is given as the first evidence of written language roughly 100 thousand Earth years (68010 Yih years) prior to First Contact. This is denoted in English as AK (after Kindling). After meeting humans, First Meeting becomes the new epoch, with years reckoned BFM (Before First Meeting) and AFM (After First Meeting).

# The Yinti

Around the high southerly latitudes of Yih there is a cryptid known as the rcfrcfDFg b sPnqg (great snow beast), or "yinti" to humans. It is described as being anywhere from grizzly- to elephant-sized, bearing white fur and possessing a roughly cynoid body shape. An ambush predator, it makes its home in caves atop sheer cliffs and kills its prey by flinging itself over the edge and crushing the unsuspecting prey under its bulk, suffering no injury from the impact. More fanciful legends speak of it simply killing out of aggression or malice rather than predation, bouncing elastically back to the clifftop after dispatching its victim.

# Archeonets and Cyberarcheology

Much like humanity, the yinrih's information age dawned around the same time they achieved spaceflight. Through the millennia their internetwork has grown in size and complexity as they settled throughout Focus, and by the time of First Contact they have amassed 95 thousand Earth years of digital information.

When you live over 700 years, you have to think long-term. There are data centers filled with storage servers that are built to operate independently for millennia. To err is vulpithecine, and sometimes these servers are left forgotten to run on their own.

The discipline of cyberarcheology specializes in ferreting out these lost archeonets and uncovering their secrets. Cyberarcheologists specialize in dead programming languages, obsolete data storage formats, outmoded hardware architectures, and long superseded network protocols.

The Farspeakers have a keen interest in cyberarcheology as they want to preserve the system their predecessors built. There is also a thriving amateur cyberarcheology community whose interests range from finding lost media from one's own puppyhood to preserving vintage tech from before the end of the Terran ice age.

# Yinrih Popular Media

Yinrih consume a similar variety of media as humans. There are experiences similar to movies and TV shows as well as print and audio media. The phrase "canned play/drama" is used to refer to what humans call movies and serialized TV shows.

One of the more unusual ways yinrih consume media is via text stream. This is text received in real-time through the ansible network. It can be read directly by the person receiving it or it can be recited by a speech synthesizer. These synths are treated a lot like humans treat fonts, with different synths being judged appropriate for specific types of media. With a bit of text markup, one can also achieve passable, though still obviously synthetic, dramatic dialogue with different synths voicing different characters, or, should the listener be so inclined, a single synth can affect different voices in imitation of a narrator telling a story.

One of the reasons the Allied Worlds has achieved cultural hegemony is through its STL orbital repeater network. These are artificial satellites that act as conventional realspace radio repeaters placed at intervals between the planets of the AW, allowing for very fast (though still not real-time) data transfer. Entire high-definition video files can be propagated from one end of the AW to the other in anywhere from a few hours to a few days, depending on the position of the start and end points at the time. This allows entire movies or shows to be distributed across the region in a timely fashion, allowing media companies to reach a very wide audience.

After the initial wave of human media hits Focus following First Contact, a distinct "Terranesque" style emerges, yinrih creators making media aimed at a primarily cynoid audience, but heavily influenced by human culture. Compare the phenomenon of Western cartoons informed by anime tropes.

There is a small but dedicated human fandom for such media, which derives entertainment as much from yinrih misconceptions about human nature and odd interpretations of Terran cultural touchstones as from the media itself.

While stories of talking animals are as common among yinrih as humans, one particular quirk of such stories inspired by Terran culture is that, since the yinrih are fur-bearing quadrupeds with tails living in a world designed for fur-bearing quadrupeds with tails already, Terran animal characters look much closer to how they do in real life, such as not walking on their hind feet. But if an animal has a tail at all, it's bound to be prehensile.

Another quirk is how clothing is portrayed. Even in serious works it's colorful and outlandish. Humans often compare it to the styles found in anime. Fortunately, yinrih understand that humans don't go naked in public, but yinrih are fixated on humans' use of clothing as a social signal while ignoring the more mundane use of clothing as a practical tool. More savvy cynoid creators will poke fun at this cultural difference in a nod to human fans. One memorable scene from a particular political satire depicts a Partisan diplomat discussing a military alliance with Mainland China. The

Partisan strides into the room, his tail aloft and ears erect in a display of dominance to counter the human's intimidating height. This show of confidence is marred by his tee-shirt, backwards, of course, with "I'm with Stupid" printed on it.

# Weeping Sires

The *qhrBFg*, "weeping sires" or simply *rBFmg* "those who weep", is one of the oldest surviving examples of cynoid folklore.

Depictions and explanations vary widely, but some elements are common. They are usually depicted as the vengeful ghosts of sires who have lost their womb nests. A typical retelling goes like this:

A group of sires is killed while attempting to protect their womb nest from harm. Their vengeful ghosts wander the bank of the River, seeking to drown passers-by in revenge for their lost kits. Their presence is heralded by the strong scent of lacrimal fluid, which to humans smells like sea spray.

The story is a classic cautionary tale told by parents to their pups to keep them away from water. The earliest versions of the tale involve an act of infanticide by a rival shire, showing how ancient the story is. More recent versions censor this detail, with the loss of the kits attributed to miscarriage, disease, or predation. In these latter versions the ghosts' aggression is blamed on grief-driven madness rather than revenge.

The exact number of ghosts vary. Sometimes there's only one. Sometimes they act together in a group, and sometimes the group is scattered around the area with individuals acting alone. Sometimes the lacrimal fluid can be seen as well as smelled, usually on rocks along the shore. Sometimes the fluid actively oozes out of the rocks rather than simply being present on them.

The sires may appear as rotting corpses that lunge out and drag their victims under, or they may be ethereal specters or even unseen voices that compel the victim to enter the water like a siren song.

Not all versions are negative. Sometimes the sires kill themselves in despair and appear before people who are contemplating suicide to encourage them to reconsider. These depictions appear as normal living yinrih and tend to have black fur.

A version of the tale where the kits die of disease has been used in modern times to criticize the natural brooding movement, which eschews the use of womb nest incubators.

This story is often associated with *The Dam's Lament*, the first extant example of written language, which is a dam mourning the loss of her kits.

# More on Moots

Moots fill the same social niche as the nuclear family. Childermoots are a special kind of moot, but moots can be formed without the intent to raise a litter. Biological factors limit childermoots to twelve members divided evenly between the sexes, but moots generally can have more members (though at least two people are required to form a moot), and moots don't need to have a particular gender ratio.

Childermoots cannot be embedded in a larger moot, as divisions and conflicts of interest can arise between parent and non parent members. However, the same looser associations that give rise to metamoots exist between childermoots and regular moots as they do between socially powerful and less powerful moots. Academic childermoots exist in this configuration.

Moots are considered legal persons similar to corporations on Earth. Assets such as land, bank accounts, property, etc. can be owned collectively by a moot, and moot members are usually contractually obligated to contribute some of their earnings to the moot as a whole.

Most yinrih societies do not recognize blood relationships beyond those between parent and child and among litter mates, though those relationships are quite strong. Involvement by "grandparents" in their "grand-pups" lives is less prevalent, and usually indirect, with sires and dams interacting with their adult children who are now themselves parents.

More common is the involvement of unaffiliated siblings in the lives of the pups of their adult litter mates, as can be seen with Sherman's Aunt Breezy. And yes, the "sugar them up and send them home" strategy is just as common here as on Earth.

Child rearing can take different forms depending on the time and place. One method is to have all parents equally involved in taking care of the entire litter. This strategy can involve the entire family living communally as is usual on Earth, or individual parents can live singly, with each parent taking turns caring for a few pups at a time in rotation.

The other major strategy is for pups to be divided up among the childermoot early on, usually by the time the kits are weaned or by the time they start school, with one parent concentrating on the same smaller group of pups throughout their puppyhood. The other parents and their own young charges are treated like very involved aunts/uncles and cousins, respectively, by individual pups.

This second approach is employed by fostering orders raising human kids to more closely emulate the human family. Using Sherman and Doug from the Multiverse Inn as an example, Doug was responsible for closely monitoring Sherman's health and educational development, undertaking discipline for misbehavior, etc. Since the monks and their human fosters lived communally, the other monks were still heavily involved in Sherman's upbringing.

Speaking of religious communities, individual monasteries are legally considered moots.



# Train of Wonders

While the Allied Worlds is the chief source of entertainment media, a few offerings from outside the AW have managed to achieve system-wide success.

The Train of Wonders is a children's educational TV show from Hearthside starring a litter of pups and their childermoot who live in a magical train capable of traveling through space and time.

Humans compare the show to The Magic School Bus, as many of the episodes use the train's magic to teach basic science concepts in an intuitive and entertaining way, but the show is much broader in scope. Many episodes have the characters go back in time to learn about history or travel to different parts of Focus to learn about different cultures. The show is primarily geared toward Wayfarers. The lives of Claravian saints and martyrs are often depicted in the historically-oriented stories, and instilling good morals is a core focus of the show. In that respect it garners comparisons to Veggie Tales.

When the show becomes popular outside Hearthsiede, the creators start including episodes showcasing Hearthsider culture, and one of the requirements for the show to be aired in foreign markets is that the characters must retain their Hearthsider names even in dubs, and the original Hearthsider dialogue must be made available on an alternate audio channel.

After First Contact the show becomes a hit with humans both young and old, and the creators produce many episodes where the cast goes on adventures on Earth. A human character is even added to the show in order to educate human fans about their new galactic neighbors.

# Hearth Licker

## Image

Kissing the glass of the star hearth is a common pious practice among Wayfarers. For yinrih, "kissing" means gently touching the wet part of the nose to a surface and quickly exhaling. Star hearths in more devout corners of Focus are covered in nose prints. This custom gives rise to the common anti-Wayfarer slur "hearth licker".

Such hallowed objects as the star hearth, icons, the bones of deceased loved ones are given the lowest level of religious devotion, known in Commonthroat as <qhjh>, literally "care" or "reverence". Some abstract concepts are also so revered, such as the noosphere. The other two levels are <nLqg> "honor" given to saints and martyrs, and <kgg> "praise" given only to the Uncreated Light.

The difference between these degrees is how much agency is ascribed to the entity in question. Things that are given <qhjh> have no inherent power (to believe otherwise is regarded as superstition), and are merely physical objects or concepts that represent higher realities. Saints and Martyrs reflect the Uncreated Light through their lives of holiness and virtue, but they merely *reflect* it. To claim otherwise is, again, condemned as superstition. The Uncreated Light itself is regarded as the only proper object of worship.

This is in contrast to most flavors of Neoshamanism, which ascribes animistic power to living things and natural phenomena.

# On Grooming

As yinrih do not sweat, bathing is less frequent compared to humans. Yinrih from most cultures bathe weekly (about every 12 Terran days), usually before or after torpor. A comprehensive yinrih shower may take upward of an hour from start to finish, as a yinrih's entire coat of fur requires the same level of care as a human's scalp, including shampoo, conditioner, and lots and lots of drying and brushing.

Yinrih are just as chatty while showering as they are while using the restroom. As with their toilets, cynoid showers are optimized for hygiene but not privacy. Spas are as much a social gathering spot as restaurants and bars. Indeed, businesses offering both a bath and a bite are quite common.

Depending on what part of Focus you are in, houses will have a public room set aside for showering separate from any toilets. This may be an outdoor area in climates that are warm year-round. When staying as a guest in a private home for longer than a week, one will be offered a shower in the same way one would be offered a meal. Clean fur, a full belly, and a roof over one's back are the three quintessential things a host gives to a guest. Humans are advised to bring a bathing suit and hang out and chat as you would in a hot tub, with the only difference being some of the people are lathering up. Most yinrih understand the human desire for privacy when bathing to get clean, though that won't stop them from trying to hold a conversation with you from the other room.

A typical yinrih "wet room" as they are often called, has several shower heads lining the walls. They may be fixed in place or they may be designed to be healed in the tail. The floor slopes gently toward a gutter running down the center of the room designed to both drain water and whisk away shed fur. The floor itself is textured to prevent slipping.

More spacious homes have an anteroom set aside for drying. The walls or floor will be covered in bristly mats that the yinrih wallows on or rubs against to brush out their coat. More modest wet rooms have to double for drying and brushing, with brush mats that are removed for showering and replaced for drying. High velocity coat dryers are ubiquitous.

Keeping one's nose wet is an important part of yinrih grooming. A wet nose helps aid the sense of smell, and a dry chapped nose is uncomfortable. A glistening wet nose is also considered aesthetically pleasing.

In addition to the nose's natural mucus, wetness is maintained with an occasional lick. In dry climates, however, nose balm is used to prevent the nose from drying out. Unlike human lip balms, which are often mildly flavored, cynoid nose balm is invariably scentless. Indeed, many brands are advertised as having "negative odor", possessing no smell of their own but enhancing surrounding odors.

# Hearthsider Stereotypes

Of the major planet-wide societies at Focus, Hearthsider is the most polychronic, with a relaxed attitude toward scheduling and a plethora of religious holidays off from work, this gives outsiders the impression that Hearthsiders are lazy.

Wayfarers who have only visited Hearthsider on pilgrimage, or at any rate have heard stories about those who have, regard Hearthsiders as dishonest and greedy, thanks to visitors to the City of Eternal Noon getting fleeced out of their money by unscrupulous merchants.

# More Thoughts on the Calendar

The yinrih's torpor cycle isn't synced with Yih's day-night cycle, so it's likely there are no timezones on Yih. Calendar days will likely start at solar noon over a particular meridian, likely Newman's Dale. There will likely be time divisions lower than a day that are named rather than numbered, and the names reflect an ancient Claravian cycle of prayers prayed at specific times. These times will still be numbered for purposes of collation in the same way months are numbered in some places but usually referred to by name in speech and writing. Hearthside may have a completely different calendar that isn't divided into days.

Related: The Claravian calendar and liturgical norms may have varied more widely in the past than they do at the time of First Contact. In particular, Hearthside may have had customs peculiar to itself that were later spread to the rest of Focus after the War of Dissolution and the rise of Hearthside as the center of Claravian government. In particular, Many customs practiced on Yih may have been suppressed by Hearthside after the War as they were seen as too favorable to the corporate wing of the Bright Way.

# They Need To Do Way Instain Mother

“ [Khemehekis](#) wrote: 2023-12-26T02:44:51+00:00 I love the title you gave to your last post in this thread. I was laughing so hard when I read it.

And I could see the title on the "Latest posts" board index, too.

I mentioned the notion of yinrih trying to adopt human children. I figured I'd add this as a footnote to the other post.

Once the mass router trunk is established between Sol and Focus, and as yinrih become more familiar with humans, there's a massive crush of yinrih who want to adopt neglected or abused human children. Yinrih families are less likely to be dysfunctional for a couple reasons: no sex means no sexual violence, for one thing, and while bad sires or dams certainly exist, the fact that a typical yinrih childermoot is larger than a pair of human parents means that one bad apple has less of an effect on the kids. If a particular sire or dam is proving to be an unfit parent, there are numerous ways to "do way instain mother" as it were. If the culture in which a particular family resides does not have families cohabiting, it's pretty easy to just cut off access to the pups. Some cultures, however, have all the pups and childermoot under the same roof, and that makes it harder to just exclude a parent quietly. Situations like this usually result in legal action by the rest of the childermoot against the parent in question, with his or her official ouster from the moot being the end goal.

Anyway, back to adopting humans. Human governments and adoption agencies have a range of responses to this movement. Some refuse any inter-specific adoption on the grounds that human kids need human parents in order to have a healthy upbringing, same instincts, same lifespan, same development, etc. Language acquisition issues are usually the biggest reason cited. Yinrih are incapable of reproducing human speech, and humans likewise can't make yinrih speech sounds. Some organizations allow adoption only after a certain age, between seven and thirteen is the most common. Others may allow yinrih to foster but not adopt, some condition adoption on the family regularly exposing the human child to other humans, sending the human to a human school, etc. Others allow adoption just as they would with human parents, figuring that, while it would be nice for a human child to have human parents, having yinrih parents is better than having none.

Some cynical humans see this as yinrih looking to have a "human pet". Yinrih live so much longer that the time it takes to raise a human child from infancy is comparatively trivial, so it's hard not to see their point. The difference in lifespan also means the human's adopted sires and dams will be burying their child, and their child's children, and so forth.

**Edit:** I've decided the yinrih age of majority is on average 36 yih years, or about 53 Earth years. That's three "dodecades" if that's a word.

# Dogtors

“ [thethief3](#) wrote: 2024-01-02T09:49:18+00:00 Probably as humans are discovered we see a push for the clergy to enter secular politics. And more men will feel as though they need to enter the clergy.

Yinrih society's attitude toward gender roles can be summed up as "men break, women fix." with the occasional addition of "and that's why the politicians are men." There are people who push for the traditionally gender-locked careers (healer, cleric, politics/diplomacy, and military), to be integrated. Despite this, the military and clergy remain firmly gender-exclusive. There are probably more females getting into politics after the collapse of the clergy, since before if a female wanted to be in a position of authority she could become a cleric and make the real decisions. while the male statesmen were merely figureheads.

The only area I plan on exploring in the lore is males getting into healthcare, and especially male healers specializing in human medicine. There are also female healers working on humans, too, but there's a little cultural loophole that permits males to work on humans where they'd be forbidden or discouraged from working on other yinrih. Males are barred from becoming healers, but there's nothing stopping them from becoming *veterinarians*.

yinrih (male or female) who want to work on humans are considered vets by the yinrih medical establishment since they work on a dissimilar species. They go through a yinrih vet school (usually one that focuses on humans) and then undertake the same human-led medical school required for human doctors. This takes about 14 years (4 years of yinrih vet school, 4 years of human med school, and 7 years of residency).

Yinrih have a few things going for them that make them excellent doctors. They have a prodigious sense of smell, greater than a dog's. They can smell cancer, changes in blood sugar, or oncoming seizures, among other things. They can (potentially) have an excellent bedside manner thanks to their ability to smell pheromones making them empathic. Their wider visual spectrum allows them to estimate body temperature and diagnose hypo- and hyperthermia just by looking at a patient's *soul glow* (their word for the thermal radiation emitted by a living body). And their much longer lifespan allows them to provide womb-to-tomb healthcare for individual humans, as well as be a family doctor for several generations of humans, giving them an intuition regarding inherited health conditions.

Humans have a range of reactions to the concept of aliens practicing human medicine. Some are uncomfortable with a species that doesn't have first-hand experience with the human condition working on them. Some are offended by the idea that yinrih working on humans are considered vets by other yinrih. Some humans just think it's funny.

Humans call yinrih medical professionals *dogtors*.



# ARROW'D!

I've mentioned before that yinrih are not very good at throwing things, and they certainly never invented the bow and arrow, with tail slings being the go-to primitive projectile weapon. That means the use of arrows as directional markers never developed. Yinrih also don't point with their paws, they point their muzzle in the desired direction.

The preferred direction marker is therefore a caricature of a yinrih's head. In addition to indicating directions parallel to the plane of the writing surface, there are conventions for indicating perpendicular directions. On a wall that means straight ahead and behind, and on a flat surface it means up and down. Human signage generally uses an upward pointing arrow to mean "ahead", but it would literally mean "above" or "overhead". For "left", "right", "up", and "down" this ends up looking a lot like an arrowhead, or rather a turned V. The tip is usually filled in to represent a rhinarium. "Forward" is a pair of inverted V's representing the profile of a yinrih's ears as seen from behind. "Behind" is a semicircle or U shape with a filled circle in the middle, representing a yinrih's face seen straight on.

# Representing Balanced Ternary numbers visually

Image

I'm not sure yet what this will mean in-universe, but I've thought of a way of representing balanced ternary numbers in 2 dimensions. Here are the rules:

1. You draw a dot as your starting point.
2. Start drawing a line in any cardinal direction.
3. You may turn 90 degrees clockwise or counterclockwise, drawing a new dot at each turn.
4. You may go straight ahead, drawing another dot dividing the line segment.
5. You may not turn 180 degrees on a single node, you must make two consecutive 90-degree turns.

How does this represent balanced ternary numbers? A counterclockwise turn represents a +1, straight represents 0, and a clockwise turn represents -1. The digits are big-endian, that is, the first turn represents the highest-order trit, the second is the second-highest-order trit, and so on. Since you start off going straight, you can consider it an insignificant leading zero. Neither starting direction nor line-length are significant, so your choices in that regard can be governed by aesthetics or other constraints. Mirroring the image results in a number of the opposite sign, as does traversing the path backwards.

# Yinrih Cities and Houses

I need to think about how yinrih build their buildings and how they arrange those buildings into cities, especially pre-space age. As arboreal animals, I've assumed that they'd prefer to be off the ground where possible. Perhaps they construct their homes on stilts or pylons and use the space underneath for storage. Yih has 12% lower gravity than Earth, so that may make it more feasible.

As for cities, yinrih aren't built for endurance, so unless they domesticate some sort of draft animal I don't see sprawl becoming a problem. They may build up rather than out.

# Yinrih Art

Vulpithecine art is the visual art of yinrih cultures. Yinrih do not rely on subtle facial structure to recognize one another, making them effectively prosopagnosic. In close quarters, musk is used to distinguish individuals. Gross visual features such as fur pattern and body shape are used at a distance or when olfaction is impractical. Emotion is also communicated primarily through pheromones rather than body language, though ear position is used as a secondary indicator.

This species-wide face-blindness has effected how yinrih depict themselves visually. Yinrih art relies much more heavily on sets of visual tropes when identifying the subject of a picture or statue. If the artistic medium incorporates color, coat pattern may be used to identify the subject. If the subject is a recent historical figure, their actual fur pattern will be used. However, as legend blends with history and the already secondary visual appearance of a person becomes less relevant with time, the artist may lean into stereotypes associated with particular fur patterns, depicting the subject with pelage that evokes those stereotypes rather than their actual coat. These associations vary from culture to culture. Examples include red fur symbolizing bad luck and black ears (with a non-black coat) representing stupidity.

Other anatomical features hold symbolic significance as well. Short claws are associated with hard work and diligence, and long claws with laziness. stereotypical racial phenotypes are also used, such as hearthsiders' larger ears and deep blue bandpass membranes, and the rotund physique of Sweetwater's surface-dwellers.

Especially in religious art, items around the subject or on the subject's person are frequently used as identifiers. For example, a ceremonial wrench is a badge of the office of hearthkeeper, so hearthkeepers are usually shown holding a wrench. A drinking bowl is associated with hedonism, and libertines may be shown with a drinking bowl in paw. Knights of the Sun are seldom shown without their mech, and missionaries are usually depicted suspended in an amnion.

# Transit Ideas

Revisiting the idea of high-speed nonstop trains, but not fast enough to create microgravity. No evacuated tunnel, but I still like the idea of feeder trains. Instead of the main train stopping to pick up passengers, a feeder train on a circulating side track couples with the main train, where passengers can get on and off. The feeder train then returns to a station.

The feeder train is located above or below the main train, and hatches between the two are opened on the floor/ceiling. Recall that yinrih are arboreal, and so are more comfortable climbing in everyday situations.

# The Hame

A hame is a badge of honor granted to a healer. It is a cloak made from the pelt of a celebrated healer, usually the foundress of a college or other well-regarded alumna. To have one's pelt made into a hame is the highest posthumous honor a healer can receive, and to be given a hame is the highest honor a living healer can receive, especially if the hame was worn by, or better yet, made of, a saint.

In order to have her pelt made into a hame, a healer has to have lived long enough to retire from actively practicing medicine and regrow her fur. She also has to be sufficiently well regarded upon death for her pelt to be saved for the purpose.

Humans working with yinrih healers were often presented hames as gifts during the initial cultural exchange following the establishment of the Sol-Focus mass router trunk. The humans were initially shocked, but accepted the gifts gladly after being informed that the pelt was given willingly and taken posthumously.

# More on tactile writing

Sighted yinrih may use long-form tactile writing in a few circumstances where a text must be recited while the eyes are focused elsewhere. This may be done where humans would use cue cards or teleprompters, and in worship aids to recite prayers or hymns while the eyes are focused on the star hearth.

# Urban Planning

I think since yinrih are arboreal, they'd have a desire to get off the ground whenever possible. This leads to them building up rather than out, with dwellings packed together and raised off the ground, with the foundation resting on stilts or pylons. The fact that their urheimat was a flood-prone river valley also means that they'd have experience with flood mitigation. Yih's 12% lower gravity would help them build taller structures earlier than equivalently advanced human cultures. As buildings cluster together, cities start to look like Midgar from FF VII but on a smaller scale, with an undercity used for travel between buildings and an upper city where people live and work. In fact, the word "underlay" as used for hyperspace may have originally been an analogy to this urban infrastructure.

# The proper way to enter a room

When a yinrih enters a room, the polite thing to do is to stick the muzzle through the curtain and scent the air first before entering. This is the equivalent of a human visually scanning the room to get a general feel for who's present, what's going on, and how everyone is feeling.

# More on Gender Roles

Pre-theophany gender roles were simple. Men had worldly authority and women had spiritual authority. In the Bright Way this developed into a spectrum, with "women only" on one extreme and "men only" on the other. Strictly speaking at the time of First Contact the only occupations that are absolutely gender-locked are hearthkeeper (female) and soldier/law enforcement (male). Historically politicians also fell into the "male only" category, but as AW society secularized after the war of dissolution women found themselves disenfranchised as their former locus of power was no longer relevant. Politicians, even in the secular AW, are still mostly male, but there are no laws forbidding women from holding office.

Besides the two extreme ends of the spectrum, some occupations fall under "ideally male" and "ideally female". Post war, politics and diplomacy are found on the male side, and occupations historically associated with the clergy like healer and engineer on the female side.

Most occupations are not gender-specific. In the Bright Way pious men gravitate toward non clerical religious roles such as bonekeeper, research monk, farspeaker, missionary, etc. The Claravian mystical tradition is particularly associated with men.

There are loopholes though. Men may become veterinarians if they're interested in medicine, and while deliberate instigation of violence is taboo for women, self defense is fair game, and many, many martial arts arose from the clergy and their acolytes learning to defend themselves while working in isolated areas. Let's just say those ceremonial wrenches are big for a reason. Farspeakers, though not limited to women, have similar traditions, with a weapon similar to a flail or nunchucks evolving out of networking cables with heavy metal terminations.

# A day at the market

Here's a bit of lore since I'm feeling a tad better (at least about my testing issues, I always have some worry gnawing at my gut).

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Hearthside does not have stores as they exist in the US, where you have a cart and shelves acting as both storage and display for products. For groceries, there are two separate businesses that are usually colocated. A market selling fresh produce and meats, and a grocery store selling premade, processed, and frozen items. The market is usually outside under a pavilion if climate permits, much like a farmers' market. The grocery store is more of a warehouse optimized for storage rather than sale.

Fresh produce and meats can vary in size and quality, so it makes sense that a shopper would want to smell, feel, and see them before buying. So such things have browsable market stalls. One box of processed snacks of a certain brand is the same as the next, so there's no reason to waste real estate to display them for the public. That said, sample booths such as one sees in Sam's Club and Costco are a common site between the open air market and the grocery store, so if you want to try that box of processed snacks before buying, you can.

A typical family shopping trip goes like this. You and your fellow sires and dams pile into the train to go from your house to the business district. You have 20 little mouths to feed, so there's a lot to buy. A few of the sires are wearing draft harnesses. You are carrying one or more collapsible carts that the sires will pull behind them like a team of oxen. All 20 of those furry little terrors are traveling with you. On Hearthside it's considered proper to take your pups along with you when doing family business.

Once you arrive, you fold out the carts and hitch them to the sires' draft harnesses. The sires will not be touching the food. There is a net hanging under a low roof. After washing their paws, the dams leap up and grab hold of this net with their rear paws and tail. They hang upside down with the clean forepaws used to sample the wares and the rear paws used to navigate around the market. The sires will follow along on the ground, ready to catch any produce tossed into the cart by the dams. You and your fellow parents work in parallel, scattering throughout the market to fetch fresh fruits, firefly honey, spiced wormcow meat, and some fermented steadtree fruit juice for the fast preceding an upcoming holy day.

Kits will cling to their parents' backs, either dam or sire, though it's considered healthy and stimulating for a kit to cling to the back of a leaping and brachiating parent, so you see many dams nimbly vaulting around, each with one or two little fluffballs holding fast to their back or belly.

While it is more common for the dams to gather the produce while the sires man the carts, this is by no means a hard and fast rule. Men tend to be larger and stronger, while women tend to be

smaller, quicker and more nimble, so parents tend to settle into these roles, but you see plenty of ladies pulling carts and gentlemen flying around above.

Haggling is common. A dam hangs down by her tail, brandishing a gourd in one paw, a fistful of plastic tokens in the other, both forelegs gesticulating energetically. A kit is snuggled into her chest, lulled into torpor by the thrumming of his dam's vigorous negotiation. The vendor's strange accent and hefty build betray his Sweetwater heritage. Hearthside has a sizeable immigrant population seeking a better life unattainable on the surface of Sweetwater, and these "salty pelts" often find themselves working as merchants.

Her transaction complete, the dam bounds off to find the next item on the shopping list. But the kit, stirred to alertness by her sudden movement, begins yipping hungrily. The dam makes her way to a row of nursing couches. She drops straight from the netting onto the couch, lies on her back, and cups the kit's tiny head in her forepaw. He licks enthusiastically at the lactation patch between her paw pads. Stimulated by the kit's saliva, the patch begins sweating bluish-white milk. Once the kit has lapped up his fill, the dam rolls off the couch, washes her paws and tail again, and then leaps up to resume her shopping spree.

Meanwhile, you've finished your allotted errand and are waiting just outside the pavilion for the rest of your childermoot.

"sample. free." yips a fellow to your right, gesturing down at a tray full of sweet cakes covered in some synthetic blue frosting that's just a couple atoms away from being plastic. He has the same chunky frame and smaller ears, but a completely different lilt to his voice. It seems like there are as many throats as there are people on Sweetwater.

You accept his offer, skewering a morsel with your claw and popping the cake in your mouth. Your kit peers curiously from between your ears at the glob of blue icing remaining on your paw pad. "Oh, here you go," you say with mock reluctance as you reach up and let her lick your paw clean.

"Too small!" the vendor grunts, his ears flattened in disapproval. "Only milk for one so young!"

You scent the air. "Well when you lay your egg you can feed your kid whatever you want," you say as you walk off to meet the rest of your childermoot, now wending their way ahead of you to the grocery store to pick up the rest of the week's necessities.

Compared to the chaotic din of the open market, the grocery store is a much quieter and more orderly affair. Normally there's a tidy line of folks waiting to pick up their orders, some made online ahead of time, others printed on a list of product IDs and quantities and handed to a clerk to process.

Today, however, there's a knot of folks clamoring around a towering figure. "It's a human!" an older fellow barks back at you, having smelled your curiosity as you approached. "I've worked with 'em before, but I never thought one would visit our little shire."

The human turns to you. "¡Oooo!" she coos, bending over you and reaching with her smooth, pentedactyl, furless forepaw toward your kit. "¡Qué Precioso!"

Your pheromones are shouting in protest at this unwanted intrusion but the human is oblivious. You take a step back and bare your teeth. "Do NOT touch my daughter!" You growl.

"¡Ay! ¡No tóquesla, porfa!" The older fellow has equipped a synth and is attempting to defuse the situation. He explains the woman's faux pas to her in her own language, of which you understand not a whisper. The old man seems fluent though, at least going by his rapid speech and the woman's long responses. He smells much more relaxed now. "Lo siento," she says repeatedly.

"No te preocupes," he says before turning to you. "She's real sorry. Humans have an odd fascination with furry critters, like to run their paws through their coat. 'petting' is what they call it. Ya see, humans don't got any fur of their own, as you can see, well ignoring that stuff on their head. But they used to have fur, back when they lived in trees and had proper rear paws for climbin'. Anyhoo, back then they used to pick bugs outta each other's coats. Allogroomin' is what they call it."

The man rambles on as the line inches forward, giving an unnecessarily comprehensive survey of human evolution and biology. "And that's where human babies come from!" He barks enthusiastically. "Ooh, Looks like I'm up." He approaches the window and hands the clerk his order. The employee disappears for a moment before returning with a box of the same blue snack cakes you sampled earlier. The old man hefts the box onto his back. "You gotta try these," he says patting the box with his tail.

"uh..." you stammer, still trying to process the old man's biology lecture. "Light, why can't they just lay eggs?" you grunt under your breath as the old man trots away.

"Next!" You hear the clerk barking behind you. You turn back to the window and pull a slip of paper from the wallet around your foreleg. You reach out to put the paper in the clerk's open paw but yank it back at the last second. "Oh, sorry, one more thing." You flick your writing claw a few times and scribble a number onto the paper, then hand it back to the clerk.

He scans the list and disappears as before. He comes back, a few boxes resting on his back. He picks them up with his tail and places them on the counter. "Oh," he glances at the paper, "and here's that box of snack cakes." He grabs another package of the same blue sweets and adds it to the pile.

You join the rest of your childermoot, some laden with the weeks groceries and others covered in geckering kits overstimulated by all the new smells.

"Well, let's go home." You and yours turn around and start walking back to the train station, the sun still frozen near the zenith, just where it was when you arrived hours ago.

# The Protector's Paw

Here's the male counterpart to the healer's paw: the protector's paw. Like the healer's paw, it is a stylized depiction of the palmar pads on the forepaw, but male rather than female. Where the healer's paw is used like the caduceus or red cross, the protector's paw is analogous to a police badge, though it's not worn as a literal badge. That would be rather painful. It's found on buildings and vehicles.

Image

# The Dam's Lament and the Ark of Sapience

The Ark of Sapience is a reliquary containing the earliest positive specimen of written language as well as the bones of the earliest known yinrih to have undergone funerary rites. The text and the bones within have changed over the millennia as earlier artifacts have been found or the dating of relics thought to be prototypical called into question.

The epoch used prior to First Contact represents the earliest post-kindling artifacts that can be accurately dated, but earlier specimens have since been found that cannot be dated with enough certainty to serve as an epoch. What is known with certainty is that sophonts coexisted with presapient yinrih for a time before the latter disappeared.

The various texts housed in the ark are notable for how unremarkable they are, No profound philosophical musings, no stirring poetry, those would come later. Most are laconic declarations such as "This tree is ours", "Good hunting here", or "I feel sick". Newly sapient yinrih were wont to write to themselves in the same way a human might think out loud, so simple statements of one's current mood or activity are by far the most widespread examples of primordial writing. Paralinguistic drawings are often intermingled with written language as well.

The dam's lament is the currently accepted earliest sample of written language. It is a picture of a destroyed womb nest, the kits eaten by an oviraptor, killed at the paws of a rival shire, or even crushed under a fallen tree limb. The picture is accompanied by a single character written over and over. Primordial abounds in polysemy and grammatical categories are fluid. The repeated glyph can signify the verb "to push" but also means more abstract things like "motive", "reason" or even the interrogative "why?" This last sense is what is inferred in the case of the Dam's Lament.

The Ark of Sapience is a major bone of contention between the Bright Way and Neoshamanism. Since all such artifacts predate the Theophany they can't have belonged to Wayfarers. Neoshamanists contest that Wayfarers are appropriating Shamanist relics that should be left alone. The Bright Way asserts that it represents an unbroken development rather than a rupture from primitive animism. The vast majority of yinrih undertook the Bright Way out of the jungle and into the southern grasslands, and the shamans among them simply continued their rites as before, but worshipping the Creator rather than the creature.

# Curiosity and Caution

I've made the Lonely Galaxy Mediawiki instance public. It can be found at <https://constructed.world>.

I don't know how long I can keep it up for, but there it is.

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Before I forget:

"Curiosity and Caution" is an artistic motif, usually depicted in statuary, of a young yinrih bounding forward while an old yinrih holds the other back by the tail. It represents the ethos of a research monk, a sense of wonder and exploration tempered by prudence and caution. The two forces both work against one another but are still essential. Without curiosity you cannot advance, but without caution you end up advancing right off a cliff.

# Recreating a yinrih meal

Random idea for a human dish that replicates typical yinrih cuisine. Take smoked shredded beef brisket, dill relish, and diced white onions and mix them together into a dry stew. Add salt and pepper and serve in a bowl. Humans use a fork or spoon to eat, yinrih bring bowl to mouth or mouth to bowl. Make sure the relish is fridge-cold, the onion is room temp, and the brisket is hot to provide a contrasting temperature profile. Salt should be large-grained rock salt to provide texture variety. Cook the beef in such a way that it acquires a large amount of piquancy (not sure how this would be done as I'm not a chef) in order to replicate the overall sensation of wormcow meat. You could also add or substitute jalapeno relish to achieve desired heat. Alternatively serve in a bread bowl, though not sure if yinrih would eat it that way since the number one rule of yinrih table manners is paws never touch food.

# colossi

A colossus is a cynoidomorphic structure with a full-sized lighthouse on its back. The word for these structures in all major yinrih languages has gone on to mean giant or titan, and is used to indicate anything imposing or intimidating.

The first Colossus was built at Moonlitter by the Knights of the Sun as a war memorial honoring the knights who joined the Pious Dissolutionists at the plea of Iris the Hearthsider. It's a fully working mech, much larger than normal, powered by the Star Hearth in the lighthouse on its back. It's too large to be used practically and can only move around on a specially constructed tarmac, which it does on special occasions.

Other colossi are giant unmoving statues rather than mechs and are carved to be more lifelike. Some are standing with head erect and all four paws planted on the ground, while others are depicted in a hunting stance, with the head lowered and one forepaw raised, or rather placed on a pillar for stability. There are urban legends surrounding a supposed meaning between these two stances, but it's more likely a caprice of the designer.

Some colossi are allowed to weather and erode just enough to achieve a ruined aesthetic, then are maintained in that state. Others are built with decorative wear and tear, like a missing ear or cracked claws.

The lighthouse is used as a normal place of worship. Access is provided by an elevator built into the statue or in an attached building.

# Garlic and Onions

“ [Visions1](#) wrote: 2025-12-18T16:50:46+00:00 Do yin have chemical weapons?

Bioweapons?

Do they eat onions and garlic? Most animals can't stand them because of their smell (for example, onions contain a chemical that's basically tear gas, and the smell of fried onions is a component in skunk spray). Do they hate them? Do they like them? Because they're strong and funky?

Chemical probably, Bio almost certainly not. I know a lot was made of biological weapons immediately after 9/11, but I think the consensus has moved away from them being the most dangerous of the WMDs, or at least that they're too unpredictable to be used in warfare. Once you release something it's out in the wild and can't be controlled, and it's not hard to imagine your own side getting infected along with the enemy.

As for whether yinrih love garlic/onions, I can assure you they do, or rather analogous foods, especially for the smell, but for them it's like cabbage. It's tasty in the moment but you quickly tire of it if it lingers for too long. In fact there's a word for a toothsome aroma that is initially pleasant but gets less so over time.

# Clowns

Image (from a post on Lemmy criticizing what Mozilla is doing with Firefox)

Now I'm thinking about yinrih clowns again. I said before they wouldn't wear makeup, but perhaps distinct perfumes. Doug from the Multiverse Inn is perhaps the closest to what I'm thinking of.

# Reject Yinrih. Return to Tree-Dweller

The Atavists are a diverse collection of related ideologies that encompass the idea of going back to nature. The original, and most extreme, Atavist group believes that sapience is a curse and wishes to be rid of it. This group is opposed to the Bright Way, as they reject the Bright Way's belief that sapience is a divine gift. Their reasoning is pretty simple: animals aren't gnawed by existential dread, and they don't set up impossible moral standards for themselves and then beat themselves up for not living up to them.

Neo-shamanism also falls under the Atavist umbrella, and they in turn have a number of subdivisions. Some Neo-shamanists still consider themselves Wayfarers, but lead a primitive lifestyle, often living in steadtrees as hunter-gatherers as the tree-dwellers do, while their hearthkeepers tend open bonfires rather than star hearths. Others see themselves as radical traditionalists, rejecting the monotheism of The Bright Way and attempting to reconstruct the primitive animism the yinrih practiced before the Theophany. It's possible that one of these groups ended up as the Machine Cult that formed on Newhome. But the majority of yinrih who self-identify as Neo-shamanists merely put on the trappings of primitive religion as a lifestyle choice without considering the strict personal moral code imposed by the yinrih's primal religion. In particular, intoxication was severely punished in the early days, as a drunk yinrih was at best dead weight to the rest of the group, and at worst actively dangerous. Modern trendy Neo-shamanists not only ignore this rule, they incorporate drug use into their rituals.

# Perfumes

Here's a topic I've needed to elaborate on for some time. With the exception of healers, yinrih don't wear clothes. While they do use things like backpacks and pocketed leg bands, the communicative function of clothing is filled by perfumes.

Yinrih produce pheromones, both as an ambient musk and via their ink, that other yinrih can use to gain information about them. Approximate age, gender, emotional state, and whether or not one is currently in a childermoot can be determined readily by these natural odors.

Artificial perfumes are an extension of this form of olfactory communication. Perfumes communicate things like occupation, social status, and rank. This can get surprisingly detailed. Different military ranks use different scents, managers and floor staff at stores have their own odors, and hearthkeepers have different perfumes that serve as clerical vestments.

Perfumes are sometimes used to advertise stores, assuming the store's wares don't have a unique smell of their own, such as the rubber and grease smell of a hardware store or the smell of organic solvents common to electronics stores.

The good news for humans is that yinrih olfactory tastes largely overlap with ours, so most yinrih perfumes smell pleasant, if a little unorthodox. Clerical perfume, for example, smells like the faint note of cigarette smoke that has permeated the walls of a Motel 6 from the 90s. Perfumes used by veterans like Tod smells like the sulfury discharge of fireworks or model rocket engines. While healers use their lack of fur as the big indicator of their occupation, there is also a traditional scent used by healers that smells like lavender. While these perfumes can be smelled at a distance by other yinrih thanks to their ridiculously powerful noses, humans only catch a whiff now and then because yinrih don't use the same amount as a human would.

While not very common, some machine indicators use olfactory signals rather than lights or sounds to indicate warnings or states of operation.

# More Subfactions of the Atavists

Radical Atavists (the ones who reject sapience) are further divided into two factions: the Atheists and the Misotheists. The Atheists are straightforward: sentience is a random fluke of the blind purposeless process of evolution, one which they find undesirable and wish to correct.

The Misotheists are a much more interesting lot. They believe The Light is evil, and that it cursed them with sapience. Many Misotheist Atavists seek to kill The Light. The means by which they try to accomplish this goal are legion, and may or may not involve spiky hair, giant swords and long-winded speeches about the power of friendship.

# Light Sculpture

Hearthside is a tidally locked world, meaning the sun is frozen in the same place in the sky, with its elevation determined by latitude. This lack of movement makes it easier to incorporate sunlight into art and architecture.

Hearthside is famous for light sculpture, which uses reflected, refracted, filtered, or diffracted sunlight in interesting ways.

One of the more common examples of light sculpture is a dark room with a single skylight. Placed in the path of incoming sunlight is a surface covered in tiny mirrors that may be stationary, moving, or may even have several parts that move relative to one another, reflecting tiny patches of sunlight onto surrounding surfaces. These mirrors may be colored, and prisms may be used instead of mirrors to create a rainbow effect.

While humans instantly recognize this as an analog to a disco ball, this is the main attraction rather than a bit of ambience.

Such dark rooms are meant to give people a break from the endless bright daytime outside.

# The Mechanists

The Mechanists were a group of Neoshamanists who formed the first group of colonists on Newhome. At this particular time in yinrih history, the Bright Way was still on the rise. It wasn't yet a cyberpunk-esque megacorp, but it was very much an "established" religion on Yih. Minority faiths were not actively persecuted, but pride of place was given to the Bright Way in public life. Its holy days were national holidays, the deaths or accessions of political figures were accompanied by Bright Way ceremonies, and many countries' education systems explicitly or implicitly taught from a Claravian\* perspective. There were some who chafed under this system, and saw an opportunity to found their own polities as planetary colonization became technically and economically feasible.

Neoshamanists subscribe to the belief known as Panpsychism: the idea that consciousness is a latent property of matter itself, or of the very fabric of the universe. This is in contrast to the doctrine of the Bright Way, which professes mind-body dualism. The Mechanists in particular believed that consciousness can manifest in any system of sufficient complexity. In their new home, which they dubbed, uh, Newhome, the usual fonts of consciousness were missing--no living matter, no complex meteorological phenomena, no geological activity. The only complex systems besides the colonists themselves were the machines they brought with them.

Frontier life is hard on both yinrih and machine, and the colonists' equipment frequently broke down. Combine the flakey machinery with the colonists' particular flavor of animism, and it's not hard to see how this little cult got going.

The following are some highlights of their beliefs and practices.

Fabricators were believed to possess particularly temperamental spirits, and it was customary to hold a screwdriver in the right front paw when submitting a print job to the fabricator's leasemind, as a warning to the spirit that consequences would follow should it misbehave.

Small figurines were placed in engine rooms to keep the generators company when engineering personnel weren't on duty.

A brief canticle would be chanted when booting a computer to appease the spirit within, often while a particular key was held down. The key did nothing apparent, but it was believed to make the machine spirit more biddable, or even make it run faster.

Particularly powerful shamans were said to be able to resolve mechanical issues by their mere presence. Lesser techs would toil away at a particular problem, only for the problem to resolve spontaneously when the shaman entered the room.

Red cabling was believed to be spiritually efficacious, probably because the material needed to manufacture the red polymer used in the cable jackets was hard to come by, so only the most important network links were made with red cable. The claimed benefits included less jitter, fewer

dropped packets, lower latency, and even increased throughput.

The most sacred of this sect's rites was the sacrament of Percussive Maintenance. It was reserved for those occasions when even the wisest of shamans was unable to get a misbehaving spirit to cooperate. It involved repeated whacks of the errant machine with a ceremonial wrench. These wrenches would often be lavishly decorated, and are prized cultural artifacts today.

As the Mechanists got the terraforming ball rolling, more and more colonists began making their way to Newhome. At first these were people from other minority sects and fringe political ideologies, but eventually, the normies showed up, gradually diluting these odd practices by simple cultural inertia.

The first wave of "mainstream" yinrih to arrive on Newhome largely consisted of military personnel representing governments from the homeworld seeking to establish claims on swaths of virgin territory. Since the Mechanists were still somewhat active at this point, some of their quirky rituals were passed on to the grunts stationed there.

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\* Of or relating to the Bright Way. From Latin *clara via* a calque of Commonthroat *sGKqg qCb /yip*, long rising strengthening growl, huff, short low weak growl. huff late low weakening whine/

# Broad Strokes History between Sapience and First Contact

The hundred millennia between the dawn of sapience and First Contact can be divided into three ages of roughly equal length. The first age, sometimes called the golden age of the Bright Way, is characterized by the expansion of both the Bright Way within yinrih society, and the expansion of the yinrih themselves, first throughout Yih, and then into the rest of Focus.

It's important to remember that, unlike humanity, which sundered into a myriad of different ethnolinguistic groups with sometimes drastically different cultures, the yinrih's culture remained far more monolithic and cohesive thanks to their innate ability to write. Different cultures do exist, but their differences are comparable to those between, say, French, Italian, and Spanish cultures. Distinct identities emerge and grow, but there's always a common baseline. The yinrih thus have nothing comparable to indigenous peoples on Earth. It is this cultural cohesion that allowed the Bright Way to settle in as a ubiquitous, powerful force in society.

It is also during this age that the yinrih take their first steps into the starry firmament, with the first permanent orbital colony being founded shortly after, marking the birth of the Spacers. Between this time and the discovery of tailstone and the Underlay, you see groups like the Mechanists pioneering ahead to found settlements on Newhome, with other ideological missfits following in their footsteps. The yinrih's true age of discovery begins after the invention of the ansible. The Mechanists and others on Newhome went there specifically because it was isolated from Yih, but the ansible made the system much smaller, allowing Newhome to simply grow into an extension of wider yinrih society. The same pattern of growth, establishment, and pioneering repeated itself many times for the other terraformable bodies throughout Focus.

In reality, there is no clear delineation between the Golden Age and the Age of Decadence, but most Wayfarers set the pivot point at the first attempt by the High Hearthkeeper to halt interstellar mission work. She was "persuaded" to reconsider by the missionaries, backed up by the considerable firepower of the Knights of the Sun, who at this time were among the most pious groups within the Bright Way (more on the Knights in a subsequent post.) Anyway, this is considered to be the moment the Bright Way lost its focus and transitioned from being a very popular religion that happened to control power infrastructure and interplanetary transport and communications, to a multi-industry for-profit monopoly that happened to have a religion that shared its name. Many people during this time may not have even been aware that the "Bright Way" delivering their power and handling their interplanetary messages was the same "Bright Way" that ran the local lighthouse.

The Age of decadence is when the yinrih finish their conquest of the system, ascending to Kardashev II status. It's also during this time that Yinrihcron gets built (still looking for an in-universe name). The City of Eternal Noon is also founded around the beginning of this time, and the city's corrupt foundress is in retrospect considered a harbinger of things to come.

Unlike the gradual transition between the first two ages, the third age begins decisively with the War of Dissolution. That's a big enough topic to get its own post some time, but the war and its aftermath sets up the current players in monkey fox geopolitics: Hearthside, now the center of the Bright Way, which is lead by the successors to the Pious Dissolutionists during the war; The Allied Worlds: consisting of planetary metagovernments of Sweetwater, Yih, Newhome, and Welkinstead; The Spacer Confederacy: a VERY loose collection of independent Spacer city-states in the inner belt; Moonlitter: a somewhat more cohesive group of semi-autonomous lunar colonies around the titular ice giant, with nominal authority over the part of the outer belt not claimed by the Partisans. Last but not least, we have the Partisans themselves, who were the original instigators of the war. They were technically the allies of both the Pious Dissolutionists and the Allied Worlds, but the relationship broke down after the war, as the Allied Worlds were willing to allow the Pious Dissolutionists to maintain their strictly religious institutions while breaking up and privatizing the Bright Way's worldly holdings.

The Partisans, however, wanted to see the Bright Way completely eradicated. If you wanted to be generous, you could say they wanted to make absolutely sure that nobody held the same level of power over the entire system again. If you were more cynical, you could say they had designs on being the next system-wide superpower themselves. Like most big movements, it was probably a little of column A, a little of column B.

The alliances boil down to this: The Allied Worlds (AW) and Hearthside are cordial but somewhat aloof allies. The AW have disestablishmentarianism as a core tenant, while Hearthside is of course an ecclesiocracy. The AW and the Partisans are politically opposed to one another, even as the Partisans put down deep economic roots in just about every supply chain in every industry in the AW. The Spacer Confederacy kind of fills the same niche as Newhome did before the Underlay was discovered. It's a home for everything from cult colonies, libertarian (u/dys)topias, anarchosyndicalist communes, and groups of people who just want to get by in peace--all of whom somehow hate each other just little enough to form a debateably functional government.

And then there's poor Moonlitter. Its government swings between favoring the Partisans and the AW, depending on who gets elected (or whichever of the two sides has better spies at the time.)

The refugees that formed Wayfarers' Haven, including four of the six crew of the Dewfall, were at least nominally citizens of Moonlitter before being evacuated to the Inner Belt and forming their own city-state. They could have just moved to Moonlitter itself, but they wanted to get as far away from the Partisans as possible while still staying together as a community, not to mention Moonlitter's notoriously unstable government.

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“ [Visions1](#) wrote: 2024-02-16T20:34:24+00:00 Why not doggie doors?

I mention vertically hinged doors, which are more or less doggie doors.