

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.

* 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/

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