

history

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A Monument to Our Sins

Deep in the jungles of Newman's Dale lies a massive slab of metal and concrete, with a few crumbling ruins dotted on and around it. These are the remains of the Bright Way's "corporate headquarters" during the Age of Decadence. It was originally a massive skyscraper extending upward to become a space elevator. The High Perch, the symbolic seat of the authority of the High Hearthkeeper, was also originally located here before being moved to The Eternal Hearth in the City of Eternal Noon on Hearthside after the War of Dissolution.

It was here that Greenleaf the steadtree hermit made his denouncement of the High Hearthkeeper after the scandal of Firefly's apostacy.

The structure's razing is generally considered to mark the end of both the War of Dissolution and the Age of Decadence. The final battle of the war actually had three sides. The Preservationists were on their last legs and the writing was on the wall, but they nevertheless fought tooth and claw to the bitter end.

The Pious Dissolutionists were attempting to oust their coreligionists from the structure and occupy it for themselves. It had tremendous symbolic value both as holy ground, being as it was standing on the very soil where the Kindling and the Theophany took place, but also as the center of the Bright Way's ecclesiastical government. Iris the Hearthsider had been set up as an informal anti-High Hearthkeeper, and the Pious Dissolutionists wanted to see her take the High Perch for herself and officially purge the faith of its mercantile interests and put an end to the hierarchy's acedia once and for all.

The third group was a group of Secular Dissolutionists, mostly members of Firefly's Partisans, who wanted to see the structure toppled in their effort to expunge all traces of the Bright Way from Focus. The Secularists ended up winning the day, slabbing the structure and glassing the surrounding area from orbit, but not before the Pious Dissolutionists were able to capture both the reigning High Hearthkeeper and other holy relics, including the High Perch itself.

The High Hearthkeeper initially resisted capture, and refused to recognize Iris as her successor. The Pious Dissolutionists pointed out that it was either spend her remaining centuries in quiet retirement in a monastery on Hearthside, or be brutally tortured and killed by the Partisans. She reluctantly abdicated, making Iris the undisputed leader of the Bright Way.

There were subsequent battles between the various radical and moderate secularist factions for control of Yih, but the moderates repelled the militants, securing the Bright Way's future as a purely religious and philocynoidic institution. These moderate factions would eventually coalesce into a stable government for Yih, which would later go on to form the core of the Allied Worlds.

A modest monastery now stands in the middle of the massive foundation, housing an order of penitents. Wayfarers make pilgrimages here to weep before the ruins in reparation for thirty three

millennia squandered in the name of greed.

The Beginning of the Allied Worlds

After the War of Dissolution, the Partisans were still on the war path. The old Claravian hierarchy was laid low, but the Partisans wanted to make sure it could never rise again, and the only way to do that, at least if you asked the Partisans, was with the Partisans in charge of the whole system. The old secular governments of the inner planets weren't about to let themselves be subjugated again just after throwing off the hierarchy's yolk, and many policymakers felt the only way to keep the ~~space-tree-doggo-Commies~~ Partisans at bay was to present a united front. So while some weren't too pleased with chaining themselves to Yih *again*, the inner planets save Hearthside formed an economic and military federation to counter the Partisan threat.

While most of the governments involved tolerated the now economically gelded Bright Way, they still wanted to keep them at tail's length, so the ecclesiocratic Hearthside was explicitly kept out of the alliance. This despite Hearthside being the stronghold for the Pious Dissolutionists, who were instrumental in turning the tide of the war.

It worked out well for Hearthside in the end, since they still had a hefty buffer between them and the Partisans. The subsequent cultural homogenization that among other things saw Commonthroat become the de facto standard language didn't affect them as much as it did the AW, and Hearthsider remains a living, albeit declining, language at the time of First Contact.

Fossil Fuels

I had originally assumed that Yih would not have coal or oil deposits since I assumed that required very specific biological factors (absence of certain decomposers allowing organic matter to form fossil fuels). After a little wiki walk it seems that it's mostly a question of time, heat, and a lack of oxygen. Yih and Earth are about the same age, and since Yih's biosphere (present and past) is like Earth unless noted, I'll go ahead and give our space tree doggos some Texas tea.

MFSK: Monkey Fox Shift Keying

Because yinrih language relies very heavily on subtle changes in volume, analog radio telephony--voice communication--proved much more difficult for monkey foxes than it did for humans. When radio signals bounce off the ionosphere, they can experience fading, which sounds like fluctuations in volume to the receiver.

A wireless communication system was developed, adapted and greatly elaborated from St. Redclaw's initial wire telegraphy signal system. This system is known cross-linguistically as some variation of <sfsc> /yip, long high strong whine, yip, short low strong whine/, which is an onomatopoeia meaning something like 'beep-boop'. Humans refer to the system as Vulpithecine Morse or MFSK (monkey fox shift keying, a pun on minimum frequency shift keying).

The system is based on a reduced set of yinrih speech sounds. Phonation and strength are not distinguished, and consonants are not present. What we're left with is a system that distinguishes only length and tone. Like Morse, there are two length distinctions: short and long. Unlike Morse, there are also two *frequency* distinctions, low and high, separated by 170 Hz. This yields a total of four symbols: low dot, high dot, low dash, and high dash.

Also unlike Morse, MFSK does not represent written language, but rather constitutes a language in its own right. Strings of MFSK symbols represent meaning directly, making it an international auxiliary language.

Much of the system borrows the cadence and tone of words from the prestige languages of the time period around the yinrih's first orbital flights.

The system was outmoded eventually as digital communication and eventually ansibles took over, but enthusiasts have kept the system alive even at the time of First Contact, and MFSK becomes a popular mode among Terran hams.

A Rough Ideological Timeline

A rough ideological tree showing the relationships among the major belief systems of Focus. It's not scaled for time.

Image

The Dawn of the Digital Age

After the shakeoff, a sect of neoshamanists formed known as the Mindseekers. They rejected the Great Commandment as a fool's errand. However, they still clung to the hope that they would one day see bone not of their bone and flesh not of their flesh. Rather than looking for minds among the stars, they chose to create new minds here on terra firma.

Mindseekers played a similar cultural role among yinrih as Terran alchemists--Pursuers of forbidden knowledge. Early Mindseeker attempts at creating sapient life resembled golems or homunculi. They were no more successful at creating life than their human counterparts were at transmuting lead into gold. But just as alchemy blossomed into chemistry, the mindseekers hit their stride as computer scientists when electronics became feasible.

While the Bright Way's research monks stubbornly continued to use analog and mechanical computers in their attempt to reach the stars, the mindseekers were busy jump starting the digital revolution. It wasn't until a former Mindseeker who converted to the Bright Way made an impassioned apologia on behalf of electronic computers that the research monks began incorporating the new tech into their work. This newfound efficiency allowed them to simulate and iterate like never before, which led to them finally breaching Yih's atmosphere. The Mindseekers never did manage to create life, much less sapient life, but their failures allowed Wayfarers to finally fling themselves into the starry firmament.

The influence of the Mindseekers is still felt at the time of First Contact. Early on, they settled on balanced ternary, not binary, as their number system of choice. Balanced Ternary uses three digits, -1, 0, and 1. This choice stems from their attempts at emulating certain vagaries of yinrih neurology. Numbers in balanced ternary can express any integer, positive or negative, without the use of a negative sign. The sign of a number can be deduced by looking at the highest place value. If it is 1, the number is positive. If it is -1, the number is negative. The sign of a number can be flipped by flipping the 1's to -1's and vice versa, and truncation and rounding are equivalent operations.

Oracle OS

One persistent subject of interest to amateur cyberarcheologists is the so-called Oracle OS. It was said to have been programmed by a mad monk who claimed it was a conduit through which the Light could communicate with mortals. While many pieces of software claiming to be the original Oracle OS are in fact full operating systems, able to execute other programs while running, the earliest mentions of the software describe it as a standalone piece of machine code designed to boot and run directly on the processor.

Many, many software images claiming to be the true Oracle OS are known. Cruder examples are little more than random number generators used to for divination. More sophisticated attempts employ anything from Markov chains to complex AI chatbots that form more coherent sentences. In modern times one doesn't so much speak of THE oracle OS so much as AN oracle OS, divination programs used much like Ouija boards. Such programs are popular among the casually spiritually inclined, but are condemned by the Claravian Magisterium as superstition.

Food Caching in Presapient Yinrih

Presapient yinrih would cache food in communal larders shared by single families and sometimes entire shires depending on local culture. Communal food caching is very rare on Earth (only two species are known to do it according to Wikipedia).

This mostly consisted of dry seeds and nuts gathered by female pups too young yet to accompany their dams on foraging trips. Male pups would practice "hunting" small invertebrates and occasionally add their kills to their sisters' bounty. Sometimes these seed caches would sprout before being eaten, laying a foundation that would blossom into true agriculture when the yinrih achieved sapience.

Better Illustration of Balanced Ternary Paths

Image

As you may have guessed I've decided that these paths are used by the Mindseekers. It is unclear for what purpose. They may have used them as clever aesthetic touches, or they may have held some spiritual significance. Mindseekers would often hide such patterns in plain sight, in the brickwork on the side of a building, in the abstract pattern of a tapestry, and so on. It became popular to create such paths as hidden messages, even long after the Mindseekers faded into obscurity.

Tentative idea about the beginning of the Bright Way

Another tentative idea: After the Theophany, a movement grows within the interstitial teens. The miraculous light appeared low in the southern sky, at a much lower elevation than the equatorial sun was known to travel. The majority of yinrih still lived along the bank of the River, but their range extended as far south as the border between the jungle and southern grasslands. These border folk sent word north that one could get an unobstructed view of the sky by traveling south out of Newman's Dale and into the southern steppe. The term "bright way" originally literally meant the exodus out of the jungle, which symbolically represented yinrih fully embracing the gift of sapience by venturing out of the environment they emerged in, taking the first steps toward fulfilling the Great Commandment.

Early Claravian sermon

The stream that quenches also drowns. The tree that gives shelter also crushes under falling bow. The fire that cooks the food also burns the flesh. Why revere these things? They care not a wit for you or I. Has even a great gross of offerings moved the River not to flood?

Have the trees entrusted us to carry out commandments?, or has the River revealed its precepts? Did the rocks guide us forth from the jungle? Have the clouds shown us love? Did the ring give us writing claws and speaking throats? Worship these dumb objects if it please you, though they will not give you succor. As for me and mine, we shall follow the Light alone.

Thoughts on Early yinrih weaponry

I've stated previously that yinrih are not accurate throwers. They also have natural weapons in the form of their claws, so I'm not sure if spears would develop. Then again, spears were likely the first tools used by early humans (chimps also make spears by gnawing branches down to a point). Perhaps like chimps yinrih could use spears for thrusting but not throwing.

Early weapons would probably be enhancements of the yinrih's natural combat strategies. Caudal slings were probably the first projectile weapons after thrown rocks. These slings would at first use the same pebbles or stones previously thrown by the paws or tail, but shards of obsidian or later artificial glass could be used. These would be mid or close range spread weapons rather than accurate projectiles.

The first firearms would likely be elaborations on these caudal slings, using a propellant to launch metal or glass shot. I think early projectile firearms would come in two flavors: less accurate shotguns that could be operated by one person while moving, and more accurate guns that had to be mounted on a bipod or tripod in order to aim. Back-mounted guns before the invention of electronic aim-assist would invariably be these less accurate shotguns.

But the quintessential weapon, the one found everywhere as a metaphor or symbol for strength, the cultural equivalent to the human sword, would be the <SHJgg>, known in English as a thagomizer. These usually take the form of a metal ring partially lined with spikes or blades which is held in the tail. Much like the sword, it's far less practical as a weapon than its cultural weight would suggest. The wielder has to turn in order to attack opponents who aren't behind him. The primary reason it can be used at all is that yinrih use scent as the primary means of personal recognition, so the wielder can identify an enemy coming from behind by smell as long as they're not upwind. (Even then, it's probably more practical to kick with a rear paw in order to claw the enemy. You could also use the hind feet to hold the attacker's forelegs in place while strangling them with your tail.) The thagomizer likely started out as a farming tool used to clear brush.

Bladed paw gauntlets would likely also be used. These could develop from climbing tools used by inhabitants of rocky terrain.

Early vulpithecine metallurgy

I went down a rabbit hole that started with a youtube video about smelting iron, which lead me ultimately to [this Jewish ethical text](#). The relevant passage is thus (emphasis added):

“ Ten things were created on the eve of the Sabbath at twilight, and these are they: [1] the mouth of the earth, [2] the mouth of the well, [3] the mouth of the donkey, [4] the rainbow, [5] the manna, [6] the staff [of Moses], [7] the shamir, [8] the letters, [9] the writing, [10] and the tablets. And some say: also the demons, the grave of Moses, and the ram of Abraham, our father. **And some say: and also tongs, made with tongs.**

The YT video mentioned this legend, the idea being that you need a pair of tongs to make another pair of tongs, so where did the first pair of tongs come from?

This made me think about what role smithing plays in early yinrih culture. Would it be the domain of the hearthkeeper? Or would she merely provide the fire while a layman did the actual smithing. I'm currently inclined to the latter. I also like the idea of legendary artifacts being tools of creation rather than weapons of destruction.

Further, I've read that gold was the first metal worked by humans, with copper being the first practical metal. The first metals would have been cold-worked (merely pounded and pulled into place rather than melted and molded) and gathered as native (pure) copper rather than melted from ore found in a mine. I haven't given much about the properties of caerulium other than its color. Perhaps like gold for humans, caerulium was found native and was soft enough to be cold worked. In any case cold working would get around the taboo of men starting fires.

Focus is a star, too

From Newman's Dale, Yih's ring is only visible as a thin line stretching from east to west across the sky. As yinrih began following the Bright Way out into the southern grasslands, the ring appeared to widen, dominating the northern sky as the pilgrims approached the mid-latitudes. This celestial prodigy made Wayfarers even more curious about the world above them.

They had already deduced that Focus was a star thanks to the Great Commandment. In particular, males coming home from their nightly hunts noted that the home hearth appeared dim, cold, and small from a distance, but grew brighter, larger, and hotter as they approached. And so it was, they reasoned, with these celestial hearths, dim and cold at a distance, but blazing bright to the star folk who lived up close.

It was the ring that provided Wayfarers their next scientific discovery, the fact that Yih is round. They noticed a curved shadow creeping across the ring on summer nights, and by comparing the phenomenon to the shadows of stones moving across the ground as Focus traveled through the daytime sky, they realized that the body they lived on was a sphere.

What may have become of the Artificer's Litter

At the end of [The Artificer's Litter](#) the giant head's builders are scattered across Focus. It struck me this morning that that's an excellent founding myth for a stateless nation that practices a form of Mechanist Neoshamanism. This nation may or may not have any connection to the head, and they may not believe themselves to have such a connection, but outsiders do, so they're popularly regarded as the descendants of the Artificer's Litter.

They may in fact be a mechanist revival movement, or actually descendants of the mechanists themselves. Alternatively, instead of being a cohesive group living more or less alongside modern society, they are groups of feral Atavists living in orbital colonies who have convergently developed (or whose founders devised) machine worshiping cults to keep the colony running. These colonies would be violently xenophobic, attacking any approaching craft. The only thing connecting them are these similar religious practices and their status as spacers, so once again they're associated with the Artificer's Litter in the popular imagination.

I've mentioned the concept of feral orbital colonies in the past. Just think of them as every Sci-Fi short story involving generation ships. The crew forgets they're on a ship and believes the craft to be the whole universe. The difference being this is the intended outcome when the colony is founded, so stuff is put in place to help the myth along. There's no way to contact the outside world, and there may be no windows to show there even is an outside world.

Speaking of feral atavists, I've had a story idea in my head for a while that probably won't get realized as I have way too many unfinished stories as is. A human on Sweetwater gets shanghaied by a band of submarine pirates. They happen to have a feral atavist slave on board as well. Feral atavists as a rule have no idea humans exist, so the slave thinks the human is a demon. The slave barely speaks Commonthroat, and the pirates have taken the human's synth so he can't communicate at all. The human and the slave have to learn to communicate so they can escape. etc. etc. Then perhaps the story turns into a Robinsonade as the two end up alone on an island (fixed or floating) and have to survive.

And speaking of Sweetwater and submarines, I think I'm going to go with breathable liquid for divers as I talked about before. Subs have a station that injects the liquid into the lungs and sucks it back out again when the diver returns. The liquid also acts as a sink for CO₂, so no separate scrubber is needed. (One of my hard rules for this setting is no cybernetic implants, and a permanently attached CO₂ scrubber crosses that line IMO). I did mention before that long-term use of this liquid would cause some telltale condition that others use to identify Sweetwater surface dwellers, perhaps it's a persistent cough or a raspy voice.

On the Southern Grasslands

"The Bright Way" originally referred to the migration of the yinrih out of the jungle and into the southern grasslands. There were pre-theophany shires living on the southern border of the jungle, and they had the clearest view of the Theophany. Word spread north through the interstitial teenagers that the sky opened up to the south, and so yinrih began to migrate out of the jungle, with the term "wayfarer" used to refer to these migrants.

Yinrih were built to live in the jungle. Anyone older than a kit had no predators to fear, and food and shelter were plentiful. But as Wayfarers followed the Bright Way from the safety of their jungle home to the open unknown of the southern grasslands, they found themselves in a world that they were absolutely not designed for.

Pre-theophany yinrih built few if any structures. Trees were their homes and holes in the ground and tree hollows served for storage. Tools were also rudimentary, with flint paw axes for gathering and butchering (if their claws were insufficient for the task) and perhaps the occasional pinched clay pot to store water. This all changed when they left the jungle. Food and shelter were no longer givens. Neither was safety. Grasslands require grazing animals to keep the trees from multiplying and turning the land into forest. Where there are large herbivores, there are predators to hunt them, and these predators were more than capable of devouring adult yinrih.

Among these predators were a species of zap rats who evolved a eusocial lifestyle similar to ants. Instead of using their biocapacitors for defense, they weaponized them to attack prey. They traveled in swarms and collectively shocked large animals into submission. The animal would be torn to pieces that would be devoured then and there by the swarm or carried back to the rats' underground den to feed their queen and young. Many an unwary yinrih met an unfortunate end this way.

But the yinrih were predator as well as prey. Males continued their nightly hunting routine, learning to fell much larger prey than their jungle forefathers. Conflicts between neighboring shires over the comparatively scarce grassland resources lead to early warfare, with hunters becoming soldiers.

Shelter mimicked the yinrih's steadtree homes. The first structures one could call houses consisted of wooden platforms built high off the ground, low enough for a nimble monkey fox to leap up or climb, but out of reach of groundling predators. A roof to block rain and a single wall to block the prevailing wind completed these primitive dwellings.

Shamans, now organized into the first hearthkeepers, continued their duties as healer and provider of warmth and light. They alone could tend the community's central hearth. As communities grew, acolytes would be selected from among the girls of each moot to bring home a fire bundle to light their own home hearth. Men (regardless of age) were only allowed to do this if a woman was unavailable.

No One Expects the Reverse Inquisition!

On Newhome during the centuries leading up to the war of dissolution, a movement adjacent to the pious dissolutionists arose whose aim was to hold corrupt clergy accountable. Its original name, if it ever had one, has been lost to history, but humans studying yinrih history often refer to it as "The Reverse Inquisition."

The movement was formed by pious laymen and women. Clergy, even those sympathetic to the dissolutionist cause, were forbidden to join. The group's modus operandi was to take advantage of the growing power of the secular government to punish wayward clerics who abused their power. A hearthkeeper's duty is to provide warmth and light to those around her, both spiritually and literally. The faithful are encouraged to offer tithes of their own free will and according to their means to enable their spiritual dam to fulfill her duties. As the Bright Way became more corrupt and worldly, "free will donation" became "mandatory payment", and the clergy gradually began justifying harsher and harsher consequences for those who didn't pay up.

At first, the reverse inquisition used legal and social pressures to eject offending clerics from their Lighthouses and support principled hearthkeepers to positions of power. However, as time went on, overzealous members began attacking hearthkeepers physically rather than just rhetorically. Their ire expanded to encompass not just clerics who actively fleeced their congregations but hearthkeepers who didn't vocally support the dissolutionist cause, and the group was eventually labelled a terrorist organization.

Over time, the organization devolved into simple anticlericalism, and the rank and file pious laymen were gradually replaced with militant secularists aligned with the Partisans. These new members began calling themselves "extinguishers", and simply attacked religious leaders of all stripes.

Idea for the development of currency

very rough draft of how money emerges.

So let's say after Wayfarers settle the southern grasslands they start agriculture in earnest. Yinrih already exhibit communal food caching behavior, which blossomed readily into simple planting and harvesting in the ample arable land south of the jungle.

The patriarchs of shires begin collecting produce from individual moots to store for the winter, keeping a ledger of who gives what. A simple taxation system emerges from this. Then I'm not sure. Maybe from this accounting system emerges a commodity currency, likely something small, edible, with a long shelf life. Lets say something like a peanut. Then precious metals are discovered which sparks the invention of metallurgy and eventually the move from commodity money to more intangibly valuable caeruleum coins. Then as more and more money enters the economy and it becomes impractical to carry so much, we move to representative money in the form of wooden coins or base metal coins, then as governments get bigger eventually to fiat money.

The origin of Neoshamanism

These are the circumstances that lead to the Shakeoff. Much like the War of Dissolution it doesn't have a single definitive cause, but most historians say there are a few major contributing factors. First, a pandemic that highlights the inadequacy of Claravian medicine. People get sick and look to the research monks for answers. The Bright Way has thus far been so preoccupied with the stars that other scientific fields that aren't obviously related to aeronautics and astronomy receive little attention. People die, and the survivors say "You did your best and it wasn't good enough."

Around the same time, a movement romanticizing pre-theophany life becomes popular. Yinrih are increasingly urbanized, and society is becoming more complex. People imagine a simpler time before the Theophany, before the yinrih migrated out of the jungle they were built to live in. When the pandemic hits, this catalyzes the movement, as the denser population and more frequent movement brought on by newly invented train travel is blamed for the plague.

The third contributing factor is a failed orbital flight. Much like Firefly's ill-fated mission 33 millennia later, this was a highly publicized experiment that was all but promised to succeed. While this was a case of overconfidence rather than deception on the clergy's part, the outcome was the same, a loss of trust in the clergy.

So there's this movement glorifying the old shamanists, a public health crisis that highlights gaps in the Bright Way's knowledge, and a catastrophe that makes the clergy look bad.

All this culminates in the schisms that formed both neoshamanism and Atavism. The various groups of schismatics differed on where "it all went wrong." The Nonagentivist Neoshamanists rejected the Great Commandment and monotheism, but kept the Claravian idea that science is a form of worship. They're the ones who accuse the Bright Way of academic tunnel vision, and it is out of this Nonagentivist movement that we get the Mindseekers and Lifebringers that filled in much of the yinrih's academic gaps.

The Agentivists thought the Nonagentivists didn't go far enough, and they sought to recreate Shamanism wholesale, including reintroducing animism. While both branches of Neoshamanism believed in panpsychism, agentivists went further and claimed that not only was everything potentially conscious, but that these things could act on their own. If the wind blew a certain way because it willed itself to do so, then the idea that you could predict its movements by simply observing it sound silly. You can't just observe it, you have to ASK it.

Atavism, meanwhile, thought that the other two groups still weren't going far enough. Atavists said that sapience is where it all went wrong, and yinrih should return to being tree dwellers.

This results in a period of civil unrest, if not outright warfare. While these schismatics were outnumbered, they were still a statistically significant minority, they were also highly geographically concentrated, and whole nations took sides. If you professed one faith in the

territory of another, it would not go well for you, and suspicions about conspiracies, and the expected societal fallout from those suspicions, ran rampant on all sides.

If this sad period of history could be said to have a silver lining, it's that this is when Yinrih learned that ideologically motivated violence is counterproductive. Things gradually settled down, but the Bright Way was still the clear majority. This state of affairs continues until the first group of Neoshamanists moves to settle Newhome after discovering viable terraforming techniques. The Bright Way was more than happy to provide transportation. "By all means, do your thing over there."

Of course, all this time secular governments are still in charge and doing their thing. They may not have officially been associated with one faith or another, but of course they would lean in a particular direction. Once Newhome became livable, these secular governments wanted to manifest their destiny on this new world, and that's how the "normies" showed up after Newhome's wild west period.

Looking at the Yinrih's population growth

Yinrih live on average around 724 Terran years and mature at around 53. Since they're semelparous, once they lay their egg they're out of the running, so the cohort size is only dependent on the size of the previous cohort.

For my first method, let's say the lifespan is 700 to make the math easier, and let's assume because of social factors they don't reproduce until around the age of 100.

The average litter size is 1.5 times the number of contributing parents. Let's say that once you account for childhood death, infertility, conscious decision not to have pups, etc, the number of pups in a litter that go on to become parents is about 1.2 times the size of the childermoot.

Let's say at year zero there are 50000 newly hatched yinrih. They reproduce at year 100, giving a total population of $50000 * 1.2 + 50000 = 60000$. This trend continues until year 700. The first cohort of 50000 yinrih dies, so from here out we subtract the population older than 700. The population reaches 3 billion (my threshold for achieving orbital flight) at around the year 5750.

For my second strategy, I used the same starting numbers, but this time I got the present population by summing the cohorts younger than 700. The good news is I came up with a similar result, with the population reaching my 3 billion threshold around 5250.

For my final approach, I used Yih years instead of Terran years, and I used the more accurate average lifespan of 492 Yih years (724 Terran years), and assumed the average age of reproduction at 71 (around 100 Terran years again). Then I did more or less the same as method two, summing all the cohorts younger than the average lifespan of 492 Yih years. I get to my 3 billion mark between 4260 and 4331 (6262 to 6366 Terran years). This one's a bit later than the other two but I might go with it since I used more accurate numbers.

Now here's the rub. That 50K number represents the population at the year 0 AK (after kindling), which is only an approximate date for the dawn of sapience, specifically it represents the earliest writings that can be accurately dated, and not the actual dawn of sapience. At this point Shamanism was active and language was in full swing but nonsapient yinrih still existed. I have A LOT to cram into that 6 millennia, the Theophany, the disappearance of the original shamanists, the Shakeoff, and a ton of technological progress and social change.

6 millennia sounds like a lot, but it only represents about 8 yinrih lifetimes. Scaling to a human lifespan that's about 600 years. 600 years to go from the paleolithic to the space age. We could assume, as I've been doing this whole time, that a combination of having writing from the start and

religious zeal driving further innovation gives yinrih 4 massive legs up. I've also said that they don't necessarily achieve milestones at the same rate or in the same order as humanity.

I could also move the goalpost and push back that magic 3 billion population count for the sake of making things seem more reasonable. But otherwise I don't know.

A letter from a patriarch to a hearthkeeper

"My dame, you have written to me on several occasions, urging me to suppress these Neoshamanists, even with violence, on account of their heresy. Each time I have given you the same response, which I reiterate once again unchanged. I, a mere patriarch, am not permitted to judge in spiritual matters. Yet it is my duty as patriarch to ensure the security of my citizens, and these Neoshamanists, heretics though they may be, are yet my citizens.

"A sorry preacher you must be if you cannot correct their errors with words and must beg me again and again to raise the claws of the state against them. Must I, a mere patriarch, remind you, my dame, that the beholders did not act thus toward those who refused to follow the Bright Way out of the jungle? See to your duties, hearthkeeper, and I must see to mine."

More on the early Bright Way

“[Visions1](#) wrote: 2025-12-16T17:52:30+00:00 What was Bright Way organization like in the early years?
And who was the first Hearthkeeper? What was she like?”

There wasn't a clear delineation between shamanism and the early Bright Way. A lot of laymen (if not at least some clerics) regarded the Uncreated Light as a particularly visible animistic spirit. Only later as the migration out of the jungle really got going did the differences become significant. During that time, if you undertook the migration you were a Wayfarer and if you didn't you weren't. The trek into the strange environment of the southern grasslands and the subsequent leap in tech brought on by the need to adapt (along with the researches brought on by the Great Commandment) are what finally solidified the split.

The beholders (witnesses to the Theophany who began the migration) preached that the Light made itself known to all and gave the yinrih direction and purpose, whereas the nature spirits they previously worshiped were fickle and cared not whether their devotees lived or died. This would later be thrown in the clergy's faces by the Atavists during the Shakeoff. They claimed that the same argument made by the Beholders against nature worship were applicable to the Light as well, since people still suffered and died as before. This led to the formulation of the first Claravian theodicies.

But in general, the hearthkeepers regard themselves as the legitimate heirs to the legacy of the original shamans. Much of their liturgical practice was simply an uninterrupted continuation of shamanistic practice, in particular the association with fire and medicine and the yinrih's unique funerary rituals. If you were a shaman who left the jungle, you simply became a hearthkeeper.

Neoshamanism, especially the nonagentivist branch, incorporates a lot of Claravian ideas that would have been alien to the original shamanists, especially the use of the scientific method to understand the universe. This allowed them to apply the principles used by the research monasteries to their own endeavors. The Shakeoff is probably where the split between hearthkeeper and healer took place. The Bright Way had excellent knowledge of anatomy and biomechanics, since you have to know this stuff when firing people out of a cannon and expecting them to live afterward, but microbiology in particular was either completely unknown or given little attention. Indeed, I suspect quite a few of the first Neoshamanists were research monks frustrated that their particular areas of inquiry weren't given as much attention as aeronautics and spaceflight. Basically they were scientists following the grant money.

How Welkinstead was terraformed

Welkinstead was terraformed by accident. It turns out that oxygen is a byproduct of the gas refining process, meaning the more the platforms polluted, the more breathable the air became. Eventually a layer of air at normal temperature and pressure formed and is continuously maintained by the same cities the Welkinsteaders live in.

However, a layer of poisonous gas is below the level at which the cities can be found, and upwellings of this gas into the breathable layer are caused by cyclonic storms. When cities traverse these upwellings everyone has to go inside and the city has to seal up.

The Founding of Pilgrim's Rest

Pilgrims' Rest is a dwarf planet located in the Outer Belt. It was founded by remnants of the missionaries fleeing Firefly's genocide during the war of dissolution. Originally under Moonlitter's control, it is conquered by the Partisans shortly (in vulpithecine terms) before First Contact, prompting the population to found Wayfarers' Haven in the Spacer Confederacy.