

AD ASTRA



A Science Fiction Roleplaying Game By Michael Wolf

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Introduction to Ad Astra

Welcome to the world of “Ad Astra”, a SF campaign setting. This document shall give players and game masters a quick overview about the setting.

The primer is presented in a system-free format to allow the GM to use any rules system he likes.

If you are looking for more information about “Ad Astra” and my other projects, check out my blog Stargazer’s World at www.stargazersworld.com!

“Ad Astra” is set into the far future. Humanity has ventured to the stars. Aside from a few artifacts found in the lifeless deserts of Mars, there are no signs of intelligent life. Humanity is all alone in space. Or so it seems.

An ancient jumpgate found near Jupiter allowed us access to a far away region of space: the Omega Centauri star cluster. In the early years of the 22nd century millions of humans travelled to the stars, seeking a better life among the stars.

Scattered among these human colonies live the espers, humans with amazing psychic abilities that are the legacy of an alien species, called the Elohim.

Then suddenly the jumpgate was destroyed, the colonists where stranded in a far away sector of space. Hundreds of years later Earth is just a distant memory.

This book contains all you need to play in the exciting world of “Ad Astra”.

So, what are you waiting for? Take some pencil, paper and a couple of dice and dive into the exiting world of “Ad Astra”!

Credits

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and everyone else I may have forgotten

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A Future History

21st Century

The first manned mission to Mars is a success and a semi-permanent research base is established on Mars. A couple of years later the remains of an alien space ship are found under the surface of the red planet's desert.

The alien technology salvaged from the derelict ship is far beyond human technology. The leader of the research team calls the unknown aliens Elohim. Nobody knows what happened to them and why they crashed on Mars. A international research team finally uncovers another alien artifact. A huge Elohim jumpgate orbits the Jupiter moon Europa. Using alien technology and human ingenuity the scientist and engineers manage to start the millennia-old gate opening a wormhole to the far away Omega Centauri star cluster. Several probes are sent through the wormhole and return with information about several habitable worlds.

22nd Century

Huge colony ships are sent through the wormhole to establish colonies and research outpost on the other side of the wormhole.

The data crystals found in the Elohim ship indicate that the Elohim have tampered with human genome in order to give them abilities like telekinesis and ESP. Using alien technology it's possible to identify people with a latent ESP ability and awake the dormant gene. This is called the "Prometheus Effect".

Over the coming centuries hundred thousands of people are identified as "espers".

Among the abilities of espers is the capability to attune to Elohim technology. At the end of the 22nd century millions of humans live in the Halley II colony thousands of lightyears away from home, when suddenly the Elohim jumpgate is destroyed.

A New Beginning

For several hundred years the human colonists fight for survival far away from Earth. There are wars, famines, natural disasters, but in the end the former colonists build a new civilization. In memory of the world left behind they call themselves Gaians and their new homeworld Gaia. Several hundred years after being stranded on Gaia the former colonists start building space ships again to explore the Halley system.

On Halley III aka Alexandria they find Elohim ruins and more artifacts that allow them to build their first psitech devices. Psitech devices can either be used to grant some basic esper abilities to ordinary humans or greatly enhance the abilities of a talented esper. This technology leads to the first hyperdrive. But even after extensive research the Gaians scientists are unable to build another jumpgate.

The Star Ocean of Omega Centauri

In the 8th century NR (New Reckoning) the Gaians and their descendants have colonized hundreds of worlds all





over the Omega Centauri cluster which they now call the “Star Ocean”. In the last hundred years several factions have emerged that now coexist more or less peacefully.

The Gaian Republic

The Gaian Republic is still the most influential nation in the Star Ocean. The Gaians are a peaceful people who value science and philosophy but they are not afraid to take up arms if their liberty and peace is at stake. The Gaian Republic is currently ruled by Administrator Arlen Coronaar of the Technologists party.

The Tovenaar Empire

The Tovenaar Empire is the complete opposite of the Gaian Republic. It’s a militaristic state that is ruled with an iron fist by the General-Emperor Arbach Tovenaar. Currently the empire is struggling with an uprising along their rimward border but it’s only a question of time until the Tovenaaari start expanding again.

The SpaceCorp Corporate State

SpaceCorp Industries is the largest manufacturer of space ships and heavy machinery in the Star Ocean. Eventually they were granted “extraterritoriality”, which means that any land owned by the corp is sovereign territory and immune to any laws of the nation within. Its employees are corporate citizens. With the acquisition of the Kobe colony SpaceCorp became another sovereign state. Current CEO is Moriann Sakata. SpaceCorp tries to stay neutral in most conflicts, but has cordial relations with the Gaian Republic.

The Akkathon Federation

The Akkathon Federation is a loose alliance of worlds in the space between the Gaian Republic and the Tovenaar Empire. They have lost several systems during the last Tovenaaari aggression.

The Federation doesn’t meddle in internal affairs of their

member states and every world has its own laws, customs and military. But all member states work together in times of need.

The Psitech League

The Psitech League started as a worker’s union for espers. In the 8th century NR almost all espers or psitechs as they prefer to be called, are members of the Psitech League. Some of the best space ship pilots and explorers are members of the League.

The Twilight Star

The Twilight Star is a privately funded secret agency that is believed to have some ties to the Gaian Republic. Usually they intervene in order to restore peace and balance to the Star Ocean. The Twilight Star operates from a secret

Designer’s Note #1

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The Gaian Republic

“Freedom, Equality and Fraternity. These are not just empty words from a world lost to us, these are the ideals we want to build our republic on!” - Tycho D’Arellien, first Administrator of the Gaian Republic

The Gaian Republic is the oldest nation in the Omega Centauri Star Ocean. Port Liberty, its capital city, was founded at the place where the first colonists from Lost Earth set foot on a new world. After contact to Earth was lost the Gaians struggled for centuries until they finally returned to the stars.

The Gaians are proud of their achievements, their freedom and their ideals, and sometimes are regarded as arrogant to other humans.

The common Gaian citizen has a high standard of living. The Republic’s education, healthcare and social welfare system is on a very high standard. Even the Republic’s frontier worlds are often better off than e.g. the major worlds of the Akkathon Federation.

The Gaian economy is almost second to none, because of the resource rich planets Hephaistos and Nifelheim, and the vast industrial plants in the orbit of Tannhauser. The Gaian industry is known for high-tech equipment and psitech devices.

The Gaian Republic maintains a small professional army and navy in order to defend its member worlds against aggressive neighbours like the Tovenaar Empire. Although the Gaians don’t have as much ships and troops as other nations the Gaian forces are well-trained, well-equipped and highly motivated.

The Gaians have several trade agreements with both the SpaceCorp Corporate State and the Akkathon Federation, but are in a state of cold war with the Tovenaar Empire. They are on friendly terms with the Psitech League and it is rumored that they have special ties with the Twilight Star.

The Tovenaar Empire

“Not everyone was happy with how things worked in the Gaian society. One of these people was Alexander Tovenaar, a young and brash Gaian career soldier. He believed democracy to weak, to slow to solve the problems the Gaian Republic faced at that time. In 317 NR Tovenaar and his followers tried to over-

The Gaian Republic (Quick Facts)

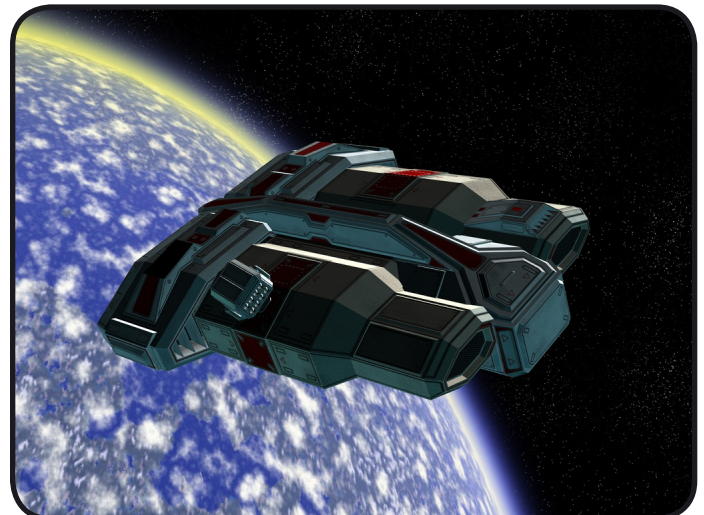
Main world	Gaia, 2nd Planet, Halley System
Government	Representative Democracy
Head of State	Administrator Arlen Coronaar
Official Language	English
Official Currency	Gaian Credit
Military	Professional Army/Navy
Economy	Social Market Economy
Religions	Atheist 78%, Neochristianity 12%, Other 10%
Major Worlds	Gaia, Alexandria, Asgard, Paris, Hephaistos, Aeon, Nifelheim, Sanctuary, Tannhauser

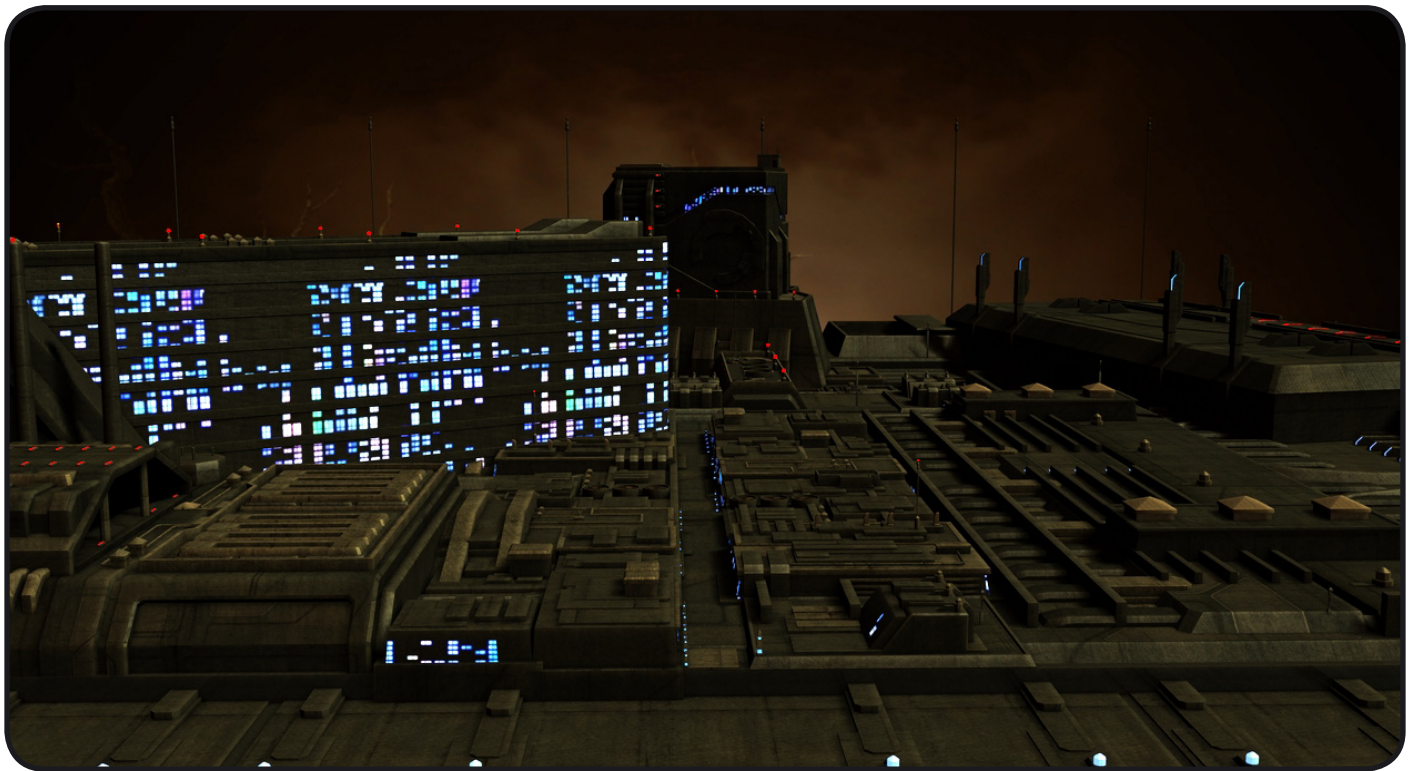
throw the Gaian government. The coup failed and they were forced to flee.” - From a Gaian history textbook

After their flight from Gaian space, forces loyal to Tovenaar conquered a colony world on the rim. They called the planet Tovenaar Prime and made it the capital of their fledling empire. Today the Tovenaar Empire is one of the superpowers of the Star Ocean.

The Tovenaaari Empire is ruled by the General Emperor and the Tovenaaari Senate who has only advisory functions. All members of the Senate are drawn from the higher echelons of the military. In fact the whole Tovenaaari society is highly militaristic.

The Tovenaaari industry is totally focussed on war production, shortages of non-military products are common and the standard of living of civilians is pretty low. Only members of the military and industrialist enjoy a higher standard and have a lot more freedoms than the ordinary





The Tovenaar Empire (Quick Facts)

Main world	Tovenaar Prime, 1st Planet, Tovenaar System
Government	Military Dictatorship
Head of State	General-Emperor Arbach Tovenaar
Official Language	English
Official Currency	Tovenaar Denar
Military	Universal Conscription
Economy	Free Market Economy
Religions	Atheist 90%, Neochristianity 6%, Other 4%
Major Worlds	Tovenaar Prime, Ayasi Secundus, Bethalor, Turondro, Outback, Serpentus V

citizen.

The Tovenari government has almost total control over the lives of its subjects. The second most important person in the Tovenari Empire is the propaganda secretary. The indoctrination of young Tovenari begins in early childhood making sure they don't fall out of alignment.

The Tovenari maintain the largest military of the Star Ocean. In the last centuries they invaded their neighbours repeatedly. Currently most of the imperial forces are trying

to quell an uprising on several imperial frontier worlds. Relations with its neighbours are tense to say the least.

The SpaceCorp Corporate State

"Contrary to the vulgar belief that men are motivated primarily by materialistic considerations, we now see the capitalist system being discredited and destroyed all over the world, even though this system has given men the greatest material comforts" - Ayn Rand 20th century writer

One of the corporations that took part in the colonization efforts in the 22nd century was the Japanese SpaceCorp Corporation. SpaceCorp not only supplied a lot of the space ships but also sent thousands of highly trained and qualified workers, engineers and managers to the new world beyond the wormhole.

The mainly Japanese employees of SpaceCorp clinged to their language, tradition and work ethic even after the wormhole collapsed. The Gaian branch of SpaceCorp survived all hardships and as the first Gaian space ships travelled to the stars they were built by SpaceCorp engineers.

In 387 NR the newly elected CEO of SpaceCorp Ken Watanabe convinced the Gaian government to grant extra-territoriality to his corporation. A few decades after that

The SpaceCorp Corp. State (Quick Facts)

Main world	Kobe, 4th Planet, Kansai System
Government	Corporate State
Head of State	CEO Moriann Sakata
Official Language	Japanese
Official Currency	Yen
Military	Professional Army/Navy
Religions	Buddhist 62%, Atheist 28%, Other 10%
Major Worlds	Kobe, Toshima, Nerima, Shinjuku, Arakawa, Kanto, Chiba, Kyoto

SpaceCorp bought the Kobe colony from the Gaian Republic for an undisclosed sum.

Until today the SpaceCorp Corporate State is the largest supplier of space ships and heavy machinery.

As a corporate state, SpaceCorp is not governed but managed. Minor rules and regulations are set by corporate bureaucrats at all levels. The major day-to-day operation is handled by the CEO. The board of directors, which advises and directs the CEO is directly elected by the stockholders.

The standard of living in SpaceCorp is very high, especially in higher branches of the management.

The Akkathon Federation

“General-Emperor, we’ll have the Akkathon Federation conquered by the end of the year.” - Admiral Carl De Luca, three weeks before his fleet’s defeat in the Higara system

The citizens of SpaceCorp are not the only people who have clinged to their national identity during the first centuries of life on Gaia. As hyperspace travel became available a lot of these groups left Gaia to start a new life at the frontier.

When the Tovenaar Empire started expanding, nine systems decided to form an alliance. They convened on Akkathon in the Nebuchadnezzar system and eventually the Akkathon Federation was founded. In the following decades more members joined the alliance.

Each member state sends its representatives to the federal council with decides all matters that concern external



The Akkathon Federation (Quick Facts)

Main world	Akkathon, 3rd Planet, Nebuchadnezzar System
Government	Representative Democracy
Head of State	President Aleksey Gregory Kalinin
Official Language	English and Russian
Official Currency	The Federation has no common currency
Military	Each member world maintains its own military
Economy	Mostly Free Market Economy but a few members world have a centrally planned economy
Religions	Atheist 54%, Neochristianity 27%, Buddhism 12%, Other 7%
Major Worlds	Akkathon, Higara, Ygdrassil, Napoli, Kerensky, Anasazi, Rheinland, Potemkin, Vatican

affairs and the security and defense of the federation. The federal government headed by a president does usually not meddle in the eternal affairs of the member worlds. In case the federation is under attack the president assumes command over the member’s forces.

The standard of living varies from world to world. Some worlds like Akkathon, Rheinland and Vatican have an above average standard of living, but other member worlds like Anasazi are still pretty undeveloped.



Main export of the Akkathon Federation are livestock, food and unrefined minerals. The federal council has made an effort to secure trade agreements with the other major nations in order to improve its economy.

The Akkathon Federation is on friendly terms with SpaceCorp and the Gaian Republic but has been attacked several times by the Tovenaar Empire. Luckily they were always able to defend the major worlds.

The PsiTech League

“Millenia ago, an alien species, we call the Elohim, tampered with human genome to create humans with extraordinary abilities. Espers are today the backbone of our species’ voyage to the stars. We are the Elohim’s legacy!” - Unknown esper

When human astronauts found the remains of an alien space ship on Mars, humanity was changed forever. One result of the research of Elohim technology was the “Prometheus Effect” that allowed to awaken the dormant gene that the Elohim had introduced into the human genome. When an esper’s abilities emerge they are often uncontrolled and it takes some training to master psionic abilities. So the Psionics Institute was founded to research psionics and train new espers. In these years the majority of society had a cautious if not hostile stance against espers. Especially people with strong telepathic abilities were feared. So the Institutes second mission was control of espers and their abilities.

As reaction on the Institute’s new mission espers started to organize themselves in the Espers Union, that was organized similar to a worker’s union. The Espers Union fought for the rights of people with psionic abilities and gained



more and more influence over the years. When the colonization of Halley II began, especially espers saw this as a chance for a new beginning. When the jumpgate closed the Espers’ Union took control of all Psionics Institute facilities. In the turmoil of the early years the goverment of the colony grudgingly gave in and didn’t move against the espers. Over the years espers showed their value to humanity. Without espers a lot of the secrets of the Elohim would never have discovers and fear and hostility were replaced with respect.

The Psitech League of today is the modern version of what the Espers Union and the Psionics Institue were back in the early days of Gaia. When someone with a latent psionic ability is found the Psitech League will use the “Prometheus Effect” to awaken his potential and train him in his abilities. But the Psitech League is much more than that.

With the discovery of the Elohim data cache on Alexandria the League created a xenoarchaeology and exploration division that was meant to find out more about the Elohim and their psionic-based technology. With the discovery of the psitech hyperdrive the espers actually gained monopoly on interstellar travel, because only espers are able to initiate a hyperspace jump sequence. So it’s no surprise



that the League grew in money and power. But instead of misusing their influence the League has always tried to work in the best interest of all humanity.

The Psitech League owns and finances not only the Gaian Academy for Applied Psionic Sciences on Aeon, but also organizes xenoarcheological digs all over the Star Ocean and several of the leading hyperdrive technology experts are members of the League.

Of course not all registered espers are members of the Psitech League. Especially the Tovenaar Empire has made sure that the espers in their employ have severed their ties to the League. Their espers are mandatory members in the Mindwalker Corps, a quasi-military organization totally loyal to the General-Emperor.

The Twilight Star

“I want this Twilight Star scum killed on sight!” - General-Emperor Arbach Tovenaar after the attempt on his life

The Twilight Star is a privately funded secret agency that has been around for a couple decades now. Not much is known about this organisation aside from the fact that they are exceptionally well trained and equipped. Usually the public is unaware of the Twilight Star's operations but when they rescued several high-ranking Gaian members of parliament that were taken prisoner by terrorists, they entered the public awareness. Especially in the Gaian Republic the Twilight Star's agents are seen as noble rogues, a view not shared by the Tovenaar Empire for example.

The Twilight Star recruits agents from all worlds of the Star Ocean. It is said that they only recruit the best in their fields and that each agent is also trained in all forms of personal combat including archaic weaponry like swords. According to several rumors they own a small fleet of hyperdrive capable ships including the supercarrier “Twilight Star” which is a space ship of huge proportions, dwarfing even Tovenaaari fleet carriers. Twilight Star operatives usually operate in small groups that disguise themselves as free traders, explorers, prospectors or even mercenaries. They almost always have access to a hyperspace-capable ship and sometimes even to powered armor or space-fighters.

Aside from rumors not much is known about the Twilight Star. The agenda of the Twilight Star is unknown also a lot of people believe they try to hold peace in the Star Ocean by making sure there's a balance between the four major

nations. They supposedly have some close relationship with the Gaian government and the Tovenaar Empire is openly hostile towards them.

Designer's Note #2

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The Free Miners Guild

The Free Miners Guild is an alliance of independent miners, prospectors and small mining companies. The guild was formed to give the many small entrepreneurs a combined voice against larger corporations. The members of the Free Miners Guild usually meet once a year on the planet Glasgow in the Akkathon Federation to talk about guild policy, new contracts and business opportunities.



The Brotherhood

The Brotherhood is a fanatical religious sect that has committed several acts of terrorism in the last decades. They believe that they were selected by God to bring deadly justice to all unbelievers. They want to establish a totalitarian theocracy all over the Star Ocean. And since they are only a few they use terrorism to further their goals. It is believed that they have small training camps scattered all over the Star Ocean.

Ares SpaceWorks Ltd.

SpaceCorp may be the largest but not the only big corporation in the Star Ocean. Ares SpaceWorks Ltd. is one of the most important manufacturer of space ships in the Star Ocean. Most of their factories and offices are in Tovenari space and the CEO Murmage Larvess is a close friend of General-Emperor Tovenaar himself.

The Raiders

Raiders is the name that is used to describe all pirates and raiders that attack trade vessels all over the Star Ocean to steal their cargo. Usually each group of pirates operates alone, but it is not unheard of more successful pirate captains who have commanded several vessels and

sometimes even conquered small outposts and colonies. Piracy is still a major problem on the frontiers, especially because it is almost impossible to patrol all trade routes.

The Venshran Principality

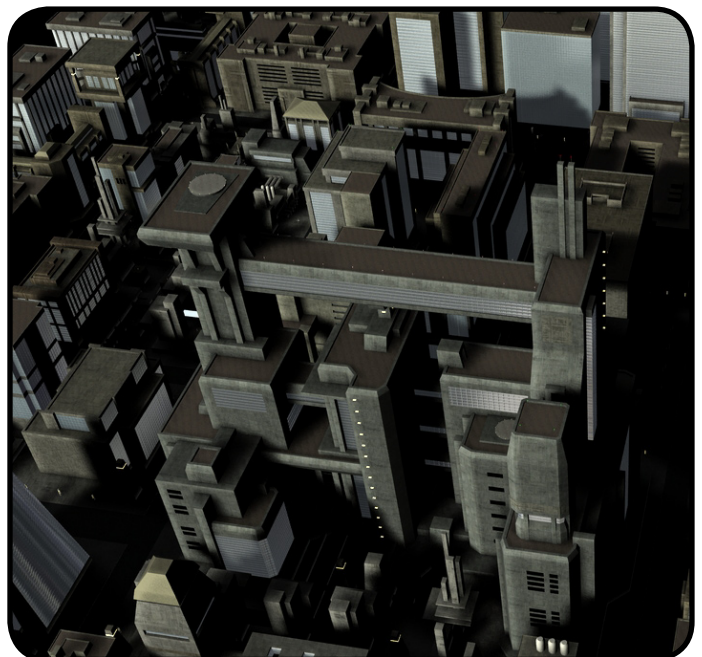
The Venshran Principality is a small star empire ruled by Princeps Chgowiz III. The Venshran Principality consists of twelve star systems bordering on Gaian space. The Principality has almost no diplomatic contact to the major nations of the Star Ocean and is usually left alone because their worlds are of minor interest.

The Interstellar Red Sun

The Interstellar Red Sun is the successor of the organisation known as the Red Cross (or Red Crescent). The IRS is a humanitarian organization that provides emergency assistance, disaster relief and monitors compliance of warring parties with the Akkathon Conventions.

Interstellar Astrographic Society

The IAS, headquartered on planet Tannhauser, is one of the largest non-profit scientific and educational institutions in the Star Ocean. Its interests include astrography, xenoarchaeology and natural science, the promotion of environmental and historical conservation, and the study of culture and history. The IAS maintains a small fleet of explorer ships and releases the monthly Interstellar Astrographic magazine.



"One man's "magic" is another man's engineering. "Supernatural" is a null word." - Robert A. Heinlein, 20th century SF writer

Humanity in the 8th century NR has access to highly advanced technology that allows FTL space travel, FTL communications, detailed holograms, advanced robotics, artificial intelligence, gene therapy, antigravitational fields, advanced energy weapons and many more things believed to be impossible just a few centuries ago.

This chapter will give you an overview of the available technology of the world of Ad Astra.

Spaceships and FTL technology

Travel by spaceship is pretty common in the Star Ocean. There are several inventions that made this possible. The most important is probably the psitech hyperdrive. It allows an esper to create a wormhole into hyperspace. Hyperspace has natural laws that are quite different to the laws of "normal" space and so it allows the spaceship to travel at speeds much higher than the speed of light. Modern psitech drives are fast enough to travel from one end of colonized space to the opposite end in a few months. Alas even modern hyperdrives don't have the speed to reach Lost Earth in the span of a human life time. Even reaching the outer regions of the Omega Centauri globular cluster would take a very long time.

Another important technology is the gravitic drive. Like the psitech hyperdrive it is based on alien technology and is a reactionless, sublight and maneuver drive. The gravitic or grav drive not only doesn't need any reaction mass to function, it also creates a gravitic field that shields all inertial effects from the ship's crew.

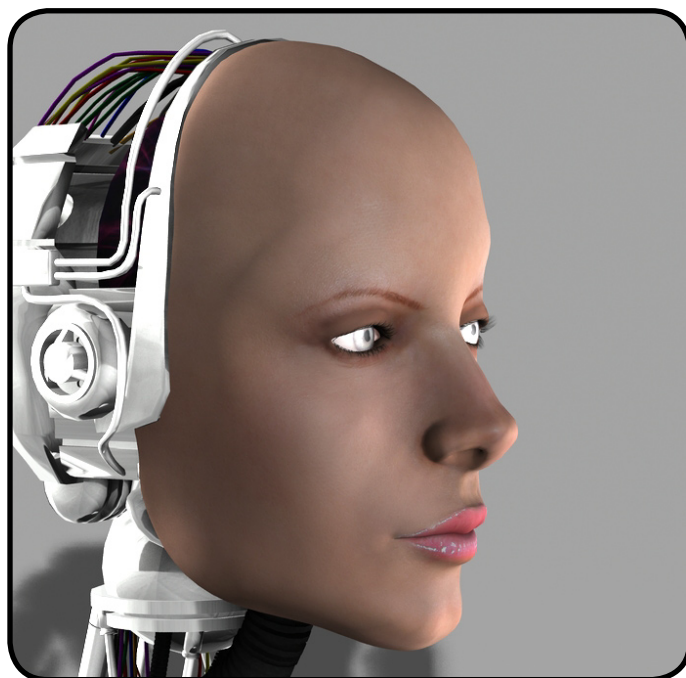
Elohim technology also allowed human scientists to build a FTL communication system dubbed hyperradio that allows communication over several lightyears in mere milliseconds.

These key technologies made it possible to colonize hundreds of worlds in a relative short period of time.

Computer technology and the StellarNet

The modern society of the Star Ocean would be impossible without advanced computer technology and the StellarNet.

Modern personal computer systems use holographic displays and can be commanded using spoken commands. Espers can also communicate more directly with compu-



ter systems using a Psitech interface. Usually modern artificial intelligence agents have replaced user interfaces like they were common in the 21st century. Interacting with a computer is as easy as talking to a human being.

Most AIA (artificial intelligence agents) use a holographic image that is modelled after a real (mostly the programmer itself) or fictional human.

Sometimes holographic displays are inappropriate, so another common display method are CLDs. A CLD is a contact lense that is connected to the computer using a wireless network. People who don't like contact lenses can use data goggles.

Most computers in the Star Ocean are connected to an instellar network called the StellarNet. Its an interstellar version of the so-called Internet on Lost Earth.

Modern computer systems store their data in data crystals (the design has been derived from Elohim artifacts). A common data crystal can store several Exabytes of data.

Personal Computers

The common citizen of one of the major worlds owns a portable or desktop computer connected to the StellarNet. The latest portable model looks much like a 21st century smartphone with a hires touchscreen and a holographic interface. The desktop models come with a bigger touchscreen and usually several holographic interfaces that allow computer access in all rooms of an apartment or house.

Forcefields

Using the Elohim data caches Gaian scientists were able to develop forcefields for several purposes. Small force-



fields can be used e.g. as loudspeaker membranes that can be projected almost anywhere.

Bigger forcefields are used in construction, to create barriers for various purposes. The military uses forcefields as protective measure for personal, vehicles and space ships.

Larger forcefields can only projected for a small amount of time, so most forcefields are “flicker” shields. They are on in very short intervals of time. They are not impenetrable anymore, but they are a much better protection against attacks than armor plating.

Robotics

The advances in computer technology finally allowed the construction of autonomous robots in the 22nd century. In the 8th century NR robots are a common sight on the major worlds of the Star Ocean. Robots usually are used in work environments which are dangerous for humans or are used to support humans.

Article 5 of the Akkathon Convention prohibits the use of robots in warfare.

Medicine and Cybertechnology

Modern medicine has finally overcome most diseases and the average lifespan of a citizen in e.g. the Gaian Republic is 150 years. Most Gaians in their early 60s look younger and more healthy than a 40-year-old in the 21st century. Lost limbs or organs can be replaced by regrown or cybernetic replacements. Alas this level of health care is not widely available. Even in the major nations not everyone has access to gene therapy or cybernetic replacement technology.



