

# THE ELYDEN GAZETTEER: KORACHAN



DESCRIBING, IN DETAIL,  
THE NATION OF KORACHAN  
- ITS CULTURE, RELIGION,  
GEOGRAPHY & POLITICS

- N. S. MANGION -



# SOCIAL CLASSES

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Korachan is a land of rigid social hierarchies, which in many cases date back millennia to the founding of the empire itself.

There are three main classes, though there are many who exist outside of this structure, including members of the clergy, for instance. The classes are helot, also known as work-slave; freeman, also known as citizen; and Patrician. Slaves, which form the backbone of the imperial work-force are not considered to be part of this structure, and exist outside it in their own structure.

For the sake of clarity, all of the aforementioned classes, including the clergy and slaves, as well as other members of the Korachani social structure, including the classless, and others, are detailed below.

## SLAVES

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Slavery is an everyday part of life in the Korachani empire, and is common-enough to be barely considered or dwelt-upon by most. It's just a fact of life. If one can find a redeeming feature in the empire's attitude towards slavery, is that it's not prejudiced in who – anyone and everyone, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or background can, though circumstance or bad luck, become a slave.

There are various forms of slavery, which generally fall into one of two camps – domestic slavery, and foreign slavery. Domestic slavery includes indentured servitude, debt bondage, press-ganging, and forced-marriage, amongst others. Foreign slavery generally takes the form of the slave-trade, where chorsairs, privateers and slavers invade foreign lands to take prisoners, regardless of their social standing in their native cultures.

Both domestic and foreign slavery can exist in varying degrees of severity. This is not an absolute, and details can vary from owner to owner. Some owners treat their slaves well, reasoning that well-cared for slaves are more productive than those who are starved or who live in fear; whereas others barely treat them as living-beings, considering them as little more than consumables to be used and discarded when their usefulness has run its course.

In its most famous guise slavery takes the form of invading enemy lands and taking people as slaves to sold to market later. This form of Slavery has existed in the Fifth Age since tyrants and warlords grew to exert their influence over less-powerful groups and individuals. Though many nations and regions have abolished it, and others are becoming aware of the moral implications of slavery and are on their way to abolishing it, there exist many powers and empires that continue to embrace slavery – this includes the Korachani empire.

The slave trade is an important economic driver in the empire – fleets of privately-owned slaving ships ply the waters of the Inner Sea and beyond searching for defenceless coastal settlements to attack. Goods are looted and individuals of worth are taken alive, with the intention of taking to market.

Most fleets are operated by a patrician house, or a consortium of parties, which is granted a charter to operate in a specific region with impunity. These slaving companies may or may not also own the markets where slaves are sold, though in many cases fleets will lay anchor to sell slaves at the nearest sizeable market, rather than sailing half-way across the Inner Sea, to get rid of them quicker – this reduces the chances of disease spreading across the ships and the need for food and water to keep freshly-captured slaves alive. The largest slave traders in the Korachani empire are the Inner Sea Cooperative, which includes six patrician houses, and operates with concessions and rebates from the government,

and it maintains slave markets in most major coastal cities across the Inner Sea, including Sarastro.

The targets of slave raids can be a contentious point. As a general rule of thumb, most institutions frown upon salvors who raid imperial towns, though the very fact that it is looked down upon means that it happens enough for it to be a topic of debate amongst rulers. There is little enforcement against this act, and few would take the word of a newly-captured slave above that of his captors, particularly if they are operating with an official charter.

More traditionally, slavers operate in foreign waters, either acting as privateers hunting foreign merchant and transport vessels, or physically attacking coastal areas, usually in the west or south-east of the Inner Sea, around Parthis, or beyond the Gate of Erebeth, where there are many viable targets.

Slaves sold at market may be bought for any variety of purposes. Though they would usually be destined for a life of physical labour, such as working in mines or quarries, they could also find themselves in a variety of other roles. They might be sent to the military for 'training'; or to the imperial bureaucracy, destined for a life of clerical work; or to seminary for a life serving the clergy. Others may end up as household servants, in the sex-industry, for use in blood-sports, or sold to ateliers and flesh-clinics to be used as test subjects. Other fates exist, though these are the most common.

Once sold, a slave becomes a commodity. What laws may once have protected them no longer apply (aside from those that protect their owners), and they are now an object to be traded or done with as their owner chooses. They are at the whim of their owners' desires and capriciousness. If lucky, they may have a relatively stable life, a roof over their head and a considerate owner. If unlucky they have a lifetime of pain, hunger and suffering to look forward to, with the only reprieve being death.

**LABOURERS:** the most common slaves in the empire are the industrial slaves and servants that form the bulk of the menial workforce.

Legions of slaves work in the open-cast quarries and mines that power the empire's industries, and they can be found in manufactories performing the worst and unskilled work required that is considered beneath even what the helots and work-slaves perform. Oghurs, certain halfbloods and other non-humans with large physical bodies are often used in as hard labourers, due to their natural strength which allows them to do the work of multiple humans.

Most patrician houses are served by a coterie of servants, which may or may not be slaves, based on the ethical outlook of the house. In general, old houses tend to cling to old customs and maintain slave servants, whereas smaller newer houses may prefer paying their staff.

**INDENTURED SERVITUDE:** in the empire, indentured servitude is pre-determined temporary enslavement as a form of payment against a service, or, more commonly, a loan.

The period of indenture varied based on the service or loan provided and, in some cases might see a young man grow into a husband and father, all the while still an indentured worker.

The practice is most common amongst those who have recently purchased their freedom from being a helot. Many find themselves unable to adjust to the change in their lives and, desperate, seek out indenturees to lend them money to help them settle down. The indenturees are typically patricians or money-lenders from the middle-classes who have made a business of offering this service to new freemen.

Individuals or families can also find themselves indentured in return for passage across the empire or beyond, after which they would work for a set time on the indenturees properties or loaned out to third parties.

Indentured servitude is typically seen as exploitative of those with no other choice, though indentured workers are usually treated better than other slaves and even helots in some cases, though indenturees have a reputation for being petty and deceitful, often tricking indentured workers into working longer than the original agreement, which is legally binding, but which powerless individuals are unlikely to contest.

**DEBT BONDAGE:** peony is a practice where a debtor who fails to make repayments within the stipulated time is bonded to labour until a times as the lender sees fit. Lenders who take on bonded slaves often inflate interests to make it impossible for the debtor to pay off their debts. When the bonded labourer dies, their debts may be passed on to their children.

The practice is old, and only remains in Pelasgos and Vârr, and some overseas colonies, such as Crassula, Melhumbrá, and Tavadra.

**IMPRESSMENT:** the Korachani military and navy, as well as the Church of the Machine, are known to 'press-gang' individuals who are unable to present their passports as proof of freedom. The Church would place such impressed men and women into the Shadow Marches as forced pilgrims, designed to make up the numbers of pilgrims to the holy land in Kharkharadontis. The army and navy would take impressed men and force them into slave regiments for use as cannon fodder and other dangerous tasks.

Though the law is meticulous in the applicable manner of press-ganging, and the eligible targets for impressment, enforcement is lax and gangers are typically free to work as they please so long as they are targeting acceptable individuals – convicts, the homeless, and others who are living outside of the bounds of imperial culture. By law, escaped slaves are still the property of their owners, and should be returned if found. A ganger found in possession of an owned slave may face criminal charges, making them poor targets. Citizens who are unable to prove their freedom (by presenting their passports, or by having someone of higher station speaking on their behalf), are fair game, and make up the highest volume of impressed individuals, many of them unjustly-so.

Once impressed, it is near impossible for an individual to secure release, even if they were freemen, unless an influential individual can speak up on their behalf.

The Church of the Machine has increased the numbers of press-gangers in its employ over the past years, in a bid to bolster the ranks of the Shadow Marches, in the hopes of attracting more individuals to its cause. Many patricians and magnates claim that the Church has been preying on their helots, and, receiving little aid from the empire, are organising raids on pilgrimages to regain their lost workers. They care

little whether the pilgrims they take are honest freemen or impressed workers, so long as their workers' numbers are restored.

**FORCED MARRIAGE:** not as common in the Korachani empire as it is elsewhere, forced marriage nevertheless remains a common fact of life for the patrician class, of all things. Arranged marriages between houses are sought to solidify alliances, and more often than not the opinions and desires of the two young heirs being forced into the arrangement will have no say in the matter.

Though it is impossible to compare a forced marriage amongst nobility with slaving away in a mine for 60-hours a week, the act is still considered as being slavery, with the term conjugal slavery being commonly used. Following the marriage, the bride can look forward to a life of isolation, her role being that of bearing children to continue the house bloodline, and little else.

**SEX-WORKERS:** sex trafficking and sexual slavery are common in most cities of the empire, and are indeed an insidious presence throughout the Inner Sea and likely Elyden as a whole. So long as mortals have carnal desires, the need for sex workers will be present and there will always be those willing to abuse others in the name of profit.

Prostitution is rife within the empire and usually takes one of two forms – illegal prostitution, where a small group of workers fall under the control of a hustler who, to all intents and purposes owns them; and regulated prostitution, which can only boast slightly better working conditions and in which the workers are not typically classified as slaves.

In the majority of cases prostitutes are forced into their work through circumstance. Many begin life as helots who, after buying their way or escaping to freedom, find themselves unable to live as citizens, and find their way to prostitutions. With no idea of the culture behind prostitution, they might struggle alone, until they are 'rescued' by a hustler, who takes them under their wing, sending them to work for a cut of the profits. Indeed, whilst under the aegis of a hustler, prostitutes will see very little of their money earned, and will suffer abuse at the hands of their patrons, though they will under the protection of their hustler, who must protect the investment.

Many sex-workers will begin their life in the slave markets of the empire, where prisoners taken by corsairs and privateers are sold. Those deemed to be suitable for the work are sold, with those showing supreme beauty or willingness for the work fetching high prices, and being bought for the harems of patricians or for work in high society as escorts and courtesans. Others are bought in bulk by prostitution rings, before being put to work on the streets with little preparation. Those who do not meet quotas or who do not have the disposition for the work are beaten into submission. Many are killed this way.

The most exotic sex-workers are often trafficked from distant lands, or press-ganged from slums. Non-humans such as shie, keratin, halfbloods and even otherworlders are always in high demands, and would be a prized catch for any hustler with the means to catch and enslave them.

Life for prostitutes is difficult and few are able to escape the clutches of their hustler. Indeed, most die in the profession at a relatively early age. Though who grow old and are no longer capable of attracting patrons will be retired from duty, becoming mother-figures to their younger co-workers, providing them with moral support when needed.

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## HELOTS AND WORK-SLAVES

The majority of the workforce in the empire is made up of helots and work-slaves who form the backbone of its workforce. They live harsh lives, with most of them working in manufactories, mills, assembly-lines, foundries, or otherwise in the empire's struggling farms and hydroponic vaults. To outsiders they may appear little different to slaves, but the major difference is that they are paid, albeit a paltry sum, and can legally buy their freedom, though this is difficult for most to accomplish.

The history of helotry in the empire is complex and dates back millennia to feudal times when the extant Patrician Houses were still in their formative states. Workers unable to pay taxes on the lands they leased from imperial nobility would be forced into debt bondage, which would often carry-over to their families upon death. In many cases it was impossible for families or individuals to work their way out of bondage leading to indentured servitude and eventually the helot class we see today. In some cases helots could, if they had the means to, trace their ancestry back centuries or even millennia to their first direct ancestor to become bonded.

Today, outside of being born into helotry, one can find oneself becoming a helot after falling upon hard times and being forced into an agreement with a manufactory, becoming a work-slave. Thus is started a new generation of helots, whose children will be born into the system, unless they can buy their freedom, which is unlikely. Children born within these factories receive little-to-any education, beginning work as soon as their small bodies are capable until the day they die.

A typical worker will spend ten to fourteen hours a day working, with two breaks each day to attend mass and to eat. Food usually takes the form of a small bowl of dross, possibly accompanied by bread (made from moss- and barley-flour). Typically, on Aional workers are granted a reprieve – either working for half a day or not at all – to follow religious observances, though not all manufactories follow these traditions.

In most cases work-slaves live cramped apartments within the manufactories themselves – small quarters that offer little comfort, freedom or security to their residents. Often large families will live in a couple of small rooms in residential areas that are empty during the day and crowded at night. Though many manufactories do not allow average workers to leave the premises, others allow them to wander their city, though the punishment to those who would

attempt to flee is harsh to serve an example to others who may follow.

Work-slaves draw a small wage that is enough to keep them fed and housed, leaving them with a small amount left-over that is, more-often than not spent in bars, markets and gambling-halls within the manufactories themselves.

Most work-slaves are relatively unskilled outside of the immediate competence needed to carry out their daily work. Those who do not meet quotas or fall behind will be disciplined and reprimanded, with common punishments including wage docking, withdrawal of meals, and physical punishment.

Workers who show particular competence in various fields, which may garner the attentions of their overseers. If they play their cards right, resourceful work-slaves may gain preferential treatments, or even rise above their peers, becoming shift-leaders and specialists. Though they remain work-slaves, they may enjoy shorter physical work hours, increased wages, responsibilities, and luxuries. Some are taught to read and write (itself a luxury), paving the way for administrative duties.

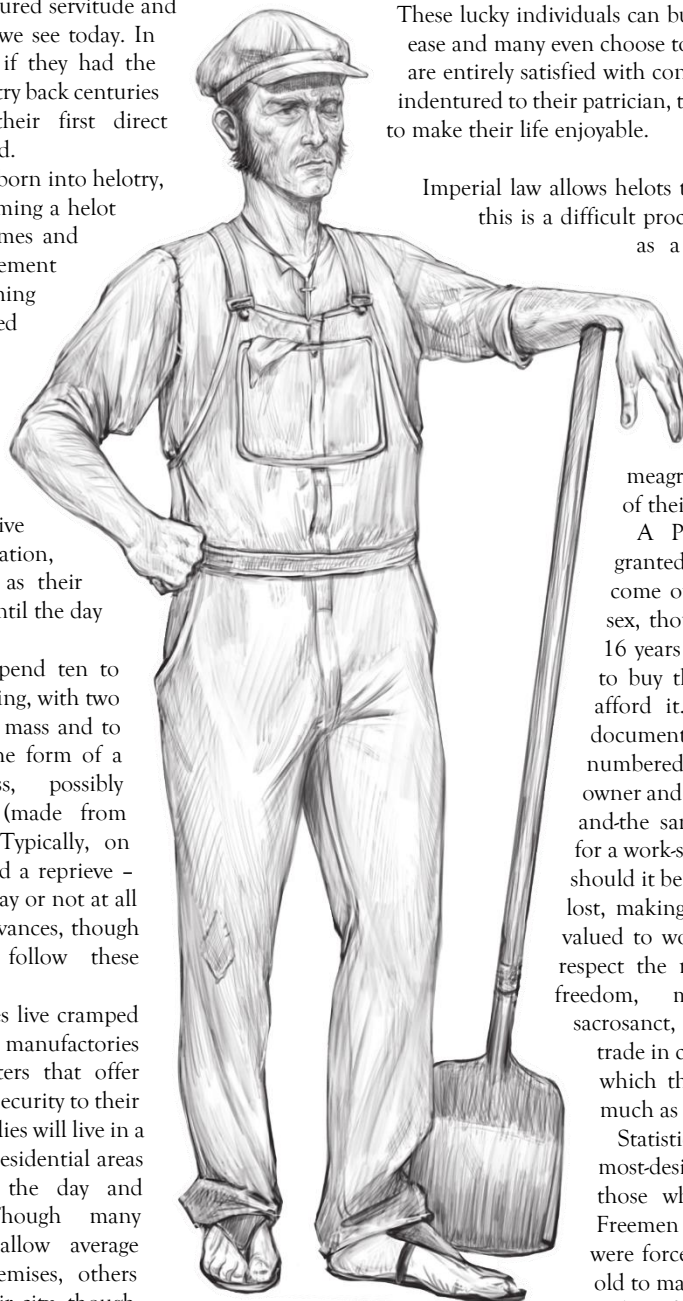
These lucky individuals can buy their freedom with relative ease and many even choose to continue their work. Others are entirely satisfied with continuing to live this life – still indentured to their patrician, though granted enough leeway to make their life enjoyable.

Imperial law allows helots to buy their freedom, though this is a difficult process, possibly intended merely as a focus for the hopes of a downtrodden workforce.

This process is made all the more difficult by the many distractions and vices that are presented to them to tempt them into squandering their meagre wages back into the pockets of their owners.

A Petition of Manumission is granted to work-slaves who have come of age (this varies by area and sex, though is typically between 14 – 16 years old), giving them the option to buy their freedom when they can afford it. This takes the form of a document of heavy stock, individually numbered, which is stamped by their owner and city representative (often one-and-the same). This Petition is needed for a work-slave to buy their freedom and should it be lost or damaged the option is lost, making these documents incredibly valued to work-slaves. Typically, workers respect the right of others to buy their freedom, making these documents sacrosanct, though there exists a small trade in counterfeit or stolen Petitions, which themselves can cost almost as much as the act of manumission itself.

Statistically, those who attempt or most-desire to buy their freedom are those who were born into helotry. Freeman who, though circumstance were forced into helotry, are often too old to make the sacrifice needed to buy their freedom, or otherwise, having been broken by the system once



Helot coal-shoveller

before, lack the drive to make their way back into the world, knowing full well the risks and dangers involved.

The Church of the Undying Machine may be willing to pay some or all of the Manumission fee to those who pledge to undertake the treacherous Shadow March – the life-defining pilgrimage to the holy land of Kharkharadontis. Few are truly aware of the risks involved in this and see it as an easy way to freedom. In many cases they are press-ganged into the March, with their passports confiscated, only to be returned upon completion of the 4,000-mile trek, assuming they even survive. Some attempt to flee after being freed, only to find out that the Church is harshly unforgiving to those who rescind on their promises.

It can take a responsible individual, with no other monetary commitments or dependents, up to a decade to buy their freedom, and that is if they live austere lives with little-to-no distractions or pass-times that would otherwise help to make life bearable.

Those who accomplish this are granted their freedom – they become citizens and are issued a passport, which cannot be replaced if damaged or lost, making them even more valuable than a Petition of Manumission. The new citizen is sent out into the world, with their new passport and no possessions other than the clothes on their backs. With little knowledge of how imperial life truly operates beyond their old home, these freemen now face the harsh realities of freedom.

Life is hard for newly-freed helots, who must find employment and accommodation, often with little assets outside of the specific skills they learnt in their previous life. Many find it easier to turn to a life of crime than to integrate into society, while others leave the city altogether, hoping to find better options elsewhere. Those who are articulate enough to sell their abilities may find apprenticeships under the aegis of craftsmen and experts.

Many, however, find freedom a difficult prospect and either return to workhouses and manufactories as free men, with few perks they would not have enjoyed previously. Despite higher wages, the need to pay for accommodation often leaves them with less money than they had in their old lives. But that's irrelevant – to most the ability to call themselves freemen is reward enough. Many freemen pool their resources and live together in communal homes, forming close bonds and familial groups that last a lifetime. It is in these communities that many freemen find their life-partners and begin families whose children will know nothing of the manufactories.

Those who are unable to find their footing as freemen may find themselves drawn to indentures, who lend them money in return for a set period of indentured servitude, or to the many hospices that were established to help freemen in need. Many hospices have gangs of 'recruiters' who actively seek out those struggling, to bring them into the hospices.

Though there exist freeman hospices that truly do seek to rehabilitate and prepare newly-freed work-slaves for life as citizens, including teaching them to read and write, or teaching them new skills; the harsh reality is that most are little more than workhouses, using the excuse of teaching new skills and vocations to receive free labour. Most such hospices are run by patricians, often the same patricians that own manufactories.

**Scuti:** there exist some instances in imperial law that may cause a helot to be freed from whatever institution held them to bondage. This could be an honour or award, bestowed upon them following a deed, a boon gained from inheritance, or some other reason.

Though other helots and slaves regard scuti with envy or even bitterness, the truth is darker – though essentially freed

from the prison of servitude, scuti are no more freemen than helots, and they are not considered citizens by the empire, so have none of the rights that freedom brings with it, leading to many scuti falling on the wrong side of the law and ultimately being rounded up by slavers. By contrast most true freemen regard scuti with disdain.

A particular example of this practice, albeit taken to an extreme, includes most of the population of Zion following its subjugation to Korachan in 212 RM, though in this case the honour was not hereditary.

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## FREEMEN AND CITIZENS

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Imperial citizens, freemen are those who were either perseverant-enough to buy their freedom, or lucky-enough to have been born to free parents. A few opportunists may have escaped from indentured servitude, using their wits to clamber up the social ladder to somehow become freemen, though this is not the norm.

Freemen form a lower-to-middle-class that is above the work-slaves and helots, but beneath the patrician classes. Typically, most skilled craftsmen, specialists and merchants are freemen and they employ freemen as labourers and apprentices, and if their business is profitable-enough, may also have a few helots under their aegis, also.

The life of a freeman is very different to that of a helot. As the name implies, they are free, as helots can never imagine. They can leave their house whenever they want to, can travel should they need to, and their income is generally enough to sustain them at a minimum level of comfort, with some money left-over after necessities for saving or extravagances, such as foods that may be considered exotic to helots, or to spend on ornaments for their houses, or hobbies. Their income is typically enough to give them the luxury of owning different styles of clothing, including what is known as 'Ikuaional best' – clothing worn to church, or formal occasion that is of better quality to what is worn every-day.

Of course, this is all generalised, and the income that freemen make can vary from a minimum wage, barely above what a helot makes to survive, or on par with the wealthiest of patrician houses.

The life of a freeman is tenuous, at best, and one must work hard to retain that which was earned through hard work or inherited. Complacency may lead to debt or eviction, which may force freemen into debt bondage or indentured servitude, which more often than not leads to helotry or press-ganging into the Marches or military.

**AGRICULTURALISTS:** farmers, shepherds, pastoralist, ranchers, vintners, orchardists and any number of other rural professions, are typically made up of freemen.

In most cases, farmers and their ilk lease land off of patricians or the government, and are allowed to work it in return for a tithe on produce. In many cases the land can be bought, though this is not the norm. The land offered to farmers in this way can vary for being fruitful, which will be profitable for both parties, or close-to barren, and only given up by the owner under the assumption that the hard work of the tenant may improve the condition.

Farmers may often employ helots for manual labour in the fields, and the land-owner may also provide them with slaves or their own helots to aid during harvest-time. Those who are born into or who choose this life are hard workers, and subject

to the vagaries of the weather, but working outside and not being surrounded by a machinery are considered reward-enough to most, particularly those who bought their freedom from the manufactories.

With a focus on dross-manufacture in most large cities of the empire, agricultural work was become more specialised, with many crops and meats now considered exotic goods, which makes the lands a farmer works a target for banditry. Farmers must defend against such banditry and cattle-rustling, for instance. Their landlord may or may not provide adequate protection, depending on their investment in the work, possibly leaving farmers ill-equipped to defend the lands they work. The empire does provide protection in the form of rural iron-guard regions that are targets to banditry, but there are never enough forces to go round, and bribery is also rife.

In times of war farmers may be called to fight for a specified term for their country, and upon return may find their lands ravaged or plundered, and their families destitute or dead. This may lead to indentured servitude while the farmer repays his debts to his old landowners, and he may ironically find himself working as a helot on another's farm.

**ARTISANS:** carpenters, masons, smiths, mechanics, bakers, shapers, leatherworkers, butchers. These are just some of the multitude of vocations that can be considered artisans or craftspeople – experts who provide a service to the economy by crafting specific items which others are incapable of doing themselves.

Craftspeople such as chemists, scribes, or notaries are likely to be educated individuals, which impacts the rates they charge. Others may be uneducated, but otherwise highly skilled, such as silversmiths, leatherworkers, master carpenters, and so on, and despite their relative lack of schooling, their expertise is also valued and priced accordingly.

Most craftspeople enjoy a decent income for their services, and are commonly respected members of society within imperial cities. They may be self-employed, often living above or close to their place of work; or may be employed as a worker in a larger institution, either working alone or as part of a team. The latter may feel like a glorified helot, but there is never any doubt as to the freedom and respect that such workers command – finding a skilled artisan is not an easy task, so such workers are treated better than any helot.

Despite this, the livelihood of many craftspeople has become undermined by the rise in manufactories and industrial processes, at least in urbane environments. Many crafts have been replaced by large-scale industrial production that can produce objects more quickly and cheaper than through traditional means. Certain industries, most notably cotton and textiles, are now almost exclusively manufactured in large scale factories, forcing countless artisans over the past centuries into unemployment as they failed to keep up with the industrialisation of their craft. This created a shift, where many skilled labourers would find themselves becoming helots working in manufactories where they had once been artisans.

Conversely, some talented helots are able to buy their way out of the manufactory system to become famed artisans in their own right.

The hundreds of different crafts present in the empire are supported by guilds and unions, which serve (at least in theory) to protect their members and their interests. In practice, however, these establishments tend to act as gatekeepers, discriminating against particular demographics, disallowing them membership. Those who practice a particular craft and who cannot prove guild or union

membership will often be terrorized into abandoning their work. Refusal to do this will often result in their workplace being destroyed and death threats until they are forced out of the city or at least outside the district over which the particular guild holds sway. Many such targets are forced into helotry or lives of itinerance where they travel across smaller settlements, offering their services where the guilds do not hold sway.

The guilds and unions are seen by many as antiquated and hindering innovation and free trade, concerning themselves more with collecting fees from memberships than they are in preserving the ideals of their craft and promoting it across the empire. Despite this, little has been done about changing this status quo, and craftsmen who operate without the endorsement of a guild or union continue to do so at their own risk.

**MERCHANTS:** another major subclass of freemen in the empire is the merchant-class, which trades in items produced by other people (typically craftsmen and manufactories). Merchants can typically be broken down into two forms – local traders or importers and exporters, who operate on a far larger stage and are typically part of mercantile conglomerates. In its most simple form mercancy is the procurement of items from one party to sell for profit to another. This can be local produce or spices and ores from half-way across the world.

Socially, merchants exist in a grey area. They are envied by slaves, helots and even craftsmen for the great wealth they can acquire, though will always be derided by the patricians, who are mostly unable to see past their ignoble blood.

To many they are considered callous middlemen, taking the hard work of others and moving it elsewhere for great sums of money. Despite common sentiment towards them, merchants can garner incredible power, enough to match many patrician houses, at the very least, and some have even made their way into the ranks of the empires' ruling council through the sheer influence they can wield.

Merchants enjoy more home-comforts than most other freemen, and use their earnings to purchase (rather than rent) property and to decorate their homes, which are usually 3 – 4 rooms or larger and located in more affluent districts away from unwanted industries. They have at their disposal many foods and drinks that most others would class as luxurious, though even they have their limits unless. Many merchants invest their income into bonds or other ventures, in the hopes of acquiring more wealth. Such investments may be risky, and the possibility of losing their capital is ever-present.

Small-scale merchants operate in villages and towns, taking goods produced by others and selling them to third parties. This saves the manufacturer from spending time and resources selling goods when they could be spending the time creating more. In this scenario merchants would likely be generalists, buying and selling anything they see to have value and which would earn them money.

In larger cities merchants have the luxury to specialise in certain wares, such as food, or lumber, or object d'art, garnering reputations in their chosen fields that their patrons come to rely upon.

The importation of raw materials for use in wide-scale industries is unlikely to be handled by a small merchant, and instead is the purview of mercantile consortiums made up of as many as a dozen partners, or well-established merchant-houses that to the uninitiated eye may be indistinguishable from patrician houses.

In many cases these large-scale consortiums and merchant-houses have centuries of experience with histories of trade across the empire and beyond, and have amassed relations in



dozens of nations, granting them a monopoly on trades and goods from and to certain regions. Competition between merchant-houses for trade and distribution rights is fierce and has resulted in gang wars and subterfuge on many occasions.

Merchants often travel with their own caravans, either to different imperial cities or beyond. This typically takes place overland, using conveyors or beasts of burden, or across the sea on large transport vessels.

**VETERANS:** members of the Korachani armed forces are given the option of voluntary retirement after three years of service, with their papers of manumission provided if they were not already in possession of them.

Life for veterans is difficult, though, and many carry the scars of war, be they physical, in the form of missing limbs or ailments, or psychological, and few of them are able to carry on their previous lives where they left off.

Many go on to continue working militant jobs – becoming mercenaries, guards, or bodyguards, though others are unable to reintegrate into civilian life, becoming destitute or becoming homeless, possibly press-ganged into the shadow March or back into the military.

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## PATRICIANS

Patricians form the upper-class of imperial society and in many cases have family lines and history that date back to the formation of the empire and beyond.

Patricians form the bulk of the aristocracy and own most land that is not owned by the empire itself, and their lands may spread across multiple nations, including those outside the empire, such as Sarastro, Almagest or even Parthis.

In the broadest and most simplified sense patricians can be considered to be akin to feudal rulers of old. They originated in pre-imperial times from the arbitrar class, which acted as a judge in times of need and would go on to become a ruling class from which the patricians would emerge in around 100 RM.

They are titled and landed, and rent out their lands to freemen and helots who work them in return for a percentage of their produce. Their aristocracy is seen as a badge of pride amongst patricians, and houses that can trace their family trees back the farthest can claim more prestige, though generally amongst other patricians, whose opinions are the only ones that matter.

Typically a patrician house that has become destitute is still

favoured over self-made riches or wealthy merchant-houses, whose new money is considered unrefined and tainted by their labour.

Each patrician house is headed by a paterfamilias or materfamilias – generally the eldest or most respected member of the house, to whom other family-members are typically subservient. The Archpatrician, as they are often known, has the legal power to expel members from the house, and has final say on various matters, including marriages and partnerships (often making younger members of the house enter into forced marriages with other houses to secure political and business assets), or the fate and working conditions of employees and slaves, as well as tenants working their lands or otherwise serving the house.

Many patricians do not work and typically claim a stipend from their family's coffers. Whilst many busy themselves investing their finances and dealing with businesses, others prefer to have a more hand-on approach to their lands, serving as rulers of cities and territories – many young patricians are often given a town to control upon returning from their studies. Many more are content to carouse and relax in lifestyles that can be incredibly hedonistic. Others spend their days trying to better themselves through study and artistic pursuits, or working in the community – though the latter will commonly hold some ulterior motive that strives to better the social standing of the house.

House heirs must adhere to time-honoured traditions, with the first-born child (be it son or daughter) being sent to college to study and train to manage the holdings they will one-day inherit. A second born son is commonly sent to military college where he will serve as a ranked officer in one of the Korachani armed forces. Many choose to continue this lifestyle, bringing honour to the house, though others will be discharged after their three-year minimum term ends, returning to the house with skills that are invaluable in managing the disparate holdings of the house. Some houses may have a long-standing arrangement with the Church of the Undying Machine to send their third-born sons to theological school to train to become priests – in return, the church gains the patronage of the house and the yearly tithes owed by the house are waived off by the church.

Other daughters are sent to finishing school where they are taught the intricacies of attracting a powerful partner, through whose eventual marriage the power of the house may be solidified. Younger siblings have fewer responsibilities and either lose themselves in vice or dedicate their lives to the pursuit of an academic vocation or artistic pursuits. Indeed, many of the highest-regarded artists of the empire were the fifth or



A Dashing Patrician showing his meticulous style – note the metal gorget

sixth children of patrician houses.

Most patrician houses display their wealth through their fashion, jewellery, belongings, property and actions – with every societal move intended as a display of wealth and power. The image one exudes can do as much as true wealth and power and most patricians are acutely aware of the actions of their relatives in high-society.

High-fashion begins and ends in patrician culture, and there exist a great many fashion houses whose income is solely generated by the lavish costumes worn to galas, operas and other events where individuals compete against others to make the biggest impression. Brocade and military-inspired jewellery are commonly seen in high fashion, though other pioneering designers have been known to draw inspiration almost anywhere.

Patricians with the means to will often seek out ways to prolong their lives, either through the use of shaping, drugs or technarcana, or a combination of the three. It is not uncommon for some paterfamilias to live for centuries, much to the consternation of their heirs.

Patricians are also patrons of the arts and commission artisans and master craftsmen to furnish their homes, using materials from far-flung colonies and foreign lands.

Similarly, cuisine forms an integral part of most patricians' lives, with exotic foods that are beyond the dreams of helots and even freemen at their disposal. Lavish dinner parties are thrown with the sole intent to impress with whatever exotic foods have recently been acquired. In many patrician circles, the measure of a true epicure lies in the competence and artistry of household chefs, who are considered artists in their own right.

It is not uncommon for houses to fall to the temptations of these excesses. Idle princelings and grandchildren with more time than sense squander the houses' wealth on reckless purchases and losing themselves in decadent pursuits which over decades may bring the house low. Some houses allow their lands to lose their worth through ignorance or inattentiveness, allowing their income to dwindle until it stops.

Other houses fall not due to the squandering of their wealth, but the end of their bloodline. Without heirs the last generation of a house may give in to ennui, living in seclusion, relying on their servants to care for them as they allow their house to decay, their finery growing mouldy and tattered, until they expire, bringing an end to the house.

Whatever the reason, such fallen houses will likely disappear, what

remains of their lands taken over by the empire and sold off to the highest-bidder.

The status of patrician house is an ephemeral term and anyone who is independently wealthy through rental income and who holds enough influence could refer to their house in the manner, though that is not to say that they would be respected by fellow patricians.

There exist a few ways in which a patrician house can be formed that is more legally-accepted, though which still may not be socially accepted by more established houses. Typically, this would be through the dissolution of a marriage in an existing house, or at the behest of The Seven (often by proxy) as a reward for some action that advanced the position of the empire, or as part of a bribe.

Should a marriage within a small house fall apart, the resultant divorce would likely split the assets evenly amongst husband and wife, resulting in the dawn of a new house, with the wife taking her maiden name.

*Chrysaphius' Patricians* is a reference work published every 5-years, describing, in detail, all of the established patrician houses and their genealogies, heraldries, and relations, as well as business holdings and lands, and any changes that may have taken place since the last edition was published.

Most patricians' libraries will include various editions of the reference, though how up-to-date the volumes are will depend on the nature of the house and the level of interest its members have in genealogies.

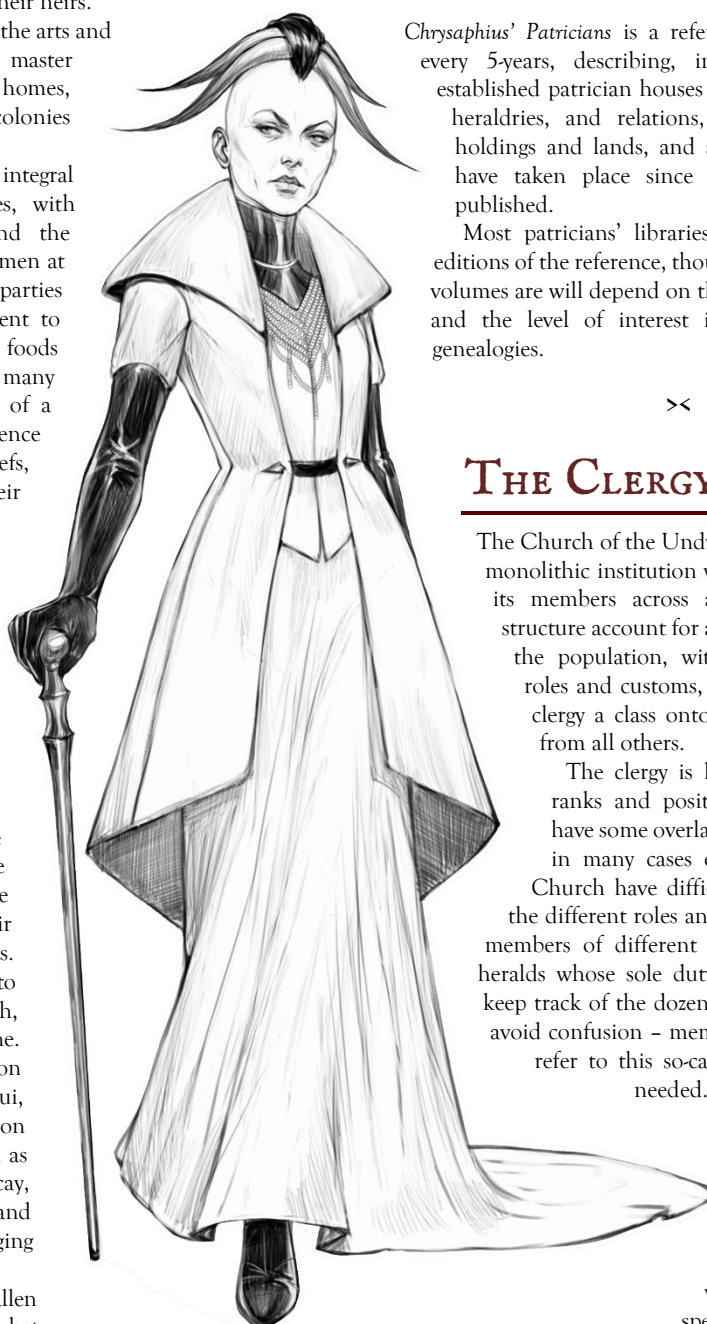
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## THE CLERGY

The Church of the Undying Machine is such a monolithic institution within the empire that its members across all hierarchies of its structure account for a significant portion of the population, with their own societal roles and customs, effectively making the clergy a class onto itself, standing apart from all others.

The clergy is known for its various ranks and positions, many of which have some overlap with each other, and in many cases even members of the Church have difficulty keeping up with the different roles and duties across church members of different titles and there exist heralds whose sole duty is to categorise and keep track of the dozens of different ranks to avoid confusion – members of the clergy can refer to this so-called *Holy Codex* when needed.

The institution of the Church of the Undying Machine is elaborated on elsewhere in this volume. This entry spends more time detailing what day-to-day



Patrician showing her care-free style and expensive fashion sense



life is like for members of the church.

In general, members of the church are divided into one of three categories – the laity, sectarians (brothers and sisters), and ordained members. There may be a few titles that fall outside of these three basic criteria, but they are exceptions rather than the rule.

**THE LAITY:** these are laypersons who follow the church, attend mass, and undertake the necessary rites of communion, but who are not considered to be initiated members. By law almost all slaves, helots, freemen and patricians in Korachan are considered to be members of the laity due to the Church of the Undying Machine being a state religion. In fact, any citizen of the empire is, by the definition of being a citizen, is obliged by state and church law to take part in all rituals and acts of communion within the church. Though slaves and helots are not citizens, it is also expected of them to do so through the sheer weight of cultural expectation and indoctrination. It is rare for someone not to actively consider themselves a member of the laity and it is usually the disenfranchised or someone who feels a personal grudge against the church for whatever reason who willingly refuses to take part in church rituals or communion.

The laity have no rights within the church hierarchy, though some influential members may be granted honorary titles in lieu of extensive donations to the church, recognised philanthropical work, or other extraordinary acts. These titles have little true effect other than stroking the egos of their bearers, though may be used to intimidate lower ranking church members.

The Church often takes orphans or foundlings that show promise and pays for their tuition in theological schools that are run by the Church itself, with an eye towards having them ordained as priests.

**SECTARIANS:** (commonly called brothers and sisters) these are the initiated members of the church who devote themselves to it and its causes, typically living frugal lives of introspection, and helping out in communities. They are not ordained members of the church, and therefore have little authority within the church hierarchy, though all church members begin their vocations as sectarians, before rising through the ranks, though it is not simply a matter of promotion – those who remain sectarians for their entire lives are considered failures – it was simply their calling to serve the Undying Machine in this role. Despite this, many ordained members of the church look down on sectarians, the way patricians may look down on a helot.

Members of the church's clerical staff and militant orders are all sectarians, though their superiors and leaders are likely to be ordained.

The name sectarian is derived from the ritual in which an initiated brother or sister chooses a sect in which to serve. These sects take the form of monastic orders to which a brother or sister will belong until death. Family roots are forsaken upon choosing a sect, with fellow sectarians of that order becoming their family. Similarly, sectarians are not allowed to marry or raise children, though many orders work closely with children (orphans, or those with troubled backgrounds, for instance) and sisters are commonly associated with children, often being seen working in orphanages or as midwives.

As part of their initiation sectarians vow not to fornicate or consume alcohol outside of religious rituals. Similarly, they

vow to live austere lives in which material possessions do not feature. They live together, often in monasteries – either isolate to aid in their meditation and introspection, or close to a parish, where they work

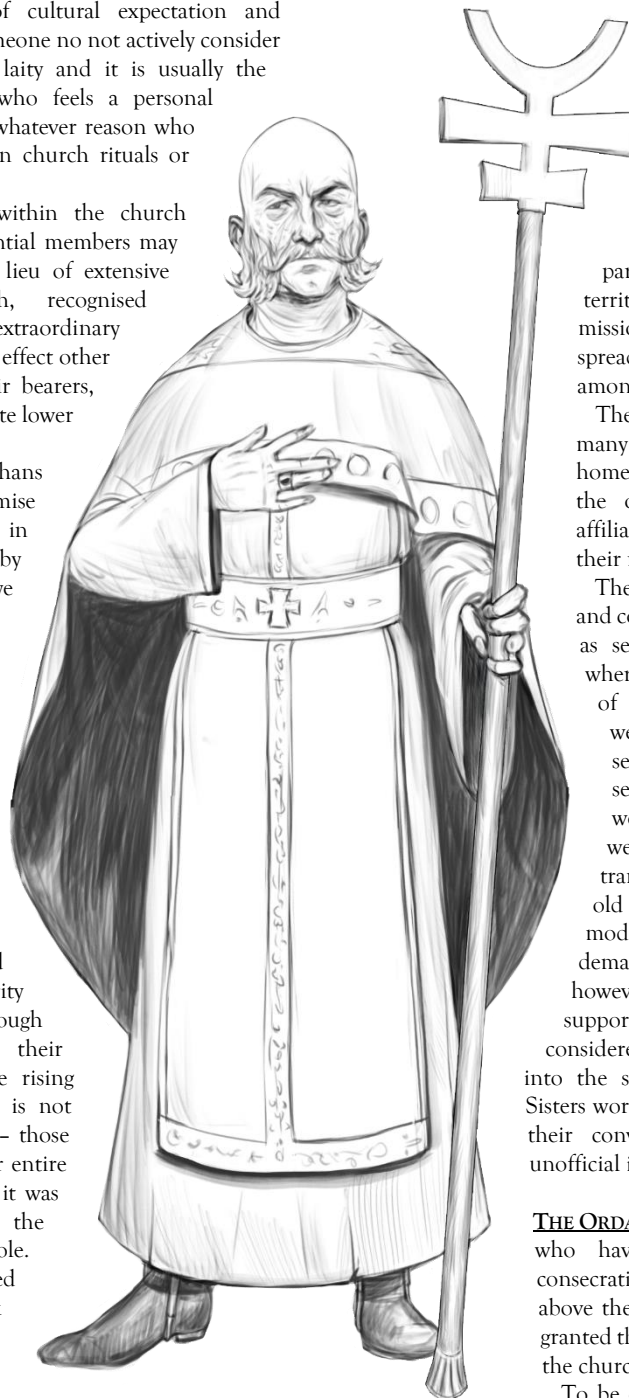
within the community or parish. Those in far-flung territories may work with missionaries and exoclines to spread the word of the church amongst heathens.

The Church itself is divided into many different sects, which serve as homes to the sectarians as well as the ordained, who often retain affiliations with the sects following their ritual of consecration.

The sects maintain monasteries and convents, commonly referred to as sect houses, across Korachan, where all members of the Church of the Undying Machine are welcome, and in which the sectarians live. It is from these sect houses that the sectarians work. Traditionally, brothers were renowned for their transcribing and translating of old books, but with the advent of modern mass printing methods demand for their work dwindled, however wealthy patrons still support their work, which is considered art today, bringing money into the sect house and the Church. Sisters work as midwives and nurses and their convents sometimes double as unofficial infirmaries.

**THE ORDAINED:** members of the church who have undergone a ritual of consecration are said to be elevated above the laity and sectarians, and are granted the authority to act on behalf of the church.

To be ordained one normally needs to first be a sectarian, though it is not



An ordained member of the Church

uncommon for members of the laity to be directly ordained. This might happen when an experienced adult member of the laity with close ties to the Church decides to fully devote their lives to the Undying Machine. The act of ordination is complex and requires years of study, or experience deemed equivalent, as well as spiritual preparation in theological schools that the Church itself operates across the empire. Many patrician houses have a tradition of sending

There individuals learn the tenets of the Church, its dogma, and history in a way that members of laity can never truly understand. Even if they do not pass the required exams, it is likely that these students will remain in the Church as sectarians or adjuncts.

There are dozens of different ranks within the Church and many more titles that ordained Church members may have, and these are not necessarily a linear hierarchy, so upon ordination individuals will be granted a title and/or rank based on their strengths and aptitude, and the focus of their studies, though their own aspirations are not entirely ignored either.

The more common positions within the church are those of priest, endocrine, exocrine, and cenobite, all of which will be examined in more detail farther below.

**PRIEST:** the most commonly-recognised religious figure within the Church of the Undying Machine, priests form the backbone of the church. They are appointed by the church to perform religious rituals such as mass and communion, and are considered the main link between the laity and the Undying Machine.

A common sight in Korachan and its territories, priests live within church territories – typically simple houses adjoining their parishes or place of work – and spend their days in tending to matters of religion or within the community. Priests are more educated than the majority of the laity thanks to the studies that led to their ordainment, and many go on to become educators within their community, with a focus on faith and religion. Others work within the church organisation itself as historians, record-keepers, and overseers of religious texts, often working alongside sectarians and other members of the church.

Contrary to popular belief, most ranks and titles within the priesthood allow marriage and bearing children and in many cases the rank of priest has become hereditary with children born to priests going on to follow in their ordained parent's footsteps more often than not. Though not a restriction, many priests marry within the ranks of the ordained, a result of their often-sheltered lives and close contact with other ordained. This is likely also a remnant of the ancient days of the Church of the Undying Machine, where the position was hereditary. This was abolished in an edict in 773 RM, leading to a period

of growth within the church as, for the first time ever, people outside of the acknowledged ranks were given the option of becoming priest.

To ambitious individuals within the church, attaining priesthood is merely a stepping stone to higher ranks, such as those of primate, ecclesiast, or theologian, and yet higher titles, such as prelate, cardinal and, finally, archbishop – the highest rank an ordained member of the Church of the Undying Machine can possess, giving them full control over their diocese in a particular nation. Above them are only the Archpotentate and the Undying Machine Rachanael himself.

**ENDOCRINE:** a holy order within the Church of the Undying Machine, the purpose of which is to ensure that the laity is actively worshipping. Endocrines operate within Korachan and its immediate territories. Its members are feared and parents use them to scare young children into submission.

They have various roles, the most well-known of which include making sure that the laity is going to mass and actively taking part in worship, collecting church tithes from applicable institutions and business, and general maintenance of church structures and monuments, and guarding them from vandalism.

They work closely with the Inquisitorial Grigorian, Kyoni, and Moëhani Fraternal Orders during their work, and are an unseen presence within imperial cities – certainly felt, but rarely seen, working in the shadows to achieve their secretive goals.

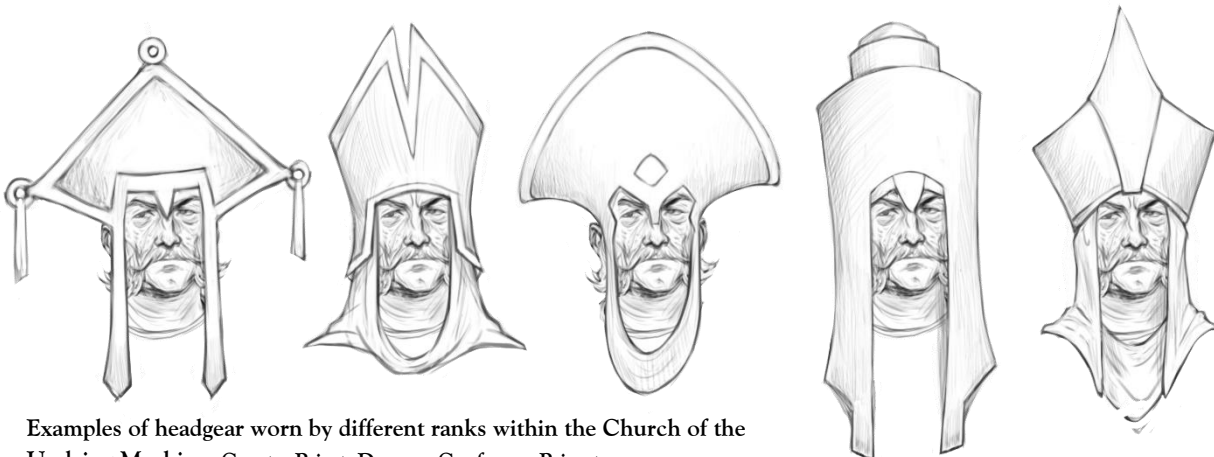
**EXOCRINE:** similar to the Endocrines, exocrines are interested with maintaining the faith and spreading the word of the church and as such as the missionaries of the Church of the Undying Machine.

Exocrines fulfil a similar role to that of the Endocrines, though they operate in the empire's suzerain territories and vassals, as well as without the empire's borders, where they operate as missionaries, often working alongside iconoclasts and the Inquisitorial Aiwahim Fraternal Order, in rooting out alien religions and idols.

They often travel with the Shadow Marches of the Church of the Undying Machine, helping to protect pilgrims as well as spreading the work of Rachanael to heathen lands through which they might pass.

**CENOBITE:** famed across the empire for their mishappen bodies and the solitary crossroad chapels they inhabit, cenobites are an integral part of Korachani culture, bringing to the fore its attitudes towards the Atramenta.

Cenobites are fanatical worshippers of the Undying Machine, and can come from any rank within the Church, and may even be sectarians. They actively seek out



Examples of headgear worn by different ranks within the Church of the Undying Machine: Curate, Priest, Deacon, Confessor, Primate

Atramentally-tainted lands – be they in the heartland of Korachan or in the tainted wastes of Kharkharadontis – and travel to them. Once there they will bathe in tainted water, consume tainted food, and expose themselves to the worst of the Atramenta, all while praying and chanting litanies of faith to the Undying Machine.

The vast majority of cenobites become physically corrupted by this exposure and eventually die from their ailments. Despite their devotion to the Undying Machine, they are deemed weak, their physical corruption a sign of their lack of willpower. They are sentenced to crossroad chapels across the empire as a form of castigation, where they gather alms and maintain the road as they contemplate their failure. Often the target of ridicule and abuse by passers-by, they are seen as tragic figures within the empire and are avoided by most and pitied by the rest.

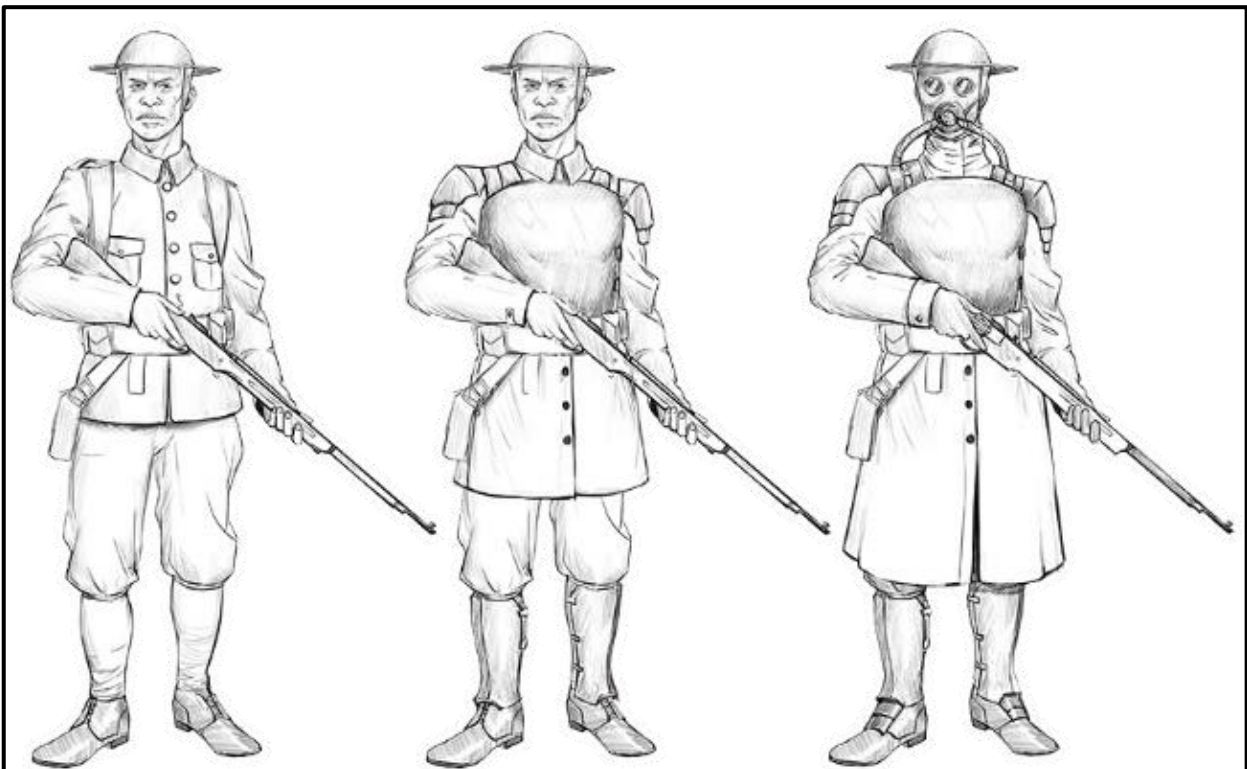
Those rare few who somehow survive the corrupting experiences unharmed are thought blessed by the Undying Machine with a power over the Atramenta that few can match. They are known colloquially as Incorruptibles, and become the closest thing to celebrities within the church and go on to wield political power quite different to anything else in Korachan, often becoming powerful demagogues and puppets of the church or respected members of the Arāthuahi fraternity. Others go on to become living saints, bringing great prestige and money to their parish.

Outside of the rigid church hierarchy of exist many uncategorised or unrecognised ‘ranks’, most common of which are fanatics. These are members of the laity who go above and beyond the demands required by the church of its worshippers, to the point that it consumes their lives, interfering with their work and social life, making them pariahs.

Usually, their obsession leads to them being dismissed from their workplace, or if they are slaves, they may be sold to the church directly. These fanatics gravitate towards the church and often just abandon their work place, seeking out church asylums, where other fanatics live under the auspices of the church. Many have their manumission papers paid for by the church, and become citizens of the church; whereas others are press-ganged from the ranks of unlicenced people found living in the streets. They are effectively slaves of the church, existing outside of the normal social hierarchies of the empire, and are provided meagre sustenance and lodgings by the church in return for their ‘services’.

Many find themselves conscripted within church forces where they are used as expendable shock-troopers, or are added to the Shadow Marches to bulk up their numbers, or may be planted in regions where the church’s grasp is waning to act as psychological weapons against the populace, where their flagellation and chanting may help to impress upon people the importance of the church.

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Here are some examples of common military uniforms:

On the LEFT is a soldier equipped with standard field gear, common to most theatres of war, as well as trench fighting – unarmoured uniform, wide-brimmed steel helmet, and bolt action magazine-fed Warrellhoff W-11 rifle.

In the CENTRE is a soldier with heavy field gear, which is rarer and reserved for more experienced regiments and troops, commonly used in close quarter fighting or sieges – thicker cloth uniform, wide-brimmed steel helmet, steel armour covering the torso and shoulders, and bolt action magazine-fed Warrellhoff W-11 rifle.

In the RIGHT is a soldier with heavy field gear (see above), but also equipped with an airtight mask and gloves, as well as a gas mask with filtration tanks that allow limited access to Atramentally-tainted areas. Though not as effective as a softsuit, which is specifically designed for prolonged exposure, these uniforms nevertheless offer a degree of protection.



## OTHER CASTES AND CLASSES

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Common in Korachan is a caste of itinerant tinkers and tinsmiths who traveller from settlement to settlement offering their services. They sharpen blades, repair machinery, fix leather items, mend shoes and clothes, buy scrap and interesting items, sell odds and ends, and generally serve as a source of news and information across smaller settlements that may not have access to advanced means of telecommunications.

These tinkers are respected by the general populace and are given shelter and food in return for their services, and to treat them badly goes against cultural mores in Korachan. Though that is not to say that there not people who would attack or steal from such tinkers, but such people are far from the norm.

These tinkers are experienced and adept at living on their own, and their knowledge of local geography, climate and wildlife is unparalleled. They often travel on customised conveyors that are laden with knickknacks and trinkets that they have collected over the year. Life in the wildernesses between cities requires good survival skills and most tinkers are not only skilled hunters and trackers, but also adept at using firearms at repairing them and making ammunition for them. Their travels outside of populated areas often brings them into contact with Atramentally-tainted regions, and some may bear the physical and psychological effects of this exposure, though most would be prudent-enough to avoid the worst areas or to wear hard- or softsuits whilst travelling in such regions.

Most tinkers tend to dress outlandishly and are proud of their individuality, going out of their way look as different from the monotonous crowds of imperial cities. Some may travel with exotic pets or in small groups of like-minded individuals. The latter is particularly true of dangerous territories, though for the most-part they prefer to travel alone so as not to invite too much attention.

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## THE CLASSLESS

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There exist countless others in Korachan and its dependencies who slip through the cracks of the conventional social hierarchies, and who do not so easily fit into the above classes.

Most common amongst them are the countless homeless, vagrants, vagabonds, orphans, and destitute who live in the underworld of the empire. Despite the empire's best efforts at controlling and monitoring its cities' populations, there are always those who will willingly choose to live outside that system. Such a life is hard, as the threat of press-ganging by church or army is ever-present, and one must always be on the lookout for threats – be they uniformed, or in the form of other destitutes or criminals.

Others who live outside of the class system are members of the military – from the lowliest rating to the highest ranks. By serving in any of the branches the Korachani armed forces for

a minimum of three years individuals are granted citizenship rights, making them freemen. Indeed, many join up under the assumption that three years of service are better than spending what may be dozens of years as helots, saving every penny to buy their freedom. Though military life in the empire is hard and cheap, anyone who meets the requisite three-year minimum is given the unconditional option of citizenship. There is no pension or further compensation after this, and many are discharged before their three-year term is up time due to injury or other criteria.

Career criminals are another group of individuals who live outside of the class system, often occupying regions of cities that are outside of the reach of the law – ancient ruins, hidden crypts or subterranean remnants of regraded cities. Their territories are heavily guarded from outside interference, and they often make use of orphans and the homeless as informants and agents.

Orphans are also effectively classless, though they exist in a grey area of imperial society, where they are technically outside of the class system, unrecognised by most. They live abhorrent conditions in overcrowded orphanages, which are overseen by Presbyters who rule with an iron fist. The Presbyters see the orphans as little more than resources to be bartered with and for all intents and purposes orphanages serve as slave markets where patricians and business-owners can buy workers for cheap. A lucky few may be bought and freed by a wealthy family, who adopts the child as their own, though most will find themselves sold on into the sex trade or worse. During their residency, orphans are expected to work – cleaning, cooking and doing other chores needed for the smooth running of the orphanage.

For the most-part children live and die in these orphanages without experiencing life or the world outside their walls.

Another caste which is considered to live apart from others is that of the Canaphrani. These are itinerant knights sponsored by anything from patricians, to the state or church, and who swear loyalty to an ideal or authority – commonly the Undying Machine, or the Archpotentate Malichar, or one of The Seven, or a moral ideal of some sort.

Most are retired mercenaries or veteran soldiers, though some simply decide to leave their old lives to become Canaphrani. Those without experience rarely last long.

They travel the Inner Sea, fighting transgressions against their chosen ideal, while furthering the reputation of their sponsor. Some go on to build sterling reputations, earning them the envy and loyalty of those who they protect... while others go on to become infamous for their bloodlust or tyranny.

In truth most fall within a grey area between the two extremes, with many considering them vigilantes or bandits. There is a long-standing Canaphrani tradition in both Laaskha and Skaros, and any aspire to become one.

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