



CHAPTER I: HISTORY OF THE VULDROK

While there were tech savvy people within the Drenjar, Zetol, and Lakol Nations, as well as the wealthy clans that remained tied to their identities within them, the Rekgold and Maghtaw became the premier technical powers among the Nations.

Invasion of the Røeng

Other sundered worlds also fell into barbarism. A confederation of peoples known as the Røeng invaded the Wersa worlds during the early 4200s. The war that resulted lasted over a century. These battles broke down the last remnants of Republican culture on the Wersa worlds. By the end, they were no longer Republics or unified planets, even in name; instead, these worlds had fallen to competing nations and factions within each world. Their cultural unity developed in the planetary Althings, where a Law Speaker was chosen by unanimous consent from the wisest by the great loremasters.

The Røeng brought with them the return of Sathra worship. Culturally, the Wersa responded with a deepening belief in their emerging Erdgheist faith. Erdgheist was similar to Gjarti, arguably with common origins, recognizing energies, planetary and stellar powers, and a host of spirits, ranging from ancestral shades to a dimly understood and far-removed Creator. They also responded with a cultural shift: The Nations increasingly valued warfare, as the four worlds fought long and hard against their invaders. The Røeng were thought to originate on the (now lost) worlds of Galahaut and Pergamum. Responding to population pressures, the Røeng expanded outwards in search of resources and new colonies.

The Zetol Nation initially took the leading role in the defense, but by the century's end, they were weakened by bearing the brunt of the fighting for so long. The Drenjar emerged as the strongest nation, as they were largely responsible for the final push to vanquish the invaders from their worlds. The later stages became a war of bloody attrition and then annihilation. Both sides razed whole cities and villages to the ground. The Drenjar and Zetol emerged from these generational wars with a deep hatred of Sathraism, and any ship discovered without a field damper was destroyed. Maghtaw technicians found good employ in Drenjar and Zetol service reinstalling dampers and welding them shut so they could not be dismantled again.

The Lakol had a tradition of vision quests among their spacefaring pilots and long debated the Sathra question. They only sided with their Zetol and Drenjar neighbors after concluding that, while the jump passage's Sathra "awakening" did remove certain

buffers against the gods, it also allowed for hostile spirits to enter into unguarded physical bodies, where they could seize control.

The Drenjar Nation emerged as the political and cultural pillar of the new Vuldrok worlds. With a newly found confidence from expelling the Røeng, the Vuldrok Star Nations began expanding again, raiding into Kurgan space and skimming the edges of the Known Worlds. Battles commenced among them for supremacy. No single nation or world was ever wholly united during his epoch, but the riches brought in from plunder turned their attention largely outward and away from the core worlds.

Who Were the Røeng?

Not much is known about the mysterious people who invaded the Wersa/Vuldrok worlds in the 4200s. The Vuldrok claimed they came from two worlds named Galahaut and Pergamum and arrived in massive waves bent on conquest. There are no Second Republic records of a world by either name, although there was a remote world named Galahad's Landing at the end of a series of jumpgates tenuously connected to Sky Tear. The few reliable records on the Røeng are from the Rekgold scroll-hordes and archives. What they tell is harrowing.

Around 4207-4215 (exact date unclear), a great armada came through the Fingisvold jumpgate. The Røeng were an aggressive warrior people. Sagas and surviving Rekgold records indicate they came to extinguish the Wersa peoples and take their worlds. There was little chance of parleying, although this was attempted.

Although the Røeng were technically an advanced and thoroughly militarized society, they were also accused of practicing (perhaps ritualized) cannibalism. The Vuldrok accusation that they were Sathraists was harder to prove, but it does bear consideration. During this long war, the Maghtaw began welding Sathra dampers onto the starfaring ships of the Star Nations. All accounts agree that the Røeng considered themselves the only true humans (or "trans-humans"). All others were inferior half-beasts to be slaughtered whenever encountered.

At one point, the Rekgold Princess Arnkatla of Scild (on Fingisvold) ordered the torture of some Røeng warriors to discover their origins (4225?). Even under threat of death, they revealed nothing, so she asked one of her obun advisors to enthrall their wills (perhaps by using something akin to hypnotism), and she called for a Lakol shaman many considered to be a psychic. Under the influence of their interrogators, the three Røeng warriors eventually answered Princess Arnkatla's questions, and a gradual history unfolded.

Their worlds were overpopulated and resource poor. When space commerce became scarce two centuries prior (around the time of the demise of the Second Republic), food imports almost ceased. Pergamum suffered a series of solar flares that destroyed their communication systems, causing considerable harm and destruction. In the chaos that followed, civic society collapsed, and hordes of hungry people attacked each other for dwindling food supplies before finally turning to cannibalism. Galahaut suffered a similar period of chaos, although undamaged by solar flares.

Scholars debate whether these cannibalistic practices continued with their invasion. Some insist these accounts were later added to the tales and sagas to paint a more monstrous picture of the Rweng. Nonetheless, Princess Arnkatla learned the following details from these three soldiers: Pergamum held ancient pre-human ruins on a northern continent that were considered malign by the inhabitants, the ruins of a fallen race. Ancient faiths fell as wars engulfed their worlds, and their high civilization tottered. Then a person emerged from the pre-human ruins during the planetary chaos, a charismatic leader named Seritustran. He possessed mastery of spells and elementals, striding forth like a demi-god with an authority few questioned. He came, he said, to bring the people out of their suffering and conquer new worlds. Legends of a coming savior existed among the old dying faiths of the Rweng, and they swiftly grafted their legends onto him, acknowledging him as their messiah. It was not known if Seritustran was legendary, a sorcerer of great power, or some strange, perhaps otherworldly visitor. The Rweng believed he was half-divine.

Seritustran, finding the Rweng worlds poor in resources but rich in technology, led a great armada forth. They attacked and slaughtered the populations of whole planets (the exact number is unclear), but finding scant resources, they plundered and moved on. It is not known if Seritustran eventually died or returned to Pergamum; the three soldiers told varying accounts. Two of the warriors said he was mortal and died; the third said he returned to the ancient pre-human ruins of Pergamum, where his spirit still dwells.

When asked about the origins of the Rweng, the three soldiers said they came from Urth during the end of the First Republic (their words translated more as “assembly of masters”) and kept pushing through the jumpgates to be free of the corrupting influence of “commerce lords.” They were not part of the Second Republic, although they seemed to receive trade through a long series of middle worlds. They were an advanced and militarized society, usually under control of a First Commander (a phrase that may also be translated as High Captain). While populated, their worlds depended on trade to bring in vital food

supplies. They were haughty and treated other people as lesser beings, even before their civilization nearly collapsed. The belief that they were the favored of humanity, the Great People, long predated the collapse of the Second Republic.

The Rweng must have been desperate to attack the Wersa worlds, which were largely inhospitable and not resource rich. The Drenjar sagas and Zetol tales say that the Rweng filed and sharpened their teeth, giving them a ghastly appearance. The Rekgold records do not confirm or deny this, although skulls have been found about the great battle sites that display these traits. It might be that only elite warriors did this.

If the Rweng came to divide and conquer the Wersa worlds, there is no doubt they would have succeeded. It seems the idea did not occur to them. As they regarded the inhabitants of the Wersa worlds as beast-people, there was no need for alliances or unions. They were to be exterminated. The Rweng’s arrogance cost them dearly.

Expansion

By the 4400s, Vuldrok mercenaries, hardened by unrelenting wars, were sought by the rival noble families of Hargard. Within a century, the Vuldrok were powerful enough to rise against both their employers. They destroyed the Chandra Princes and pushed the Ramakrishna’s influence southward, carving out continents for themselves. Yet this was not enough.

From Hargard, they pushed forward again into the Known Worlds, all while Vuldrok incursions into Kurgan space grew. The history of the Kurgan Worlds was shaped by these invasions, and their unified culture was produced in part by their resistance to the Vuldrok. The first caliph of the Kurgan worlds, known by the name of Juhangiz, spent much of his adult life uniting his people in throwing off the Vuldrok yoke.

In short, Vuldrok power grew and unified in the 4400s.

Drive for Vuldrok Unity

Under the thanes of Wolf’s Lament, a strong centralized military machine arose, strengthening and binding loose clan and nation alliances into a powerful military force. Warlord Gunnar the Grim (4382-4461) brought Wolf’s Lament to heel by tying the other thanes and itankans to him through oaths and marriage. In place of the earlier freeman’s levy from the Rweng invasions, he created a new tax and began the centralization of power that led to the eventual unification of the Vuldrok worlds.

