

CHAPTER XXX

HAQQISLAM

Oppressive regimes create toxic societies that produce and export nothing but hate, fear, and ignorance, the three great enemies of Faith. Muslims must abandon the reactionary teachings of clerics and allow themselves to be guided by nothing but their only sacred book, the Qur'an.

- The Springtime of Intellect,
Farhad Khadivar

THE
PROPAGANDIST

There were many who "carried Khadivar's word" to the people, but chief among the Haqqislam propagandists was Hamid al-Din al-Hamdani. Al-Hamdani was young, he was savvy, and he was ruthless. He wielded the mass media of the 21st century – television, cinema, radio, the internet, the news networks – like a surgeon with his scalpel, eventually gaining personal control over most of the major communication and media companies of the Islamic world. Khadivar preached that "only the message, not the messenger, is of consequence", but al-Hamdani insured that Khadivar's message could be heard every minute of every day in every corner of the world.

THE WORKS OF
KHADIVAR

Khadivar's words survive in two books – The Springtime of the Intellect and The Quietness of the Soul – and in recordings of his majlis al-hikma (sessions of wisdom). None of these are treated as scripture, but Khadivar was an educator who excelled at making his ideology accessible to the general public and they remain valuable guides for many Haqqislamites.

A minor but important power, the nation of Haqqislam is a Neo-Muslim culture born from the religious doctrines of Farhad Khadivar, who believed that Islam required a philosophical and theological rebirth. In the Qur'an he saw a clarion call summoning the faithful to the Search for Knowledge, but in the world around him he saw that this humanist message had become crippled under the ignorance and fanaticism which embedded itself in misguided teachings based on the traditions of the *hadith*, *sunnah*, and *ijma* – all the traditional precepts of Islamic law, the consensus of the faithful, and the false authority which had been given to the imams.

In the mid-21st century, the Energy Crisis crippled the economies of the Muslim world. A crisis of faith and identity saw a proliferation of new interpretations of Islamic philosophy and theology, the rebirth of Sufism, and the rise of countless populist religious teachers. Out of this morass of theological ideas, it was the doctrine of Haqqislam (meaning New or True Islam) which quickly became ascendant.

Farhad Khadivar was a teacher of drab appearance but blessed with charisma and gifted in philosophy and oratory. Khadivar evoked a vision of Islam inspired by the paradisiacal gardens of Al-Andalus and the great caliphates of the past. He taught that the path to a new golden age of Islam required shedding the baggage of the intervening years.

The clarity of his vision called out to people who felt lost in the tumult of the 21st century. Khadivar preached that prosperity would come to the spiritually wealthy, and he maintained that spiritual wealth derived from the rational pursuit of knowledge, art, and cultural enrichment. Cast adrift in uncertain times, people were drawn to the message that they could take control of their own destiny.

The New Islam also appealed to a number of the Middle East's fading elite who clung to an apparatus of power constructed during the height of the Energy Glut. Long shackled by the limited vision of reactionary imams and longing for a return of their geopolitical relevance, the appeal of Haqqislam's path of prosperity – free from the stigma of a fanatical, bigoted religious power – was immense.

These leaders dedicated considerable resources to Haqqislam's success. As a result, Haqqislam's propagation had as much to do with sophisticated propaganda as it did grassroots activism.

But where some embraced Haqqislam for the opportunities it presented, others saw it as a threat. As Haqqislam grew, many of these reactionary elements turned to violence. Among these, history best remembers the campaign of terror waged by Imam Khalaf ibn Ahmad's Legion of the Exalted. Ibn Ahmad declared a *fatwa* against Farhad Khadivar, and it was a bullet fired by one of his Exalted which took Khadivar's life at the age of 42.

ROAD TO BOURAK

Khadivar's death, of course, was not the end of Haqqislam. The movement was already a transnational powerhouse, and Khadivar's martyrdom only served to accelerate its success. Significantly, during Haqqislam's rise the archaic nation-states in which it was most popular were in a state of rapid decline. As the former centres of power became incapable of providing essential services, Haqqislam's *khaniqah* (teaching and public service centres) expanded to take up the slack.

In time, it became clear that the *khaniqah* had become fully functional social institutions and people began referring to the far-flung Haqqislam as a stateless nation. This further unsettled the countries in which the Haqqislamites made their homes. Even the most tolerant, democratic regimes of the Islamic world began to look nervously at the increasing sway of this heterodox sect, and Haqqislam's own followers began to dream of a nation of their own, where they could build a society based upon their principles as a beacon of prosperity and tolerance.

Unlike other nations without geographic borders, however, Haqqislam was a young power. It had no homeland to reclaim. No one on Earth would sacrifice sovereign territory to make room for a new nation.

But this was the dawn of the Second Great Space Race. Wormholes had been ripped asunder, the colonial space race had erupted, and Haqqislam's leaders concluded that they could find a home among the stars.

Finding colonial planets was an expensive proposition, however. The fledgling pseudo-nation couldn't compete with the exhaustive wormhole searches being performed by PanOceania and Yu Jing. Haqqislam found its solution with a group of neo-Sufi astronomers and one of history's greatest

long-shots: In Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock had been built where, according to Islamic tradition, Muhammad once ascended to heaven. The neo-Sufi astronomers proposed following the Prophet's footsteps. They recreated the position of the stars over Jerusalem on the night of his ascension and determined the sector of space that had been directly over the mosque. If their interpretation was correct, that was where Haqqislam would find its key to the stars.

To find that key, Haqqislam paid handsomely for the services of ex-NASA staff and equipment mothballed after America's economic crises. Although the sliver of space they had defined above the Dome of the Rock was small, the cone it formed at the edge of the solar system was vast. A long series of failed attempts followed and the viability of the project was even questioned by some, but eventually a stable wormhole was located and the *Nailah* probe was sent through it. Its name ("Successful") proved prophetic: On the far side of the wormhole was a Sol-type system and the habitable world of Bourak.

TRADE & TERRAFORMING

The success of the project was declared a miracle. Allah himself, through the footprints of Muhammad, had shown Haqqislam its path to the future. The number of adherents skyrocketed, the newly formed O-12 recognised Haqqislam as an independent nation, and the Walī declared, "We have all become Sālik now." (A term referring to Sufi travellers.)

The Bourak Pilgrimage had begun.

The developing state of Haqqislam, however, could not handle the millions of eager sālik seeking passage to the new world. The business magnates who had helped to sponsor the Haqqislamite movement now exploited the situation: They invested in more ex-NASA resources, along with original construction projects, and leveraged the Pilgrimage to create the first major space transportation routes.

When the Pilgrimage came to an end, those routes remained and the tycoons who controlled them repurposed them for the flourishing, lucrative business of establishing and supplying all the colonies of the burgeoning Human Sphere. They became the foundation of the Merchant Guilds which now form one of the three pillars of the Haqqislamite economy.

The second of these pillars – biomedical research – was something which the Haqqislamites had already proven masters of before leaving Earth. The

third pillar, however, was a direct consequence of their sojourn to Bourak: Terraforming.

The journey to their new home transformed the Haqqislamite people.

HAQQISLAMITE BALANCE

The core of Haqqislamite belief is the Search for Knowledge.

Farhad Khadivar held reason to be the greatest attribute of the human being and believed that mankind's foremost obligation in life was the pursuit of artistic, philosophical, and scientific knowledge. It was through this pursuit that one could come to know the face of God and unlock the gates of Paradise. In *The Springtime of Intellect*, Khadivar wrote, "The Qur'an says, 'Sight cannot perceive him; yet he perceives all that is seen. The comprehension of him is subtle; yet he comprehends all.' We cannot gaze directly upon our Lord's face. We must instead seek him as he seeks us, by gazing with subtlety upon all facets of the world."

Khadivar outlined two pathways by which the Search for Knowledge could be carried out: By understanding the Cosmos through scientific inquiry of the outer world and by pursuing Paradise through speculative, internal reasoning.

TWIN TRADITIONS

This division within the Search for Knowledge can be understood as the difference between comprehension and apprehension. One who comprehends truth does so by rationally assembling knowledge to create a complete picture of the world. One who apprehends truth, on the other hand, does so by intuitively grasping the totality of its meaning. It's knowing the meaning of a word without being able to provide the dictionary definition; a poetical perception of the world which sees more than is literally observed.

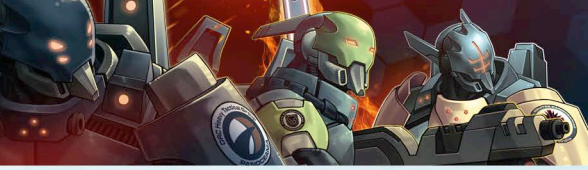
These two approaches were often seen as polar opposites, but in Khadivar's teachings they were complementary parts of a single whole. "Our world is cloaked in a magnetic field," he wrote in *The Quietness of the Soul*. "Within that field we perceive the Arctic and the Antarctic as being separate and opposed. But in truth there is only one field. It is unified. And the entire world rests within it. So, too, does the entirety of our soul rest within the single, unbroken continuum of Truth."

INFIDELS ON BOURAK

Haqqislam is a tolerant society, welcoming visitors and immigrants of all ethnicities and creeds. It is particularly open to fellow "people of the Book" – Christians, Jews, and Muslims of other sects. There are many close-knit minority religious communities in the various cities of Bourak. Perhaps the most famous is the bustling Jewish Quarter of Dar el Funduq, the largest such community on the planet. 'Infidels' have a special tax status, which exempts them from certain taxes that finance Haqqislamite religious activities. Instead, they pay a solidarity tax called *jaziya*, spent on social needs of the wider community.

WAJHAHU

The Arabic word *wajhahu* can be translated as His Countenance. In his teachings, Khadivar used it extensively as a metaphor for Knowledge and that usage has become common in Haqqislam. The meaning has also doubled back on itself: Haqqislamites will often speak of "looking for truth" in someone's *wajh* (face) and close friends will speak of "sharing one *wajh*" (by which they mean that they truly know each other). This latter phrase assumes an ironic character when referring to lovers (with the additional innuendo that the way they're sharing their faces is by kissing each other).



THE PROPHET'S MEDICINE

Khadivar often used the *Tebb al-Nabi* (the Prophet's Medicine) as a way of speaking about the division between inner and outer knowledge. Muhammad said, "There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its remedy." Thus, in the traditional medicine of Islam, healing was seen to flow from the apprehension of God's intention.

But these remedies were not simply given. They had to be found in nature — they required an external search for knowledge that had been encoded into the Cosmos. There were two paths leading to the same goal, and, in following both paths, Medicine become more than Science; it becomes Art.

Khadivar was drawing on ancient philosophies to explain his radical new ideology. But the emphasis he placed upon the useful metaphor of medicine resulted in the study of medicine and biomedical research becoming a mainstay of Haqqislam culture.

EXEMPLARS

In his work, Farhad Khadivar identified several Ideals or Virtues which are possessed by those who excel in the Search for Knowledge.

The capital letters are not his, but many of his followers among both the Haqq Mutazilites and the Haqq Tasawwuf have created lists and seek to make themselves Exemplars by mastering these Virtues and Ideals.

Nonetheless, these two tendencies have developed as separate schools of thought within Haqqislam — one in which reason is the ultimate arbiter, the other drawing from the mystical traditions of Sufism and seeking a more internal path towards God. Just as the individual is suspended between the outer and inner worlds, between comprehension and apprehension, so is the entirety of Haqqislam contained in the spectrum formed by the tension between these two paths.

Neither school has an official organization. They're not political parties, and even those most committed to one school acknowledge that the other is a valid path. Rather, they are two halves of society and two halves of the individual's life.

HAQQ MUTAZILITES

Haqq Mutazilite teachings are propagated through academies which teach maths, science, informatics, and technology. Those drawn to its path become Hakim (a title which means both doctor and philosopher). These are the scientists, medical doctors, and engineers. (Among outsiders they are sometimes thought of us as the "secular" side of Haqqislam, although the distinction wouldn't make much sense to a Haqqislamite.)

HAQQ TASAWWUF

One the other hand, there are the neo-Sufis of the Haqq Tasawwuf. To this movement belong the Mawla, community leaders and guides (or patrons) for those seeking to open the inner gateways to the Paradise which lies within us.

The voice of Haqq Tasawwuf is the Walī (a term which more or less means "saint", but which also refers to someone who is a custodian or protector over another). The Walī holds no temporal power and it would gravely undermine his station were he seen as trying to be a political leader. In fact,

the Walī is merely the spokesperson for the circumspect Council of Walī, who are usually not seen by the public or media. Haqqislam rejects the idea of a binding *ijma*, but the Walī, speaking with the myriad insight of the Council, is considered the wisest counsellor on matters of the spirit. (There are rumours that the Council of Walī has, in fact, used experimental Silk technologies to form a sort of joint consciousness.)

As the Haqq Mutazilites have their academies, the Haqq Tasawwuf have *zawiyas* where literature, art, history, meditation, and the Qur'an are studied. Most Haqqislamites attend both, generally splitting their week equally between them.

KHANIQA

Khaniqa are where the two halves of Haqqislam's soul come together. They are gathering places, communal areas, and shared spaces. Originally the meeting halls of the Haqqislam movement, they have split, specialized, and (in some cases) grown to prodigious proportions.

Khaniqa are ideologically neutral. All ideas are allowed to come together and have a free voice. This intellectual freedom and openness is the bedrock of Haqqislamite faith and society.

CARAVANSERAI

Haqqislam's trade network in the wider Sphere is built upon the caravanserai, free ports throughout human space located at key junctions on the interstellar trade routes. The caravanserai are the external version of the *khaniqa*, neutral outposts where anyone can do business. The Winter Hall at the centre of each caravanserai is a place to buy and sell, rest and resupply, in as much comfort and luxury as local conditions allow.



Caravanserais are usually located near the platforms of Vila Boosters, along the Circular paths, or wherever there's a high volume of traffic. Mostly owned and managed by Haqqislamite commercial enterprises, with support from the Bourak government, they always have an appointed Trade Diwân who represents the Haqqislam state and is able to perform limited diplomatic functions.

These Trade Diwâns are also authorized to issue the Haqqislamite flag to any vessel with little red tape and only a small fee. These “flags of convenience” mean that the caravanserais also act as home ports to hundreds of small trade companies, corsairs, and ships from all nations. Unsurprisingly, caravanserais are often havens for smugglers, particularly those involved in the black market for Silk.

BIMARISTANS

The earliest Haqqislamite *bimaristans* were free clinics on Earth. On Bourak, they became a network of hospitals which covered the healthcare needs of the sâlik settlers. Following the precepts of Haqqislam, however, they were also designed to facilitate the Search for Knowledge as research hospitals and biomedical research facilities.

The most prestigious bimaristans are in the Al-Medinat region, but they are found throughout Bourak.

UNIVERSITIES

In Haqqislam, universities are also part of the interwoven web of *khaniqah* which provide the scaffolding of society. They are seen as the place where the twin traditions of the academies and *zawiyas* are synthesized into a cohesive whole. The teaching staff are made up of both Hakim and Mawla.

INSTITUTIONS

GOVERNMENT

Haqqislam is a parliamentary democracy, with its form of government defined by the Constitution of Bourak (which was, itself, heavily influenced by the Concords of Tubruq which were created in the aftermath of Khadivar's assassination).

Bourak is divided into semi-autonomous democratic regions. The four major regions are the Al Medinat Caliphate, the Funduq Sultanate, the Iran Zhat Al Amat Shanate, and the Gabqar Khanate. (Several smaller regional governments also exist, including Bahiti, Huriyyah, Baniya, and Parthalia.)

OASES IN THE DESERT OF THE VOID

Outside of Bourak, most caravanserais are orbital stations. Nomad construction crews are hired to hollow out large, convenient chunks of rock and fill them with habitation modules. (Construction often proceeds while the future caravanserai is being propelled to its final destination.) The exterior of an orbital caravanserai is usually covered by a thick layer of ice, an inexpensive solution to protect the anti-radiation shielding from micrometeors, space debris, and other hazards. Peeking out from under the ice, long metallic quills mark the location of communication systems, sensors, docking modules, and maintenance blocks.

FIVE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HAQQISLAMITES

1. “Sâlik!”: The harsh environment of Bourak demands a certain tenacity. Fortunately, as a Haqqislamite saying goes, Allah favours the tenacious. Simultaneously, Haqqislamites feel that the Pilgrimage which brought them to Bourak made them all sâlik — a term which once described Sufi travelers on the path to spiritual enlightenment, but which now conveys a sense of wayward adventure. Haqqislamites often cry, “Sâlik!” before diving headlong into some daring (some might say foolhardy) escapade.

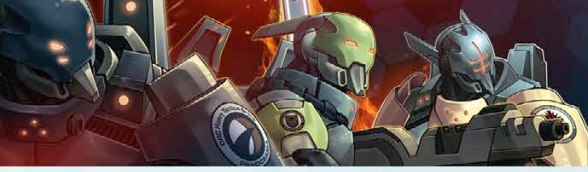
2. Traders’ Hearts: The marketplace is the mainstay of Haqqislam culture. Even the smallest town has a bazaar and every village has a weekly market. (Think carefully before getting into seriously haggling with a Haqqislamite merchant, for they have years of practice at it, beginning from their childhood visits to the souk with their mothers.) This constant bargaining has burned itself deep into the Haqqislamite psyche, and they often see every conversation as a negotiation.

3. Oaths: Like all Muslims, it is only permissible for Haqqislamites to swear oaths by Allah or by

Allah's attributes. (“I swear by Allah's might” or “By Allah's life, I will not fail.”) They are, however, quite liberal in doing so.

4. Devil's Advocate: Haqqislamites prize the free expression and exchange of ideas, which often leads them to value examining an idea from all angles and earns them a reputation for playing devil's advocate. A popular turn of speech for contrasting two ideas is to ascribe one to *abbi* (“my father”) and another to *abbun* (“the Father”, i.e. Allah). This is often misunderstood by outsiders as prizing one idea above the other, but it's about analyzing the ideas through different lenses of perception.

5. Taharah Purity: Observing cleanliness of the soul, the clothes, and the surroundings (referred to collectively as *taharah*) is an essential aspect of Islam. Among Haqqislamites this belief is actually intensified — the body is both the instrument by which the Cosmos is observed and the temple in which Paradise can be found. As a result, on Bourak you are far less likely to find eccentric or visible body modifications or genetic alteration than elsewhere in the Human Sphere.



MAJLIS

The Majlis is the parliament of Haqqislam. The lower majlis is divided into four separate houses, one for each of the major regional governments. The Majlis al-Bourak is the upper house, with its members evenly divided between the major ethnic groups and selected by national popular elections. National law requires agreement between the Majlis al-Bourak and at least two of the regional Majlis.

HACHIB

The Hachib (President) is elected by a nationwide popular vote. The present Hachib, Aisha bint Osman, is the first President not born on Bourak since the time of the planet's initial settlement. Born and raised on a caravanserai in Svalarheima during the Silk Revolts, the Hachib Aisha first became involved in politics when she came to Al Medinat to study philosophy at the Siddig el Tahir Academy.

Now into her second five-year term as President, Aisha bint Osman has developed a reputation for listening closely to her military advisors above others. All other things being equal, she tends to opt for the warlike path. This has made her some enemies among the caravanserai and the Silk trade, who regard her as too much trouble. Frontier dwellers on Bourak and in space, in contrast, value her emphasis on security, as does the military.

DIWÂNS

The diwans are the large bureaucracies largely responsible for running the Haqqislam government. These agencies are deliberately firewalled from each other (and often have overlapping remits) in order to keep power divided. There are more than a dozen major national diwans, in addition to temporary diwans formed by decree or law for specific, short term purposes.

The major diwans include the Diwân al Jund (War Office), Diwan al Kharâj (Tax Office), the Diwan al Mazalim (Trade Office), the Diwân al Hachib (Presidential Ministerial Office), and the Diwan al Rasa'il (which can be literally translated as the Communications Office, but which is actually in charge of national quantronic security, coordinating activities with ALEPH, and maintaining the official record of all laws).

Also notable is the Diwan al Nawal (which serves as the regional government of Nawal Island) and the Diwan al Paradiso (which governs Haqqislam's colonial holdings on the planet).

GUILDS

During the Pilgrimage to Bourak, the Haqqislamite tycoons rapidly grew in power and infiltrated Bourak's politics at state and national levels. Murad Rajia, the Hachib at that time, saw that these influences threatened to strip away the ideals of Haqqislamite faith and reduce the new nation to mundane and secular concerns.

Hachib Murad's solution was the creation of the Merchant Guilds. He divided the tycoons by granting them powerful autonomy within their spheres of influence, and then introduced competition between the guilds. The Merchant Guilds remain a major power in Haqqislam and there are places riddled with their corruption (particularly in the Funduq Sultanate), but Hachib Murad's strategy fundamentally worked: The guilds are weakened by their internecine conflicts, allowing the Hachib to maintain the autonomy and authority of the Diwan system.

SILK LORDS

Immortality is the most valuable product ever sold.

Technically the Silk Consortiums which control immortality (and all Silk-derived biotechnology products) are just part of the merchant guilds. In practice, however, they represent a wholly different scale of power. Their corrupting influence among the regional governments, particularly in Funduq and Gabqar, is huge and their interplanetary reach is incalculable.

On the other hand, they are also subject to far greater scrutiny and regulation. The Diwân al Hachib uses the need to protect Haqqislam's Silk monopoly as a check against the indomitable wealth of the Silk Lords.

BIOHEALTH CORPS

The biohealth corporations, primarily located in Al Medinat, form a distinct bloc within the merchant guilds. They're less focused on trade and more focused on biomedical innovation, but the medical tourism they attract to Bourak is a major part of the Haqqislam economy.

MASTER GARDENERS

The Master Gardeners of Bourak straddle the divide between guild and government. On the one hand, the Gardener Guilds are important to virtually every aspect of life on Bourak – whether it's maintaining ecological balance in the slowly expanding farmlands or sculpting the rich tourist resorts along the coasts. On the other hand, the Terraforming Committee, a government agency based out of Iran Zhat Al Amat, is responsible for building and maintaining the vast networks of

Terraforming Towers (T2s) that make the miracle of life on Bourak possible.

HAQQISLAMITE HIGH COMMAND

The Haqqislamite military is something of a paradox: On paper, it appears to be a disjointed disaster. Made up of multiple, independent regional armies that fiercely compete with each other, it would seem to be hopelessly mired in factionalism and over-specialization.

In practice, the Haqqislamite High Command melds its fractured troops into a highly coordinated, flexible, and mobile offensive force that seamlessly coordinates the actions of its disparate components.

SWORD OF ALLAH

Haqqislam's state army, the Sword of Allah — the only combat force directly maintained by the Haqqislamite High Command — has more personnel under arms than any other standing force in the Human Sphere. The bulk of this force is made up of the ghulam light infantry. Built around light troops with superior manoeuvrability, the High Command primarily uses the ghulam to crush the enemy against an anvil of smaller, heavy units and specialists largely drawn from the regional armies.

The High Command refers to this as the Antikythera Doctrine: The ghulam acts as a universal gear train, synching the actions of the regional armies with each other and serving as a medium for communication and coordination.

Haqqislam does not have the budget to equip all its soldiers with the sophisticated gear that those of other human powers get, but makes up for it with rigorous training and iron discipline. The small numbers of elite troops are equipped with the very best available and used to strike at key targets ahead of the main force to soften up the enemy for the coming onslaught from the Sword of Allah.

QAPU KHALQI

The regional army of the Funduq Sultanate serves as the security force for all of Haqqislam's interstellar trade routes, including orbital elevators, astports, caravanserais, orbitals, Funduq merchant vessels, and the all-important Silk Route. Although its wartime activities are coordinated through the Haqqislamite High Command, the Sultanate invests profits from its taxes and commercial tariffs to fund independent forces that act with full autonomy. This includes the Qapu Khalqi Armada, a corsair fleet independent from the Space Admiralty which includes Corregidoran Nomad troops, Yuan Yuan

mercenaries, Druze shock teams, and Bashi Bazouk adventurers.

HAQQISLAMITE ARMADA

The Haqqislamite Armada is technically part of the Sword of Allah, but its activities are heavily compartmentalized. It maintains a rivalry with the Qapu Khalqi Armada, but is largely perceived as a staid and "boring" service by comparison. The Armada is charged with home defense and interplanetary troop transport, although during times of war it has also been used to harry enemy commercial endeavors.

CORSAIRS

Corsairs are ex-military spacefarers who refit merchant ships with weaponry to plunder enemy ships in times of war, in exchange for being allowed to keep an agreed portion of the ships and cargo they seize. Although the letters of marque under which the corsairs operate are issued by the Diwân al Jund, they are independent from the Haqqislamite High Command.

Privateering, of course, is frowned upon by merchants of other nations and their military, who do not recognise letters of marque as legitimate. Summary executions of captured corsairs are common. In peacetime, which rarely lasts long, letters of marque are invalid and any corsair who can't hold off from the old business becomes guilty of piracy. Some do it anyway. Others sign up with mercenary companies to transport their hired guns from one planet to another.

WILDERNESS OF MIRRORS

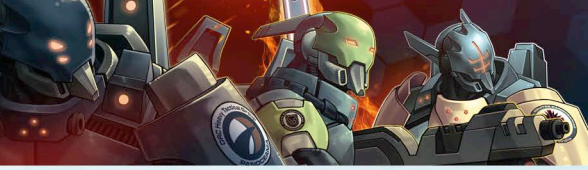
HASSASSINS

The Hassassin sect was founded in the grief-stricken aftermath of Farhad Khadivar's murder. When the creator of the Haqqislam movement was slain by the Legion of the Exalted, the mathematician, psychologist, and theologian Abdulahmed Rashad resolved to never again allow reactionary forces to stand in the way of the Search for Knowledge. He recruited agents and consulted with contacts around the world. Within weeks, Khadivar's killer was dead in prison, his throat slit. A month later, an agent killed Imam Khalaf ibn Ahmad on a public street. The hassassin shouted Haqqislam's truth even as the imam's bodyguards shot him down. Over the next seven years, it is said that every member of the Legion of the Exalted was slain.

So began the fearsome legend of the hassassins.

Science moves fast and implacably, and the diversity of studies and avenues of investigation that could result in the creation of a Judgement Day weapon multiplies with each passing day. Misuse of corrupt Science could cause the cancellation of true Science by provoking an irrational, instinctive reaction from fear and ignorance. This would gravely affect the Search for Knowledge.

- Speech given via holoconference by the Old Man of the Mountain during the Authorization Ceremony of the Hassassin Society



OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN

The Society's leader is the mysterious Old Man of the Mountain. There are some who say that the current Old Man is, in fact, still Abdulahmed Rashad himself, the founder of the order. Whatever the truth may be, it is the Old Man of the Mountain who is the ultimate determiner of who (or what) constitutes a threat to the ongoing Search for Knowledge, a mission which extends beyond Haqqislam and includes anyone obstructing humanity's development. He designates the targets who are marked for death by his disciples, and once they are marked, sooner or later death inevitably follows.

HASSASSIN EXEMPLARS

The Hassassins consider themselves seekers pursuing the Haqqislamite Virtues who, in their defense of the Search of Knowledge, have transformed themselves into the embodiment of the Haqqislamite Ideals. Their teachings wed the martial lore of the Nizari Isma'ilism (an ancient order of assassins) with the mysticism of neo-Sufism.

The Hassassin philosophy centers on the *lataif-e-sitta*, the psycho-spiritual organs known as the Six Subtleties. Mastering the use of these organs unlocks a physical and spiritual perfection which attains its ultimate purpose in the art of divine murder.

The Hassassins are diverse in their skills and training but united in their devotion to the cause

and not afraid to die if that is what it takes. They seek public executions, viewing their killings as an instrument of propaganda for both themselves and the Search for Knowledge.

LAYERS OF DECEPTION

Even before Bourak's government was formed, the hassassins appointed themselves Haqqislam's intelligence organization. The society's government liaison is officially listed as an agency of the Diwān al Jund, under the title of Hasasssin ETTVAK (an acronym for *Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, a Farsi phrase meaning Circle of Intelligence and Security).

The public face of ETTVAK, however, is a cover for the Hassassin Bahram ("Victory" in Farsi), a supposedly ultra-secret organization that controls the Special Operations Division of the Sword of Allah.

In practice, the Hassassin Bahram is an open secret, almost as well-known as PanOceania's Hexaedron. What very few people realize (outside of elite intelligence operatives and fringe conspiracy channels on Maya) is that the Bahram is also a cover operation, protecting the true Hassassin order which operates out of secret bases in the Alamut deserts of the Iran Zhat Al Amat Shanate. This, the core of the sect, is not truly under the Hachib's control. The Hassassins are a law unto themselves. Haqqislamite leaders are reluctant to admit this in public even when Hassassin activities cause anger and revulsion, at home or abroad, believing that it's better to take the blame for the Old Man's actions than to admit that they cannot truly control them.



ARTWORK IN PROGRESS

MUHAFIZ

The Funduq Security and Intelligence Force, informally known as the Muhafiz, is the only significant Haqqislamite intelligence operation outside of the Hassassins. They gain their remit through coordination with the Qapu Khalqi, and receive political coverage from powerful members of the Silk Consortium who are uncomfortable with the Old Man of the Mountain's monopolization of power.

CHIEFS

The agency is divided into independent "chiefdoms", each overseen by a chief referred to as a Muhafiz (one who guards, preserves, or watches over another). The chiefs have broad discretionary powers and little guidance or oversight. This occasionally means that the agency steps on its own toes, but it also makes it an incredibly difficult target for counterintelligence.

AL HAWWA'

The Al Hawwa' are a secret naval unit within the Muhafiz specialized in infowar and close combat. They work closely with the Qapu Khalqu to perform raiding, surveillance, and sabotage missions along Haqqislam trade routes, but you're more likely to have seen them onboard civilian ships — not that you would have known it at the time. Al Hawwa' agents work undercover security on the ships and space stations that conduct Haqqislam's lucrative Silk trade. They pose as crew members or passengers, blending in and amassing data on the places they visit, through simple surveillance and observation, or through industrial espionage. Only when necessary do they reveal themselves and swing into action, demonstrating their extensive combat training, which includes Zero-G fighting.

The Silk Consortium sponsors part of the unit's financial budget in return for the protection it provides to the Silk trade. This allows the Muhafiz to outfit Al Hawwa' agents with the very best weapons and equipment. Formally, the Consortium has no say in how or where the unit's personnel may be deployed — but the Al Hawwa' commanders know they need to do the merchants a favour every now and then.

HASSASSINS: FRATERNITY OF ASSASSIN PHILOSOPHERS

Hassassins are obviously famed for their assassinations, and spec-op liaisons with the Haqqislamite army, but with their near-monopoly on Haqqislamite intelligence operations the truth is that they can be found operating throughout the Human Sphere performing industrial espionage, information gathering, infowar, and the like.

Capture the Cube: As a rule, hassassins don't have Cubes — it's the only way to protect the deepest secrets of the order. But when Hassassin Fiday Hamdi Hashim was captured, a fast download port was forcibly attached and his memories drained. Now the recording is in the wild. Enemy agencies may seek to capture it for themselves, while hassassin agents are dispatched to retrieve the memory records before they can be analyzed.

Assassination Double Cross: A PanOceanian diplomatic envoy must be disposed of. Merely assassinating him won't be enough, however: The hassassin agents will need to frame a Yu Jing junior ambassador for the crime.

Ersatz Assassin: Three bodyguards of the Silk tycoon Yamak Bey were hospitalized and one of his odalisques killed by an attacker who declared "hassassin justice". Bey is furious and calling for blood, but the assassination attempt wasn't authorized by the Old Man. Was the attacker even a true member of the order?

MUHAFIZ: DARK MATTER GUARDIANS

Officially, the remit of the Muhafiz is limited to the trade routes controlled by Funduq. In practice, Haqqislamite trade interests permeate virtually every aspect of the Sphere and it's easy for the autonomous Muhafiz chiefs to justify pretty much anything they want to stick their noses into. (They're also known to go deliberately "off reseveration" to perform intelligence services for the Sword of Allah, other regional armies, or government diwans when they don't want to get the hassassins involved.)

Unraveling Arachne: An Al Hawwa' task group is assigned to hunt down criminal Arachne nodes being illegally hosted on Haqqislamite facilities along the Silk Route.

Death at the Top: A Muhafiz chief turns up dead in a suite at an Al Medinat resort. The bullet holes in the back of her head make it complicated, and the dead prostitutes stacked in the bathtub aren't simplifying it. (It just gets worse if the PCs were directly working for her.)

Cross Purposes: The Muhafiz has learned that hassassins have targeted a mid-level Yu Jing government official. The only problem? She's a Muhafiz agent. The PCs are going to have to run interference, preferably without blowing the agent's cover.