

# Earth

Cradle of humanity

and diplomatic heart of the Alliance

## Planetary Survey

**Earth** is a volatile planet, frequently reshaped by catastrophe. The biosphere is the result of rapid expansion and adaptation by all forms of life in the brief grace periods between times of ecological disaster: the history of Earth's inhabitants is one of trial, error, and change.

### **Earth's surface is majority oceanic (~70%).**

The landmasses and the seas are host to many overlapping biomes and a diverse range of lifeforms – the legacy of intense evolutionary differentiation in response to the planet's instability.

Compared to other habitable zone planets and other planets in its star system, Earth is comparatively poor in the compounds and liminal metals used in voidcraft. Early forays into local spaceflight relied on a combination of chemical propellants and thermal propulsion to escape the atmosphere. Such methods are extremely inefficient compared to modern manifolds, but they reflect the stubborn – though short-sighted – ingenuity of early Anthropocene engineers.

### **Earth has one extant intelligent species: the human (*Homo sapiens*).**

Humans are bipedal tool-users with complex hierarchical structures. Early human societies relied on unsustainable resource extraction, facilitating their rapid development while putting extreme stress on the planet's ecosphere. In spite of a pre-Alliance paradigm shift toward preservation, the planet is still scarred by this period.



Earth has one natural satellite (SOL-3.1, local name Luna): a relatively large planetary- mass moon, formed from an early collision between Earth and another protoplanet within its star system. Luna is too small for true terraforming, but self-sustaining arcologies have been established within the larger craters.

## Diplomatic Positioning

Earth maintains cordial relations with all members of the Alliance, leading to tensions when multiple member states are involved with disputes that Earth is mediating. Earth's significance to the Alliance is at odds with that of frontier worlds like **Sulton** or industrial powerhouses such as **Marzion IX**, who perceive the influence and protection enjoyed by Earth as excessive (relative to its contributions)



## Demographic Review

Earth hosts embassies from each world and species within the Alliance. It is the homeworld of humanity and the majority of the population are human, but the auto-terraforming systems employed to keep Earth habitable at all have also made it uniquely comfortable for many other species. Earth is the foremost diplomatic hub of the Alliance. The people of Earth were driven by impending disaster to work together as one, with the goal of mutual preservation overcoming their differences. This precedent of clear-minded co-operation has led them to their current role within the Alliance: no treaty is ratified, no negotiation held, no deal brokered, without the assistance of Earth's bureaucrats.

## Cultural Evaluation

Earth is a bright light that casts a long shadow. While its diplomatic corps smooth the edges of the Alliance, historians and analysts scour the history of Earth and its allies for pertinent lessons: learning from the mistakes of the past as they build the future. Earth celebrates difference, but disagreement and division are tempered before they pose a risk to the community as a whole: too much is at stake for pride to outweigh stability.

Earth is a planet in suspension, in a sense: a museum of itself, reliant on outside interests to protect and sustain it. Thousands of cultures have formed, flourished and collapsed over its lifespan, and the modern planetary monoculture is a diplomatic fiction. Earthlings keep their extant cultures alive through festivals, which range from planet-wide commemorations to spiritual rituals observed by only a few.

Cultures with less tolerance for paperwork perceive Earthlings as smooth-talkers and fence-sitters, overly focussed on procedure and rhetoric. It must be said that many of Earth's finest are married to their jobs, but their long history gives them much to draw on – in the form of art, dance, food, music – whenever they do clock off.

## Economy

Earth has great economic significance, almost none of it having to do with the planet itself. Legal contracts within the Alliance are written and ratified on Earth.

## Research

Earth is a hub of historical research and scientific study, with a key role in collating data from all over Alliance space. There is no active experimentation to speak of the planet is too precious and the ecosystem too unstable for the kind of testing that is permitted on other worlds.

## Industry

Earth has few natural resources and produces little by itself. It is an importer, taking Alliance goods in exchange for the administration it provides.

# Geostation Kessler

## Planetary Survey

The Alliance has a few requirements that must be satisfied by bodies applying for membership. A planet-state must be of a certain size and shape; be stable enough to support life indefinitely without assistance; and remain within a consistent system of address. Some have been accepted on appeal, despite failing to meet one of the requirements. **Geostation Kessler fails all of them – and yet, it moves.**

Kessler is an immense mobile installation, able to move between star systems with remarkable ease for a space station with a wingspan measured in the hundreds of kilometres. It is a cleaning station: it travels through regions of space plagued by debris, preferably the orbital zones of planets, and sweeps the area clean. The resulting garbage ranges from particulate contaminants to whole broken satellites, and all of it is sorted, scanned and catalogued for re-use or sale. Whatever Kessler finds, it keeps.

The Alliance did not create this intricate titan, though it is diligently studying its inner workings. Before it became Kessler, the vessel was under the control of SHADOW forces: Alliance scouts responding to distress signals near the core region found the installation all but adrift, its fleet support decimated by THRONE interceptors. The ensuing skirmish was brief, and concluded with the station's capture for study.

Enquiring minds from all over Alliance space were drawn to Kessler upon its recovery – a generation of xenologists and vographers jumping at the opportunity to unravel its alien secrets. The conditional statehood extended to the station and its researchers allows it to roam the galaxy, cleaning an atmosphere here and cataloguing a new contaminant there: an academic precursor of the later ARDENT initiative to which it contributed.

## Diplomatic Positioning

Kessler maintains good relationships with client planets like **Viront**. Its individualist streak puts it at odds with staid and solid states like those under the **Marz Union**. In addition, its origin as a hostile alien construct is the source of some anxiety within the Alliance – particularly as conflicts intensify along the border of SHADOW space. Kessler's position in the Alliance is tenuous. While its usefulness as a planetary waste management system cannot be denied, there are those – even some of its own inhabitants – who would rather see the station dismantled for deeper study.



## Demographic Review

Kessler's citizens are organised into **Working Groups**, teams of didactic descent that have consistently maintained the same system or provided the same service aboard the station for generations. Masters (graduated professionals and experts in their field) lead the Groups, while students learn and work underneath them like cells in Kessler's body.

The heads of these groups gather regularly in symposia, at which they will make an account of their Group's work, show off their research, and discuss matters of policy both local and distant. At each of these councils, a chancellor is elected from among the masters. This role combines that of a figurehead, a spokesperson, and a scapegoat: during their tenure, it is the chancellor's honour to represent Kessler to the alliance and to mediate any disagreements that arise between researchers.

## Cultural Evaluation

Kessler's internal architecture has a certain brutal grandeur, with its vertebral pylons and sweeping radial arcs. Upon this monument, Kesslerans impose their own eclectic tastes, using souvenirs of past journeys and projects along with bespoke FABREP art to decorate their homes. Working labs and access areas are clean and focussed, but communal areas are full of experimentation and expression. Kesslerans iterate, continually adjusting how they live and how they work for the thrill of innovation.

Since most interactions between Kesslerans and other planets are when they are on shore leave, they are generally seen to be boorish and excitable – happy to involve themselves in the affairs of other people, and heedless of social subtleties. The working environment aboard Kessler encourages loudness and directness, and Kesslerans are used to shouting to make themselves heard among their peers. They value iconoclasm, preferring leaders who stick to their guns over those that vacillate to please a crowd.

## Economy

Kessler's contracts are extremely lucrative and the station's services are in high demand. What the station cannot source or fabricate from the materials accrued in its work, it imports from the planets it is stationed to.

## Research

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# Sultononia

## Planetary Survey

**Sultononia** is a young planet in an old solar system. When the star Cassiter evolved into a red giant, six planets – Sultononia’s siblings – were destroyed. Material released by that cataclysm accreted in the system’s existing asteroid belt until it formed a new planet, fortuitously located in the star’s habitable zone. In many ways, the very existence of Sultononia is something of a miracle.

Sultononia is relatively cool and stable for its age, with several competing theories as to why this may be. It has an atmosphere with a roughly even mix of hydrogen and helium. Carbon-rich sandy regions cover much of the surface. Trace acidic compounds and complex silicates within the planet’s mantle suggest that life might have independently arisen on Sultononia, given a few billion years in isolation.

Be that as it may, Sultononia is prime real estate in a region of space marred by conflict and crisis. Cassiter lies on the inner frontier of Alliance space, where skirmishes with SHADOW and THRONE forces are all too common. Sultononia was therefore prioritised for terraforming, to provide a home for refugees and casualties that have been evacuated from the front lines and a frontier port of call for Alliance vessels.

In more recent times, the planet has been chosen as the launch site for the ARDENT initiative. Many survival techniques developed to cope with Sultononia’s gestational climate have been adopted into ARDENT protocols for manned visits to uninhabitable planets, and the planet’s location makes it ideal for departures into the unknown.

Sultononia has three natural satellites, called (in order of size) **Denali**, **Menlale** and **Begguya** [CASSITER-7.1, CASSITER-7.2, CASSITER-7.3]. All three act as shepherd moons for the planetary ring, which is made of stellar material and asteroids that were not absorbed during the planet’s formation.

## Diplomatic Positioning

Sultononia’s distance from other Alliance worlds and lack of centralized authority make it something of a neutral zone, and a target for smugglers. Alliance authorities have made extensive efforts to prevent the movement of core-region artifacts and unsanctioned tech through Sultononia, but crackdowns on contraband have mostly impacted legal exporters like **Kessler** and **Viront Z85** – leading to tensions between Sultononia and the aforementioned planets.

A frontier oasis,  
half-finished and halfway habitable



## Demographic Review

The inhabitants of Sultonia have been thrown together by circumstance. The population has risen precipitously as the planet has been developed, but it remains relatively underpopulated compared to other Alliance planets of its size. Dwellings tend to be communal, with a few outlying homesteads attached to farms or solar arrays.

Sultonians tend to be jacks of all trades, with the planet's harsh seasons encouraging the settlers to play farmer, mechanic and nomad in turns throughout the year. There are few divisions of class or labour on the ground. The people of Sultonia have adapted to each other and to the conditions of their new world: it remains to be seen if the camaraderie that has developed here will survive the planet's transition from a relief zone to an autonomous member of the Alliance.

## Cultural Evaluation

Sultonians demonstrate a responsive stubbornness in all things: whether they are pushing through helium storms or working out land permits, they do so with clear heads and a focus born from survivalism. They are generally private, and dislike interference in their personal affairs. Sultonians do not have a problem with authority, but they also have no problem with pointing out when said authority is wrong.

Sultonian festivals are frequent if muted affairs, chances for communities to collectively decompress. They are for the most part descended from refugee traditions, the better to keep said traditions alive. Charity – born out of mutual survival – is a virtue, though it is often couched in terms of nothing being allowed to go to waste. There is much made of “paying it forward”, and of settling one's debts.

As Sultonia approaches self-sufficiency, thoughts turn towards the day when it is no longer reliant on outside aid. Some wish to find lost home-worlds: others dream of new frontiers. The ARDENT launch is the catalyst for a generation of Sultonian navigators, scouts and survivalists to leave the hard soil and seek their places among the stars.

## Economy

Sultonia is the beneficiary of Alliance funds and materials, with little economic activity beyond subsistence and internal development.

## Research

Sultonia has attracted scientific interest as a rare case study into the development of young planets, and the rapid terraforming of same. Survival techniques honed on the dunes of Sultonia have become Alliance standard procedures for temporary settlements on semi-habitable planets.

## Industry

Sultonia is an Alliance-sponsored terraforming effort. Chief industries are FABREP construction and a small amount of carbon-aggregate export.

Nisaba-10

# Viront Z85

## Planetary Survey

The lights of Viront rival its own star. Though the planet only supports life along its equator, that life is all the keener, all the brighter – as though it were spurred on by the precarious conditions in which it developed. It was this striving that drew the Vironti syndicates to flout Alliance advisories in settling here, carving a band of crystalline wealth from the planet's dross.

Viront is tidally locked to **Nisaba**, a subdwarf in the proximity of the Urashanum nebula. It is an "eyeball planet"; the side facing Nisaba is in perpetual light, and is accordingly a scorched desert. The side facing away from Nisaba is in perpetual darkness, and therefore consists of a frozen wasteland. A narrow band along the terminator zone of the planet is temperate and habitable in comparison.

It is this band which saw life arise independently on Viront. A jungle of protocarnivorous glass ferns coats the planet's habitable band, supporting a canopy full of venomous parasitoids. The least territorial of these have been genetically altered to produce Viront's fashionable – and docile – Crozier houseplants and Vespider lap-bugs.

The colony of Viront is a single elongated city, a continuous linear settlement that runs along the planet's entire circumference. On the ground, Nisaba hangs unmoving beyond the horizon, its corona providing the planet's signature and never-ending "Tyrian twilight" – while water vapours rising from the jungle hide the stars behind an inflexible haze. Massive solar farms on the bright side of the planet harness the sunshine, running power through the cityscape and up to the frozen north. There, supercomputer arrays steam in glacial pools: the brains behind Viront's automatic splendour.

Billions of Vironti live, work and play in that narrow band of gold, hemmed in by gossamer jungles and the inhospitable landscapes beyond. It is a neon paradise, a wonderland of excess and intrigue, balanced on a razor's edge.

## Diplomatic Positioning

The Vironti attitude towards Alliance regulations is best described as "relaxed", which does not endear it to **Earth**. Indeed, among the capital planets there are few with mild feelings toward Viront: their industrial rivalry with the **Marzion** planets is well-known, while **Kessler** is an old ally often engaged for sweeps of Viront's upper atmosphere.

Hot and cold playground of the rich

and soon-to-be-rich

ERI

## Demographic Review

All paths lead to Viront. The planet is a delivery hub, importing raw materials from elsewhere and exporting consumer goods to the rest of the Alliance. Orbital elevators and Lagrange gates in the local system allow for easy launches and landings. It is also a travel hotspot, advertising itself as the “playground of the Alliance”. Whether they are traders or tourists, people from all walks of life may be found riding Viront’s sleek trains, exploring the twilight forest in trawlers, or taking in dazzling holoshows.

For permanent residents, life is defined by Viront’s corporations. The bottom line of living needs for citizens and visitors alike is ensured by moment-to-moment management of the cityscape’s interconnected systems by GREY, an artificial intelligence housed on the planet’s glacial side. With their basic needs met, Vironti can focus on their hungers for influence and recognition. Most join up with a corporation, itself joined to a syndicate overseeing millions, within which they can pursue their dreams and the excess for which Viront is a byword.

## Cultural Evaluation

Viront’s reliance on automated labour has led to the breakdown of most hierarchical structures. The prevailing attitude is one of “easy-come, easy-go”; from the most elite to the destitute, all are aware that one bad season or one great idea might see their positions reversed. Gambling is accordingly popular on Viront.

The people of Viront are seen as ambitious, and curious to a fault – hustlers, in a word, always looking for a new angle or something that others have missed. Conversely, they are loyal – whoever they work with is a true ally, and potential trading partners are also evaluated as new friends. Vironti value knowledge and honesty: they find a sense of pride in rising by merit (so that one can boast about it), not by deception or stealth.

Viront leads the Alliance in its embrace of cybernetics and implanted tech. Most Vironti show off their implants; the planet’s culture of self-improvement leads many to proudly display their enhancements, though discrete medical devices are available.

## Economy

Viront plays a key role in interplanetary trade in its sector and in the broader alliance. This includes the trade of contraband, and of restricted technology.

## Research

Viront leads the Alliance in patents, driving innovation in fields such as orbital sports, procedural FABREP art, and virtual entertainment.

## Industry

Viront’s mineral resources are largely untapped. The planet prefers to import raw materials from Alliance members, using its own factories and refineries in concert with a common-trust drone fleet for construction and manufacturing.



Michel/ Sículus-1<sup>1</sup>

# Marzcion IX

## Planetary Survey

Marzcion IX is the characteristically direct name for the ninth planet settled by the Marz Union. As has become routine for MU, they have taken a resource-rich world at the edge of Alliance space and invested heavily in mining and production, transforming the anonymous terrain into an immense network of quarries and refineries.

Unlike other Marzcion worlds, IX is a gas giant – the largest planet in the Michel/Sículus binary star system. **Michel** and **Sículus** are known locally as “the Dancers”, due to their elliptical orbits around a shared barycentre. A debris field has formed around them, with the few planetoids within being smaller than some of IX’s own moons.

IX’s atmosphere is rich in helium and notably stormy, with concentric “waves” of turbulence frequently erupting across its surface. Interference from these storms has prevented accurate imaging of the planet’s core, which remains under study. Approximately 8% of the atmosphere consists of vaporous precursors to RC<sup>2</sup>.

Marzcion has constructed a number of proprietary IXTIS orbital structures from the hollowed-out moons of IX. These atmospheric gas-extraction rafts descend into the gas giant’s depths, rising again at the end of a shift with tanks full of precious vapour. Each is capable of supporting a workforce the size of a terrestrial city, and each operates as a worker’s co-operative under the collective helm of the Marzcion Union.

Marzcion IX represents an unusual frontier for the Alliance: mining of gas giants has never been attempted on this scale before, nor with this much investment.

## Diplomatic Positioning

Marzcion IX is the newest Marz project, but it operates under the same codes and is subject to the same laws as its elder siblings. While these industrial regulations can be overruled by Alliance law, their strictness means that Marzcion worlds often receive the benefit of the doubt compared to other planet-states. In particular, IX and **Viront Z85** often butt heads: the latter competed with Marz for mining rights in Michel/Sículus, and its laissez-faire culture is at odds with Marzcionite collectivism.

<sup>1</sup>Because IX is the only object within the system with a stable orbital distance, it bears the designation that would normally belong to the closest planet to the system’s centre.

<sup>2</sup>**Replicator Compound:** reactive material used in FABREP technology.



## Demographic Review

Marzion IX is governed by and for its workers, with a centralised industrial economy similar in structure to a navy. Each IXTIS raft is a ship within a fleet, with a captain (overseer) in charge. Each captain is under the authority of a central Admiralty Board, and that board reports in turn to the Marz Union. IX is a crew of crews, a union of unions, and it provides for all that live under its sails – just as they provide for it.

The Marzion worlds form a supply chain that feeds the alliance with vital materials: not luxury goods, but the common necessities of life – and in such abundance that none within shuttle distance of a Marzion planet may go unclothed or unfed.

## Cultural Evaluation

The Marzion culture can be summed up as care without unnecessary sentiment. Marzionites know that others will pick them up when they fall, and provide them with whatever they need to get the job done; in turn, they lift and support others whenever they are in need. Pride is found in teamwork, in mastery of one's craft, and in helping the entire group to give their all.

IX is a harsh workplace; discipline is needed to navigate the gas giant's moods and claim its treasures. Marzionites may be spoilsports to crews from other planets – but, when lives are on the line, they spring into action with a courage and efficiency that has given them a reputation across the Alliance for heroism. The preservation of life, from daring rescues to coordinated relief efforts, is given a focus in their culture that other civilizations give to historically significant military victories.

Food rituals are conspicuously absent – a life on call has led to a preference for short, nutritionally dense meals. Marzionites show a preference for high-impact sports, the better to unwind after a mentally and physically exhausting shift. They are also known for their shanties and work songs, which can vary wildly from one raft to the next.

## Economy

Marzion IX exports RC precursors and helium to Alliance planets, and imports consumer goods, high-tech tools and entertainment for its populace.

## Research

Scientific divisions aboard the rigs study the planet's composition and analyse the debris field of the local star system. There is significant interest in IX's core, which is currently unmapped due to electromagnetic interference.

## Industry

IXTIS extraction rafts collect, refine and package valuable gasses from the planet for refinement and later distribution.