

VEGANS

The first truly alien race encountered by Terrans, the Vegans occupy several worlds near the star Vega, just outside the current coreward border of the Confederation.



History

Like most other subject races, the Vegans received the jump drive from others. Vilani influence was still far away when this happened, but traders from the powerful Geonee state to coreward passed the secret on about 1500 B.C. A conservative race, the Vegans built up a small state about 10 parsecs in diameter around their home world Muan Gwi, then settled down to assimilate what they had taken.

Unfortunately for them, the Vegans were the last known spacefaring race as one headed to the Rim – in other words, they were the obvious anchor on one border of the *Ziru Sirka* when the Imperium was first proposed. For a while they were protected by having the Geonee between them and the Vilani, but after that race was conquered the days of Vegan independence were numbered. The Vilani conquered the original Vegan Polity by about 120 A.D.

Since then the Vegans have been carefully trying to find a way out of their predicament. While not aggressive, or even particularly resentful of the Imperium, they would rather be their own masters. With lives spanning several centuries from birth to death,

the Vegans are cautious by Human standards, and have never brought a plan all the way to the point of rebellion. With the right spark from Terra, though, this may change.

Physiology

Vegans are roughly humanoid, but they diverge strongly from Human appearance. Muan Gwi is a small world, so they are very tall – often over 7' in height – but frail and unable to handle Terran gravity for any length of time. Their eyes are at the top of their body at the end of a long fleshy hood; strictly speaking this isn't a "head," in that it doesn't contain any other sensory organs nor can it turn independently of the rest of the body. Vegans hear through a series of ear holes around their shoulders, and a mouth pierces the chest. The mouth isn't dual purpose like a Human's, being only for eating their vegetarian diet; breathing slits flank it on either side.

Muan Gwi is quite arid, so Vegan legs bear a superficial resemblance to those of Terran camels, especially in their broad, soft feet that can easily handle sandy ground. Vegan arms split into many tentacles just below the elbow, producing an odd "hand" that makes it difficult for a Vegan to use Human equipment and vice versa.

Psychology

Terrans often characterize Vegans as stoic, but this is not true. Vegans

actually have a range of emotions quite similar to ours, surprisingly for such an alien race. The difference is that their emotions are much *weaker* than those of Humans, to the point that they are rarely swept away by what they feel.

As a result, Vegans are much less ambitious and driven than Humans, and will think about things rather than act. In the Imperium this is probably a good thing, as the thoroughness with which the Vilani put down rebellion would bring disaster if the Vegans ever acted on their feelings about being subjected.

Vegan society before the Consolidation Wars was somewhat similar to that of the Vilani, with citizens divided into castes named *tuhuir*. Despite the similarity, the Vegans find it troubling to live by Vilani ways, as they miss subtleties of the *tuhuir* system that matched particular Vegan needs. There is also resentment at the Imperium's controls on innovation in art, philosophy, and mathematics; these three topics are of great interest to the thoughtful Vegans.

Vegans in the Interstellar Wars

Though other subject races are more obviously opposed to being part of the Imperium, the Vegans may have made the most progress through sheer passive resistance. They follow Vilani dictates in letter, not spirit, and only to the minimum extent necessary to keep the Imperium from cracking down. They follow orders, and back down when challenged, but constantly test the limits of what they can do. After 2,000 years of practice, they are masters of being infuriating without seeming the least bit threatening.

From a Terran standpoint, there are very few races that would make better neighbors. Vegans will follow their own interests without qualms as long as they think they can get away with it. They will gladly help Terrans whenever the help brings discomfort to the Vilani and doesn't endanger Vegan society. As a result, they have proven to be very useful trading partners and sources of intelligence. In many ways they are the Confederation's window onto the rest of the Imperium.