

The Rihanssu

Narrator's Note: This species profile is based on data created by Diane Duane for a series of Star Trek novels.

Just as D.C. Fontana was responsible for codifying much of what we know regarding the Vulcan people, Diane Duane did the first serious, comprehensive work on the "Romulan" people. Unfortunately, much of her excellent material was discarded in favor of the two-dimensional cardboard villains presented in Star Trek: The Next Generation and later, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine and Star Trek: Nemesis.

This profile is an attempt to reconcile the different versions of the Romulan Empire into a coherent whole. Wherever possible, the data has been weighted towards the on-screen evidence, or logically extrapolated therefrom. Narrator's and players should feel free to use or discard the data as needed for their campaign.

Ironically, much of this material has been resurrected in the Star Trek Online MMORPG and can now be found in a single volume: Rihanssu: The Bloodwing Voyages.

Known to the Federation as "the Romulans", the Rihanssu are a sister people to the Vulcans who left in a diaspora just as the teachings of Surak began to take home on their homeworld. After much trial and error (and some intervention from the Q), the Rihanssu found the sister worlds of Ch'Rihan and Ch'Havran on which to settle- and from which to found their expand their Empire.

History

At the Time of Surak, the Vulcan people were divided, fragmented, and at near-constant war with one another. According to some scholars, during the first part of Surak's life, there was never more than ten year period when more than 30% of the planet was **NOT** at war.

In this maelstrom of death, violence, and blood-debt, two events occurred which proved pivotal to the fate of both the planet and of the Alpha and Beta Quadrants: Surak began teaching a system of ethical and reasoned behavior which Federation translators render as "logic", and Vulcan was invaded by Orion pirates and slavers

The Orion invasion had two curious

outcomes: it (temporarily) unified the Vulcan people and divided the adherents to Surak's philosophy. While the rival nation-states banded together to fight the invader, a Vulcan named S'task (Surak's most prominent student) turned away from his master, and adopted a more "the ends justify the means" approach. Even as the war with the Orions came to an end, the rift between Surak and S'task threatened the very unity both men were trying to build.

Rather than see Vulcan destroyed or their causes reduced to one more justification for war, S'task gathered together his followers and led them into space in seventeen multi-generational colony ships. Because these were (comparatively) crude, sub-light vessels, they and their descendants would be subject to the effects of relativity- and spend nearly 500 (non-subjective) years in space.

Comparatively isolated in the Beta Quadrant, the Rihanssu would spend nearly sixteen hundred years in isolation- though a caprice of the Q caused the formation of a wormhole which allowed a century of war with their mother planet Vulcan.

By the 21st century, the Rihanssu had returned to space and were busily forming an Empire-including an attempt to corrupt and suborn their Vulcan neighbors. In response to this and other failures, and alarmed at the rumored founding of an interstellar Federation, the Rihanssu launched a war against the humans of Earth, before being defeated and "confined" behind the Neutral Zone.

With the end of the Earth-Romulan War, the Rihanssu entered a period of isolation which lasted nearly a century- and which was ended with unprovoked attacks on the Federation's monitoring stations along the Neutral Zone. Border conflicts with the Klingons had led to a tenuous treaty which was honored more in its breach than its keeping- but which did allow an exchange of technology and intelligence between the two powers.

Upon their return to the Galactic stage in the 2260's the Rihanssu engaged in acts of military, diplomatic, and technological brinkmanship, and establishing diplomatic ties and committing acts of aggression throughout the Alpha and Beta Quadrants.

In the 2270's Rihanssu researchers began kidnapping Vulcans in order to harvest the

genetic and neurochemicals necessary to “bootstrap” latent Rihannsu psionic capabilities.

Rihannsu Commander Ael t'Rllailieu, fearing that the technology would be used to destroy the last freedoms and nobilities of her own people, allied with a Federation task force led by the *Starship Enterprise* and destroyed the research facility, and indirectly touched off a Rihannsu civil war.

In 2276 following the capture and capitulation of the Rihannsu government, Ael was installed as Empress of the Rihannsu Empire, instituting a series of reforms and a rule that lasted through the latter part of the 22nd century.

By the turn of the century, the Rihannsu Empire was again wracked by internal dissension, and Ael's policy of constructive engagement with the Federation was superseded by aggressive military action. The Norkan campaign and the infamous Tomed Incident in 2311 cost thousands of lives and led to the signing of the Treaty of Algeron (which reaffirmed the Neutral Zone and forbade the Federation the use cloaking technology) and to an almost complete withdrawal of the Rihannsu from galactic affairs which lasted fifty years. With the exception of the Narendra III attack in 2344 and diplomatic overtures toward the Cardassians in the late 2350's, the Rihannsu waited behind their Neutral Zone borders and bided their time.

By 2364, Rihannsu internal dissent has been rigorously quashed, and the Rihannsu returned to the galactic stage following an attack in 2364 against several Rihannsu and Federation colonies along the Neutral Zone. These attacks were later identified as having been perpetrated by a Borg scout ship on a survey mission in the area.

As with their return to the galactic stage in the 23rd century, the renewed Rihannsu presence led to a series of acts of espionage, aggression, and (occasionally) diplomacy. Diplomatic ties with the Federation were renewed, while at the same time the Rihannsu attempted to lure the Federation into acts of war, such as the Nelvana III Incident.

Following the discovery of the Dominion in 2370, the Rihannsu allowed a codicil which allowed the Federation the loan of a cloaking device for the U.S.S. *Defiant* in exchange for information on the new threat.

Following an abortive attempt to collapse the Bajoran Wormhole in 2371, elements of the Tal Shiar allied with the Cardassian Obsidian Order in order to perpetrate the disastrous Battle of the Omarian Nebula- a Dominion trap which seriously damaged the effectiveness of both organizations.

Initially neutral in the Dominion War, the Rihannsu joined the fight in 2374 after the assassination of Senator Vreenak and incurred heavy losses during the war.

In 2387, Rihannsu scientists noted the instability of the Hobus star and Spock appears before the Rihannsu Senate to warn of the danger of a supernova. With additional reports of dangerous instability in the Hobus Star, the Rihannsu Senate finally authorized a full evacuation and every available vessel was recalled to ferry residents off-world. The evacuation was expected to take six weeks. The star exploded seventy-two hours later.

Personality

The Rihannsu are (by and large) a passionate, artistic, and often pragmatic people- born to (comparative) poverty and a suspicious, almost paranoid mindset that makes trust difficult and suspicion- particularly of the outsider- a way of life.

“Classical” or “Old School” Rihannsu are also driven by matters of honor and a religious philosophy and mindset that mixes utter ruthlessness with a passionate affection second to none in the Universe.

Suspicion of the outsider- if not outright xenophobia- are bred into the Rihannsu mindset- their rift with their Vulcan cousins is rooted in an alien invasion, and fifty generations have been taught that anything alien is probably bad- and vice-versa.

Rihannsu strength is forged in unity and cooperation- and service to one's family and to the State supersedes all personal consideration.

As a general rule, though, a Rihannsu believes in open, honest dealings- honest loves, honest hatreds. As a rule, a Rihannsu will keep his word- not for your sake, but for his name's sake.

Of course, Rihannsu are no more “all of a piece” than are humans- for every “good” example of a Rihannsu, there is a corresponding exception.

Physiology

Despite nearly two millennia of isolation, the

Rihannsu still broadly conform to the Vulcan hominid norm- copper-based blood, green-tinted skin, pointed ears, greater-than-standard physical strength and endurance.

There are minor chemical and physiological differences which differentiate Rihannsu from their Vulcan cousins, though these are more a matter of nurture than nature.

Some Rihannsu sport a slightly enlarged cranium, which results in a v-shaped forehead crest.

Modern scientists believe that the Rihannsu possess the same raw telepathic potential as their Vulcan cousins, but the techniques and disciplines necessary to harness these abilities were lost during the Rihannsu diaspora.

Homeworlds

The Rihannsu are actually native to Vulcan, but emigrated to the homeworlds of Ch'Rihan and Ch'Havran nearly two thousand years ago, and made these worlds their own, subjugating the Reman population native to Ch'Havran.

Ch'Rihan is a large, lush Class M world, and was home to the bulk of the Rihannsu population until 2387.

Ch'Havran is also a Class M world, but is considerably harsher than its planetary sister.

Language

As the Rihannsu began preparing for their Diaspora, they took deliberate steps to craft a separate cultural identity for themselves: notably and particularly, in their language. In their own minds, the Rihannsu were recreating themselves as an idealized Vulcan- Vulcan as it *should* be. Rather than simply divorcing themselves from their forebearers and heritage, a committee of poets, linguists, and scholars returned to the roots of ancient, Old High Vulcan and "aged" the words and syntax in a different direction. While the Rihannsu common tongue is grossly similar to Vulcan, human speakers often describe it as sounding somewhat like Latin and Welsh.

Religion

While not all Rihannsu share the same faith (except perhaps a near-fanatical devotion to the State), many share in an animistic faith that began largely as a joke during the Diaspora.

In this faith/philosophy, everything in existence embodies the four primary elements (Air, Earth, Fire, and Water) to varying degrees, and are endowed with the dignity of their existence.

Mnhei'sahe- the ruling passion- is a concept of honor primarily occupied with courtesy not only to the people around one, but to the various objects and elements as well. In one sense, it encompasses elements that humans would describe as karma: in short, be kind to the universe and the universe will be kind to you in return.

This courtesy, depending on circumstances, may require killing a person to do him honor, or severely disadvantaging one's self on his behalf.

The ramifications are complex and often subtle- but generally, *mnhei'sahe* is satisfied if all the parties to an agreement or situation feel that their "face" or honor is intact after a social (or other) transaction.

This concept is sometimes mistranslated as doing things "for the good of another." This is incorrect. In Rihannsu culture, one does things for one's own good- or rather, the good of one's honor- and if properly carried out, the actions in question will have benefitted the other parties in the transaction as well.

Names

Given both the Rihannsu take on religion (described above) and the fact that they speak an artificial language, it is not surprising that names take on a special significance in Rihannsu culture and psychology. A person's (or object's) name has power- especially their "true" name. When you call someone's name- they notice- the Elements no less than people. As a result, Rihannsu are chary about sharing their names with others.

Rihannsu generally have either three or four names: a given name, a second name (usually denoting either clan or place of origin). Rihannsu attached to a noble House or clan also have a House name. Finally, there is the "fourth name".

One's fourth name is not bestowed, but is something one finds for oneself. It is one's "true name"- deeply private, and shared only with the closest and dearest friends or family.

One further note- House names are normally modified by an honorific indicating gender: "t'" for females and "tr'" for males. Aeden tr'Kellian would, therefore, be a male named Aeden of the House s'Kellian. Lhae t'Tarii would be a daughter of House t'Tarii.

Honored or particularly trusted servants of a noble House may (in rare circumstances) be granted permission to use the clan name as

their own “third name”.

Societal Structure

Rihanssu society is centered around the family or clan, with the *hru'hfirh* or Head of House acting as clan chieftain. Loyalty flows upward from the average citizen to their Senator, the Praetorate, and to the Empire as a whole.

Most Rihanssu are free citizens, but bond servants and even slaves still exist. Rihanssu in a given territory (or colony) owe their allegiance to their Senator (who is chosen either by Imperial appointment or by heredity).

Military service is not only the surest means to both advancement and prestige within the Empire, it is also one of the only means to political power. As a result, the Rihanssu have a ready pool of talent and can afford to put their very best in uniform.

Rihanssu society has shifted greatly in the last two hundred years. For fifty generations, the Rihanssu enjoyed relative peace and plenty as they lived, loved, warred, and died amongst themselves. Rihanssu personal rights and *mnhei'sahe* flourished.

The Rihanssu seem to follow a “classical”, if mercurial, pattern. Where personal honor and integrity are allowed to flourish, the Rihanssu people prosper. When their leaders begin to desire what others have- when greed and deeds done in secret replace noble and honest dealings as the currency of the Empire- the people suffer.

The rights of the people and *mnhei'sahe* suffered during expansionist period that led to the Earth-Romulan War- only to recover in the reorganization which followed the Rihanssu defeat.

Rihanssu treachery (against both their own and their neighbors) of the 2260's was answered with a revolt as the Rihanssu reclaimed their *mnhei'sahe*.

The authoritarian excesses of the 2350's, 60's, and 70's were met with war, bloodshed, treachery, and ultimately, with the destruction of Ch'Rihan and Ch'Havran themselves. As one Rihanssu citizen phrased it, “Perhaps we have not been as kind to the elements as we thought”.

Despite the excesses of the authoritarian regime, there are still those Rihanssu who remember the rewards of honor and fair-dealing- and hope that, with the rotten core removed- that these principles might return to

the Empire, and *mnhei'sahe* might flourish again.

Government Structure

The Rihanssu government is, technically, a ceremonial monarchy, feudal in nature, with the central power and control held primarily by the Rihanssu Senate.

The Rihanssu Senate uses a modified tri-cameral or three-house legislative-executive branch. The Tricameron is comprised of a Senate - evenly divided against itself into a half that proposes and passes legislation, and a half that vetoes it - and the Continuing Committee or Praetorate, a sort of quadruple troika or duodecimvirate: twelve men and women who implemented the Senate's decrees, declared war or peace, and spent most of the time squabbling amongst themselves for power. The Head of the Continuing Committee (and hence, of the Senate) was called the Praetor.

“Senator” is a hereditary position associated with a specific geographic region and passed down from father or mother to the eldest sister's-son or -daughter. The only thing that could remove a Senator from office was abdication or death (which was often disturbingly easy to arrange).

In 2379, all but one member of the Praetorate were assassinated in a military coup arranged by Shinzon of Ch'Havran, and for a time, a human (albeit a Rihanssu-created clone) stood as Praetor of the Romulan Empire.

Following Shinzon's death, the Senate and Praetorate were reorganized, with Senator Tal'aura replacing Shinzon as Praetor.

In 2387, the Praetor, the Empress and her family, most of the Romulan Senate, and the bulk of the Rihanssu people were killed by the Hobus supernova. A new Senate and capital were organized on Rator III, but have yet to consolidate their power.

The Rihanssu Military

The strength of the Praetor has always lain as much in his control of the Rihanssu military as in his ability to sway the other Senators. While the Emperor (or Empress) is the titular commander in chief of the Rihanssu military, the orders invariably come from the Praetor.

The Rihanssu Star Navy is responsible for protecting the Empire against external threats, and represents the “classic” military. In addition to the bulk of the Rihanssu Fleet, the Rihanssu Star Navy maintains a series of deep-

space installations such as starbases and supply depots, and shore installations such as the Imperial War College.

The Tal Shiar

The Rihannsu Intelligence apparatus is designed to protect the Empire against both external infiltration and internal subversion, and has waxed and waned in power considerably since the late 23rd century.

Depending upon the fortunes of its various patrons and the political climate within the Empire, the Tal Shiar has exercised greater or lesser power over the Rihannsu populace.

The Tal Shiar was at the height of its power between 2360 and 2371- and were largely able to subvert the Senate and dictate Imperial policy through threats of blackmail and intimidation.

Tal Shiar power was largely broken in 2371 after the disastrous Battle of the Omarian Nebula- in which a joint Tal Shiar-Obsidian Order task force were led into a trap over the Dominion homeworld.

Since then, the vestiges of the Tal Shiar resumed their rightful duties as a security service of the Empire. In the wake of the destruction of the Rihannsu homeworlds, however, a number of Tal Shiar officers are making a bid to regain their lost power in the chaos and confusion.

Interstellar Relations

The Rihannsu maintain an interstellar empire roughly 1/3 larger than the Klingon Empire and roughly half the size of the Federation. Unfortunately many of these worlds are either resource poor or devastated by internal (or external) conflicts, or both. This fact, coupled with limited trade relations, limits their economic impact in the galaxy at large.

The Rihannsu conduct limited trade relations with a number of minor galactic powers, but most of their economy and production are directed inwards.

The Rihannsu are sworn enemies of both the Klingons and the Federation, though the latter

Notes

The Rihannsu are available for use as Player Characters in either a "Romulan" campaign or with Narrator approval and one heck of a good in-story reason.

Favored Profession

Starship Officer, or Soldier. The Rihannsu can take up almost any profession, but the heroes will encounter them most often in one of the above contexts.

relationship has grown less overtly hostile since the Dominion War.

The Rihannsu treat the Flaxians as a client state, just as they did with the Breen- despite the fact that the latter relationship ended in rebellion and betrayal. "Never turn your back on a Breen" is a common Rihannsu saying. The Tal Shiar has been known to use Flaxians, Nausicaans, and others for both espionage and assassinations.

Technological Summary

The Rihannsu are Tech Level 6/7 society- comparable to the Federation and the Klingon Empire, though there are a number of technical differences.

Like the Klingons, a lot of Rihannsu military equipment is powered by power cells containing minute antimatter bottles.

The other primary difference is that (due to their sheer size) many Rihannsu starships are powered by quantum singularity generators, which use an artificial black hole to generate power.

Technology levels can vary widely from planet to planet and even from city to city within the Empire.

While it is true that many of the worlds controlled by the Rihannsu are resource poor, it is equally true that the scars of war and a centralized, often punitive bureaucracy biased towards the home worlds has kept the Empire from utilizing its resources- in both personnel and material- to their fullest. With the advent of advanced replicator technology, the Rihannsu Empire had both the opportunity and the means to end hunger and want in their society- and failed to do so.

Projections

Starfleet Intelligence and the Federation Diplomatic Corps expect little change in Federation-Rihannsu relations over the short term. Despite the destruction of their homeworlds and the attendant internal chaos, the Rihannsu remain both territorial and distrustful of the other Alpha Quadrant powers.

Species Adjustment

+1 STR, +1 INT

Species Abilities:

Bonus Edge (Keen Hearing): Avrius receives a +4 bonus to *Observe (Listen)* tests.

Disciple of D'era: Rihannsu society overall tends to be regimented and orderly, and Rihannsu work well in organizations and under stress, and receive a +1 to all extended or combined tests.

Intrigue: Rihannsu are good at watching others for clues to their true motives, intentions, and feelings, and gain a +3 bonus to *Inquire* tests from their *Observe* skills.

The Ruling Passion: "Old School" Rihannsu adhere to *Mnhei'sahe* a concept of honor primarily occupied with courtesy to people around one: this courtesy, depending on circumstances, may require killing a person to do him honor, or severely disadvantaging one's self on his behalf.

The ramifications are complex and often subtle- but generally, *mnhei'sahe* is satisfied if all the parties to an agreement or situation feel that their "face" or honor is intact after a social (or other) transaction.

In Rihannsu culture, one does things for one's own good- or rather, the good of one's honor-- and if properly carried out, the actions in question will have benefitted the other parties in the transaction as well.

So long as a Rihannsu is actively living in accordance with the concepts of *mnhei'sahe* , he receives 4 Courage points instead of the usual three.