

REFINEMENT TOWARD PERFECTION

HISTORY OF THE CONVERGENCE OF CYRISS

Ours is a young faith, but Cyriss is eternal, her origin at one with the fundamental laws of reality.

—MAGUS ALDOPHOUS AGHAMORE, FIRST ORACLE

*From A Concise Overview of the History of the Maiden of Gears
by Enumerator Giovastus, Prime Archivist of the Temple of the Incomplete Axiom*

The history of the Convergence is inseparable from the history of Cyriss, a divinity only recently recognized. Although our subtle goddess was unknown until 283 AR, she has always existed as an embodiment of universal principles. She waited to reveal herself until we were ready to understand her enigmas, which required a certain degree of mastery over engineering, mathematics, and astronomy.

When matter came into being and was put in motion, Cyriss was there to weigh it, to measure the energy released by the first movement, and to enforce the rules governing that process. The acts of creation instigated by the primal gods could proceed only according to the deeper cosmological laws that were central to her being. As civilization began to emerge from barbarity, Cyriss played an invisible but vital role, bequeathing small insights to certain brilliant minds in order to lead them to intellectual discovery.

Those guided by the goddess while unaware of her, we call nescient savants. Through them we perceive her grace, subtlety, and eons-long designs. These inspired thinkers worshiped other deities, and at least two of them attained divinity through metaphysical transformation. Cyriss did not seek veneration, however; she was content to guide these minds, knowing they would usher civilization into higher thought.

NESCIENT SAVANTS OF ANTIQUITY

One of the first nescient savants was Cinot, the priest-king who revealed the Gifts of Menoth at Ichthier. Though these revelations were attributed to the Creator of Man, we believe they arose from Cinot's own visionary mind. Cyriss' guiding hand is evident in his greatest revelations, including the knowledge of cultivating grain from seed to harvest. Even the impulse that led Belcor to join the sage-priest Geth in their exodus to spread civilization ultimately served the goddess' designs.

Priest-King Golivant is credited with the founding of Calacia, whose mighty walls still surround Caspia, but this wonder of architecture was designed by the genius Kielamandes, whom the Menites have long forgotten. A leader in the development of mathematics, formal logic, astronomy, and architecture, Kielamandes was unquestionably guided

by the Maiden of Gears. By his efforts the walls and many temples of Caspia endured thousands of years and into the modern era. In addition, he was the first to systematically chart celestial bodies and describe their seasonal cycles, though his observations were limited by what he could perceive with the naked eye.

Kielamandes suffered a tragic death: in telling stories to illustrate logical paradoxes, he made the mistake of including Menoth as an actor. The Menite priesthood deemed this blasphemous and declared him a heretic, burning him alive despite his long service to the temples.

The Menite faith has historically opposed discovery and invention. Though their civilization is a force of order and has achieved many engineering marvels, they have imposed tremendous restraints on new ideas. The only lore fundamentally important to their priests is the True Law; science and the higher arts languished under their rule.

So arose the greatest savants of ancient times: the Twins, Morrow and Thamar. Their remarkable path to ascension was part of Cyriss' plan to shape the evolution of human thought. Proof of her influence appears throughout the Enkheiridion, particularly in diagrams with hidden ciphers employed by both the Twins. Morrow was an accomplished student of natural philosophy and a quick study at mathematics, while Thamar evidenced an interest in astronomy and foundational linguistics in addition to her more metaphysical pursuits. Both rejected the established order and sought answers through experience, thought, and the application of reason. The spread of their teachings did much to break the conceptual monopoly of the Menite priesthood and facilitate higher thought. Many subsequent ascendants and scions are also recognized as nescient savants, particularly Angellia, Corben, Nivara, and Sambert. Each played a part in bringing humanity to awakening.

In their wake, numerous thinkers guided by the goddess rose to prominence in Caspia and Thuria. The early Thousand Cities Era saw considerable expansion of systematic thought in these communities as scholars documented discoveries and participated in open discourse. Among the dozens of influential savants who arose were Glasneagh of Ceryl, known for the Sieve of Glasneagh, an algorithm used to isolate prime numbers; Tolonia of Caspia, who advanced

trigonometry as its own study and invented modern numerical notation; and the Cloutsdawn Enumerators, a group of Thurian mathematicians who performed breakthrough work on kinematics and defined the laws of velocity and acceleration.

THE CLOCKWORK RENAISSANCE

The Clockwork Renaissance was an era of mechanistic progress. Countless clockwork devices were created to solve diverse technical challenges during this time, with applications ranging from agriculture to warfare. The sextant and a refinement in telescopic lenses also emerged, allowing improvements to navigation and tremendously expanding the science of astronomy, respectively.

Most of the significant inventors in western Immoren during this period received subtle inspiration from Cyriss. These include the Umbrean apothecary Voldu Grova, who instituted a system to test and categorize alchemical compounds; Janus Gilder from Mercir, who invented the printing press; and particularly Drago Salvoro, who created the steam engine in 743 BR. Although its true significance would not become apparent for a thousand years, that design contained a seed of mechanized perfection.

Sadly, observatories erected in the decades before the arrival of the Orgoth would be destroyed when a long dark age fell upon western Immoren, a time that saw the quashing of scientific advancement.

SEBASTIEN KERWIN AND THE ARCANES ORDERS

The era of tyranny western Immoren endured during the Orgoth Occupation was more than simply a time of terror and oppression; it threatened to stifle the advancement of civilization and thought itself. Breaking centuries of entropy was not easy, requiring invention as well as bloodshed. Here again, Cyriss played a powerful indirect role. It is doubtful the subsequent Rebellion could have succeeded without the most admired savant of the era: Sebastien Kerwin, the father of arcanists and modern alchemy. Kerwin's works contain many hidden ciphers and numbers sacred to Cyriss. Her influence can be discovered by careful analysis of each of his seminal writings, including *The Essence of Divine Magic*, *Principia Arcana Magus*, and *Synthesis*. These writings suggest Kerwin was on the verge of recognizing the Maiden in his search for fundamental truths—and might have succeeded had he lived longer.

Kerwin applied a rigorous scientific methodology to his study. This approach enabled him to come close to understanding the relationship between runic formulae and mathematical equations. The work he and his peers accomplished brought human understanding closer to the point of awakening in a few short decades than in all the previous millennia

combined. Kerwin demonstrated that although magic could bend certain natural laws governing energy and matter, mystical forces still obeyed their own dictums, which could be codified. Thus emerged arcane science and mechanical thought. Kerwin perished in struggles with the Orgoth, but his legacy lived on in the Order of the Golden Crucible and the Fraternal Order of Wizardry.

The Rebellion and its aftermath saw the appearance of the last nescient savants before the discovery of Cyriss. These included Maximillian Nivin, who created the first clockwork automatons, and his student Elias Decklin, who eventually solved Nivara's puzzles and went on to create the cerebral matrix. This arcane construct emulated a living mind and provided the motive impulse for the colossals. Bastion Rathleagh later improved upon Decklin's design, creating the first modern cortex and ushering in the age of the steamjack in 241 AR. Although both generations of the device contained inherent flaws related to the attempt to create intelligence by arcane means, they unquestionably revolutionized industry and warfare across the Iron Kingdoms.

Complacency can be another enemy of progress, as compelling in its own way as tyranny. Such was the demand for steamjacks that soon the Fraternal Order of Wizardry became entirely focused on cortex production, to the detriment of other research. Some few cabals within the Fraternal Order continued to advance the physical and arcane sciences, however—and one individual among them would soon make the greatest discovery of the era.

DISCOVERY OF CYRISS

Astronomy was one of several fields of study that saw a resurgence during the Reconstruction following the Corvis Treaties. A number of new observatories were erected across western Immoren, funded by universities, science-minded patrons, and scholarly organizations. The Fraternal Order of Wizardry boasted its own skilled astronomers, foremost among them Aldophous Aghamore of Orven. Aghamore earned his fame by helping revolutionize optics, innovations initially applied to the viewing apparatus of steamjacks. Most of his peers paid little attention to his accomplishments in astronomy.

Magus Aghamore was the first to apply certain principles of alchemy and mechanika to the apparatus of astronomy, creating augmented telescopes. Working with others at several Cygnaran universities, he sought a better understanding of the celestial bodies beyond Caen. He is credited with being the first to apply alchemical glazes to the telescope optics that filtered light as well as with developing a precisely machined clockwork mechanism to orient and focus the large instruments. Through these innovations, he made unprecedented observations of the celestial realm.

It was with one such device that in 283 AR Aghamore sighted a previously unknown celestial object. He theorized this to be a distant planet on a highly elliptical orbit far from Caen's sun and dubbed it "the Dark Wanderer." His findings were initially dismissed, largely because the reported object was all but invisible without his new filtering techniques. In time others were able to replicate his methods and confirm the existence of this planet.

Meanwhile, Aghamore began to experience inexplicable dreams and visions. Through these he became convinced that the newly discovered planet was named Cyriss, a name shared by a divine being communicating through his dreams. Those he told of this feared he had succumbed to madness. Aghamore's reputation suffered such that he became a pariah among the arcane and astronomical societies of his day.

The discovery of a new divinity—of an entirely new concept of the universe and the powers inhabiting it, no less—was not easily comprehended. Yet this would prove to be the revelation of Cyriss, the first sign of our awakening. We had reached the vital point in our scientific and arcane development when we could at last become aware of the hidden goddess, whose plans and goals were too vast for mortal minds to grasp. Over the years others who had witnessed the Dark Wanderer began to experience similar dreams, lending credence to Aghamore's claims.

FOUNDING THE CULT OF CYRISS

Aghamore and others who had heard the whispers of the goddess began to meet, and from these discussions arose the Cult of Cyriss. Initial members were drawn largely from esoteric cabals within the Fraternal Order of Wizardry, including those seeking to reconcile mathematical principles with arcane formulae. Many of these individuals had already earned reputations as outsiders within the order. A widely held belief among them was that the steamjack cortex—the foundation of the Fraternal Order's wealth and influence—was a fundamentally flawed mechanism, overly reliant on chaotic arcane interactions. The very traits that had alienated these great minds from their peers were valued by this new faith, which revered scientific method and the application of reason.

Interest in Cyriss quickly developed among fields such as abstract mathematics, engineering, and astronomy. The astronomers were particularly profligate in spreading papers on Cyriss, as their number included several learned members of the aristocracy who were also knowledgeable in the natural sciences. The notion of a divinity governing fundamental laws seized the imagination of Cygnar's intelligentsia and soon spread to other nations.

By 290 AR the first major gathering of the cult convened. At this secret summit, members established many of

the tenets of the faith and nominated its earliest priests. Esteemed for the clarity of his visions, Aghamore was key to this endeavor and was among those nominated. After much discussion, the convened cult members determined three basic tiers of the priesthood: optifex, enumerators, and fluxions.

The optifex, the most numerous, would be as much laborers and craftsmen as priests. A member of the sect could remain at this level indefinitely, for promotion would require not only mastery in his field but also a demonstrated ability to lead and instruct others. The next level, the enumerators, would manage the daily tasks of the faith and oversee its works. Above the enumerators would be the fluxions, tasked to lead the temples. Fluxions would be few in number, and they would safeguard the cult's highest mysteries. Knowing the perils of a worship few could understand, the founding priests stressed secrecy and discretion. In these early years their first priority was to gain a better understanding of the goddess who had revealed herself to them.

Unfortunately, in the years after this summit Aghamore proved to be too fragile of mind to endure the implications of the goddess' appearance. In 298 AR he isolated himself and put aside all other obligations. Continuous meditations on natural and divine order began to take their toll, and he became increasingly erratic in both speech and writing.

Unknown to his peers, Aghamore had become obsessed with building a machine of tremendous size and complexity. He died in 303 AR, having apparently fallen into the massive gears of this unfinished apparatus. Those who found this scene were shocked to see that he had covered the walls of his house with fragmentary notations, labyrinthine formulae, and incomprehensible scrawling. It would later be discovered that these writings were not the nonsensical ranting they appeared.

THE TEMPLE AS WORKSHOP

From the beginning our temples have not been simply houses of worship but places of fabrication, analysis, and experimentation. The goddess cares not for empty prayer, preferring devotion through scientific exploration and the refinement of process and form. Challenging oneself through the application of abstract science is an act of prayer, as is advancing the state of mathematics, astronomy, or engineering. Very quickly those awakened to the goddess exceeded former engineering limits and succeeded in remarkable innovations. To recognize and take full advantage of this new level of mechanical mastery, the Convergence created the role of forge master to be conferred upon each temple's most accomplished engineer and fabricator.

COSMOLOGY OF CYRISS

Priests of Cyriss prefer to apply scientific methodology to their understanding of their faith. Given there is much about the goddess that cannot be perceived, tested, or verified, these matters are omitted from formal doctrine. There is significant conjecture about the cosmology of Cyriss that does not appear in the record. Priests of Cyriss think it vital to separate theory from fact, and the facts known about the goddess are few. The priesthood refuses to discuss many questions about her nature, even internally.

On the topic of cosmology, the priests assert only that Cyriss' psyche inhabits the world named after her, in the same way the will of other gods exists in Urcaen. While the planet is the seat of her conscious will, her influence and power extend to all things and is connected to the laws of reality itself. All parts of reality are aspects of a vast machine continually being perfected by the

Clockwork Goddess, who loathes disorder. That which is closest to perfection and flawlessness is closest to Cyriss, while that which is flawed and poorly functioning is furthest from her. This paradigm applies to the condition of life itself, which Cyrissists believe to be fundamentally imperfect. Nothing that is alive can be as pure or as true to the goddess as a harmonious machine.

The only aspect of the living that the sect believes capable of perfection is the seat of thought—the soul. Even this immortal essence must be refined over time, and it is this process toward perfection in both one's labors and one's self that motivates the faithful. This desire for self-improvement is similar to certain Morrowan beliefs, but the preference for the ordered perfection of the machine over the chaos of life is unique to the worship of Cyriss.

In 311 AR the ranking priests of the cult collaborated to write the *Principles of Geomantic Energy*, a foundational thesis that would soon unlock an ample power source for our temple workshops and their machinery. It had been discovered that certain subtle arcane energies flow beneath the surface of Caen, collected into invisible channels connected to significant geographical features like rivers and mountain ranges. Although this energy proved difficult to harness despite its demonstrable presence, the possibilities of its use spurred considerable study.

Subterranean energy accumulators were soon built at sites where strong flows converged, though at first this had few practical applications beyond powering simple systems like temple illumination. The use of this resource remained limited until the invention of the astronomic nexus in 326 AR. These tower-like machines served as focusing mechanisms by creating internal alignments based on tracking celestial conjunctions. Close analysis of Aghamore's last writings and the construct that took his life provided key information in the development of this invention, suggesting he had himself been attempting to harness these energies. Once the tower of an astronomic nexus is properly aligned, the influx of energies from connected subterranean accumulators magnifies exponentially.

Our mechaniks and engineers soon learned how to transform this energy to operate a variety of apparatuses. Ready access to essentially limitless energy at several major temples spurred invention, allowing for the construction of machines of a size and complexity previously infeasible. By 330 AR experiments related to transforming energy resulted in several breakthroughs, including advances in voltaic and electrostatic charging. These enabled the early

cult to transition away from burning fuels in order to power engines, freeing them from reliance on coal.

Locations where geomantic flows converged became preferred sites for the most advanced temple workshops. Tremendous accumulators and generators within the confines of major temple facilities provided ample energy that could then be broadcast to power machine guardians and workers, such as vectors and servitors. The sect's engineers developed methods for long-term storage of this energy in reserves, useful for machines required to perform tasks away from these facilities.

During this early era the leading priests debated how they should propagate and control the many advancements innovated in different temples. They agreed that all temples should benefit from new techniques but determined it prudent to limit familiarity with these techniques to the awakened faithful. This prompted the implementation of the Rubric of Mysteries in 320 AR to formalize a hierarchy of secrets within the priesthood. Lore of the goddess and the work of the faith would be kept from outsiders and only incrementally revealed to members as they proved their dedication and readiness. Certain works would be compartmentalized so that junior members could access portions as necessary for their labors without needing to understand the greater whole their efforts supported.



THE CIPHER ENGINE

One of the most important early temples was the Foundry of Enumeration, built in the southern Wyrmswall Mountains in 312 AR. This site generated a large volume of pioneering research. Dozens of the brightest minds of the faithful were gathered here to launch the ambitious

project of creating mechanical devices capable of automated mathematical operations. These calculating machines were originally built as a devotional act, as exploring the fusion of mathematics and engineering was seen as inherently sacred.

Researchers swiftly discovered a variety of applications for these machines. Even the simplest calculating machines proved useful for controlling servitors, semi-autonomous machines created to function as both tools and weapons. Machines containing larger computational components weighing multiple tons were able to perform more complex tasks; these were put to work on abstract mathematical exercises as well as deriving exacting measurements for precision instruments like lenses for astronomic nexuses and telescopes. These computational machines were fed instructions on brass cards with punched holes that expressed a new language for mathematics. Technology akin to the printing press allowed the output of a machine to be preserved, usually as a lengthy string of numerals.

Because such machines could function indefinitely, they could be given complex formulae to solve, including those that would yield extremely long number sequences. Analysis of this output became the sacred obligation of a specialized segment of the priesthood. Although large calculating machines were soon being fabricated in other temples, the largest and most complex remained at the Foundry of Enumeration, where it was regularly improved and redesigned to handle ever-greater formulae. By 330 AR it occupied several chambers and was maintained by dozens of priests.

A problem arose when careful study of this machine's output revealed unprecedented errors amid exceptionally long series of numbers. Attempts to correct the anomalies failed. In 333 AR, a priest named Helicratus applied an innovative new algorithm to this output and revealed an underlying pattern. With unparalleled excitement, he determined they were not mistakes but part of a long encrypted message. The cult's best minds set to the work of breaking this code, partially achieving this goal in 334 AR. To considerable astonishment they announced that the ciphers were messages sent by Cyriss herself. The computational machine that had generated these ciphers became known as the Cipher Engine, regarded as a vital relic of the faith for being the primary conduit through which the goddess communicated, however enigmatically. From this point the Cipher Engine was used exclusively for the generation of lengthy strings of numbers from complex formulae. The vast output was regularly distributed to dozens of temples to assist in its ongoing interpretation.

The first major directive from Cyriss was translated by Helicratus in 335 AR. In it, the goddess tasked the priesthood

with becoming one with machines and abandoning flesh. As a result the ranking clergy initiated the Anima Corpus Procedure, a project to transfer a soul into the body of a machine. The task would prove to be exceptionally difficult, seemingly beyond the most talented priests' capabilities. Many decades passed before the first glimmers of progress.

Leading this project were Fluxion Helicratus and Forge Master Lucidia, one of the eldest and most respected engineers of the faith. Dozens of the brightest minds from the inner circles of temples across western Immoren joined them. The greatest addition was an astronomer and priest of the periphery faith named Ghil Lucant, who had earned fame in scholarly circles in 356 AR for discovering the planet closest to the sun, a body subsequently named after him.

Disagreements between Lucidia and the fluxion divided the foundry's leadership in 360 AR, and Lucidia was eventually cast out of the cult. She returned three years later, just as Helicratus became the first to experience the sublimity of transferring his immortal essence into a clockwork vessel. This should have been a triumphant moment, but a vengeful Lucidia, informed by spies of the imminent procedure, compromised the temple's defenses and slaughtered most of its occupants. Mortally injured, Enumerator Lucant successfully transferred his own soul into a clockwork vessel and managed escape. The cult abandoned the foundry, salvaging only the Cipher Engine and the knowledge of soul transference.

CONVERGENCE BEGINS

Before the Foundry of Enumeration's destruction, Lucant had received a revelation by deciphering an extensive series of connected encrypted messages. It described a machine spanning all of Caen that would draw on the geomantic energy of the entire world through a vast lattice of conduits connecting hundreds of temple complexes. Once this creation was realized, Caen would become suitable for the goddess to manifest, inhabiting the world machine as her vessel. This was the Great Work, the completion of which would require untold centuries of dedicated effort. While awed by the scope of this mandate, Lucant immediately reassembled the Cipher Engine and began to organize the scattered cult toward this effort.

The inner circles of each temple had previously operated without oversight, but Lucant foresaw a stricter hierarchy would be required for the vital work ahead. In 370 AR he called a meeting of every ranking priest versed in the highest mysteries, leveraging both his previous standing and his existence as a clockwork priest, tangible proof of the goddess' miraculous guidance. This summit laid out the scope of the Great Work and defined an overarching leadership. Lucant was recognized as the first iron father, the head of the newly organized faith now known as the

Convergence of Cyriss. He passed down tenets that would become the Nine Harmonics and form the core of their religion. Several of these sacred principles were refinements of earlier precepts laid down by Aghamore.

Not all Cyriss worshippers would become part of the Convergence. Some priests rejected Lucant's vision, and those who turned away were denied access to the higher mysteries. Most of the goddess' followers who remained outside the Convergence, however, were members of small periphery sects entirely ignorant of the higher mysteries. The Convergence would remain the inner circle of the cults of Cyriss, comprised of those awakened to perform her work on Caen.

Many drawn to worship Cyriss were not prepared to take an active role, including scholars of mathematics, engineering, astronomy, and other sciences. While the worship of Cyriss brought them comfort and inspiration, most were unwilling to forsake old loyalties and devote their lives to the Convergence. They were unwilling to transcend. The Convergence set agents in place to observe any extraordinary minds found among these members of the extended cult so that no momentous discovery would escape attention. Further, it was among these peripheral faithful that we would look for promising recruits.

ATTAINING CLOCKWORK PERFECTION

Before the Great Work could begin in earnest, those who joined the Convergence had to fulfill the first directive of Cyriss: to become one with the machine. Lucant knew this blessing was not meant to be his alone. At first the process of transformation into a clockwork vessel was shared only with the highest ranking priests. In these early days the procedure was no simple matter—fabricating an essence chamber to contain a soul required considerable time, absolute precision, and significant resources.

By 382 AR a number of refinements had been made to the transfer process that simplified the manufacture of essence chambers. The priests began to include others within the Convergence as candidates and initiated the fabrication of clockwork soldiers, whose forms allowed them to become superlative and theoretically immortal warriors. Subsequent improvements allowed souls to be recovered more quickly and with less energy investment, allowing the faithful to be preserved even in the event of sudden death.

The Convergence discovered there were benefits to leaving a soul to develop and mature in a living body, so standards were imposed to interdict premature transfer. Priests in particular were encouraged to experience as much of their mortal lifespan as possible, with exceptions made for those few deemed sufficiently spiritually advanced for early transformation.

In 390 AR Lucant stepped down as iron father, having determined the faith would stagnate if guided by the same leader for too long. Every nine years a new leader would be chosen by a gathering of the ranking fluxions. An individual could serve repeatedly but never consecutively, and an iron mother or father who wished to resign before nine years could do so. Lucant remained a figure of tremendous importance due to his special insight into the enigmas of the Cipher Engine. He was given the honorific of "Divinity Architect" for his role in founding the Convergence and would go on to advise subsequent leaders advancing the Great Work.

The year 410 AR saw the creation of the Constellation, a complex device to house multiple essence chambers and enable rapid communication between them. Construction of the machine was prompted by clockwork priests who sought to create and then experience a pure mental state utterly removed from physicality. Built to resemble a vast orrery with each essence chamber set within arcs of interlocking orbits, the Constellation soon held the foremost minds of the Convergence. One of the first to permanently transfer into this machine was Fluxion Ambro Pascal, who in life had been the most gifted mathematician of his era, a man credited with inventing a true calculus of infinitesimals and revolutionizing mathematical physics.

Most who joined the Constellation did so temporarily, returning their minds to clockwork bodies after weeks, months, or years. For others, installation was permanent. By 440 AR the Constellation had become a vital advisory body for the Convergence. When not being consulted directly, the Constellation focused on analyzing matters of material scientific or technical import and coordinated efforts to decipher the vast output of the Cipher Engine. Over the past two centuries the Constellation has been redesigned sixteen times to expand and improve its architecture.

EXTENDING THE CONVERGENCE

It would not be for almost a century after Father Lucant's first revelation that the Convergence had the tools necessary to create an infrastructure for the Great Work. The scope of this work was beyond any mortal lifespan, requiring the tireless efforts of those who had preserved themselves as machines. All would need to contribute to creating a global machinery sufficient to house the consciousness of the Clockwork Goddess.

The ranking leaders of the Convergence worked to realize this vision, expanding the network of temples and workshops across remote and hidden locations. The fluxions divided the labor on major projects between disparate temples. Secrecy was maintained at all but the highest levels, with information passed down only when absolutely necessary.

CYRISS AND THE AFTERLIFE

Lacking any means of scientific verification, priests of Cyriass have never been able to provide definitive answers regarding the afterlife for the souls of their faithful. Among the periphery sects some clergy teach that Cyriass chooses worthy souls to join her after death, but no evidence supports this. Convergence priests have long suspected Cyriass is unable to shelter her followers in the afterlife, being separate from the dynamic between Caen and Urcaen. Most human souls naturally pass to Urcaen, which would suggest her worshippers would be marooned after death in the hellscapes between the domains of the gods.

Cyriass' directive that her faithful should join with the machine is seen as the solution to this uncertainty. The Convergence asserts that the soul prefers an afterlife amid the pure state attained in fusing with an essence chamber. Through a variety of mechanisms the Convergence has become efficient at preserving the souls of its members in clockwork vessels. This brings both immortality and utility to aid the Great Work. Every awakened follower of the goddess hopes to be preserved and maintained in this way. All hope to eventually witness the completion of the project—to experience Cyriass' arrival on Caen so they can become one with her perfection.

Expanding this network from 440 to 500 AR brought countless challenges, each overcome by applications of superior technology, planning, and patient will. During this phase of secret expansion, Convergence leadership proceeded cautiously to avoid major confrontations with the various kingdoms and other powerful groups that held ground they might wish to claim. Yet occasionally they deemed it necessary to commit to force of arms in order to seize a particularly important site. New hidden outposts were created and new astronomic nexuses built along convergence points to complete sections of the pattern plotted out by the divinity architect.

The Convergence quickly discovered that many locations rich in geomantic power were held by competing groups. Among the most ample geomantic conjunctions were the mouths of major rivers, nearly all of which supported heavily populated cities. Rather than committing to impossible military campaigns, our leaders opted to construct workshops and temples hidden below or within these cities. Caspia, Ohk, Berck, and Five Fingers became key aspects of the temple network, each requiring significant machinery to tap vital energies flowing through them. The completion of these temples created the Great Conjunction, which magnified the energy produced at each major river delta.

As early as 460 AR we discovered that we were not alone in prioritizing sites rich in geomantic energies. Subterranean locations otherwise ideal for establishing new temples were found to be infested with the cephalyx. These hostile and incomprehensible entities proved formidable enemies, with their own twisted sciences and peculiar powers. The cephalyx could enslave weaker minds with but a thought and employed surgically altered soldiers to fight in their stead. After repeated hostile encounters, the cephalyx became our intractable enemies.

Another adversary from the earliest days were the blackclads of the Circle Orboros, who erect sacred sites of towering stones to harness Caen's energy for their own occult purposes. More than any other of our rivals, the blackclads have learned how to harness geomantic energy. Several times our priests have had to revise their understanding of this group, whose methods are disturbingly similar to our own, though reliant on formulaic rituals and natural constructs. Some priests have theorized that the first blackclads must have received inspiration from Cyriass but misinterpreted her will, unready to surrender their primitive beliefs. This ancient group has proven pernicious in defending its grounds, and we have waged hundreds of secret wars over sites rich in the power we both require.

The arcanists of Ios are the last major group apparently aware of this energy source. From 500–520 AR we made several attempts to secretly penetrate Ios' borders to establish temple complexes there, but each time our members were intercepted and destroyed. Convergence leaders decided to postpone a major push into this nation, but this is likely to change soon. We have already contested with Iosans at secret strongholds amid the Iron Kingdoms and successfully seized several sites from them.

BEYOND IMMOREN

Our efforts in western Immoren had been relatively small in scope when viewed against the entirety of Caen. Given the difficulties of completing the work on a single continent, the dream of a world-spanning machine network seemed impossibly distant. Our perspective on the world and the timeline of our Great Work was about to change.

Just before the Thornwood War, the Llaeese mathematician Lorita Donaes was brought into the Convergence after achieving breakthroughs in the study of complex numbers, those which combine real and imaginary numbers. She adapted readily, soon providing significant insights into fluid dynamics and electromagnetism.

In 521 AR, after working with the Constellation, Enumerator Donaes created a system of signal analysis to audit energy flows within the Convergence network. Its

goal was to improve the efficiency of energy gathered by the astronomic nexuses and geomantic accumulators, but in the process a remarkable discovery was made. Tiny fluctuations of energy flows at the periphery of the Immorese network suggested sympathetic networks beyond the Meredius. It was determined that the Great Work must exist on other continents, advanced by groups working parallel to our own efforts.

It is hypothesized that since civilizations have arisen on multiple shores, Cyriss has played a hand in guiding remarkable minds wherever they may arise. Other populations have discovered the goddess and received revelations. We have had no direct communication with these other groups, although energy fluctuations within the temple network could be induced to transmit coded messages. The Constellation decreed that no contact should be established for now. It is enough to know that we do not labor alone and that the hour of Convergence is closer than we ever thought possible.

ENTERING THE PHASE OF ALIGNMENT

The modern age gave rise to several prominent nescient savants among the Iron Kingdoms. These figures served as a reminder that science would advance even among those unaware of Cyriss. Simonyev Blaustavya was one of the most influential of these, a Khadoran who began as an engineer and inventor but who would attain singular political power. His influence and intelligence was vital in the modernization of the Khadoran Army. Perhaps the most eminent savant of the current generation is Sebastian Nemo, who first rose to prominence in the Cygnaran Army in the 590s AR. His revolutionary ideas transformed the nature of Cygnar's military forces. Convergence agents cautiously approached both Nemo and Blaustavya with the goal of testing their willingness to convert to the faith, but they proved unreceptive. Their presence instead served to strengthen those who would stand in our way.

As we entered the new century, it became clear to the temple leadership that the priorities of the foundries must change. Father Lucant and the Constellation had been watching both celestial signs and the ciphers of the goddess, while our agents observed developments in the kingdoms. Analysis of all these factors prompted the divinity architect to declare that we were on the cusp of the Phase of Alignment. The work of establishing temples in hidden locations had gone as far as it could. For the Great Work to advance we would need to risk deploying our arsenal to seize contested geomantic sites and secure them long enough to force their energy flows into proper alignment. It was time to lay the groundwork for our march to war.

While additional temples and workshops continued to be erected, work within them shifted from abstract research to military applications. Forge masters accelerated the production of fighting vessels, vectors, and weaponry, and senior designers set about creating a diversity of clockwork vessels that could mesh together seamlessly in battle.

As early as 604 AR it had become a concern that the vital power nexus below Caspia might be detected by Cygnaran arcanists. Our ranking leadership discreetly established peaceful contact with Cygnar's government so our work could continue uninterrupted. This was a calculated risk. Working through intermediaries, leaders of the faith in Caspia made contact with Sebastian Nemo and negotiated a mutually beneficial exchange with King Leto of Cygnar. The priesthood offered assistance solving conceptual challenges for experimental technology. In exchange, King Leto agreed to recognize the worship of Cyriss and allow the construction of a temple in the city. The Temple of Concord was erected in Caspia at a site strategically chosen to obscure the extensive facilities beneath. While the known temple would be staffed solely by periphery members of the faith, the Convergence continued to operate the much larger and more extensive hidden facilities in its proximity.

Similar efforts are underway in Korsk, with the Rigevnaya Complex in the Khadoran capital now fully subverted by members of the faith. We have installed nearly a dozen hidden foundries within that city. Facilities also exist in most other major cities in Khador, Ord, and Cygnar as well as in Merywyn and Laedry. We have established other extensive complexes throughout the wilderness regions, many with weapons stockpiles lying ready for combat actions.

In 606 AR, the Constellation elevated the ambitious clockwork priestess Directrix to the position of iron mother. At her appointment, Father Lucant declared she would be the leader to begin the Phase of Alignment. The last two years have seen our preparations coming into alignment to coincide with a special conjunction of the celestial spheres beginning in 609 AR. This celestial conjunction has been determined as the ideal time to unleash our military might.

The years ahead are crucial. Our success relies on the precision of our operations, the accuracy of our calculations, and the insight and intelligence of our leaders. We will erect alignment nodes to reshape the energies of Caen and transform all of Immoren into a machine to receive the Clockwork Goddess.

MACHINERY OF THE CONVERGENCE OF CYRISS

The collective membership of the Convergence forms one of the most unusual but frighteningly effective fighting forces in western Immoren. While those who face their mechanistic ruthlessness may not see the distinction, the Convergence considers itself much more than a group armed for war. They form the inner circle of western Immoren's newest faith, one devoted to the Clockwork Goddess Cyriss. The Convergence is a self-contained and self-governed secret society with a distinct culture as well as beliefs and goals that necessitate a large and technologically advanced military.

The Convergence has no borders, and the extent of its geographical holdings are limited. The faith is scattered across western Immoren, focused within the Iron Kingdoms. The majority of its membership spend their lives in one of over eighty hidden temple facilities. Some are located in major cities and towns while others are built deep within inhospitable wilderness regions. Nearly all these temples are underground or include substantial subterranean elements, making them difficult to find and extremely defensible. Convergence leaders built these facilities on sites of geomantic significance, allowing them access to the mystical energies flowing underground. These energies form a vital and essential power source for the sect's workshops, laboratories, and great machines.

Such sites are much more than mere power sources, however. The overarching goal of the Convergence is to bring about the manifestation of Cyriss on Caen, a holy imperative of the goddess. Accomplishing this task requires attaining a degree of control over the world's geomantic energy through a vast interconnected network. In addition to being places of worship, workshops, research facilities, and centers of Cyrissist communities, each temple contains massive specialized machinery that lets it serve as a node in the temple network. Together, this network and the geomantic energy flowing through it is considered a single great machine, albeit one that is incomplete. This machine will be finished only when the temple network connects all continents of Caen.

There is one perfectly harmonic pattern to which this network must conform. Reaching harmonic convergence is referred to as the Great Work, a convoluted sequence of construction that has been ongoing for almost twenty-five decades. In addition to establishing permanent temples, the Convergence must also realign geomantic flows across the continent, a difficult process requiring the seizure of new territories in exposed locations to build alignment machinery there.

Until the end of 608 AR, the Convergence advanced their agenda in secret, avoiding hostile contact with sovereign

nations and limiting violent engagements to shadow wars against other clandestine groups like the Circle Orboros and the cephalyx. The year 609 AR marks the onset of the Phase of Alignment, whereby the Convergence will unleash its arsenals in more open conflict. Battles during this phase will be conducted in part to secure key locations where alignment machinery will be placed. This massive machinery must be built, activated, and protected long enough to correct misaligned geomantic flows. Once realignment is completed at a site, Convergence forces can abandon the machinery there and advance on other key sites. Since many of these vital locations are occupied by either military or settlements or are controlled by other armed groups, the Phase of Alignment requires open war against multiple nations and other formidable powers.

The responsibility for seeing this come to pass rests with all of the Convergence, not just its leadership. Each of Cyriss' faithful must contribute toward bringing about her manifestation on Caen.



CONVERGENCE HIERARCHY

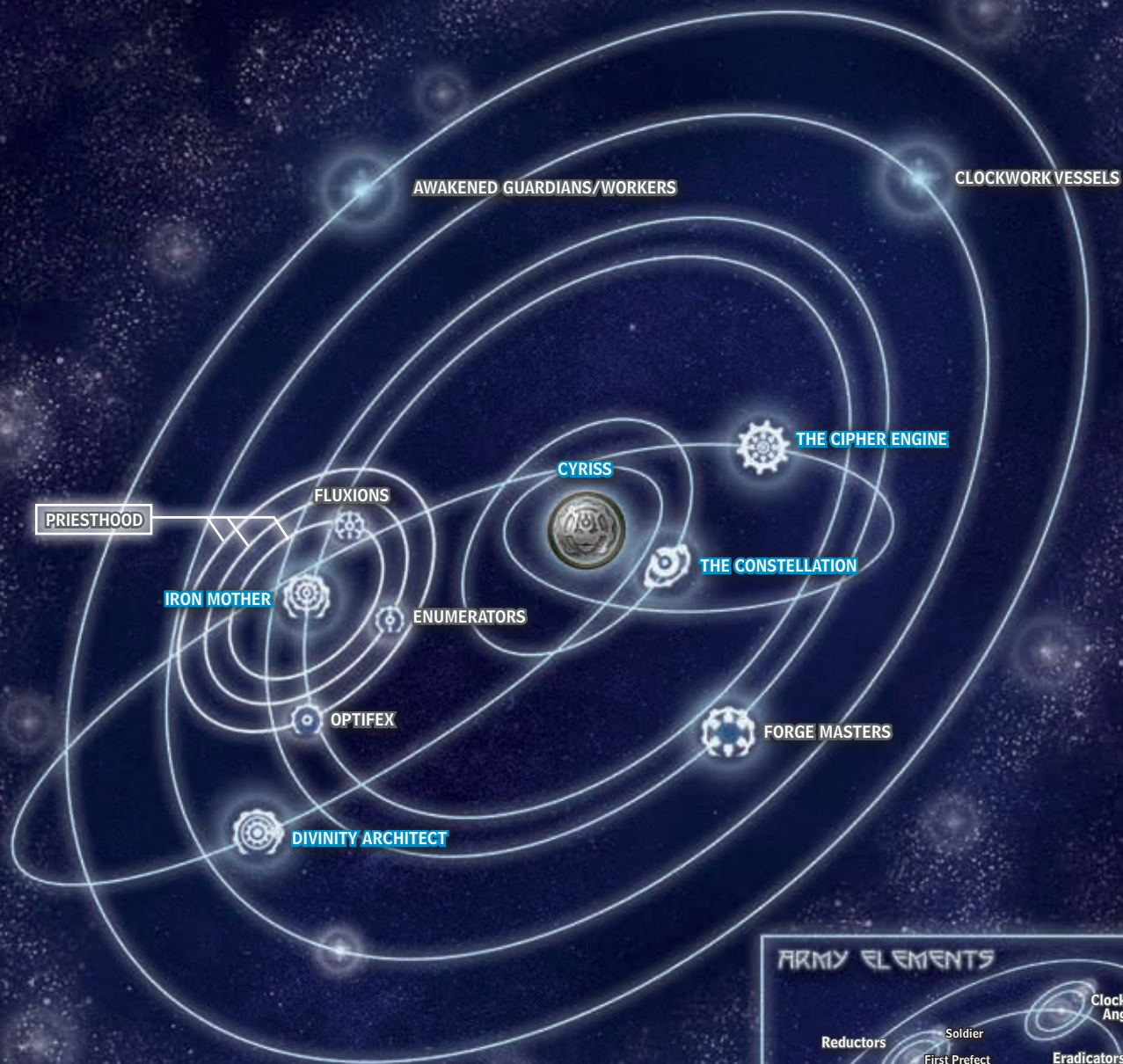
Although the Convergence is a widely scattered organization, it uses a relatively simple hierarchy. As the sect's membership belong to dozens of self-sufficient temple facilities, it has two basic tiers of leadership—one within each temple, and another coordinating them toward shared endeavors. The Convergence is a cell-based organization; the vast majority of its members do not have detailed awareness of the activities of their peers in other temples. Until the Phase of Alignment, most Convergence members spent their lives serving a single temple, perhaps being reallocated after becoming a clockwork vessel. Moving into a more active phase has required greater coordination between temples, but this has not affected those who are not involved in military matters, and most junior members remain relatively unaware of the bigger picture.

As expected for a religious organization, the priesthood comprise the most significant leadership group within the Convergence. Priests provide leadership at all levels, both within individual temples and coordinating between them. Most priests are entrusted to perform highly skilled technical work and theoretical research in addition to other responsibilities. Their work requires them to remain in temple facilities, so they are seldom sent on military missions. Those few accompanying Convergence strike forces serve as technicians and commanders in the field.

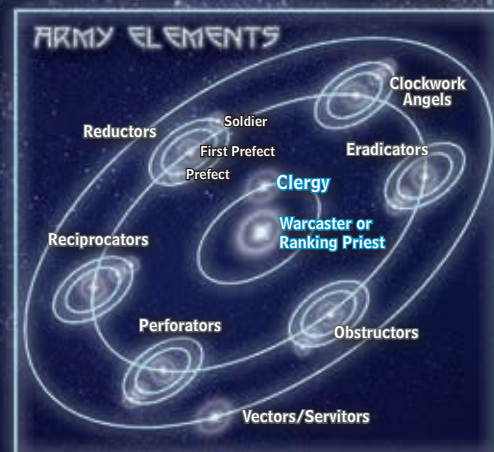
The three broad ranks of priests, in descending order, are fluxions, enumerators, and optifex. (See also "Hierarchy



CONVERGENCE OF CYRISS HIERARCHY



PERIPHERAL CULTS OF CYRISS



of the Priesthood," p. 73.) Fluxions are the only rank that maintain any degree of regular contact with clergy from other temples, as part of their function is to coordinate actions between them. Information is compartmentalized even among the clergy. Other than the fluxion(s) in charge of a temple, the highest-ranking individual at a temple facility is the forge master, who is responsible for maintaining its machinery and production as well as its armory.

The highest-ranking leaders of the Convergence are able to communicate with one another across long distances by creating barely perceptible fluctuations in the geomantic flows between temple nodes. This system can allow for the transmission of complex information, given sufficient time, but messages are usually kept focused on the allocation of resources, the coordination of military actions, or the delivery of other significant information. The central headquarters of the Convergence is the Temple of the Prime Harmonic in the northern Wyrmswall Mountains, a site of critical importance since it houses both the Cipher Engine and the Constellation.



THE CIPHER ENGINE

The Cipher Engine is a massive mechanical calculating machine housed in multiple chambers deep within the Temple of the Prime Harmonic. Comprising countless gears, pins, pistons, rods, weights, and interlocking wheels, the Cipher Engine is attended by dozens of dedicated priests who continually request it solve extremely difficult mathematical problems. These are given to the machine on brass plates with holes punched through them in certain patterns. The Cipher Engine translates these patterns into instructions and numbers and then works to derive solutions. The resulting output is produced upon mechanisms akin to a large printing press. The Cipher Engine is one of the most sacred artifacts of the faith and has played a central role in the Great Work, as its output is viewed as the primary means for Cyriss to communicate with her faithful.

Cyriss is an enigmatic goddess who does not provide simple answers, preferring to challenge her followers to decipher her will. The messages buried in the output of the Cipher Engine are never easily extracted, confirmed, or translated. Amid long numerical strings of data are inexplicable irregularities that when compiled and properly sequenced create extremely complex encoded messages. The sheer volume of output from the Cipher Engine means that the results are generated more quickly than they can be analyzed. The task of analyzing these numeric strings is distributed among the temples and is a sacred activity for priests of all ranks.

The volume of successfully translated divine messages is small, but these have led to many of the Convergence's most important directives. The majority of the Nine Harmonics have their roots in expressions from this machine. Its output was also responsible for initiating research into the Anima Corpus Procedure, which resulted in clockwork vessels as well as the revelation of the Great Work.



THE CONSTELLATION

Within the Temple of the Prime Harmonic is a machine that houses the collective consciousness of hundreds of the disincorporate souls of the faithful. This intelligence serves the Convergence as both an advisory board and a tremendously powerful tool of analysis. The Constellation was built to house the essence chambers of members of the sect who, for a variety of reasons, decided to seek a purer communion with the machine state. Removed entirely from the physical world, the souls within the Constellation enjoy a purely cerebral existence. They are able to communicate internally using an encoded mathematical language conveyed through conduits connecting their essence chambers. The Constellation also has an enunciation apparatus in the central chamber of the temple by which it can communicate with others, such as the iron mother.

The exact membership of the Constellation changes periodically, with new members added and others leaving to resume physical existence within clockwork vessels. Some members of the Convergence enter its configuration temporarily, while others never leave. Because its membership are removed even from the stimuli of a clockwork vessel, joining the Constellation brings greater mental clarity and facilitates solving abstract problems.

With the combined minds of so many significant awakened thinkers, the Constellation is the most powerful analytic body available to the Convergence. So great is their faith in its evaluations that they look to it even to select the leader of the faith. When the nine-year cycle for an iron mother or father approaches its end, the Constellation is presented with a list of fluxions compiled by the divinity architect. From among these its collective selects a new leader thought to have the best qualities to advance the Great Work.



THE IRON MOTHER

The founders of the Convergence of Cyriss recognized that decisive action required a single voice of leadership. This resulted in the individual position of iron mother or iron father, who is responsible for coordinating the activities of the Convergence as a whole. The iron mother's seat is in the Temple of the Prime Harmonic, where she can be in regular contact with the Constellation and other

THE NINE HARMONICS

The faith of Cyriss includes a variety of precepts, doctrines, and tenets, some lengthy and convoluted, but the Nine Harmonics form the guiding principles of the Convergence. These simple but broad tenets are applied in a multitude of ways. They are studied and meditated upon by all members of the Convergence but are especially important to the priesthood. Every action taken by awakened members of the Convergence must be in accordance with these principles.

THE FIRST HARMONIC: *Precision is the opening theorem in the proof of perfection.*

Perfection requires exertion toward an efficient and measured existence. Precision is to be applied as much to daily habits as to labor. Absolute precision can be achieved only by continually diminishing the margin of error.

THE SECOND HARMONIC: *Mathematics is the only true language.*

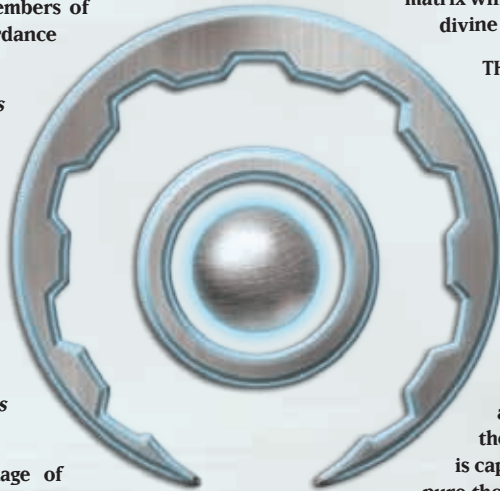
Mathematics is the underlying language of infinity. All that exists and all that does not exist can be described through mathematical expression. A process or thought cannot be unless a formula exists to describe it.

THE THIRD HARMONIC: *The power of understanding transcends the inexplicable.*

Nothing is truly inexplicable when confronted by the proper analysis. Complete understanding can be achieved by continually diminishing ignorance. Always strive to increase knowledge and understanding. All learning must be preserved.

THE FOURTH HARMONIC: *Magic obeys scientific principles and does not require mysticism.*

Magic represents a particularly complex interaction between energy and matter, mediated by sentient will. The arcane can always be understood, codified, and controlled through mathematical formulae. There is always a way to integrate the arcane with engineering.



THE FIFTH HARMONIC: *The goddess of perfection will manifest to inhabit the vessel thereof.*

The numen of Cyriss can achieve harmonic sympathy with any sufficiently flawless and empowered machine. Harnessing geomantic energy across a globally balanced astronomic matrix will complete the prime harmonic and compel divine manifestation.

THE SIXTH HARMONIC: *Clockwork perfection requires an absence of entropy.*

All acts of harmonic construction, invention, and engineering increase order and reduce entropy. Life multiplies entropy, so nothing alive can attain perfection.

THE SEVENTH HARMONIC: *Souls are elements in the divine equation.*

Only the soul is autonomous. Each soul is an aspect of a divine equation that achieves consciousness. The soul bridges the poles of divinity and mortality. The soul is capable of either infinite refinement through pure thought or utter debasement by wallowing in the corruption of flesh.

THE EIGHTH HARMONIC: *False shadows of consciousness mock the divine equation.*

The creation of a soulless machine that mimics true intelligence is a mockery of the divine equation. Machines do not make decisions. An unpredictable machine is a flawed machine.

THE NINTH HARMONIC: *To awaken a soul one must seek harmony with the goddess.*

The teachings of the goddess are not for all. Only a select few will be awakened. We do not reveal the enigmas of Cyriss to those who are unprepared to seek perfection. Those on the cusp will be awakened at the precipice where higher thought flourishes.

major leaders of the faith. She communicates with the myriad fluxions leading the Convergence temples, and she frequently travels to meet with them in person and inspect ongoing projects. When the Convergence launches major military actions the iron mother may take to the battlefield to direct the gathered forces personally.

The first to hold this position was Father Lucant. After twenty years of leading the Convergence, Lucant stepped down, but not before imposing a rule that this office could be held only for nine years consecutively. A priest would be eligible for the office more than once, but the position

must first pass to another. By implementing this rule, Lucant sought to prevent stagnation in the leadership of the Convergence. The current iron mother is Directrix, chosen by the Constellation in 606 AR.

The iron mother has vast authority over the Convergence as both the leader of the priesthood and the supreme commander of its military forces. She rarely intervenes in the organization of individual temples, focusing instead on coordinating efforts between them and on managing the assets of the organization as a whole. The iron mother determines priorities of the faith and decides when the

Convergence must send strike forces to neutralize enemies. All aspects of Convergence efforts, from production to research, are within her purview.



THE DIVINITY ARCHITECT

Divinity architect is a unique office held by Father Lucant, who was the first to understand the process of transferring a soul into a clockwork vessel and who subsequently founded the Convergence. He became the divinity architect after stepping down as the first iron father in 390 AR. In some respects this is a largely honorary office representing Lucant's great contributions to the organization, as the divinity architect has very limited direct authority. The most vital aspect of the office is reviewing decoded messages from the goddess and coordinating the ongoing efforts of the organization toward the Great Work.

Lucant has tremendous influence within the organization and serves as its key spiritual advisor and long-term strategic planner. Although the fluxions are not obliged to obey his commands, they generally heed his requests and implement any changes to procedure he suggests, so long as they do not contradict orders from the iron mother. Most priests respect Lucant as the spiritual head of the faith and view him as something of an oracle. No other priest has his skill in deciphering the words of the goddess.

THE AWAKENED AND THE PERIPHERAL CULTS

The Convergence considers its members to be the true faith of Cyriss and refer to themselves as "awakened" to suggest that this fellowship has been indoctrinated into the fundamental mysteries of the goddess. The awakened know the Nine Harmonics and live by them.

There are many worshipers of Cyriss on the periphery of the Convergence ignorant of its greater mysteries and living in ordinary society. A distinct dividing line must be recognized between the Convergence and these less devoted worshipers. While such individuals may revere the goddess and recognize the shadow of her perfection, their misconceptions and misplaced loyalties blind them to the truth.

The Convergence is not hostile toward the peripheral cults and in fact considers them valuable. Peripheral cults form a vital bridge with the outside world, as Convergence agents periodically observe and make contact with them. The most important role of the peripheral cults is to serve as a pool for potential recruits; the vast majority of the awakened were introduced to Cyriss as worshipers from peripheral sects.

RECRUITMENT AND INDOCTRINATION

While peripheral cults have only a superficial understanding of Cyriss and Cyrissist doctrine, they revere the goddess and bring in new converts. These cults are most numerous and successful in places where intellectual study or machine work are practiced. Those whose professions involve alchemy, arcane research, astronomy, engineering, mathematics, mechanika, metallurgy, or other sciences are frequently drawn to Cyriss. Some of these minds may be receptive to the deeper mysteries.

Agents of the Convergence periodically survey peripheral cults looking for promising potential recruits. There are a variety of means to engage prospects cautiously. The faithful have inserted hidden enigmas and clues in a variety of widely read scholarly works, and these can guide interested parties to make contact. Most who seek to join the Convergence are mature adults who have achieved success in their chosen fields, but younger petitioners appear occasionally. Latent warcasters are usually brought into the Convergence at an early age. (See "Convergence Warcasters," p. 42.)

Becoming a member of the Convergence requires a permanent commitment and, usually, the abandonment of one's previous life. The Convergence cannot risk its secrets being revealed and immediately isolates new recruits from outsiders, sending them to remote temple facilities to undergo extensive indoctrination. During this period a recruit is not at liberty to leave the temple.

In some cases the Convergence has accommodated the immediate family of a recruit, particularly where a spouse is a member of a peripheral cult. If a couple with children are indoctrinated, the children are also brought into the temple and eventually indoctrinated. Every effort is made to integrate these individuals into the Convergence. Those who lack devotion and cannot be trusted with secrets will be cast out or, as a last resort, humanely eliminated.

AWAKENED MEMBERSHIP

The process of becoming a fully awakened member of the Convergence reveals the candidate's various aptitudes and skills, which helps determine the role they will take in the organization. New members who have the requisite qualities may seek to join the priesthood, the most desirable Convergence career path. Being a priest requires the ability to control arcane energies in order to help design, fabricate, or repair essential machinery. Some priests are less heavily involved in this sort of work than others. Arcane talent alone does not guarantee entrance to the priesthood, however.

Most awakened lay members of the Convergence are referred to as technicians, unless they have other specific

PREEMPTIVE NEUTRALIZATION FORCE

ITERATION 9



LEADERSHIP

Axis, the Harmonic Enforcer

First Prefect Diomedes, First Prefect Idomeneus, First Prefect Patroclus

COMPOSITION

The Preemptive Neutralization Force is primarily made up of Reciprocators, Obstructors, Eradicators, and Reductors supported by Enigma Foundries and Steelsoul Protectors. Vector and servitor allocations vary, but Axis heavily favors vectors configured for close combat.

The Harmonic Enforcer is among the most active of the Convergence's combat assets. He specializes in clearing locations of interest to the Convergence and is supported in this role by a dedicated strike force. The exact elements of this force vary according to the particulars and necessities of a given mission, but Axis has long been served by an inner core of faithful prefects along with the veteran units under their charge.

Axis established the Preemptive Neutralization Force at the direction of Iron Mother Directrix as an evolution of smaller forces he had employed during his long history as her enforcer. While Axis had long served to root out the enemies of the Convergence and to dismantle those renegade cults at the periphery of the Convergence that jeopardized its secrecy, this force represents the first attempt to establish a more permanent standing force under his command.

Since its creation, the force has undergone several iterative changes in its composition to better suit the emerging needs of the Convergence. The Preemptive Neutralization Force has primarily been deployed to clear the sites for future temples and alignment operations in anticipation in the expansion of the Great Work as well as to push back encroachment on Convergence-held territories.

Due to Axis' tactical preferences and the frequency with which his force is called upon, the Preemptive Neutralization Force has grown more tightly knit than less rigidly maintained Convergence fighting forces. Axis and his veteran prefects have developed an intimidating simpatico, resulting in their ability to carry out even complex maneuvers with virtually no communication.

The Harmonic Enforcer is willing to face any odds and relies heavily upon enigma foundries to reconstitute his troops after these engagements. As such, the clockwork soldiers under his command become familiar with a greater assortment of vessels than do most of their peers. Serving with the Preemptive Neutralization Force has gained a reputation as a brutal but efficient crucible for clockwork soldiers, and those sent to reinforce this group very rapidly gain invaluable combat experience.

In its present iteration, the force does not include combined arms, as its vectors are almost entirely oriented for use in close combat, Axis' preferred mode of combat. Surprise makes up for this lack of ranged capability, strongly bolstered by the ability to endure casualties that would be untenable for an army of flesh.

titles or functions. All are expected to contribute to maintaining, repairing, or operating temple machinery. Those who are highly skilled at these tasks may go on to become engineers, an esteemed status representing considerable expertise and usefulness. A number of senior engineers are involved in more cerebral but equally valued tasks such as pure mathematics, astronomy, or research.

Some few awakened members become temple guardians. These are usually those who are competent but not exceptional in technical fields or whose temperaments make them better suited to this role. Occasionally guardians will arise among the children of cult members who do not distinguish themselves in other roles. Guardians train in the weaponry and armament of the temple and are dedicated to

the protection of the facility. When not actively on patrol or drilling, guardians perform other work as needed, including ordinary labor and temple upkeep. Guardians are distinct from temple soldiers, a role occupied by clockwork vessels, and do not participate in battles outside a temple. Most guardians become clockwork soldiers after they surrender their mortality.

CLOCKWORK TRANSFORMATION

All awakened aspire to become clockwork vessels, and nearly all can expect to achieve this state eventually. Only those deemed mentally unfit are excluded from transformation. Such individuals are rare in the faith, but there are some members of the Convergence who are brilliant in a given field but mentally unstable or who suffer from an overly strong attachment to physicality. For others, the priesthood insists it is to the betterment of the soul to live as long as possible before being transformed. Exceptions are made only for those who demonstrate remarkable mental and spiritual clarity and maturity.

The Convergence also has the means to preserve the souls of members who die unexpectedly, in order to transfer them immediately into essence chambers. For the members of the Convergence, this transformation is holy and profound, representing their afterlife. Being a clockwork vessel is a form of immortality.

For over two centuries the Convergence has collected the souls of its members through this process, and as a consequence their numbers have grown rather than diminished. In most temples clockwork members outnumber the living. They continue to contribute to the work of the temples and also act as the soldiers of the Convergence. It takes some time to become accustomed to this mechanical state, and military training is a useful means to accelerate familiarity while also bolstering the strength of the Convergence.

The entire clockwork population of the Convergence can be considered a battle-ready militia. All clockwork vessels have formidable combat capabilities, wielding advanced weaponry as well as being immune to pain and confident in the knowledge that even the destruction of their bodies is rarely permanent.

MYRIAD FORMS

Those who have become one with the machine are not permanently installed in a specific clockwork form; the Convergence has developed a wide variety of vessels, particularly for its soldiers. Most newly transformed individuals stay in the same chassis for several years in order to become perfectly accustomed to the machine state. After this, members become more comfortable changing

vessels. It is common for members to have one chassis type for their temple work and another for soldiering. Over the decades a soldier may become versed in many different vessels, although generally one is preferred. To identify themselves to one another, individual clockworks will create a small distinct abstract pattern etched onto visible parts of their frames.

Clockwork priests and warcasters have the latitude and expertise to create their own customized vessels, an act that is spiritually satisfying for some. Soldiers must generally conform to more regimented vessels that can be properly integrated into units. The adoption of a new battlefield chassis is a rare development, requiring proof that its design augments the Convergence in a new way. The clockwork angels represent the most recently innovated fighting form.

STRIKE FORCES AND GARRISONS

The Convergence does not maintain standing armies, preferring to assemble strike forces to achieve specific goals and objectives. While some long-standing strike forces and garrisons exist, they make up a small percentage of the Convergence's fighting strength. Strike forces include a core of the veteran soldiers preferred by specific warcasters or senior priests, joined by other units as needed for a particular mission. Additional reinforcements can be acquired from the nearest temple facilities as required.

Very important tasks requiring much larger forces (such as those that would need to be collected from multiple temples) require the consent of the iron mother, with the details of coordination and assembly left to a fluxion directorate from the temples involved. The enumerators subordinate to those fluxions manage the logistics and ordered deportment of these forces and serve as the senior officers of the assembled fighting force. Before the Phase of Alignment, the Convergence rarely assembled such sizable armies, but it is expected they will be deployed with greater regularity in this new era. The priesthood serves the iron mother in ensuring these missions are allocated sufficient numbers of soldiers, vectors, servitors, and other specialized military assets.

Soldiers are efficiently organized into units, each overseen by a prefect, who reports in turn to an assigned priest. In a given standing garrison or long-standing strike force, the most experienced veteran of each unit type, referred to as the first prefect, carries out special administrative duties. (See "Soldiers of the Convergence," p. 72.)