



THE THOUSAND SONS

Numeration: The XVth Legion

Primogenitor: Magnus the Red

Cognomen: (Prior) None.

Observed Strategic Tendencies:
 Psychic Warfare, Precision Assaults,
 Misdirection, Lore Culling,
 Macro-coordination Multi-theatre
 Campaigns

Noteworthy Domains: Prospero

Allegiance: *Traitoris Perdita*

'A seeker will make three great errors on their ascent, no matter how bold their spirit, or keen their sight. The first error is to believe they have reached the end of the path when in truth they have only taken the first step.

The second error is to believe that the end of one path is the beginning of another.

The third error is to believe that any price is worth paying to take another step.

These are the errors, their number is three, and their reward is the loss of all they have ever gained and ever loved.'

Aeolus the Lesser, *Tractatus Angelus*

Betrayal is a child of many sires: power, hate, vengeance, shame, guilt, bitterness, viciousness, callousness, all have played their part in the fall of those who turned on the Emperor, but to this list two more must be added: hubris and blindness. While other Legions walked into infamy at their own choosing, the Thousand Sons were plunged into that state; first by their own pride, second by the treachery of those who they trusted, and third by the Imperium itself. Tainted by mutation and touched by the Warp, the fall of the Thousand Sons seemed certain in retrospect, but that certainty is false. Another path might have waited for the XVth Legion if fate had not been so cruel. As it is, their story is not one of darkness, but of a light that drew a Legion and Primarch higher and higher until they could no longer see the boundaries of obedience left far below them.

ORIGINS: THE TEMPEST BORN

The nature of many Legions was clear from almost the first moment they took to the battlefield. But the purpose of the Thousand Sons—for purpose there undoubtedly was—would unfold only slowly as a dark bloom, one petal at a time. The XVth were born late in the creation of the Legiones Astartes. The conquest of Terra was already complete, Luna had fallen, and the first-born Legions had started to bring the rest of the Sol System to heel. The Great Crusade was about to begin, starting the cycle of conquest that would see it flood across the stars and the strength of many Legions had begun to wax as their ranks swelled with recruits taken from conquered foes. No longer was Unification the prize for victory, and no longer could the fires of the Imperial Truth be confined to Terra. It was a time of transition, a time of endings as well as beginnings, and into this time the XVth Legion were born.

Storms marked the creation of the Legion. The great warp tempests, which had isolated Ancient Terra during Old Night, had boiled up again, and it was said that witch-fire lit the skies, and dreams of terror and brilliance danced through the minds of humanity's birth world. For a brief time, fear and revelation once again stalked the turning of the sun and stained the light of the moon. Instances of psychic mutation and emergence spiralled to new heights, void shipping was trapped at anchor, and a wave of panic swept the nascent Imperium strong enough to provoke a harsh response from the servants of the Emperor as they sought to crush again the woken serpent of superstition on a newly unified Terra. It

is a time now marked in the annals of days and the chronicles of the years as the *'Song of the Blood Skies'* amid the much-stricken Nordafrik Conclaves, and as the *'Spiral Misrule'* by the noble houses of the equatorial plate cities, but most official records know it as *'The First Tempest'*. In this time the Emperor seems to have been utterly unmoved and unalarmed by the resurgence of the phenomenon which had blighted humanity for so long, and left such response needed to the judgement of His more parochial servants of civil and military order. The momentum of His conquests contained by this sudden squall of the Epyrean, the Emperor, according to available records, simply channelled His energies elsewhere with a promptness that might imply both preparation and foresight, and it is thought that several branches of the Imperium owe their formal origin to these times, not least amongst them the nascent Silent Sisterhood and the Black Sentinels of the Astra Telepathica, but perhaps chief amongst His acts was the creation of the XVth.

At first it seemed unremarkable from the other proto-formations of the Legiones Astartes, save that it was clear that very deliberate and exacting criteria were being set upon their intake, strictures imposed that were beyond that of their fellow Legions. The aspirants who would be raised to the Legion were in fact drawn from perhaps the most stable, loyal and culturally sophisticated of the Emperor's domains on Terra, and further sifted finely in selection of candidates. Chief amongst these sources were the Achaemenid Empire, the Enclaves of the Fire Lords of Oaus, and the Kashai Domain. All had been amongst the first powers to give fealty to the Emperor and had supplied warriors for His armies since the earliest battles of the Unification Wars. All of them also had populations which were largely free of the unpredictable mutation which blighted so many of Terra's children. Other aspirants of the XVth are also known to have been drawn from across Terra, but never in so great a number as to be distinct. The entirety of the Ionus Plateau is recorded as having only given up a single youth to the XVth, for example, though hundreds were taken and raised to the VIIth Legion from the region in contrast. The Emperor Himself is known to have selected many of the first recruits personally, an honour done to almost no other Legion, and never to such a degree.

It is unclear how many recruits were submitted to the process to raise them from humanity to the XVth Legion, but many

seemed to have survived it. The sealed accounts of those involved in the later stages of the project note that successful implantation and integration of the XVth Legion's gene-seed was remarkably high. What is known, however, is the number who walked from the Terran and Luna gene-forges, a number recorded with exactness across many sources as though it held a significance beyond a measure of strength. One thousand warriors—a fully operable initial pattern Legion induction—clad in the grey that all Legions wore at their birth, knelt before the Emperor and made their Oaths of Eternity. Some who saw it say that as the Emperor bade His 'Thousand Sons' to rise, at that exact moment the storms surrounding Terra broke, their force and fury dissipating and leaving only stillness and calm in the Warp beyond corporeal reality.

The Thousand

At first there was little to distinguish the XVth Legion despite their auspicious birth, and the honour done to them by the Emperor. Though as competent in the arts of war as their brother Legions, they were still relatively few in number and possessed no special talent or predilection that was immediately apparent as they acted to quell some limited and localised rebellion on Terra itself before being given their first warships and assignments beyond Sol. Their initial deployments and campaigns were not remarkable. In the cloud warrens of Proxima-III, they assaulted the transgenic blasphemies of the rotten alien cities. On Gladris, they held the lines beside the far larger battalions of the VIth Legion, and on Secularis, they castigated the non-Compliant mica-clans beside the Imperial Heralds of the XVIIth; all were early campaigns successfully executed by the Legion. Yet despite the competency of their actions there was little to draw regard or, in fact, any attention at all. The most that could be said of the XVth was that they displayed a degree of synchronisation and integration in their actions beyond even that common in such exalted warriors as the Legiones Astartes. Perhaps early on the only notable fact about them was that they had quickly adopted some distinct heraldry of their own, namely the ancient 'Millennial' glyph to signify their Legion, commemorating the Emperor's pronouncement, and elements of the ochre panoply of the storied 'Immortal Regiments' of the Achaemenid Empire from which they drew their most pronounced genetic ancestry. From the beginning it is certain that the Legion considered itself a breed apart, despite—and unlike certain

other Legion raisings— being integrated quickly into the Imperium's order of battle as a general Space Marine force with little, at least to begin with, to distinguish it.

These first years of the true Great Crusade were heady times, and the reputations and strength of the Legions grew at an accelerating pace. The Luna Wolves was a name new on the lips of many, but one quickly distinguished in victory—their ranks having already grown to over 30,000 warriors—and the reputation of Terra's pale 'night's children' which made up the the VIIIth could already cow enemies and potential turncoats alike by fear alone, while conversely, the potent fortresses raised by the VIIth already marked the skin of Terra and a dozen worlds beyond Sol's light.

While the XVth made no such meteoric rise, they remained indistinguished from their peers as the Imperium moved out into the unconquered stars, and so it was until the first whispers and rumours began to follow them. Then, no sooner had the Great Crusade entered its second decade, an altogether stranger reputation soon clung about them like a cloak.

Whispers and Fire

Perhaps it was the honour done to the XVth Legion by the Emperor at their creation that first drew the speculation and curiosity of others. The Legion had become marked by the Emperor's words at its oath-taking, and had become known as the Thousand Sons even before its first battle honour had been

won. Perhaps it was because even as other Legions grew in numbers, the XVth grew slowly, its recruits selected seemingly with great caution from the stock of many worlds according to criteria that remained unclear. But perhaps it was simply suspicion bred by the lack of manifest reason for the unusual manner of their creation and the apparent lack of corresponding exceptional nature.

No matter—the Thousand Sons, as the XVth were now widely known despite having outgrown the literal truth of that title, were a Legion that moved uneasily amongst their brothers from their first days, and when the unique qualities of their warriors finally manifested, they did not dampen the embers of distrust, but turned them into a blaze.

A decade after the Great Crusade spilled beyond Sol, the first Thousand Sons began to openly manifest potent psychic abilities. First just a handful were affected, and then as the years went on, more and more. These were not the petty powers of cult prophets or even the sanctioned lesser arts of the half-charlatan fate-twisters that attended the noble House of Terra, but manifestations of the true potential of the Empyrean at its most destructive and majestic. At the hands of the Thousand Sons was displayed living fire made manifest, there came deluges of bio-lightning, armour-cracking telekinetic fury, thoughts which razored open minds, flesh which healed from deathly wounds before the blood could hit the ground, even visions which guided the seer to find hope in a sea of failure. It seemed to onlookers as though the designs of the Emperor had at long last begun to bear fruit.

The careful selection of recruits, the hidden methods of selection, the meticulous preparation of the Legion's warriors, even the low numbers taken as potential recruits, all now seemed to be part of a clear purpose. The Emperor in His wisdom had created a Legion which fused the psychic potential of Mankind with the gene-alchemy of the Legiones Astartes. On the battlefield, though still few in number, the Thousand Sons proved as unpredictable a foe to the enemies of the Great Crusade as they proved utterly deadly, but from this very success grew the suspicion of their brothers.

To those who had come through the Unification Wars, the psyker was at best a shunned instrument of occasional necessity, and most often an abomination to be destroyed. So it was that even as more and more of the Thousand Sons manifested their abilities, so too was it that the aura of curiosity which had followed them since their birth became a cloud of distrust and even outright hostility. Some amongst their brother Legions refused to take to the field alongside them, particularly during the initial flowering of their powers. On Ostratis, the first Millennial of the IIIrd Legion withdrew their ships when a company of the XVth joined the mustering to take the colonies of the Cyn Stars. During the Colgren Campaign, the Dusk Raiders contingent mustered as part of the force refused to look at, listen to or speak to any of the Thousand Sons, dealing only through intermediaries and servitors. It is stated by a few fragmentary sources from the era that even Horus—at that time the only Primarch who was a part of the Great Crusade—voiced direct concerns to the

An Empyrean Purpose

At the time of the manifestation of their psychic powers, the truth of the scheme of the Thousand Sons' creation seemed obvious, and still seems so now. How could the Emperor, in His wisdom and power, have not known what seeds lay in the flesh of the humans taken to make the Thousand Sons? How could He have not known the qualities of the gene-seed used to raise them above humanity, when it was the product of His own hand and knowledge? If we admit that He did not know what He did, then we admit to a universe filled with doubts and bottomless uncertainty.

Yet if we acknowledge what seems manifestly true—that He knew full well what He had wrought in the creation of the Thousand Sons—then we must perhaps see that the hubris that would lay Magnus low was not his alone, but lived in his father also. Perhaps there is another truth, lurking beyond our understanding or ability to comprehend; the ways of the Emperor are rarely simple, and the purposes of His actions seldom what they seem. Yet what comfort is there in such possibilities besides the laughter of the universe at the pride of Man? No matter the cause, the unfolding psychic nature of the Thousand Sons created a single unified response amongst those who learned of it: terror.

Emperor about the Thousand Sons' growing power and advocated a plan to swiftly cull the Legion should they waver. What the Emperor's response to such a question might have been is neither remembered or recorded, but one fact is undoubted; amongst all of the calls of disgust and fear, and even while the Thousand Sons took to battlefields in a blaze of occult fire, the Emperor withheld His censure and remained silent.

Those first years were not marked by discord or isolation alone. Victories piled up in the wake of the Thousand Sons' passage through the stars, victories won in spectacular fashion, victories that became tales that filled listeners with dread and wonder: armies of hundreds of thousands turned to ash, fortress walls cracked as if by the crushing hand of an invisible colossus, and small companies of warriors marching through storms of plasma fire and emerging untouched. And, beside the tales of destruction, there are accounts listed in records that cannot be doubted—the fact that it took Captain Ohrmuzd only six hours to subdue the planet of Necordo with two hundred warriors, or that the now lost Legio Lacrimae gave oaths of perpetual kinship to the Thousand Sons for driving back a force of countless Orks from their crippled Titans during the reversals of the Rout of Megorania. The remembrances of Solomon Voss even imply that the Emperor Himself went to battle with a cadre of Thousand Sons in His vanguard on at least one occasion against the horrors of the foul xeno-form of the Khrave. These deeds are now the forgotten past of the Thousand Sons, their brief time of glory before the next dark mark on the page of their history.

THE CURSED LEGION

The Thousand Sons remained a small Legion even while the star of their martial success rose. While the strength of other Legions grew by the thousands or even tens of thousands, the XVth grew in more modest numbers, sometimes even shrinking when war took its inevitable toll. Half a decade after their exodus from Terra, the Thousand Sons are listed in most records as no more than 10,000 warriors. By comparison the Luna Wolves, the largest Legion of that era, numbered close to five times that strength. Part of this was because the Legion accepted so few recruits, and beyond this, further factors came into play to limit its expansion. While they harvested conquered worlds for recruits like all Legions, the numbers that the Thousand Sons took were small compared with the mass inductions of the Luna Wolves from Cthonia, or the Imperial Heralds from their cowed enemies. Even of these, records indicate that relatively few of those chosen survived the process of transformation to become a Legionary compared to the success rate of the Ist Legion's induction process (generally taken as the median for such things). But it cannot be disputed that during this period what they lacked in numbers, they compensated for in effectiveness. The dominant majority of the Legion were now fully emerged psykers of some form, though of wildly differing levels of ability, and many of the rest seemed to harbour some lesser tendency. But though powerful, they remained few. So it was that when disaster came, it almost destroyed them.



It began on Bezant. Elements of the Thousand Sons 2nd and 5th Chapters had been given the task of bringing the sun-worshipping humans of the verdant world to Compliance. The Byzantine though were loath to give up their golden temples and the whispered commands of their sun-blinded priests. That might have mattered little if it had not been that the population was witch-tainted to its core. The priesthood were all chosen from those who could 'hear the light of the stars', and the traditions of the cult had shaped the population so that of every child born, one in ten were similarly blessed. When the Legion descended on Bezant, they were met not with swords or armies but with fire, nightmare and the roar of dissolving matter. It was an enemy whose arts they understood but had seldom encountered on such a scale. The Legion fought back using their own powers, as keen to prove their psychic mastery as the War Hounds Legion of the era might have been to test their bloody skills against a cadre of superlative enemy warriors in a brutal pitched battle.

There are no accounts outside those of the Thousand Sons of the battle, but if they can be believed, it was as though the fundamental elements of existence itself warred that day. Clouds spun of lightning cleaved through hurricanes of debris, and the shrieks of invisible battles soared through the burning air. The Legion had never been so tested; its warriors poured every scrap of skill and strength into the battle, but still could not break the Byzantine priests. Then, as the psychic deadlock forced black rain from the sky, the pressure broke and a single scream echoed through every mind on the planet.

The name of the warrior who fell at that moment is not recorded. In what remains of the Thousand Sons *Book of Days and Passing*, recovered from the burned libraries of Prospero, he is simply called 'Daleth', and represented by a single ancient sigil in a dead tongue. That the warrior had another name in life is certain, but the meaning of the name his death is recorded under is not. Some savants and linguist-arcans have said that this thought-form 'Daleth' has a purely esoteric meaning, and might symbolise the door from the past to the future, or the beginning and the end of all things. Perhaps they are right, because what is known is that at the height of the battle, the substance of the warrior's body slowly blew apart. Slick flows of malleable flesh spilled from his broken armour, bone fused with the substance of his wargear, and his blood misted and congealed into new forms in

the air as all the while the nameless warrior screamed for mercy in a thousand silent voices heard in every mind of his Legion.

His brothers killed him then, ripping his rebelling flesh apart with bolter fire and bathing the remains in cleansing flame until he was nothing but the dust of ashes. At the time, those who were present swore to keep the fate of their brother from all outside of the Legion. The accounts we have now of this singular event only exist because of what came after, when there was no longer any hope of the secrets being kept, and no redemption offered by keeping them.

The Horror Begins

For a time after Bezant, the Legion seemed

unchanged to outward eyes. Even within its ranks the feeling was that Bezant was an aberration, a unique and terrible fluke caused by the psychic energies unleashed in the battle with the Byzantine. The Great Crusade continued on and the Legion continued to conquer, all the while manifesting ever greater levels of psychic strength. We do not know how long it was until the second warrior fell; only the Thousand Sons know the truth. Perhaps it was months, perhaps years, perhaps longer. But a second did succumb, and then a third Legionary, their bodies dissolving into warp energy, mutating without control. The Legion gave a literal name to the curse that had come upon them; they called it the Flesh Change. The Thousand Sons fought to control what was

happening to them, and to keep it a secret, but both endeavours were doomed.

The Flesh Change manifested again and again, and in ever growing carnage, sometimes afflicting hundreds in a single instant. Such an epidemic could not be kept entirely secret but the Legion strove mightily to do so, twisting the facts where they could not be entirely hidden, so as to hide their shame. Those few within the Imperium's hierarchy who knew that some deep-rooted defect had manifested within the Legion believed it a form of deep-seated flaw of cellular degeneration, such as had once afflicted the Thunder Warriors, or perhaps gene-seed damage such as that which external tragedy had inflicted on the

IIIrd Legion, and did not fully suspect the unfolding horror for what it was.

That the Flesh Change was linked to their psychic abilities and their gene-seed cannot be doubted, but how or why, none save perhaps the Emperor can know. That it afflicted Legionaries who had no, or slight, psychic inclination did not matter to the shadows of hatred and fear which flocked around the Legion even as they floundered. With few facts to draw upon, the forces of the Imperium saw the Legion become withdrawn, and ever more secretive and ever more erratic in its commitment to the Great Crusade. Also, units which fought alongside them increasingly suffered inexplicable losses and even 'accidents', which in

retrospect can be seen as perhaps a desperate silencing of witnesses.

There was little sympathy from their brother Legions, and for those within the Imperium's hierarchy who learned of or at least suspected some measure of the truth of the Flesh Change (or merely the Thousand Sons' 'affliction' as some in ignorance called it), a common belief was that it was just the manifestation of the Thousand Sons Legion's genetic and perhaps even philosophical corruption. The whispers of suspicion soon became shouted condemnations. 'Sorcery', they called the arts of the Thousand Sons, dredging up the word from the black days of the Age of Strife and setting it on the XVth Legion's head like a crown of cold iron.



The Thousand Sons struggled on, their numbers dwindling. Battles and the curse of the Flesh Change cut deeper with every passing year. Shunned by their brother Legions and much of the rest of the Imperium, they continued to slowly conquer even as they seemed to wither. But even as they were undone from within, their psychic might grew. The most powerful ascended higher still in mastery, well beyond any known psyker of the few found in the ranks of other Legions; the number of the surviving warriors within the XVth manifesting powers with increasing potency. From a certain point of view, it might be said that they had little choice. With their numbers falling, and with few others to aid them, they fought using the weapons they had. There is another view, one that resonates with the paths that the Thousand Sons would walk over the following centuries; they persisted in using their powers not only because it was necessary, but because they believed that they were right to do so.

Decay

The Thousand Sons, as has already been noted, were never as numerous as their brothers, and with this gathering calamity, they began to spiral into nothing. Formations which had been thousands strong became hundreds, which became handfuls of warriors outnumbered by the dead and the lost. Ships which had carried great armies of conquest now carried no more than a haunted remnant of past glories walking echoingly empty corridors. The condemnations of others also grew in intensity and strength as the Thousand Sons shrivelled. Primarchs, Legion Masters and figures of authority throughout the body of the Imperium called for the XVth Legion to be disbanded. Some perhaps called for this thinking it a kindness, a mercy given to a once great Legion dying in shame. Others called not just for the Thousand Sons to be dissolved, but for them to be obliterated, and some even said purged—cut from the body of the Legiones Astartes like a cancer, their warriors executed, and their names

THE DREAMLESS BROTHERHOOD

The Thousand Sons made many attempts to cure the Flesh Change before the rediscovery of Magnus and their time on Prospero. Many tried to control it through sheer will, suppressing it or using meditative techniques to try to stop it taking hold. Others used alchemical or retro-viral methods to shut off the uncontrolled biological mutation. Most of these attempts would fail, and all would prove ineffective over time. Faced with this failure, the Thousand Sons took to placing those who succumbed to the early stages of the curse secretly into stasis. As the epidemic bit deeper, the holds of certain ships in the Thousand Sons fleet filled with more and more of their brothers, held in a timeless, dreamless sleep. By the time that the Great Crusade reached Prospero, there were more trapped in this unchanging existence between life and death than there were amongst the living. Some had elected to enter the stasis vaults when they felt the first signs of the Flesh Change take them. Others had been subdued as the curse took hold, their distorting flesh frozen in the instant of dissolution. Of the thousands committed to stasis, it is generally believed that only a few survived Magnus' cure. It is assumed that most had been removed from their timeless sleep and had persisted as the Flesh Change took hold, or were too far gone to save and put from their misery. That assumption, like so much else must be weighed, and we must wonder at the true fate of the Dreamless Brotherhood.

and honours struck from every record, monument and memory. The Emperor did not heed the calls for Him to end His Thousand Sons. Whether He would have, or if the Legion would have simply slid into nothingness, will never be known, because at the moment when it seemed certain that only oblivion waited for the Thousand Sons, they were saved.

PROSPERO: A CRYSTAL AND LIGHT

Prospero was a polished jewel glittering alone in the long dark of night. At least so it appeared at the time of its discovery. While other worlds which had cradled the lost Primarchs it seemed were often unremittingly soaked in darkness, cruelty and blood, Prospero had achieved an ascendancy over such barbarity. This ascendancy was not one of technology, but it was because of the minds of its people, minds shaped by ancient disasters and the necessities of survival.

Prospero was a world which moved between high mountains and deep oceans, between lush forests and dry deserts, a new Terra of legend, and many thousands of years before the coming of either Magnus or the Emperor, humanity had covered its surface. The ancient Prosperine humans had built cities and nations in every reach of those lands. But at some point during the darkness which humanity now calls Old Night, calamity had come to Prospero and almost erased its people from existence. The precise course of this event was never known, even to Magnus or his most gifted sons, but it seems likely that at some point the humans of Prospero had experienced a sudden explosion in psychic potential. Such storms of psychic emergence left scars on many worlds during the Age of Strife and seldom ended in anything but utter disaster. To this day on Terra and hundreds of other worlds, these memories persist in stories of unremitting horror passed down from those dark times, and with good reason. On Prospero the terrifying nature of such a surge can only be guessed at, but in its wake a second calamity came upon its people.

The Mind Parasites

The Psychneuein are nightmarish predatory creatures who live both within the Warp and in reality. Drawn to individuals of psychic potential, their reproductive cycle requires their eggs to be gestated in the mind of a living psyker in our reality. In the psychic blossoming of Prospero's people, the Psychneuein had found the perfect nest and swarmed onto their world in an infestation the likes of which has thankfully rarely been seen the length and breadth of the galaxy. The old civilisation of Prospero died, some believe in a single night of witch-fire and feasting horrors devouring the living from within. But some few indeed survived the calamity, fleeing with what knowledge and technology they could. Those few founded Tizca—the City of Light, Citadel of Reason, the last and only true city of Prospero.

Tizca gleamed under the light of sun and moon. Pyramids flanked in artificial crystal rose up to the azure sky between the glimmering sea and a circle of snow-capped mountains to house the city's masters. Statues carved from coloured stone and polished metal looked down on the paved avenues which radiated out from its centre like the rays of a noon sun. Its people were tall and handsome, with eyes that held the fire of sapphires or emeralds. In the millennia since the psychic cataclysm and the Psychneuein plague, the psychic potential of the survivors' descendants had not faded. Most born in Tizca, be they patrician or pauper, possessed at least a spark of psychic potential. That potential might have doomed the enclave though if they had not learned to control their powers. Traditions grew alongside the buildings of Tizca, schools of mental control, meditation and transcendent focus. Kept safe by these practices, humanity endured on Prospero, but it would never again flourish beyond the bounds of its sanctuary. Beyond Tizca and its cultivated environs, the landscape remained all but empty of human life, haunted by the unquiet ghosts of a lost past. Ruins still dotted the land under coverings of dust or vegetation, the wind singing through their bones like the echoes of old nightmares. The Desolation, the people called that empty expanse, and shunned it in all but the direst of necessities.

A KING FALLEN FROM THE STARS

Magnus came to Prospero as a comet falling from a night sky. The scholars and masters of Tizca looked up and saw his descent like a slash of fire cut through the firmament—a line drawn from the heavens to the heart of Tizca. The ground is said to have shattered where his body struck, the marble flowing like molten silver, and the dreams of every man, woman and child of this world were suddenly overwhelmed in a burst of light and sensation. Cries of mingled terror and wonder rolled through the city. Each of these portents and many more were recorded by the masters of Tizca in exact detail, even as their meaning was argued. None could doubt that the child fallen from the sky—a child found unmarked in the glowing crater caused by his impact—could only portend great change, though whether for good or for ill none could be certain. The answer to that question would not be answered for centuries more, when Tizca and all its people were ashes, and its stars lost beyond storms of poisoned clouds.

Magnus grew amongst the people of Tizca, absorbing the lessons of their masters and exceeding their skill in every area of psychic discipline, scholarship and endeavour. Chief amongst his tutors was a man called Amon, who in a different age would have been the foremost scholar of his people, but Amon's qualities extended beyond the intellectual. While others might have chafed at watching their pupil outstrip their own accomplishments, Amon seems to have realised that Magnus was far more than he could ever be, and so set himself the task not of teaching his charge knowledge but wisdom. As much as Magnus' mind and abilities leapt forwards, Amon tried to instil caution, to temper genius with humility. There came a time though when no further limitation could be placed on Magnus, and the pupil became the master in every sense.

Magnus ascended to the heights of Prospero's governmental circles, remaking the civilisation which had fostered him as he did so, perfecting and building on the traditions of the past and raising them and the people of Tizca to undreamed of heights of intellectual and psychic attainment. From the foundations of the methods of mental control he created the Five Prosperine Cults. From the roots of Tizca, the pyramids and towers rose higher and higher. Leaps of intellectual intuition, the deciphering of ancient lore and the unravelling of many mysteries became like the passing of sea breezes. Tizca flowered as never before, and at its head was Magnus, the 'Crimson King' of an empire of dreams.

The Gift of Salvation

It has been suggested that a connection existed between the Emperor and Magnus for long years before the Great Crusade came to Prospero. The truth and extent of this can never be known. Magnus claimed such a prior link, and that the understanding between the two was considerable, greater even than that between the Emperor and any of the other Primarchs. He is even recorded as having remarked that his ultimate teacher in the psychic realm, even in the time before he was fully conscious, and during his early life on Prospero, was the Emperor, and that the two had quested in the ætheric realm beyond reality many times.

How much of what was claimed is true, or true to the extent claimed by Magnus, is uncertain. The supremely psychic nature of Magnus and the transcendent psychic might of the Emperor makes a form of connection possible, perhaps even likely, but whether it was to the extent claimed by Magnus is open to doubt. Perhaps he was speaking in metaphor, a habit that he often demonstrated.



THOUSAND SONS LEGION CONTEMPTOR DREADNOUGHT

USHAPT-OSIRON HEDARA PTOMALAC
GUARDIAN OF THE HOUSE OF THE JACKAL

One of a cadre of nine Dreadnoughts which 'slept' within the walls of the House of the Jackal, a large mortuary and memorial complex which sat upon the western edge of Tizca's central district, serving as its ritual protectors, Hedara Ptomalac in life had been one of the first generation of Thousand Sons inducted on Prospero. The archives of the Logistica Corpus list Ptomalac as serving with distinction as the commander of a heavy support squad during the Relief of Keene's Landing, there receiving Imperial Citation, and years later again as honourably falling in battle at the infamous Last Stand on Rakotis and his subsequent internment in one of the first Contemptor Dreadnoughts issued to the XVth Legion.

After the outer structures of the House of the Jackal were shelled into ruin by the Space Wolves Legion, the Dreadnought Ptomalac and his surviving brethren tore free of the rubble and counter-attacked the Space Wolves' heavy armour at short range, Ptomalac personally accounting for two Typhon Siege Tanks before his obliteration.

Perhaps it was true but not to the extent that Magnus claimed. And then there is the possibility that he was deceived, in part or in the whole. This last possibility, given what was to come, cannot be discounted. No matter the truth of the prior connection between the Emperor and Magnus, when the Emperor came to Prospero, He knew enough to bring with Him what remained of the Legion born of Magnus' line.

Master and Acolytes

War and the Flesh Change had cut deep by the time the XVth were reunited with their sire. So many now slept in stasis or had succumbed to battle or mutation that when the Legion came to Prospero, summoned by the Emperor, a scant few thousand knelt before their father. The bond between a Primarch and his gene-sons is said to transcend even that of human parent and child. Between beings such as Magnus and his psychically attuned gene-sons, the bond seems to have been closer still, for from the moment they were reunited, both Primarch and Legion seemed extensions of one another in thought, outlook and spirit. At last Magnus had pupils and disciples both capable of assimilating his teachings and walking the path he saw for Mankind. But even as Magnus took command of his Legion and declared Prospero its home, so the Thousand Sons succumbed to the Flesh Change with increasing frequency, as though the contact with their gene-sire had brought on a final, terrible phase in the curse's cycle.

Faced with this unfolding disaster, Magnus turned all of his power, lore and learning to discovering a cure to the curse which was killing his sons; it was not simply an act of filial patronage but also, as some have suggested, a test, and one set by the Emperor Himself to His strangest of sons. What occurred next can only be guessed at, or deduced in shape from the shadows it casts from that time into the present. Magnus found a cure and saved his Legion. At the time none were certain how he had achieved this, and such were the abilities of the Crimson King that few, even amongst his brothers, could have begun to understand the answer even if he had given it. Now, with suspicion gifted from the scars of treachery, it seems possible that Magnus delved too far beyond what Mankind should know for the means to save his sons, and perhaps with his salvation sold them to a greater doom.

The Legion had been saved by Magnus, but not without loss. From amongst those few who still walked, and amongst those who

dreamed in stasis, fewer yet survived to see the Thousand Sons saved. Just as at their foundation they again numbered just 1,000 warriors, and whether by strange accident or occult design, the exactitude of this number can only be wondered at. Again and again throughout their history this numeration would follow the XVth, repeating in the cycles of their near-extinction and rebirth. It might be easy to ascribe coincidence to such phenomenon, but when considering anything to do with the nature of the Emperor's creations, and the Thousand Sons in particular, coincidence must be treated with suspicion.

THE NEW SONS OF PROSPERO

Magnus did not just save his Legion, he reshaped it within and without. Prospero became the home world of the Thousand Sons, the source of many of its new recruits, and its ways became the foundation of the reborn Legion. In place of the old structures drawn from the echoes of the Unification Wars, Magnus created new foundations of authority, knowledge and mysteries which spiralled through one another, transforming everything from the Legion's command hierarchy to its panoply of war to the very language it used in common discourse. Far from denying the use of psychic powers, Magnus enhanced and refined their use, training his sons in the arts he had distilled on Prospero. The Five Prosperine Cults were spread through the Legion, with each psychically able warrior taking one which most fitted the nature of his gift. The abilities of those who had survived Magnus' cure for the Flesh Change were great, but under Magnus' tutelage they grew, became deeper in application and stronger in subtlety. In fresh recruits he sought both psychic potential and intellectual excellence and sophistication—no mere killers bred to slaughter would carry his gene-seed. Many recruits came from Prospero itself, selected from the brightest of its youth, though as the Legion ventured once again into the stars, more would be taken from other worlds with a deftness of selection that fitted their singular purpose.

From amongst his former masters and disciples, and amongst the population of Prospero, he also raised a few to the Legion, even though they were too old to receive the full gene-seed implantation, achieving successes in doing so unparalleled elsewhere. Prosperine alchemical techniques, arcane physiochemical augmentation, and Magnus' own biomantic powers allowed these half-breed Legionaries to follow Magnus on his

quest into the stars. Among these elevated humans was Amon, one-time faithful mentor turned disciple, and now Magnus' aide in the remaking of his Legion. Much of the lore and technique gathered and developed by Magnus was passed from Amon, and these chosen few served as teachers and mentors to both the survivors of the original Thousand Sons and its new initiates. With his Legion growing once again, its curse apparently lifted and its strength sharpened, Magnus joined the Great Crusade.

Visionaries and Sorcerers

Many of the Primarchs were idealists who saw the Great Crusade not only as a war of conquest, or eve of survival, but a path to a greater end. Magnus undoubtedly had such vision, though the utopia he saw at the end of the road was different from that of his brothers. To Magnus, the purpose of the Great Crusade was not to dominate the stars but to elevate Mankind. He believed that both spiritual and intellectual ascendancy was the ultimate destiny of Mankind. He saw a golden age of enlightenment waiting for humanity, one in which thoughts, knowledge and reason guided minds free to skim the surface of realities and see the great vista of existence. Reaching this light was the goal of any undertaking, no matter how brutal it might seem in the short term. Armed with this certainty, Magnus and his sons set about not only conquering worlds, but gathering knowledge and proliferating these ideals.

Wherever they went, the Thousand Sons culled lore with an insatiable hunger. Parchments, books, data-vaults, works of artifice and art, and countless other artefacts from both human and alien worlds were gathered by the Legion. Many were taken during the wars of conquest prosecuted by the Thousand Sons, but missions sent to already Compliant worlds also recovered wonders thought lost to the darkness of the Age of Strife. It is a well recorded fact, for instance, that Magnus himself journeyed deep into the shadows of Terra in accompaniment of Perturabo of the Iron Warriors in search of fragments of lore; the brother Primarchs, utterly unlike in temperament and mien, united in their desire to know what was knowable, albeit in very different fields.

Sometimes the campaigns fought by the Thousand Sons made little strategic sense to others, and they would often leave a conflict or join another seemingly at whim, drawing inevitable criticism which added to the shadowed suspicions which still dogged the

Legion. Such acquisitiveness and quixotic tendencies brought derision from some, and overt hostility from others. The cloud of distrust had not left the Thousand Sons with the discovery of their Primarch. Many still whispered that they were tainted, that they were little better than the sorcerer kings and witch-priests of Old Night—for all their claims of enlightenment. In answer to this, Magnus sought not only to persuade the rest of the Imperium that he was right, but sought to make them see his rightness with their own eyes.

Of the Librarius

Foremost amongst Magnus' efforts to advance his point of view was his involvement in the Librarius Project. While sanctioned psykers had been used as part of the Great Crusade from its earliest days, their use had always been limited and never extended to the Legiones Astartes as a whole, or with any formality, though some emergence of psyker talent had been noted in several of the Legions, notably the Blood Angels and the Night Lords, although in numbers almost inconsequential to that found in the Thousand Sons. The Librarius Project sought to fuse together the manifest use of psychics in battle and the superior mental strength and physical prowess of the Space Marines, and regulate their function. While the Primarch Magnus was not the project's originator, he became undoubtedly the project's chief architect and proponent, wisely outwardly at least basing many of its tenets not on Prosperine culture but on other sources, perhaps less suspect to outsiders, and by this and his reasoned argument, Magnus the Red persuaded a number of his brothers of the Librarius Project's virtues. The willingness and backing of several of the Primarchs he swayed seems likely to have carried the day, and the project was sanctioned by the Emperor.

Members of several Legions who manifested psychic potential were then trained by the Thousand Sons in an adapted form of the Prosperine disciplines and practices, fused with Terran- and Baalite-derived and Emperor-sanctioned lore. After completing this training, they were placed back into their Legions and trusted to further disseminate what they had learned. Though the greater mysteries of the Thousand Sons' arts were clearly withheld in retrospect, the new-formed Librarians of the Legiones Astartes soon proved their worth.

For a time, it seemed as though Magnus and the Thousand Sons had begun to shed the suspicions which had shrouded them for decades. Some amongst the other Legions and Primarchs would never discard their

dislike, or even hate for the XVth, but in this brief era, it seemed at least that they had reached an uneasy peace with both their own nature and the Imperium they were fighting to build. Fate, though, is relentless.

THE FIVE FOLD CULTS

The pillars of the psychic mysteries of the Thousand Sons were known as the Five Fold Cults. Each Cult specialised in a single strand of psychic power and every psyker of manifest power within the Legion belonged to a Cult which mirrored their foremost ability. As an initiate mastered their art, they ascended through the complex layers of their Cult, learning its mysteries as their abilities grew. Each Cult was headed by a Magister Templi, ranked lower only to the Arch-magus of all Cults in the form of Magnus himself, and the Emperor perhaps beyond that. The ranks within each Cult varied both in number and title, though many titles were common between them all.

The Pavoni

The Pavoni concerned themselves with the interaction of the ætheric and living flesh. Biomancers, they were flesh shapers and re-makers, and their initiates could channel the powers of the Warp to harden their flesh against damage, boil the blood of their enemies, and even to heal the bones and flesh of their bodies. Deeply connected to the process of life, the Pavoni were often said to hold the heart and the passions of the Legion, and in matters of doctrine, oratory and belief, their adepts often dominated.

The Raptora

The Raptora focused on manipulating physical reality with their will, operating psychokinesis and control of fundamental forces such as gravity. They could conjure shields of invisible energy, crush metal with their minds, and summon storms of debris to flay their foes. Many of the Raptora were also amongst the Legion's most gifted theoreticians and scholars, noted for the coldness and cleanness of their reasoning and their logic.

The Corvidae

The Corvidae were soothsayers and augurs who bent their abilities to touch the flow of time and consequence. Perhaps the most subtle of all the Cults, it was said by their fellows that they could read the past in a dying man's breath, and could glimpse far distant possibilities, and even manipulate the flow of one second to another by the force of their minds alone. The mark of the Corvidae was also the mark of the Legion's greatest strategists and generals, and it is no coincidence that Ahriman, Chief Librarian of the Thousand Sons, and foremost of its leaders at the dawning of the Horus Heresy, was Magister Templi of the Corvidae.

The Athanean

The Athanean's secrets were bound to the workings and manipulations of the mind and thought. Both subtle and powerful telepaths, they held the Legion together in battle, channelling orders and intent seamlessly into the minds of its warriors, forming a communications network unbreakable and unparalleled in scope. Because of this, it often seemed not an army of individuals but of machines driven by a single, dominating will. Out of the press of battle, many of the Cult were given to asceticism and withdrawn contemplation: a consequence of their contact with the thoughts of others, perhaps. They were often also used as emissaries to other Legions and factions of the Imperium.

The Pyrae

The Pyrae's abilities expressed themselves in a terrifying manner—the control and creation of fire. Their thoughts could become hell-storms burning as bright as a star's fury, and their touch could reduce metal to slag in mere moments. Most bellicose of all the Cults, the Pyrae excelled in destruction, and their smouldering pride beat with the heat of the Legion's martial heart.

UNIT ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE WITHIN THE LEGION

The structure of the Thousand Sons was like no other Legion. Just as Magnus the Red rebuilt his Legion from the ruin of the Flesh Change, so he also shaped its every facet into a pattern which served his vision and the needs of his teachings, a pattern named in some sources as the 'Pesedjet'. Where the formations and traditions of the old Legion coincided with his own designs he kept them, where they did not, he removed and replaced them.

No part of his Legion was accident or coincidence—a fact he is on record as having boasted of to Fulgrim—noting that even where practices or variation had sprung up seemingly spontaneously, that they were 'merely seeds long planted', and that 'all which happens in my sons is held in my eye long before it is born in their hearts and minds'. While we might doubt the extent of his prescience, the implication is clear; in the business of his Legion nothing that endured did so without his consent, Magnus the Red was lord and master, absolute.

Where the Thousand Sons most resembled their brother Legions was at the level of individual units. The full panoply of the Legiones Astartes was represented in the Legion, from lascannon-armed heavy support units, to Sky Hunter squadrons mounted on jetbikes and with every variation in between, they were left not lacking in any theatre of war. For all their psychic might, and the extent to which they used its power to augment the waging of war, they were still Space Marines and capable of destruction on a much more mundane—yet still highly effective—level. If the Thousand Sons displayed a favour towards a unit configuration, it was to the mechanised tactical squad as its principal infantry paradigm, with mobile speeder and flyer-based reconnaissance units embedded across

the Legion's deployments as a near-universal adjunct. The exact reasons for this are not recorded, but it is possible that it was simply seen as the most efficient and adaptable method of deploying warriors into the field, and that the psychic might of the Legion made greater specialisation less necessary than it might have. This possible explanation tallies with a number of engagements when the Legion deployed forces against armoured or fortified enemies without the full complement of heavy materiel and equipment that would have been used by other Legions under similar circumstances, relying upon psychic power rather than just shot and shell to carry the day.

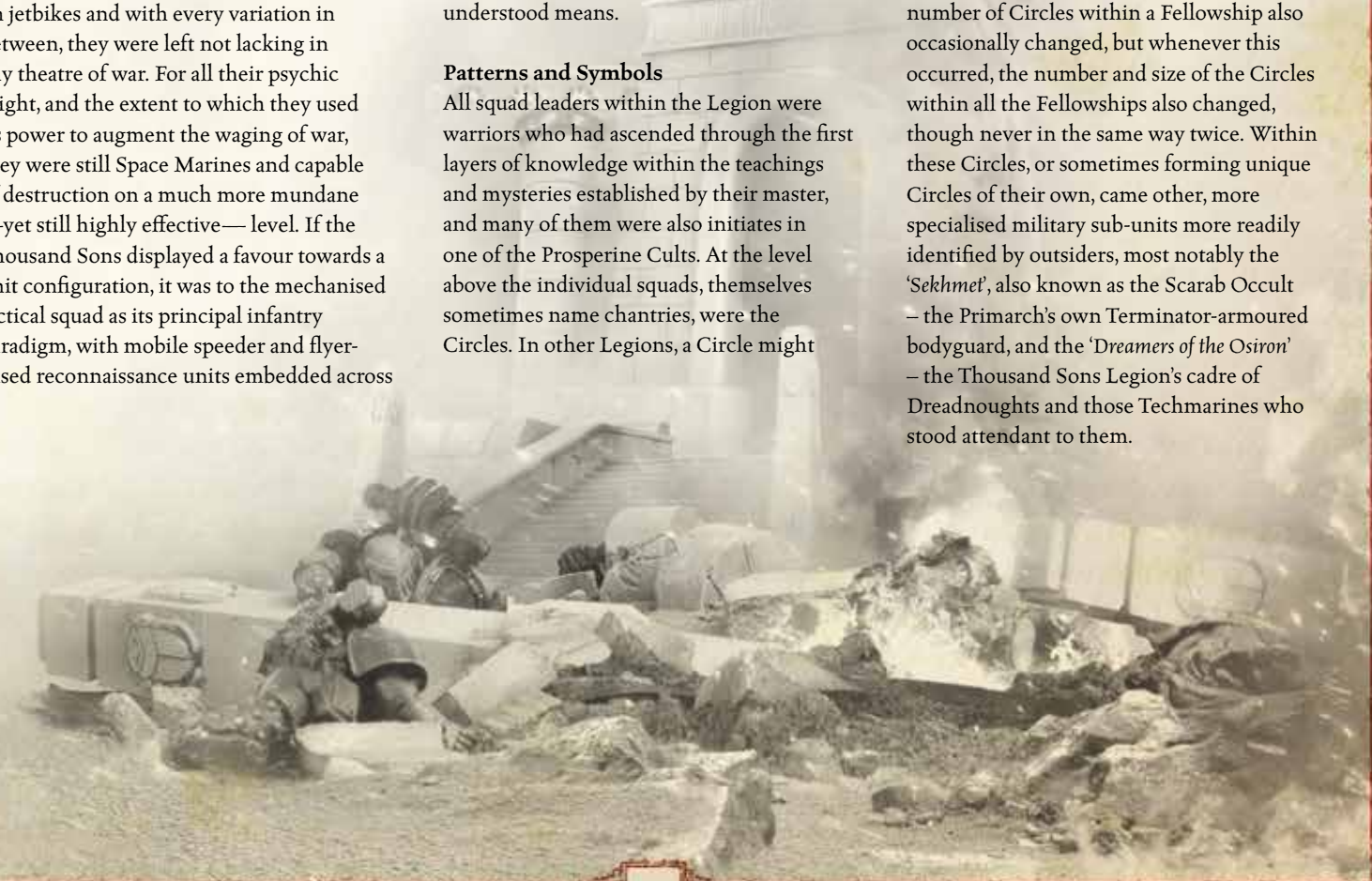
It is however also notable that despite this reliance on basic troops, the deadly arithmetic of attrition-based warfare was never a game that the Thousand Sons Legion entered into willingly, actively avoiding the meat grinder of mass-assault tactics and striving never to allow themselves to become encircled or undertake sacrificial holding actions, regardless of the prize at stake. Instead, they always strove to stack the odds of battle in their favour, either through exacting strategic planning, the considered use of ancillary forces such as battle-automata as shields and vanguards, and of course, by far more occult and less easily understood means.

Patterns and Symbols

All squad leaders within the Legion were warriors who had ascended through the first layers of knowledge within the teachings and mysteries established by their master, and many of them were also initiates in one of the Prosperine Cults. At the level above the individual squads, themselves sometimes name chantries, were the Circles. In other Legions, a Circle might

have been called a line company, but their place within the Thousand Sons was more than a simple grouping of warriors under a commander. Each Circle could vary in size, being anything between a handful of squads to many hundreds of Legionaries strong. These variations in size were not accidental, but part of a pattern of relative strength and numerical relationship which functioned to form a structure of occult significance and hierarchy within the Legion. Each bore a designation formed of both letters and numbers, though the progression of each of these variables did not follow a strict order, but again seemed part of a spiralling design which formed part of the Prosperine Mysteries. From what remains known, the Circle of Iaed-9, for example, consisted of 512 warriors divided into squads kept at strengths of either 16, 9 or 7.

All Circles were part of one of the nine Fellowships. It is said that when Magnus first began to reorder his Legion that there were ten Fellowships, but severe losses reduced this to nine. Whether this is true or if Magnus decided to change the structure because of some other, hidden, factor is not known. The number of Circles within each Fellowship varied just as the strength of each Circle was clearly purposeful, but was inconsistent at a superficial level. The number of Circles within a Fellowship also occasionally changed, but whenever this occurred, the number and size of the Circles within all the Fellowships also changed, though never in the same way twice. Within these Circles, or sometimes forming unique Circles of their own, came other, more specialised military sub-units more readily identified by outsiders, most notably the 'Sekhmet', also known as the Scarab Occult—the Primarch's own Terminator-armoured bodyguard, and the 'Dreamers of the Osiron'—the Thousand Sons Legion's cadre of Dreadnoughts and those Techmarines who stood attendant to them.



THE RED ORDERS

In addition to the core structures of the Legion, there were three Orders which existed both within and beyond its circumference. The Orders stood apart from the Fellowships and their Circles, and indeed the Temples of Prosperine psychic lore, their membership crossing such divides. Their purpose was not the practice and ascendancy of psychic mastery, for that was the purview of the great Cults, nor the day-to-day tactical operations of the Legion, but rather they were macro-military structures. Perhaps as much an outgrowth of the traditions and culture of the Legion as a deliberate structure, they were made to cope with the wider factors of the conducting of the Great Crusade, the furtherance of the Legion as a whole and its relation to the wider Imperium.

The Order of Ruin – ‘The Unmakers’
Known by the symbol of a poised serpent, the Order of Ruin were a sect of mystics said to be obsessed with numerology and the hidden structure of the universe. Calculators, logicians, analysts and organisers of supreme ability, the Order of Ruin were the siege makers, logistical specialists and planners of the Thousand Sons. When the Legion deployed its armour and ordnance to lay waste to a city or break a planet’s defences, it was the formulae of the Order of Ruin which guided the number, placement and timing of shells, explosives and force. It is said that the Order of Ruin knew the strength of every warrior and war machine within the Legion, and weighed them all in calculations that only they and their Primarch understood.

When a force was raised for a campaign, the Order of Ruin would be in the background assisting by arcane means in the determination of the disposition and

strength of that force. The arraying and maintenance of the Legion’s warships also fell under the Order’s hand, as did the creation and supply of all its material. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Order of Ruin also maintained the closest contact with the Mechanicum, in particular with the isolated Forge World of Zhao-Arkhad, which the Legion had liberated and with which it had maintained many binding ties afterwards. Under its general command laboured all of the Legion’s forge-masters and Techmarines, many of which came directly from within this Order’s ranks.

The Order of the Jackal – ‘The Measure of Life and Death’
The Order of the Jackal had a presence in every other structure and faction of the Thousand Sons, including the other Orders. The role of this small Order was twofold: to remember the dead and to raise the next generation of warriors for the Legion. The grave urns of the dead kept beneath the pyramids of Tizca were tended by their hands, and it was in the memories of each member of this Order that the deeds of the fallen were held.

When a warrior on the edge of death was considered for the honour of internment in the iron embrace of a Dreadnought, it was the Order of the Jackal who weighed his worth and decided his fate. To them also fell the task of assessing and selecting aspirants for induction into the Legion. On Prospero and many other worlds, they would walk amongst the gathered throngs of potential recruits, testing with their minds and casting divinations of their fates. In this way, the Order were the guardians of the Legion’s past and future. The Legion’s Apothecarian, who

also were all but indivisible from the Order of the Jackal, maintained the Legion’s gene-seed and were but a practical manifestation in some ways of the Order of the Jackal’s wider purpose. In their role as protectors of the Legion’s traditions, the Order served another highly important ritual position as arbiters within the Legion, as their members within each of the Five Cults formed the guardians of each Cult’s temple; their dual allegiance and responsibility marked by their ceremonial jackal-masked helms and emblems alongside the symbols of their Cult.

The Order of Blindness – ‘The Hidden Ones’
It is only by extrapolation, and the interpretation of scraps of intelligence, that the wider Imperium knows of the existence of the Order of Blindness. Thought to have been headed by Magnus’ equerry, and former tutor, Amon – the so-called Hidden Ones appear to have been an Order of infiltrators, spies, interrogators and scouts deployed to gather intelligence. How the members of this Order were recruited, controlled and deployed remain unclear, though there is evidence that the use of psychically conditioned non-Legiones Astartes humans were a part of their broader methodology. Beyond this, their membership and purpose remain shrouded, though there is some evidence that the Order may also have been responsible for the control of certain fringe military elements within the Legion, whose purposes were less to do with stealth than the creation of chaos in a foe, such as the Thousand Sons’ few Destroyer-type units, although this remains unconfirmed.



THOUSAND SONS LEGION HERALDRY



Fellowship Command Legion Icon with Numeral



Third Fellowship Legion Icon



Votive Glyph Pattern



Second Fellowship Assault Icon Variant



'Pesedjet' – Legion Strategic Command Icon



Legion Icon, Veteran Variant



Legion Icon, Common Usage



Legion Icon, Squad Command Variant



Legion Tactical Icon, Mid-Great Crusade Usage



Legion Icon, Consular Variant



Legion Honour Guard – Order of the Jackal



Pre-Prosperine Legion Icon

THOUSAND SONS LEGION HELM MARKINGS

From the period of Magnus’ reformation onwards, a number of unique variants of power armour helms appear within the ranks of the Thousand Sons. While not universal, they are believed to invoke certain ritual factors and materials in their construction.



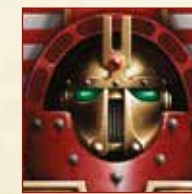
MkII 'Crusade' Achean Sub-pattern

Introduced after 'Pesedjet' structural reform, mid-Great Crusade onwards, and still used by veteran and specialist formations by the time of the Burning of Prospero.



MkIV 'Maximus' Achean Sub-pattern

Introduced during the latter Great Crusade, widespread adoption of MkIV sub-patterns locally manufactured by Arkhadine sub-forge.



Tartaros Tactical Dreadnought Armour Achean Sub-pattern

Variant aesthetic form and ritual materials incorporated into recently issued Terminator armour panoply, note also the use of 'Nemes' – Prosperine adornment indicating rank and status as one of the 'learned nobility'.



Example Legionary Standards of the Second and Third Fellowships of the Thousand Sons.

THE ENDLESS SPIRAL

Besides the Circles, Fellowships, Orders and Cults, there were dozens of other cabals, collegium and symposia formed by the Thousand Sons to pursue a particular strand of knowledge or refine a branch of psychic ability, offering a layer of subdivision that inevitably spilled over to their military structures. The membership and importance of these collectives waxed and waned with the rise and fall of their members, and the popularity of their concerns. Over the decades between the rediscovery of Magnus and the Council of Nikaea, there were likely many hundreds of these groupings formed within the Thousand Sons, of which few are now known. The 'Hands of the Drowned Moon' are recorded, for example, as having focused long hours of debate and ritual experimentation on what happened to a living being at the moment of death. The 'Aquilae', meanwhile, sometimes called the 'denied sixth Cult of Prospero', investigated the nature of the æther itself until it was disbanded upon the orders of Magnus. By contrast, the 'Atmon,' a group obsessed with the psychic observation of the distant past, was said to have never numbered more than ten initiates of the Corvidae.

The obscure nature of the structure of the Thousand Sons to outsiders is made all the more so because it was clearly driven by a precise design and guiding purpose, though what this was none outside of their ranks could say, and no member of the Legion ever broke the bindings of secrecy placed on them by their Primarch. This, amongst many other factors, further contributed to the suspicions of those outside of the Thousand Sons. Why, they asked, do these things if not for a reason, and if it was for a reason, why keep that reason secret? Of course, many other Legions had their mysteries; some might claim all held at least one secret in their hearts, but most were better at keeping them hidden or at least allaying suspicion, or in the case of the XXth were so bound up in obfuscation as to be impenetrable, but unashamed in acknowledgement of their nature. The Thousand Sons though wore the fact of their secrets like a crown whilst all the while denying them. And unlike the Alpha Legion, whose secrets were those of the shadow warrior, a thing that outsiders could guess at if not fully understand, the lingering accusation of 'sorcery' carried with it an infernal reek.

Legion Command Hierarchy

Authority within the Thousand Sons was a matter of perspective. As with all things a

simple answer existed for all to see, but if one knew a little more and looked from a slightly different angle, that answer was replaced by another. A little more knowledge, another small shift in view point and another structure of seniority would layer over the first two, and so on and on with each new detail.

At its simplest, the Legion can be seen as a pyramid. At its pinnacle was Magnus, supreme in every way, undisputed master of the Thousand Sons in war, scholarship and power. Beneath him were the high captains and magisteria of the Nine Fellowships, and beneath them in turn the legates and line captains, captains-adjutant and sergeant-aspirants who variously commanded the Circles within those Fellowships and led their tactical deployments and squads in the field. The most senior and trusted of the Legion's leaders formed a coven around Magnus, the so-called 'Rehahti', which replaced the shattered and threadbare Legion command staff structure the Primarch had found when he had joined his sons.

This first outward reading of authority within the Legion is accurate up to a point, but its simplicity hides another pattern. It is self-evident that most of the command structure of the Thousand Sons comprised accomplished psykers, though there were a few exceptions, and those of the Legion who lacked manifest psychic ability usually ranked below their psychic brothers. Even where notional military rank was equal, often it was psychic mastery not veterancy which denoted seniority. Even though this distinction was never formalised, it was a fact obvious to any who had insight into the Legion. Amongst those with psychic power, two other factors determined their place within the order of things at any time: their rank within their Cult, and the prestige of that Cult relative to the others. A low-ranked initiate of one Cult would not outrank a senior member of another Cult, but between initiates of a supposed equivalent rank, the difference was all important.

Beyond the Cults were other factors which could alter the authority of an individual. The membership of an Order and one's place within that Order, hierarchy of ceremonial authority in Prosperine culture (such as responsibility for a portion of the city of Tizca), all were absolute and measurable factors in calculating the standing of any member of the Legion. All of these subtle and hidden factors permeated every grain of authority within the Thousand Sons, and reflected back to the relative standing of

Magnus' close lieutenants within the Rehahti and who was included in its ever-shifting membership.

War Disposition

The Thousand Sons Legion had never entirely shaken off the withering effects of the first decades of its existence. Over a century later, its near-extinction prior to the rediscovery of Magnus still left a shadow on the numerical strength of the Legion. Combined with its conservatism in recruitment, this legacy meant that they were amongst the smallest Legions at the time of the Burning of Prospero. Estimates of their strength place it as potentially being as high as 80,000-85,000 warriors—ironically perhaps their greatest ever number—immediately before their destruction, with the bulk of this strength located on Prospero when not explicitly sent upon a mission of conquest. Even at this level of manpower,

the Thousand Sons comprised one of the smallest of the Space Marine Legions. Their Legion fleet was concomitant with this size comprising, by extant records, some forty capital class vessels with perhaps three times that number of smaller vessels of various classes at their disposal. The most potent of these was known to be the *Photep*, the Thousand Sons Primarch's flagship: a heavily modified Gloriana class vessel that was believed to have been augmented with a significant number of psychically augmented defences and weapons of Magnus' own unique design.

Like most Legions, the Thousand Sons forces had previously been distributed across the various fronts of the Great Crusade, but the events of Nikaea and Magnus' reaction to them meant that the Thousand Sons had acted alone for much of the period following their master's censure. They shunned the

close company of other forces, and while they continued to wage war unimpeachably in the Imperium's name, they undertook few far-ranging deployments that kept them from the touchstone of Prospero and their Primarch for long.

So it was that the bulk of the Legion was within range to heed their Primarch's call when the Wolves came for them. Of course it is possible, likely even, that other forces remained in Expeditionary or Conquest fleets that either did not return to Prospero in time, or never received the communication to do so. As with all things related to the vagaries of communication and travel within the Warp, absolutes must be treated with suspicion. The Burning of Prospero was the doom of the Thousand Sons Legion, with official estimates of their survival of the planetary assault as low as 1,000—once again, we see the numeration rears its head!

While it is likely that several thousand more were far off-world at the time, some of these elements were swiftly hunted down in the years that followed, and others yet disappeared without trace. This should have seen the extermination of the Legion, yet it was not to be so, for in the years of the Horus Heresy, the Thousand Sons again appeared, this time siding with the Traitor, and in numbers that given their destruction make little cogent sense. If it is the case, as some claim, that the remnants of the Legion fled to the Empyrean, and there in the dark realms beyond human reason and beyond time grew strong again, who can say what befell them with certainty? Perhaps, even as the more crazed theorists claim, there were in truth no survivors of Prospero, only the echoes of the vengeful dead returned to haunt their destroyers. If this is true, what difference is made to the terrible power the Legion came to represent in the Age of Darkness that followed?



