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Sanctuary Diaspora

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The Coin Currency:

Though suggestive information regarding Highland economic practices is plentiful throughout the texts, the limited contexts are perhaps less than precise. The Highlanders in fact do not recognize anything but labor as constituting any measurable value and so all material is for all practical purposes 'free', simultaneously belonging to both everyone and no one. All labor whether specialized or generalized is considered of equal hour-to-hour value without exception. No practice recognizes profit, debt or any otherwise disproportionate rate of exchange and so the coin currency is ultimately nothing more than a convenience in the form of a personal account of accumulated labor value. As previously mentioned, most residents possess at all times some accumulation of coins, and so in other words, most Highlanders maintain a regular balance of greater contribution than benefit and this balance serves as the operational reserve 'margin' on which the exchange of goods and services occurs.

The academics institution instructs all Highlanders in their youth in most necessary basic skills and methods required for common construction, and land (consisting of material) is of course of no measurable value. In practical reality, most Highlanders gather the necessary raw materials and construct their own homes with little more assistance than those portions of work that might simply prove too awkward or cumbersome for one person to perform independently. The otherwise independent construction of a home occurs therefore at virtually no expense other than each individual's own labor. Having accomplished so much typically by the age of twenty, Highlanders do little more with the rest of their lives than exchange modest services for modest comforts and indulgences, and seek out whatever craft or discipline might appeal to them. Most Highlanders work no more than the average farmer does in that the delivery of food to market generally determines annual production cycles as farmers initiate the process by exchanging food for coins, subsequently placing those coins into circulation to convert food production labor to other products and services.

Highlanders observe no formal work schedule and most work when they simply feel like it or when their coin reserves run low. As mentioned with some regularity, shortages of all things other than food are not merely common but entirely predictable and most transactions involve 'requests' and 'waiting periods' but with sufficient acclimation, most Highlanders regard the condition as nothing more than a minor inconvenience. Highlanders do not recognize the concepts of 'employment' or 'business' and every individual involved in any operation is simply an equal 'operator'. An excellent example occurs in the 'operation' of an establishment such as the Edyn Inn, where every individual involved qualifies as an equal 'host'. 'Hosts' simply show up and depart when they feel like it and as a result, might occasionally find the operation overstaffed and thus choose to come back some other time, or patrons might occasionally find the operation understaffed and likewise come back some other time or simply choose to stay and settle for slower or less attentive service. On yet some other occasions, patrons might enter only to find the establishment simply outright deserted.

The average Highlander, while in possession of any reserve of coins, experiences virtually no motivation to work and the common practice in determining work schedules consists of simply showing up at a chosen operation with some frequency to monitor ‘demand’ expectations. The primary reason Highlanders work relies fundamentally on simple conscience and a sense of social obligation. The office of the Martial compensates the militia in coins, while the agricultural community produces food for the entire society. Consequently, as the result of custom and peer pressure, no Highlander can in good conscience, refuse a request for something from any farmer or militia regardless of any personal surplus collection of coins. Highlanders refer to this social obligation as ‘contribution’ and it constitutes a form of virtual taxation. The office of the Martial also collects coins with which to compensate the militia through an actual tax that occurs on an irregular basis. As the coin reserves of the Martial deplete, all product and service operations will double all prices and contribute half of all revenues to the Martial until restoring the coin reserves. The tax occurs on a completely arbitrary basis when necessary and for as long as necessary, and the true practical function of the tax is simply to deflate burgeoning personal coins reserves, cycle those coins back into circulation and encourage individuals to maintain some form of regular work contribution.

The Highland coin ultimately possesses no value and the larger the personal collection of coins, the more unlikely the accumulative labor effort it represents will ever convert to any material value. Most Highlanders work simply because someone asks them to, and the coin transaction represents the exchange of modest conveniences. Highlanders never attempt to collect vast treasuries of coins because in the Highlands, no collection of coins, no matter how large, would ever influence any more than one individual at a time to perform anything more than one modest convenience. Rather than the accumulation of wealth, an excessive collection of coins would only represent an excessive waste of effort that could never possibly convert to any remotely equal exchange value. The Highland coin currency is simply a wholly concocted mechanism orchestrated to induce individuals to maintain relatively regular contribution to society in exchange for relatively equal benefit, and acts as well, as a wage/price regulatory device in that no Highlander ever has a motive to ‘raise’ prices or increase ‘profits’ as neither practice will ever produce actual ‘wealth’ benefit. Farmers and career militia in fact represent the ‘wealthiest’ of Highlanders due to their uniquely predictable and relatively burdensome work schedules, and both are notorious for perpetual possessions of coin stashes well in excess of any reasonable expectations of ever converting as much to any remotely equal value. Both farmers and career militia are in fact, regularly rumored to bury coin collections in secrecy as a means of ‘stimulating the economy’ by removing those coins from circulation thus creating an artificial shortage, inducing productivity.

Property Recognition:

While Highland militia familiar with neighboring city-states might possess some remedial understanding of property and enterprise based economies, the average Highlander would fail to comprehend the concept of proportioned land in the form of personal property, and would consider such a concept not merely impractical, illogical or even counter-intuitive, but outright incomprehensibly bizarre and nonsensical. Highlanders recognize the establishment of a personal domain but regard their occupation of a parcel of earth as a temporary stewardship that expires upon death and never constitutes personal property or material possession.

Highlanders recognize and respect the privacy and autonomy of the established personal domain in every conceivable consideration except economic. Highlanders do not ‘purchase’ parcels of earth and so never sell or trade, bequeath or inherit ‘land’, and of course conversely, would never comprehend any concept such as rent, foreclosure or eviction. The office of the Martial maintains a land survey record and enforces preservation and management of ‘public domains’ such as parks and designated natural resource areas and also restricts occupation of hazardous locations such as flood plains. Every individual otherwise exercises an unrestricted expectation to occupy a personal domain subject to a single limitation in that every occupant of a ‘parcel’ must establish a ‘continuing occupancy’, which in practical terms means, the parcel has to appear ‘in regular use’ such that if a parcel exhibits obvious indications of abandonment, the recorded occupancy is revoked. (An individual establishes a ‘recorded occupancy’ by simply introducing a claim with the office of the Martial to occupy a designated parcel. The office of the Martial verifies compliance with applicable ‘public domain’ and ‘hazard’ considerations then ‘records’ the occupancy by simply plotting it on the land surveys of record and formally designating the ‘recognized’ occupant. Upon death, the occupant is unrestricted from transferring the parcel to family or a designated other, but in either case, that individual is subject to ‘continuing occupancy’ criteria. The introduction of the ‘continuing occupancy’ limitation occurred to prevent ‘hording’, which in fact always represents much more of a hypothetical concern than actual.)

Seilvhanian Origins:

Seilvhanian ‘economic practices’ are identical to those of the Highlands with the exception that Seilvhanian practices in virtually all regards are significantly more sophisticated and advanced. The Seilvhanians exercise a far more efficient form of structured centralized planning which eliminates duplication of effort common in the less organized Highlands. For example, at any given time, as many as three or four shops in the city of Edyn might produce footwear, each featuring a unique catalogue of designs, while in Seilvhan, a single centralized operation produces all footwear, and Seilvhanians maintain records of contributory activities in exchange for products and services without the use of any form of currency. The Seilvhanian standard of living is in fact, measurably more luxurious than the Highland lifestyle due to minimization of contributory effort and maximization of the production and distribution of goods, both the result of standardization and centralized planning. Although they recognize the benefits, Seilvhanians familiar with the Highlands popularly express fondness for ‘charming’ aspects of Highland culture absent in Seilvhanian culture. Seilvhanians do not ‘name’ establishments, for example, and the Seilvhanian footwear shop does not have a ‘name’ as it is the only one and everyone knows where it is, so all concerned simply refer to it as ‘the footwear shop’, while Highlanders display colorful and artistic signs with endearing names such as, ‘Edyn Bootery’ and ‘Highland Footwear’. (Highlanders historically tend to overuse ‘Edyn’ and ‘Highlands’ in establishment names, for example, a statue of Edyn stands in Edyn Park on Edyn Avenue in the city of Edyn on the shores of Edynmere, and a census record from the office of the Martial lists three footwear shops under the names ‘Edyn Bootery’, ‘Highland Footwear’ and ‘Highland Footwear’.) All aspects of Highland culture in fact represent generational mutations of Seilvhanian culture as the result of a common ancestry, as documented within the texts.

Highland Tradition:

Highland ‘tradition’, as in ‘economics’, is also the result of Seilvhanian origins. The first principle all Highlanders learn beginning in childhood is modesty and charity. The most accurately and minimally defined basics of the principle propose each individual should always contribute first (charity) and always maintain reasonable expectations (modesty). The logical conclusion presumes no individual should suffer deprivation or overburden as the result of the practice, and thus the principle constitutes the only reasonably realistic model for utopian idealism.

Highlanders traditionally celebrate the quote attributed to Edyn, “accept no benefit from the suffering of others” as a reinforcing imperative, focusing on the destructive and inherently violent primordial impulse of greed and self-interest, and commonly consider all forms of desire to benefit disproportionately from advantageous circumstances as outright indistinguishable from direct violence. These principles establish the foundation for the unconditional rejection of (and the pronounced demonstrative hostility towards) all forms of ‘politics’ and ‘economics’. Highlanders will frequently argue enthusiastically and even contentiously about specific practical methods and policies, but always from the perspective of common social welfare. However, the slightest hint of the introduction of a ‘partisan’ interest in any such aforementioned argument will invariably coincide with extremely negative reaction. Highlanders consider partisan self-interest unsophisticated at best and crude ignorant barbarism more often, (Moreover, Highlanders consider all forms of personal ambition and aspiration the result of substantial mental deficiency.) and regularly subject any Highlander that might exhibit such a predisposition to extremely harsh forms of rejection, up to and including total and absolute social isolation.

Contrary to popular mythology and contemporary gossip, the militia does not automatically ‘chase’ all foreigners from the borders on sight. The accounts of the ‘friendly greeting’ practiced by Faelryd (though tactically unconventional) represent the standard procedure. Scouts will attempt to conduct something of an ‘interview’ with suspects on the border and while an aggressive reaction will immediately justify a forceful expulsion, the purpose of the ‘interview’ is to solicit the expression of ‘partisan interests’. Foreigners might speak of ‘trade’, ‘commerce’ and ‘diplomacy’ and Highland scouts will routinely interpret such terminology as indistinguishable from belligerent military conquest, and act accordingly, but those that convincingly establish themselves as simple wanderers, hermits or woodsmen may even find themselves sharing a meal and a campsite with a company of scouts before moving along their way.

All Highland ‘faith’ practices originate from the fundamental charity and modesty principle combined with varying degrees of fanatical hatred of ‘politics’ and ‘economics’ and this accounts for the elemental force behind some of the more eccentric and extreme practices that occur. A wide variation of ‘cult-like’ creeds and sects occur in abundance, observing such conspicuous practices as the avoidance of ornamentation, excessive material minimalism, self-denial or even pain regimen, advanced combat art disciplines, the rejection of certain colors or the fixation on one singular color, or the complete abstinence from the consumption of all meats or the rejection of any form of animal exploitation (to name a few). In this regard, Highlanders are far more immediately similar to Seilvhanians than in the case of ‘economic practices’ in that Seilvhanians also observe diversity in ‘faith’ including all extremes of the eccentric, fanatical and ‘cult-like’.