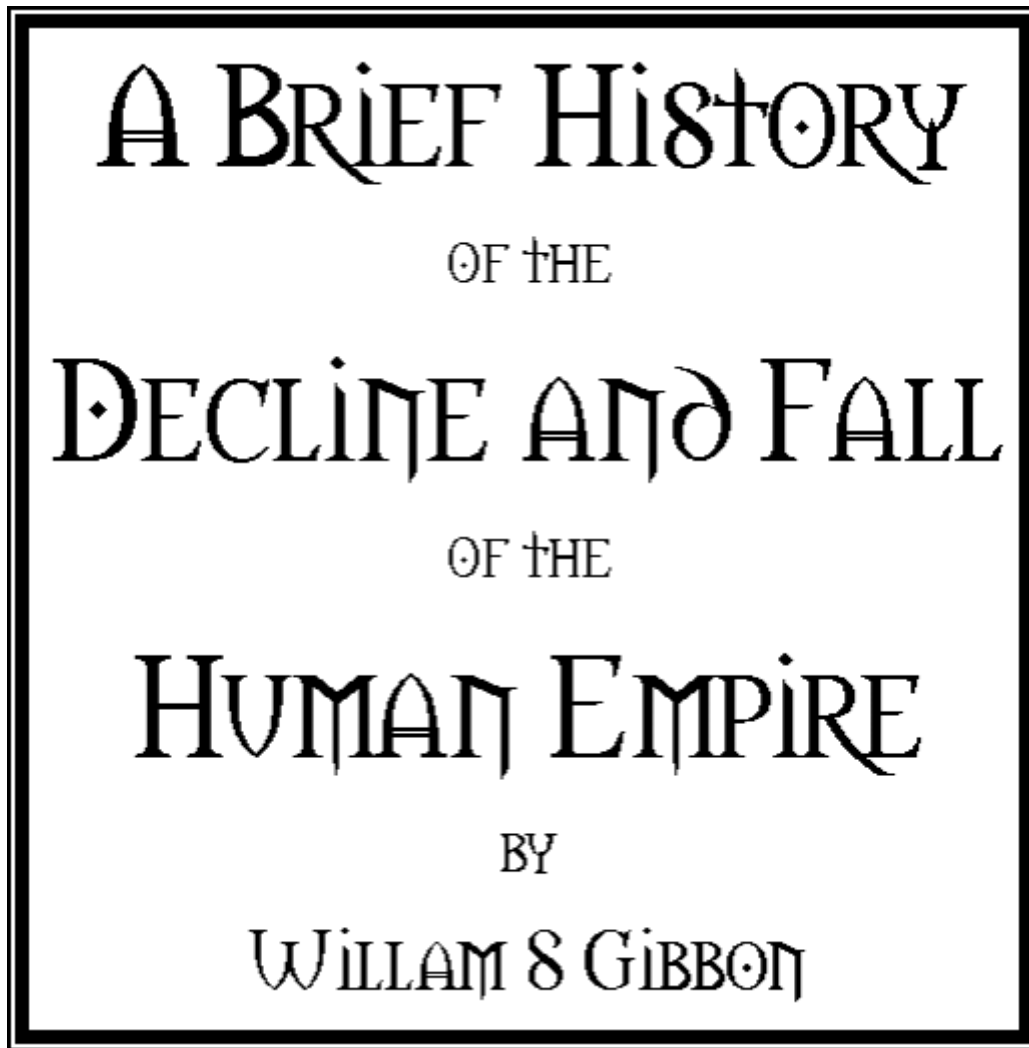


# The Decline and Fall of the Human Empire



## Preface

William S Gibbon is a distinguished historian of Great House Toulard. Born on the planet Toulard itself, he was from his earliest life attracted to the history of the Empire. He was educated at the prestigious University of Toulard and of course majored in the History of the Empire. He currently holds the seat of Emeritus Professor of History and the Chair of the Historian of the University. He was recognised with a Baronetcy by Her Majesty the Empress Matarra in 938 Y.E. for his work on the History of the Empire. He also holds the Degree of Excellence from Great House Toulard.

It took him many years to bring together and compose this, the classic chronicle of humanity in space, here presented in its 'brief' form. Scholars agree that while the Complete History of the Decline and Fall of the Human Empire is a more complete and accurate work, its size and style of prose make it inaccessible to all but the most dedicated of historians.

This manuscript does not encompass all events that have happened to humans and the Empire in the last two thousand years in their entirety. Gibbon included in his Brief History only those events that had a fundamental effect on shaping the Empire into what it is today.

For example, little mention is made of the events of the later Empire - the hostility between Great Houses Linsud and Sablah for example. The Treason of Tycho in 520 Y.E. also is absent. Gibbon felt that they were insignificant events when put side by side with the Pogrom or the Great Civil War. These events are covered comprehensively in the Complete History, and concerned parties are invited to look there.

Little reference is made to the histories of the other species with which we share the Galaxy, except where those species influence human history in a significant way. The slorel are only briefly mentioned, even though they affect much of our modern life. It appears that Gibbon, like most of us, knew little of the affairs of the mrashans.

This then is the Brief History, as presented to Her Majesty the Empress Matarra seven years ago, in its second edition. This edition corrects some publishing faults and one or two factual errors, particularly in the Timeline section. Annotations are made by myself. I am a historian and the publisher of this Second Edition of the work.

4th December 943 Y.E  
Melissa Riordan  
Great House Toulard

## Timeline

Dates are given either Pre-Empire (P.E.) or Year of Empire (Y.E.)

-1000 P. E.	Global war on Earth
998 P. E.	First crude hyperdrives developed
995 P. E.	Exodus begins
608 P. E.	Discovery of jump gate on Bonanza. Beginning of Bonanza colony.
598 P. E.	Bonanza colonists begin investigating jump gate
522 P. E.	First contact with mrashan race
518 P. E.	Agreement of alien races to withhold technology from humanity
456 P. E.	Rainu Fleming acquires warp drive technology from mrashans. Beginning of the First Golden Age of colonisation
455 P. E.	Khalroth and crelos begin 'punishment' of mrashans
453 P. E.	Last mrashan FTL-capable ship destroyed. Mrashan homeworld placed under embargo
299 P. E.	Battle of Bonanza - beginning of the Pogrom
273 P. E.	Human capital moved to Faraway
250 P. E.	Pogrom ends. Construction of human battlefleet begins
226 P. E.	Tal and crelos disagree in council
225 P. E.	Beginning of open war between tal and crelos
213 P. E.	Human ambassadors offer alliance to the tal, but are refused
212 P. E.	War begins to turn against tal. Offer of human alliance accepted. Humans move against the khalroth-crelos hegemony
209 P. E.	Tal-human alliance defeats khalroth-crelos hegemony. Declaration of the Demarc

75 P. E.	Vursace Muric comes to power on Midgard
68 P. E.	Arrival of the mrashans to Midgard
67 P. E.	Mrashans advise Demarcator of Midgard situation. Governor Muric sacked by Demarcator. Support for Muric grows in the Council.
65 P. E.	Demarcator rallies a fleet to dispatch to Midgard. Popular uprising in Midgard, supported by mrashans
64 P. E.	Demarcator assassinated, Civil War begins
4 P. E.	Pilus Koreg I takes control of Loyalist fleet
1 P.E.	Final assault against the Rebels at Faraway
0 Y.E.	Koreg declares end of Demarc, founds New Empire of Humanity. Rebuilding begins
10 Y.E.	Rebuilding ends. First Rebuilding Day declared
15 Y.E.	Search for Old Earth begins
124 Y.E.	Old Earth found, colonisation begun
920 Y. E.	Border war with gh'inn
936 Y. E.	Today

## Part One: Earliest History - Bonanza

Much of the history of humans before space flight was lost in the exodus from Earth, or relegated to the status of legend <sup>1)</sup>. What can be reconstructed of the times is unreliable at best. However, several independent sources suggest that humanity first developed crude warp engines after global war forced governments to look elsewhere to house their increasingly destitute population.

These were not the powerful drives of our time. They were barely sufficient for travel faster than the speed of light, and unreliable. Through an excessive expenditure of raw energy, a ship was able to breach the barrier into low-energy hyperspace and travel faster than light. It was crude, but it worked.

Many systems were charted which had reasonable chances of having habitable planets. The call was made for volunteers, and the volunteers came. They were packed aboard the ships, sometimes little more than metal shells built upon these massive drive systems, and sent off to space. None of them would return to their homeworld.

Most ships equipped with these primitive drives never arrived at their destination, either suffering catastrophic failure of the engines, or navigation errors that left them drifting in space for all eternity. Some few made it to their destinations, habitable planets within reach of the homeworld, and humanity eagerly began to multiply and be fruitful.

Exactly what happened to these earliest colonies is not recorded, except for one.

The ship arrived intact after a travel time of more than a hundred years. They discovered on their arrival the alien technology that we now know as the jump gate. The creators of the gate were not in evidence, and it appeared at the time that the system was deserted.

Their ship was designed to be converted on arrival to an orbital station. It was parked in orbit around a habitable planet, and the search for resources began <sup>2)</sup>. In the end it was a year or more before the colonists were able to begin investigating the technology that they had found.

After some time and dedicated study <sup>3)</sup>, they discovered the secret of opening a conduit into high

energy hyperspace, but were reluctant to test their theories by sending a ship through the gate to an unknown destination.

In the end no colonist had to risk his or her life in this way, because a few decades after they arrived, a mrashan scout craft emerged through the gate and discovered the fledgling colony. The mrashans were a peaceful race at the time, and we humans had no idea of their tragic future. With the help of the mrashans, the technology of the jump gate was opened up.

Although at first only this one colony had access to the jump gate, word soon spread to other colonies and the world now designated Bonanza became a trade gateway, and the major hub of human civilisation in the galaxy.

## Part Two: Bonanza - First Golden Age

With the discovery of the jump gate and the friendship of the mrashans, humanity was able to expand its influence to many other inhabited worlds. However, we were not yet able to construct our own jump gates, and colonisation of uninhabited (and un-jump gated) worlds still progressed slowly. The primitive FTL drives that had allowed us to leave our homeworlds had been refined somewhat, but they were still crude and dangerous <sup>4)</sup>.

Humanity quickly expanded on the industrial and commerce worlds that were linked by jump technology, and built a trading empire to rival that of the slorel. Great wealth was brought to Bonanza, and it came to be the primary hub of human society and culture in the galaxy.

However, in the councils of the alien races there was unease. Humans being resilient and resourceful (and thoroughly ignorant of galactic politics) were beginning to encroach upon long-standing treaties and trade agreements. Several races agreed to withhold higher hyperspace technology from humanity, in order that they may better control our expansion. Foremost among these were the tal, the crelos and of course the consummate galactic politicians and manipulators the khalroth <sup>5)</sup>.

Humans knew that there was technology that they did not have, and many attempts were made to acquire that technology. Some of these attempts were subtle, some were not. Every attempt at industrial espionage on the part of the humans was ruthlessly opposed by the crelos, and for a hundred years humans operated their businesses only through the existing jump gates and the very few that humans were now able to construct on their own worlds.

This did not stop many human families from becoming very rich from the trade they brought back to Bonanza. The Administrator of Bonanza, Rainu Fleming, was arguably the richest human in the galaxy at the time <sup>6)</sup>. So in a way it was not surprising that he was finally able to acquire from the mrashans the secret of low-energy hyperspace and the warp drive.

A foreshadowing of later events happened when the khalroth found out that they had been betrayed by the mrashans. The mrashans were a peaceful trading race, and by this time close friends of humanity. The crelos, allies <sup>7)</sup> of the khalroth, were warlike and ruthless. The mrashan homeworld was bombarded from orbit and the mrashans forbidden from ever entering space again, on penalty of genocide. Their ships were hunted down and destroyed one by one.

Such an extreme overreaction shocked humanity to the core. We had underestimated the lengths to which the khalroth would go to protect their interests. But we had the technology now to expand faster than ever before. Hundreds of new worlds were colonised in directions away from the khalroth -

crelos hegemony. This was the time now known as humanity's First Golden Age.

## Part Three: Fall of Bonanza - Second Golden Age

In retrospect it was inevitable that the khalroth would move against humanity. However, it took our ancestors somewhat by surprise at the time. The first assault came at Bonanza and completely wiped the colony <sup>8)</sup> off the galactic map. Hundreds of tal and crelos battleships poured into the system under khalroth orders, destroying everything in their path. Few humans escaped. The battle-fleet moved on, destroying the colonies of Tiber, Atlantis, Morgai, Mu and all those nearby.

In their zeal for destruction, the crelos' battleplan suffered from insufficient intel-ligence. The humans had spread so far and so fast that many established colonies escaped the pogrom entirely. Human planets on the outer rim of civilised space in particular were spared the tragedy. The industrial colonies of Faraway, Grant, Impossible and Karlon's Drift were all spared. The battlefleets finally withdrew, and humans started to plot revenge.

During this time it was Faraway that emerged as the centre of human activity. The industrial spaceports in that system were quickly controlled by military hawks and a great battlefleet was planned. This fleet would be LEH-capable and armed to the teeth. Their intention was to show the crelos that we humans were not to be trifled with!

When humans finally returned to galactic affairs, it was to a scene of chaos. It turned out that the tal and the crelos had disagreed over the necessity of the pogrom of humans, and were now at war with each other. The khalroth of course were directing the crelos, as they always did, but the tal this time were giving them a run for their money, being strong and technologically sophisticated.

As soon as humanity found out about this situation, they dispatched ambassadors to the tal and offered alliance. At first they were rebuffed, but when the tide turned against the tal, we were welcomed as friends and allies. Together we were able to rout the crelos battlefleets, and defeat the enemy resoundingly, driving them back to their homeworlds. The crelos, even with their khalroth masters, were no match for the combined might of tal and human <sup>9)</sup>.

As there was little left of the planet Bonanza to recover, the commander of the battlefleet retired to Faraway in triumph and created the New Capital of the Human Demarc. The war hero proclaimed himself Demarcator of all human planets amongst tumultuous support.

Thus was begun the Second Golden Age of the Human Demarc. The tal were granted unlimited freedom throughout the Demarc, and full trading rights. Such rights were not granted even to the slorel, as it was well known that they traded with crelos and khalroth during the War. Such was their wont - the slorel were traders by nature, and did not understand the need for conflict <sup>10)</sup>. So they were restricted from the Demarc and their place in the banks and merchant halls was taken by the tal.

This was the organisation of the government of the Demarc at the time. The De-marcator was the nominal ruler of all human domains. However, he delegated much of his power to planetary Governors, who contributed to the wealth and power of the Demarc as a whole in the form of taxes and military service. The office of the Demar-cator was deemed to be hereditary, but the Governors were elected. Each Governor was given the rights to lead their planets as they deemed fit, so long as the taxes kept flowing.

If a Governor failed in his duty to the Demarc by defaulting on taxes, he could be removed by a

decree from the Demarcator and the people of the planet were free to elect a new Governor. The Governors met once every five standard years on Faraway in a Grand Council under the direction of the Demarcator. At the Council, each Governor was expected to present a report on the planet under their control, and discuss and debate the policy of the Demarc as a whole. Each Grand Council lasted for over a month, and got longer and longer as more and more planets were discovered and colonised.

But the Demarcator was not always kept aware of all the little details that went on under his rule, and after a hundred years of more, the canker of corruption began to fester.

## Part Four: Corruption at the Council - Civil War

Such government that the Demarc had was well suited to corruption. The Demarcator, as sole ruler, was not aware of everything that went on in the realm, and soon most planets were pretty much left to their own devices.

In the 134th year of the Demarc, the Midgard system was governed by a crime lord named Vursace Muric <sup>11)</sup>. He was ruthless and oppressed the people under his control, squeezing them for taxes to line his own coffers while his secret police, known as Enforcers, terrorised and subjugated the people. However in his dealings on Faraway, he kept his face very clean of any wrongdoing or misdeed.

For years this went on. The tal were forbidden from Midgard, and word about the peoples' suffering went unheard. Until the mrashans reappeared.

The mrashans finally emerged back onto the galactic scene, hiding from the ruthless oppression of the crelos and the khalroth. In truth they needn't have hidden, as the old alliance no longer had enough power to threaten them <sup>12)</sup>.

It was their misfortune that the first human colony they came across was Midgard. Instead of informing the Grand Council and the Demarcator of the mrashans, Governor Muric kept the knowledge secret, intending to exploit the mrashan presence in the same way he exploited his own people.

However, during the intervening time the mrashans had become expert infiltrators and spies, and they quickly learned about the human situation. They betrayed Muric to the Demarcator, who immediately declared the position of Governor vacant. However without actually dispatching a fleet to enforce his rule, there was no way to ensure that Muric was deposed. The news never made it to the oppressed people of Midgard because the news media on that planet was controlled in its entirety by the Governor.

What's more, Muric had friends on the Grand Council <sup>13)</sup>. When it emerged that the Demarcator was willing to back up his rule with military force, these Governors rallied against him. Some other Governors who had previously remained neutral, and ignorant of the true situation on Midgard, supported them.

In the end, it was the influence of the mrashans that finally unseated the Governor of Midgard, and in the nick of time. The Fleet of the Demarc had assembled against the rebellion, and it was about to erupt into all-out war. The mrashans began a quiet propaganda campaign amongst the population of Midgard, and encouraged them to defy the Enforcers and overthrow their Governor. For a while it seemed that all was going to go back to normal. The fleets were stood down once it emerged that

Muric was a tyrant, and many of his previous supporters recanted and resigned their Governorships. Muric himself was killed by the angry mob. A new Governor was elected who began to rebuild his planet's economy.

But in the end matters were only made worse. When it was revealed that the Demarcator no longer had sufficient control over the realm to prevent a tyrant from retracing Muric's footsteps<sup>14)</sup>, action was taken at the highest level.

The Demarcator was assassinated by a coalition of human realms who felt that he was too weak to effectively lead the Demarc.

This effectively split the realm into two factions. There was the Demarcator that was installed at Faraway by the rebels, and there was also the assassinated Demarcator's legal heir, who was at the time enjoying a tour of the leisure planet Tuxedo Junction. Loyalty was split right down the middle. Almost as many planets followed the Rebels as followed the Heir. Most of the military followed the Rebels, but the Heir was supported by a faction of the tal, who felt that he was the legal ruler of the Demarc.

The tal refused to directly take part in the conflict, but they aided the Heir to develop a fleet of his own, and the Great Civil War began, which almost destroyed human civilisation more thoroughly than the khalroth had ever hoped to do.

The war spread throughout the Demarc, and it was vicious and bloody. Human fought human. Entire planets were decimated, and human civilisation stood on the brink of destruction<sup>15)</sup>.

## **Part Five</A>: Rise of the Empire - Rediscovery of Earth**

Humans fought harder during the Great Civil War than they had at any other time in history. The war was all the more bitter and bloody because it was a war in which brother fought brother and father fought son. Such wars throughout history have been worse for all involved than wars of conquest, and this was no exception. The war dragged on for decades, with first the Rebels and then the Loyalists gaining the upper hand. Both sides employed the considerable skills of mrashan spies. The tal avoided getting involved<sup>16)</sup>.

After sixty years of conflict, the combatants had lost track of the original reasons for the war. The Heir of the old Demarcator was long dead, but the Loyalist faction continued to fight on in his name. The Capital of the Demarc, Faraway, was virtually reduced to rubble<sup>17)</sup>.

Finally on the Loyalist side of the conflict there arose a mighty admiral, whose name is learned by every schoolchild in the human domains - the First Emperor, Pilus Koreg I. Admiral Koreg through sheer force of personality brought together a vast battlefleet with which he utterly wiped out the Rebels. No one could gainsay his rule.

The final battle was fought at Faraway itself, and Koreg personally killed the last Rebel leader in a hand-to-hand duel with swords. Since that time it has become fashionable for a well to do noble or merchant to wear a sword on formal occasions<sup>18)</sup>.

Koreg, standing in the crumbling ruins of the Demarcator's palace on Faraway, declared the end of the Demarc and the beginning of the New Empire of Humanity, naming himself Emperor. He would not rule weakly like the Demarcators before him, he would be a strong ruler. A powerful ruler who had

the strength to back his decrees with an iron fist.

One of the first thing he did was to name the Noble Houses that would form the Imperial Bureaucracy<sup>19)</sup>. These seven Houses became known as Great Houses, and their responsibilities have been handed down through the generations:

- House Aberwood: Defence and Military
- House Fuhan: Finance and Administration
- House Linsud: Foreign Affairs and Trade
- House Jurabu: Transport and Services
- House Sablah: Industry and Resources
- House Kanja: Population and Justice
- House Toulard: Science and Information

Many other noble Houses received minor portfolios. These were known as the Lower Houses and participated less in the rule of the Empire. The Seven Great Houses became prominent - their members were rich and famous.

Emperor Koreg immediately began the rebuilding of Faraway and other planets that had been decimated by the decades-long Civil War. House Fuhan, being very good at what they did, were able to finance the rebuilding with money from their own coffers as well as that which still arrived by tax.

After ten years of rebuilding, Emperor Koreg declared the Empire to be fully re-built, lowered taxes and declared an interplanetary holiday. Every standard year we still celebrate Rebuilding Day throughout the Empire.

Soon afterwards, Houses Jurabu, Toulard and Sablah proposed a joint venture to rediscover the origin of humankind, Old Earth itself. The location of the homeworld had been lost over the course of centuries, and none now knew its fate. When the planet was finally found after years of searching promising systems, it was found to be uninhabited by humans. Apparently the great war that forced humanity into space in the first place had finally done for the human population<sup>20)</sup>. Traces of radioactivity in the atmosphere suggested several possible sce-narios.

It was quickly determined that the residual radiation posed no threat to humanity and House Kanja quickly sent a colony ship to proudly reinhabit the original cradle of human life. Much of the history of Earth has been reconstructed by archaeologists, but does not fall within the purview of this document.

So it has been for almost a thousand years since<sup>21)</sup>.

## Part Six: Present Time

Since the recolonisation of Earth, the Empire has had few threats. Never again has an alliance of aliens threatened our existence, such as happened when the khalroth and crelos moved against us. The iron rule of the Bureaucracy has prevented any rebellion among the worlds of the Empire, and trade with the slorel has made many planets prosperous.

However, nothing lasts forever. Already we can see the signs of decline in the Empire.

The current Empress, Matarra, is aged and has left no heir. Recent holders of the title have been less strong than the First Emperor was. The Great Houses are bicker-ing amongst themselves trying to



decide who shall hold the seat after her. The current frontrunners are Arturo Aberwood and Wing Fuhan, the leaders of the two most powerful Great Houses - Defence and Finance. Many of the citizens of the Empire prefer Moutos Kanja, but unfortunately they are unlikely to be given a say in the matter.

The khalroth and their puppets the crelos are still out there, and the grudge they hold against us is strong and deep-running. They despise our domination of known space, and constantly work against us. The mrashans, ever our allies, still hide in the shadows and will not approach them. The tal, once their allies and later ours, refuse to take sides. Although powerful, they remain neutral and aloof. The slorel trade with everyone as usual, and recently there was a minor border war with the gh'inn, who sought to expand their territories into systems long held by humanity. There are many alien species in the Deep Void, and even more human subcultures that have been separated from the rest of humanity by war or chance <sup>22)</sup>.

No one knows how long the current situation will last. The death of the Empress is sure to cause strife, which the khalroth will undoubtedly be foolish enough to try and exploit. But some say that there is enough strength still in the Bureaucracy to hold the Empire together until another strong leader is chosen.

Only time will tell.

*William S Gibbon*

1)

Much history has in fact been recovered by archaeologists working on Old Earth in the years since it was rediscovered. Interested readers are referred to 'A History of Old Earth' by Joanne Vecchiotti.

2)

The colonists did, of course, colonise the surface of the planet as well.

3)

Fortunately for the colonists, their number included a high-energy physicist and two construction engineers.

4)

As illustrated by the ill-fated ship Traveller, which exploded for no particularly apparent reason en route to the world now colonised as New Atlantis.

5)

It should be noted here that there were other species that did not support the technological embargo, such as the mrashans, but they were bullied into cooperation by the crelos.

6)

Some estimates put his personal worth in excess of fourteen billion modern Imperial Credits. His financial and property empire was considerably larger.

7)

Later on Gibbon actually uses the word 'puppets' to describe the crelos' relation to the khalroth.

8)

Gibbon's choice of words is interesting here. Bonanza at that time was well past being a 'colony' and had become more of a full-fledged commerce and industrial world. The crelos used mass drivers from orbit and levelled all of the major cities on the planet. It is estimated that there was a population of some three billion humans on the planet at the time.

9)

Humans of course benefited greatly from the technological exchange with the tal.

10)

This is not strictly true. Slorel will 'fight' on occasion, but only when their trading rights have been

disrupted. A slorel 'fight' is an unusual spectacle, as the slorel slide over each other trying to get an advantageous position. The winner is the one that can absorb more of the other's body mass.

11)

Muric achieved his position by virtue of assassination, terrorism and bullying. He started his career smuggling weapons to criminals, and soon built up a massive power base.

12)

Again not strictly true, but the real reason is much more subtle and covered in detail in Gibbon's Complete History.

13)

Some were open collaborators in his crimes, others were people who owed him favours. Muric was also good-looking and charismatic, and for some it was difficult to believe that he was such a tyrant.

14)

It is not mentioned here that several other planets had by this time fostered tyrannical rulers. All of them were defiant of the rule of the Demarcator. This contributed to the impression that the government of the Demarc was weak and ineffectual.

15)

Again.

16)

In fact, in 58 P.E. the tal declared a full withdrawal from human-held areas. This event was apparently not significant enough to Gibbon to include in the Brief History. There is a short paragraph in the Complete History.

17)

Again, not completely true. The Capital was largely untouched and all of the buildings of the Government still stood. Much of the rest of the planet was as Gibbon describes - especially the military areas.

18)

Gibbon himself was a master of fencing, and his school is well known on Toulard.

19)

In fact he promoted his favoured generals and supporters to this status, and they were the founders of the Great Houses. All except Fuhan were military men - Fuhan was Koreg's accountant.

20)

Again, for more details see 'A History of Old Earth' by Joanne Vecchiotti.

21)

As mentioned in the Preface, this ignores much of the events of the last thousand years, which are also apparently not significant enough for Gibbon to include. Even the Complete History only briefly dwells on these matters.

22)

This statement is made without a great deal of supporting evidence. In fact we now believe that we have reestablished contact with most, if not all, human colonies and brought them back into the Empire.

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