

Conquest of Bread



Habitat/society in Phelan's recourse, named after one of Kropotkin's books. Originally merely a standard anarcho-communist habitat, it gradually became dominated by the ideas of India Kodangal, a bio-economist from Hyderabad.

Kodangal was active within the Indian autonomist networks, attempting to find ways of stabilizing reputation economies and societies. He was involved in a major research collaboration investigating the failure of the Mahabubnagar Movement a few years before the Fall which led to him formulating a radical idea for how to make the new economy work. According to Kodangal the key problem is that human altruism is strongly tied to the mammalian neural substrates of kin recognition and family bonding. Unlike some colleagues he was not optimistic about the possibility of enhancing the circles of concern: past experience had shown this to be very problematic. Instead he suggested that resleeving technology could allow a way around it: deliberately using related morphs might trigger kin acceptance through their shared HLA pheromones. He also worried about the locally and globally destabilizing effect of mating competition, and suggested that one solution would be to do away with reproduction – a certain amount of competition for desirable mates would remain, but if a society favoured open relationships this might be a minor issue.

Kodangal's ideas interested the Rosa Clinic commune, a predominantly gay morph-culturing group on Conquest of Bread. They began to develop the "Bread and Butter family" morphs (later called Babas), a set of genelines corresponding to an extended family and tweaked to be social. As an experiment the commune began sleeving in Babas, implementing Kodangal's ideas in practice.

Since the Fall the practice of using Babas has spread on the habitat. The morphs are all genetically family although appearance varies a lot. A certain amount of sorting has occurred as people join or leave the habitat depending on their acceptance of the memes of the locals. At present the 75% of the inhabitants are sleeved in Babas. The local soviet has set up informal rules discouraging traditional reproduction and forking, and tweaked local rep practices to implement variants of Kodangal's kin selection ideas. However, the locals often disdain using formal rep tracking to maintain their family economy: they are aiming at developing a true family structure. Kodangal and a group of other sociologists live on the habitat or contribute to the culture experimentation; they have discovered to their chagrin that the people implementing their ideas are very wilful and are rapidly evolving them into new directions. Right now the main issue is whether the risk of developing excessive clannishness requires some deliberate social structures (such as active recruiting or exogamy).

The presence of a morph culturing facility has been a great economic boon to the habitat, allowing it to expand and diversify. Some critics argue that the apparent success of Kodangal's ideas might be more due to the general success of the habitat than any inherent importance. Still, the community is tightly knit, peaceful and doing well in the external reputation rankings.

The habitat originated as a converted cargo transport. At present it consists of six modules ("Lax", "Amtrak", "Campbell", "Jennifer", "The Institute", "Musan") rotating around a common axis for pseudogravity (0.3 G). The whole structure is largely held together by fullerene cables. Pressurized transparent tubes, giving a vertiginous view of the outside habitat swarm, connect several modules to each other. Each module consists of bundled cargo cylinders, forming an internal structure of apartments around central transport shafts, forming a neighbourhood. Two of the modules ("Lax" and "Campbell") are dominated by the Rose Clinic's morph growing facilities. Musan got hit by a fairly sizeable ring iceberg recently and is under repair.

Baba

Essentially a standard exalt, having a wide variety of appearances but a consistent "family resemblance" in bone structure. Babas are all male. While sexual preference is not hardwired, practically all users tend to be gay (self-identified) men who find the Conquest of Bread family experiment attractive.

Implants: Basic Biomods, Basic Mesh Inserts, Cortical Stack, Enhanced Pheromones

Aptitude Maximum: 30

Durability: 35

Wound Threshold: 7

Advantages: +5 SAV, +5 to three other aptitudes of the player's choice. Minor social stigma.

CP Cost: 30

Credit Cost: Expensive

The enhanced pheromones are somewhat specific, giving a +20 bonus to tests against other Babas (and the usual +10 to outsiders).

Among people who know of the experiment, a certain positive or negative social stigma effect might occur when encountering someone sleeved in the morph.

Adventure ideas

During an investigation a DNA trace is found. The morph who is implicated is a baba. Now the problem is just finding out who it is. Cloning records can be found in the Rose Clinic, but they take family genetics seriously. Can the agents infiltrate Conquest of Bread to find the man they are looking for – and will the other family members let them?

Conquest of Bread is one of the more successful culture experiments, interesting sociologists in the Consortium. They would love to get more research data, but interacting across the cultural divide is by no means easy. Other autonomists might wish to interfere: after all, the PC is all about instituting social conformity, right? Why help them? Kodangal might in particular be rather possessive of “his” society, completely against the spirit of sharing he claims to support.

Black sheep: a member has done something bad. While most autonomists would just wreck their rep and go on, Conquest of Bread does take things a bit more personal. The black sheep has shamed the habitat family, and they will do their own quiet, through and potentially nasty investigation to find him and bring him back to the fold. God help him is he has resleeved into a non-family morph.

Daddy, where do children come from? The ban on traditional reproduction is due to arguments from primate evolutionary psychology that suggests some pretty dark competitor infanticide and mating competition traits. But what about having kids the nearly normal way by combining parent genomes and growing it in an exowomb (or artificial uterus in one of the parents)? Some family members want to extend the family this way, while others think this is definitely a bad idea (“Think of the poor Africans who still lack bodies!”). Few things can be more incendiary than arguments about reproduction, and here they are tied to both the ideology of the habitat and a sense of family belonging. What happens if not just altruism but family quarrels can scale up to habitat size?

The Rose Clinic is happy to build custom morphs for anyone, but sometimes they get a bit uneasy. A high rep order for a series of *really weird* morphs have arrived, and a member has quietly alerted a friend in Firewall. Who in their right mind would want to sleeve in something like that? And would be willing to pay by giving the collective very advanced genetic programs for them that seems to involve interfaces to alien biology and nanotechnology?