

What is Phase Shift?

Well, let me tell you.

The simplest answer? It's a game. A more descriptive answer? It's a tabletop RPG system. So, what makes Phase Shift different from other RPGs? The amazing and incredible people at RR Game Studios have designed Phase Shift to keep gameplay as simple as possible without compromising customization or creativity. Phase Shift takes a "more is more" approach to game balance, in that we give players an extremely high power level and use enemies to match that power level. Because of this, players feel like they're extremely powerful and feel much more engaged in the action. Combat is built to feel like even a minor fight is a battle of epic proportions, since weapons can be customized and damage can be added easily. Each type of character has the ability be game-breakingly effective. For instance, a Thief, who isn't built to directly kill enemies, can completely shut down a fight by stealing an enemy's weapons and armor or redirecting a giant energy cannon to fire back at the person who fired it.

And what makes Phase Shift so streamlined? Well, before you roll, you know exactly what number you have to hit. Roll a d20, add your bonuses, and if your total is 15 or higher, congratulations! You succeeded on whatever you were trying to do. While some more difficult actions might require you to roll more d20s and hit a higher number, you're still doing the same process.

"But what about the setting?" you might ask. Good question, reader. Phase Shift is set far, far, FAR in the future, in a universe where magic and science are not only intertwined with each other but inseparable from each other. Magic is real and magical fields can be manipulated by science. Scientific research can be performed by magical means. Oh, and gods took physical form and are powered by those who worship them. Generally speaking, the galaxy is in chaos. Areas of the galaxy are generally controlled by factions, but for the most part there's no government strong enough to control all of the cosmic horrors that keep showing up. Generally, players belong to a mercenary organization known as the GDMA, who gives players pretty much free rein to be however murderous they want to be, as long as they more or less get the job done.

So how do you run a game? Well, someone has to step up to the plate and offer to be the Game Master, who comes up with the adventure and guides players through it. Being a GM requires patience, flexibility, and creativity. You'll have to be dealing with the players, who are preposterously powerful, and while you're technically controlling their enemies, your job is to make sure everything is actually fun for everyone involved. You'll also have to roll with the punches, as Phase Shift is notorious for ruining even the best-laid plans. If you don't have something prepared for every conceivable eventuality, you'll have to improvise. Also, if a mage is in the party, you'll have to essentially haggle with them over the effects of their spells. It's actually a lot easier than it sounds. See the DM Guide for more information on how to properly run a game. Don't worry about it too much, though, as even monstrosities of games in Phase Shift tend to get extremely entertaining.

If you're ready to jump into the Phase Shift universe, read on and godspeed!

The Phase Shift Universe

From the files of Gregor Hawken, Corporate Security Consultant for Pinnacle Engineering

Shut up, everyone. Seriously. I know that none of you want to hear this, but I'm sick to death of having to explain everything to you grunts, so before your training begins, I should tell you this: If we were to send you out into the field night now, you'd all die in record time. The kind of work we get involved in gets a lot of soldiers killed. Know why? Because grunts are stupid. So we're instituting a new policy of shut-the-hell-up-and-listen-to-your-commanding-officer. Since most of you are probably agricultural colony rejects from wherever your home planets are, it's likely that you have no idea of what happened a few hundred years ago. You also probably don't know what the GDMA is. Even if you do know, you're not good enough at being a soldier, or you'd probably be working for them. Make sure you remember that everyone's automatically going to be better than you. At any rate, make sure you listen to all of what I have to say or your survival rate will decrease DRAMATICALLY.

The Merger

Just over 400 years ago, the universe was really more like two universes. One, Takaron, didn't have much in the way of technology, because the entire universe was filled with thaumic energy, or, as most people call it, magic. Space travel in that universe happened through magical ships that sailed across the stars really just because a person believed in them hard enough. And that actually worked. There wasn't much in the way of governance, mainly just a lot of independent planets acting on their whims. The other, Dekkai, wasn't quite so fortunate to have magic involved, but because of it, the inhabitants of that universe grew to utterly master the physical laws of their own universe and create scientific marvels. Their physical laws were unshakable, and every phenomenon could be explained scientifically.

Both universes flourished on their own until a theorist from Dekkai discovered evidence of another dimension existing parallel to the known universe. Simultaneously, one of Takaron's Master Wizards began sensing more and more of a presence in the universe that she could not explain. The two, working independently, discovered that there were points in their respective universes where this presence was not only strong but growing stronger. People in both universes began swearing that they could see planets and even stars flickering in and out of existence.

About two standard months after the theorist and master wizard had first detected the anomalies, they briefly established contact between their two universes while remaining in their own. They inadvertently met when studying an anomaly located at relatively the same spatial point in both universes, and were able to use the anomaly, which revealed certain aspects of one universe to the other and vice versa, to briefly communicate. As they were not just from two different planets, but from two different universes, they initially experienced a considerable

language barrier, but the theorist used an advanced linguistic analysis device and the master wizard used a clarifying spell to understand each other. It wasn't enough to really prepare themselves for what they both knew was going to happen; both Takaron and Dekkai were physically merging with each other.

About two years later, the event known as the Phase Shift occurred. It's hard to explain scientifically, and even harder to explain magically, but suddenly, star systems and planets that were in one universe or the other were now merged in one single universe. One of the most occupied planets happened to be in almost the same relative position in both universes, and when the Phase Shift happened, the planets merged together, and wizards and scientists suddenly became next-door neighbors on the same metropolitan planet. Unfortunately for the inhabitants of both universes, neither Takaronian magic nor Dekkan technology worked the same way it used to, since the fusing of the two universes changed the fundamental laws of the universe to somewhere between the two old sets of laws. The most populated planet was renamed T'Dek after the merger, and became the center of the democratic entity known as the Galactic Federation. The Phase Shift also caused a few strange effects that didn't really come from either universe. One such effect is the appearance of individuals with psychic powers across the galaxy in a seemingly random pattern. Another effect was the physical manifestation of deities. Whether they were cast down from a higher plane of existence after the merger or simply came into being because of it, their sudden physical forms sparked what is known as the War in Heaven.

The War in Heaven

While one might think that devotion to a god would be increased if it were absolutely confirmed that the god is real, the confirmed existence of gods in the mortal plane after the Phase Shift was a serious deal breaker for many potential worshipers. This is because the gods that emerged, although exceedingly powerful and intelligent, were imperfect.

Even though the gods that emerged after the Phase Shift can manifest in physical form and enable potential followers to see them, most denizens of the T'Dek home galaxy are aware that the gods are not all-knowing or all-powerful. Also, most sentient beings in scientifically or magically advanced societies are uncomfortable with being forced to worship deities of any sort.

The seven primary gods that emerged after the Phase Shift are almost omnipotent and omniscient, but as with the thousands of demigods and other lower gods that emerged after the Phase Shift, their lack of true omniscience is obvious because it is clear that they do not know how to compel all potential believers to believe in them, as the gods actively seek to acquire as many followers as they can, and yet many potential worshipers do not devote themselves to any god. As it was discovered soon after the Phase Shift through scientific and magical analyses that each of the gods needs the power of worshipers in order to survive, and as this discovery was widely publicized, the gods' lack of omnipotence became obvious because truly omnipotent beings would be able to survive on their own power, instead of relying on the power of faith.

Even with the widespread resistance to worshipping them, the seven primary gods still have so much power and so much intelligence that they have significant control over forces of absolute nature, artificial nature, and magical nature! They can manipulate the aspects of the cosmos over which they have control to further their own purposes and in some cases have forced sentient beings to worship them by threatening to use their powers to inflict calamities if worship was not attained. While some of the seven primary gods are more benevolent or malevolent than others, each is not totally pure or impure. Each, even the primary god of light, has committed atrocities, including the atrocities that caused them to possess their current levels of power and knowledge. All gods have the capability of being able to absorb the essences of gods of similar elemental type if they can overpower those gods in battle or otherwise kill them, and the seven primary gods have killed and then absorbed the essences of other gods to a far greater extent than the other gods that still exist.

The seven primary gods are:

Ikeru, The God of Light
Yohaku, The God of Darkness
Sho-Ka, Goddess of Flames
Gaes Eon, God of Earth
Aeolus, God of Wind
Maesuya, Goddess of Water
Void, God of Space and Technology

As the number of potential worshipers is much smaller than it would be if all sentient beings blindly offered their faith, deities are constantly fighting each other for access to those people who might actually be willing to become their believers. Because the seven primary gods, demigods, and lower gods all need the power of worshipers in order to survive, the deities use priests to spread the word about them, as well as perform tasks in service of their secret agendas. Priests are selected by the gods either because of their extreme devotion or because of their general willingness to become a deity's servant. After a priest or other worshiper offers a pledge of service to a deity, that deity has a binding claim on that person's soul.

The gods lend their powers not just to the priests and other worshipers who are willing to fight in their name, but to the various angels, demons, and other heralds they are able to summon to further the reification of their will. All gods can manifest angels, including Yohaku. While all of them can create demons, really, only Yohaku does, because it's bad PR for most.

The War in Heaven often takes the form of a secret, abstract war, though open conflict occasionally arises between priests or between churches devoted to the gods. Churches sometimes make exclusive deals with undeveloped planets to become the exclusive church for that territory, and the occasions in which the churches gain this exclusivity through subterfuge or coercion exemplify their frequent operation as clandestine and shady organizations. While the

Galactic Department of Military Affairs does not particularly appreciate the often-insidious dealings of the churches, deities often assuage the department's concerns by allowing their priests to join the GDMA and establish mercenary contracts, raising money for the churches while developing goodwill with the GDMA.

While any god can be worshiped, it is fairly rare for non-priest characters to devote themselves to the service of a deity, especially because the gods do not want to be further set back through further widespread public recognition of the limitations of their capabilities. The gods have tried to suppress the information that all who are not gods, especially their own priests (who often have their own clergies), from learning that the laws of the merged universe enable any being with a sizable enough of a base of worshipers to become a god. Perhaps if a mortal with significant influence over the galaxy learns of that truth, that mortal could transcend and become a god of such capability that the Primary Seven could be truly challenged

Galactic Factions

The galaxy is territorially split up amongst various factions.

The Galactic Federation: A Cosmopolitan Republic

The Galactic Federation, which is one of the most prominent factions in the galaxy, is a republic that includes tens of thousands of member planets and many space colonies. The Galactic Federation is the most political of the factions. As more planets are added to the ranks of the Galactic Federation, the Federation Senate grows in size. The capital world of the Galactic Federation is T'Dek, a heavily urbanized planet that serves as the Federation's diplomatic and economic core.

T'Dek has a population of more than 2 trillion (2,000,000,000,000) individuals, most of whom live in buildings that are at least partially connected to the planet's surface. Some of T'Dek's tallest buildings are spacescrapers, which are buildings of tens of thousands of meters in height that extend into the planet's stratosphere or mesosphere and that are able to be structurally integral through applications of magical engineering. The tallest building on the planet that is one unified structure is the Primary Agricultural Complex, a spacescraper of about 150,000 meters in height that is so tall that government employees on its highest floors sometimes see spectral auroras borealis in clear detail below. Many buildings, including some spacescrapers, are linked via hyperspace elevators to floating or orbiting continuations of those buildings that are thousands of meters directly above them in real-space. There also are many structures hovering in T'Dek's atmosphere that are not connected to buildings on the surface, and some of these as well are connected via hyperspace elevators to continuations above. Although the technological limitations of hyperspace passages, of which those created by the Federation are the best in the galaxy, have prevented the passages from being able to connect objects that are more than about 6,000 meters away from each other in real-space, millions of starships in the T'Dek planetary system are capable of transporting people, resources, and commercial

products from buildings on the surface of T'Dek or in its atmosphere to hundreds of space colonies in orbit around the planet and, more importantly, to both of T'Dek's moons.

The two planets that merged together to form T'Dek when the Phase Shift occurred each had a moon, and it was by chance that the moons had been far enough away from each other in their respective universes that they had not merged together during the Phase Shift or collided with each other or into T'Dek after the Phase Shift occurred because of the significant changes in gravitational attractions that each had experienced. Drex, the moon originally from Dekkai, orbits closer to T'Dek than Sapphira, the moon originally from Takaron. Drex does not have an atmosphere, and so its cities are primarily built either underground or within domes above ground that support life. Sapphira, like T'Dek, possesses an atmosphere that is breathable by most races in the galaxy. The soil on Drex's surface is distinctly red, and Drex revolves around T'Dek with a prograde orbit, traveling in the same direction that T'Dek rotates. The atmosphere of Sapphira is distinctly blue, and Sapphira revolves around T'Dek with a retrograde orbit, traveling in the opposite direction of T'Dek's rotation because the angular momentum it had immediately before the Phase Shift was not affected enough by the merger to change its orbital direction. T'Dek and its two moons are protected from potential meteor strikes by a network of devices located around the system that focus speed reduction spells upon the meteors, which causes them to move slow enough that ships can acquire them for mineral processing. These spells, however, can't completely protect T'Dek from outside threats using science or magic to counter, diminish, or reverse the effects of the protection spells or devices.

The Federation Senate is the main legislative entity of the Galactic Federation. Even though Senate representation is granted only to the 1,000 planetary systems in the Federation that have the highest population numbers compared to the others, laws passed by the Senate affect every one of the tens of thousands of planetary systems in the Federation. Each planetary system entitled to representation is able to elect five senators to serve in the Senate, for a total maximum membership of 5,000. The Constitution of the Galactic Federation identifies that for the purpose of calculating a planetary system's population to determine if it is entitled to representation in the Senate, its population includes all sentient organic beings, plus artificial technological beings that have at least the level of sentience of a human, plus magical or supernatural beings that have at least the level of sentience of a human. The president of the Galactic Federation is elected directly by the populations of all the planetary systems of the Federation and is able to veto laws passed by the Senate. Vetoes of the president, who is sometimes referred to within the Federation as the galactic president even though the president of the Federation does not oversee all the factions of the galaxy, can be overridden by the Senate with a vote of more than 75 percent in favor of the override. Senators are elected for a term of three standard years, while the president is elected for a term of five standard years. Individuals can be elected to serve in these capacities only once.

The Galactic Federation maintains its own army, called the Galactic Federation Corps (GFC), but the Federation's greatest military asset is the Galactic Department of Mercenary Affairs (GDMA), which is a comparatively much more impressive military force, albeit a much less

controllable one. During serious conflicts, the GDMA often is hired by the GFC, and the Federation bans any mercenaries from taking contracts with any other empires or from working for certain blacklisted organizations. The GDMA also often acts as a private police force, sending mercenaries to handle serious threats that planetary police cannot overcome.

The Galactic Federation also oversees the Brotherhood of Mages, which trains nearly all traditional practitioners of the magical arts in the T'Dek home galaxy. The Brotherhood also intervenes when certain mages start delving into areas they really shouldn't, abusing magic for their own purposes or working for enemies of the Federation. The Brotherhood of Mages is in charge of keeping tabs on magical activity, as it's been known to be remarkably unpredictable. The Brotherhood has local academies and offices throughout Federation territory, and though the Brotherhood does not have a specific home base planet, it sends voting representatives to the Federation Senate, as does the GDMA. Male and female wizards are welcome among the ranks of the Brotherhood, which retains that name out of tradition.

The Galactic Federation contains the home planets of the Ardani, Byakkarians, Gremlins, Elves, Dwarves, Nemminites, and hundreds of varieties of humans, along with innumerable other races. The Federation covers a huge territory compared to the other galactic factions, and contains the most diverse population in the galaxy among the factions. Almost all other races with home planets outside Federation territory but still within the T'Dek home galaxy are present in the Federation at least for commercial purposes, even though the homeworlds of some of these races are thousands of light-years from the Federation.

The Holy Reddarian Empire: Realm of the God-King

The Holy Reddarian Empire is a massive autocratic theocracy dedicated to the worship of the Grand High God-King, who maintains his rule through his religious followers.

The Holy Reddarian Empire maintains a formal army of conscripted citizens, known as the Holy Reddarian Army (HRA). The training system for HRA trainees involves more brainwashing and propaganda than actual weapons training, but it also serves to identify high-potential prospective recruits for service in the Reddarian Justicars, an order of paladins that serve as officers and are tasked with missions in service of the Empire.

A very high number of priests are in the civilian service of the Empire, and each Reddarian Empire vessel is required by law to have at least one priest aboard, mostly for monitoring purposes by the God-King. Reddarian Empire priests favor flashy fire- or light-based spells for their casting to show off their devotion to the God-King. The Reddarians use a hyperbolic star as the symbol for their church, and the Reddarian Navy makes their dreadnaughts in the shape of the Reddarian Star. The Reddarian Army is disorganized, but massive, due to the huge population of the Reddarian Empire, and the entire empire is held together entirely by the divine powers of the God-King, who has been alive and a deity since a few centuries after the Phase Shift. The Reddarian Empire usually minds its own business and prefers not to be the aggressor

in conflicts, aside from the occasional expansion or skirmish against the Federation or Protectorate. The Reddarian Empire contains mostly humans, but has a smattering of other races as well. The Reddarian Empire and the Federation are about evenly matched in terms of military power, so they leave each other alone for the most part. There is a small border area between the Reddarian Empire and the Federation that is suggested as off-limits to colonists, because neither side is technically supposed to be there.

The Protectorate: A Force to be Reckoned With

The Protectorate is a small, rigidly-organized military society bordering the Federation towards the center of the galaxy. The population of the Protectorate is roughly a quarter of that of the Federation, and every single man, woman, and child is considered to be in military service from the day they are born to the day they die. To the Protectorate, the chain of command is a part of everyday life. Aboard each vessel and at each colony, each person knows exactly who to get their orders from and who to contact if their superior starts showing signs of weakness. Each Protectorate soldier is extremely highly trained up until maturity and serves in military service, not stopping until death. Colonies are considered “forward bases” and they are only established at tactically superior points. The Protectorate suffers a bit from bureaucratic slowdown in the higher levels of government, as those who accept higher command positions or administrative positions sometimes are those who are simply bad at being regular rank-and-file soldiers. The Protectorate prefers to exile criminals from its territory rather than execute them, leading to many of the Protectorate-based races appearing in areas like the Federation and the Kedrosian Territory. Most of the Protectorate are actually not humans. Humans are considered weak to the Protectorate, and they scoff at the Federation for being weak and for not following the Protectorate's spartan, militaristic ideal. Protectorate ships are very spartan and have almost no decorative or entertainment areas beyond those that are recommended for decompressing after battle. The Protectorate respects the Federation's borders, for the most part, and they have a well-established arms trading relationship with each other. The Protectorate maintains no diplomatic relations with the Holy Reddarian Empire and considers all Reddarian citizens to be dangerous cultists.

Titania: A Masterpiece of Consciousness

Titania is the name for a collective hybrid synthetic-organic empire based around a hollowed-out planet that now houses a gigantic planet-sized AI. Titania has Mekkos and mechanically-meshed humans all working under the direct mental command of Titania (the name of the AI). Life in Titania is somewhere between a scientific paradise or a dystopian hellhole, depending on who you ask. Titania doesn't work its “citizens” like drones, and for the most part allows them to operate independently at their individual assignments, but when a citizen gets a command directly from Titania, they are under Titania's absolute control for the duration of the command. Some manage to escape the grasp of Titania's command and move to other areas such as the Federation, but escapees are few and far between, thanks to Titania's sophisticated tracking system. Titania has a much smaller population than the other

empires, but it makes up for it with its extremely advanced technology. Titania has a much heavier presence on the Galactic Net, and is rumored to have hacked into every corner of it. Some even say that Titania is the only thing holding the Galactic Net together. The Titanian Fleet is an extremely advanced fleet of gigantic destroyers that travel within Titania's borders with seemingly impossible speed. Titania doesn't maintain any sort of relations with other empires, and often engages on outright raids of strategic resources claimed by other empires, especially within the Kedrosian Territory. Conversely, smugglers from the Federation and Kedrosian Territory often steal bits of Titanian technology to sell to corporate buyers or other wealthy clients. It's considered illegal in the Federation to do so because the Federation wants to at least appear to not be behind such attempts. Most of the empires are reasonably afraid of what Titania can do because they're actually pretty secretive, and because nobody knows what Titania's end goals are.

The Kedrosian Territory: A Criminal Paradise

The Kedrosian Territory is the collective name for an area of space with little to no laws, but a brutal coalition of powerful criminal organizations that operate with relative impunity. The Kedrosian Territory's name comes from Kedros, the name of the planet on which the most powerful of the criminal organizations is based. For the most part, the criminal organizations don't get involved in the day-to-day affairs of their members, but they do collect a hefty sum of protection money from each of its citizens. For the most part, corporations that can't legally perform certain operations within the Federation have bases within the Kedrosian Territory. As long as they pay adequate protection money, they're usually pretty safe from Kedrosian raids. In fact, as long as a client is wealthy enough, pretty much anything can be bought from the criminal organizations, and any sort of trade is acceptable to them. Slavery, smuggling, corruption, bribery, extortion, blackmail, and murder are all extremely common throughout the Territory, and, as long as you aren't doing it to someone particularly connected, you'll probably get away with it. Messing with the main organizations, though, is likely to lead to instant death. Kedrosians often finance raids on other empires and blame other organizations for them in order to avoid any organized repercussions. Kedrosians don't particularly launch attacks on other empires because they couldn't muster much of an organized fleet. The "leader" of the biggest organization in the Kedrosian Territory is a shadowy arms trader based out of Kedros, but nobody knows his/her/its name or what he/she/it is.

The GDMA

The Galactic Department of Mercenary Affairs has played a heavy role in shaping the new universe. After the Merger, the galaxy became a new wild west, and mercenary activity went through the roof. The law could no longer fight it, so in the end the Federation legalized it and taxed it. The GDMA licenses mercenaries and provides their services for a fee. Most player characters are at least registered with the GDMA simply based on the fact that the GDMA gets nervous when unlicensed mercs start operating in various areas and steal what could have been their contracts.

The Galactic Net

At first glance, one might think that the Galactic Net is just another incarnation of the Internet on a massive scale. While that's one of its functions, the Galactic Net is much more sophisticated than that. The whole system is basically an artificially created plane of information and data. While most of the Galactic Net is just made up of video games or "visual entertainment", occasionally sentient entities manifesting themselves from the code in the Galactic Net are able to come forth and essentially will themselves into existence. Such entities are called Programs. Mages and scientists have developed ways to use the Galactic Net for long-distance travel purposes (physically traveling through the Net) as well as communicating with other individuals.

The Brotherhood of Mages

The Brotherhood of Mages is the foremost authority on the use of magic in the universe. In order to legally be able to learn magic, a prospective mage has to submit to all of the rules and regulations of the Brotherhood of Mages, which includes a screening process for people with The Gift (psychic powers). The Brotherhood of Mages regulates all registered magic users and makes sure that nobody can get too powerful without proper authorization. Since psychic powers and magic mix in the most horrible way imaginable, it's up to the Brotherhood to ensure that there aren't any psychomancers running around wreaking havoc. The Brotherhood is a near-omnipresent force in the universe, and often finds itself at odds with the GDMA, especially when it comes to dealing with problems involving mages, but neither would ever start a war with the other, mostly because the GDMA pays better.

The rest can be found at www.phaseshiftgame.com. You damned spy, you.