
Technology on Kadanzer's Pern

*Adapted by Ron Swartzendruber from original material by
Lynne Brigant & Joe Hill*

Why is the Tech Level so Low?

The creators of this club wished to make it one in which the technology level was no more advanced than that of Lessa's day, and similarly, that the social progression would also have reverted to the limited role that women were permitted to play before such people as Lessa and Menolly came along and pushed the envelope. There are those who may disagree, but it seems to us that this allows us the best of both worlds. Those who find more story-writing potential in a situation where women are restricted can place their stories in any Hold or Hall; those who prefer a more socially advanced society are free to write within the Weyr, where women do have more freedom and opportunities for advancement.

Originally, this club was to have been set in an alternate 9th pass Pern where Lessa never existed, and all the Weys lived through the long interval. This was vetoed by Anne McCaffrey, so the founders decided to change the setting to the 10th pass. Of course, the obvious question that arises is, how can the level of technological and social advancement be so similar to that of the early 9th pass, when our timeline is set 500 Turns after the events of All the Weys of Pern and includes AIVAS and the removal of the Red Star?

The answer lies within basic human nature, coupled with the strictly tradition-bound society that Pern is. The advancements promoted by AIVAS and his eager students were feared by many of the more conservative Lords and Masters, who saw these changes as being a threat to their power base. Power is addictive and once people have it, they are usually VERY reluctant to let it go. Those men had all the incentive in the world to try and quash the advances, and after the death of Masterharper Robinton, they were more free to be able to do so. Sebell tried, but he was not nearly as skilled as his Master at turning peoples' attitudes, and with the weight of the most powerful Lords and Masters aimed against progression, it was a losing battle. It took close to two hundred Turns for most of the advances which had been put in place by AIVAS to be lost or forgotten, although the biggest assistance to the conservatives was the fact that the standalone computer terminals which had been manufactured soon ran into problems which nobody had the necessary skill to fix.

Those same power-hungry Lords and Masters resented the freedoms which had begun to be granted to women, as the growing independence of this group was also perceived as a threat to their traditional role and power. Their

machinations were also aimed at returning women to their previous restricted role. Again, it took time, but eventually they succeeded.

The result is that the Pern of Kadanzer is like that of the beginning of the 9th Pass, before Lessa became Ramoth's rider. Some technology remains, although in many cases how it works has been lost and forgotten. Women are strongly discouraged within the occupational crafts and a woman must work three times as hard to earn her knots even if she is accepted as an apprentice in the first place. Women crafters almost never advance beyond journeyman. Since there are so few, the club has a rule that only PC's may be female crafters; we do not allow any female NPC's to have craft rank.



Example: Building Techniques

A good example of the changes in technology may be found in a study of building techniques. In general, buildings on Pern are constructed within native rock formations. In the days when the oldest Northern settlements were formed, this was done by means of plasma cutters and extremely high technology machinery. These machines and methods were lost quickly; by the Second Pass most were gone.

Mining and stone quarrying replaced the high technology methods used by the Ancients. Because these were painstaking, labor intensive methods, population growth and expansion was slowed due to limited Thread protection. Because of Thread's destructive attack on organic material, wood was rejected as a suitable exterior building material. Hand cut rock, similar to castle construction on Old Earth became the dominant building technique, supplemented by hand-hewn tunneling.

Until the discovery of AIVAS, this remained the status-quo of construction. With the infusion of advanced chemistry and engineering that AIVAS provided, building techniques radically changed. Construction within native rock and large scale mining were possible again. Though the original stonecutters could not be reproduced, AIVAS taught other methods which allowed excavation of large scale dwellings in relatively short periods of time. Kadanzer Weyr's old mountain home and Safe Mooring Inn are examples of construction during this time period.

AIVAS also gave access to design and engineering formulae that allowed use of simple tools to create large structures within a hollow mountain without undermining the cliff walls themselves. To accommodate the serious growth of the population and the force of expansion across the Southern Continent, simpler techniques were not as widely adopted. Large, permanent structures that could be supplied with geothermal energy were the focus of construction.

As the Pass ended, and Thread was not expected to return again, the backlash against AIVAS ("The

Abomination") became extremely influential. Over time, the techniques and technology of building degenerated to the use of quarried stone and mortar. Wood was first used on a large scale during this period, since it was thought that Thread would never return. The use of advanced engineering and chemistry was so frowned upon by the Lord Holders (the paying customers) that Craftmasters rapidly gave them up and used the old methods. As the older, trained craftmasters passed on, the applied engineering and chemistry principles were lost.

Even with the return of Thread, building techniques remain much the same. Most of the wooden structures were roofed over with slate after the Starcraft's revelation that thread would return, though some holders, including a few Lords, waited until the last moment to begin this conversion. Building remains the province of the minecraft and the woodcraft (the latter is again a subcraft of the smithcraft, in Kadanzer's Pern)



Additional Technology Notes

A question arose recently dealing particularly with plastic and rubber. Rubber is definitely a possibility, provided the original settlers took rubber (gum) trees with them. All you really need to do to get rubber is to collect the sap of the rubber trees, and cook it up - this produces a sort of coarse, thin rubber, as is used in chewing gum. To get thick rubber for tires, or elastics and stuff you have to cook the sap up with sulphur. That's all there is to it.

Plastic is most likely a no-no. You need petroleum to manufacture it, which would mean they'd have to find that oil somewhere, and get it out of the earth and everything, and then it needs to undergo a quite complex series of procedures to split it into gasoline, heating oil, or the raw materials for plastic. There is a reason that plastic didn't really become common on Earth until midway through the 20th century; it requires quite a large technical base.

Another question that has been raised has to do with the level of metalworking technology. The smithcraft is actually much more technically sophisticated than the stereotypical medieval blacksmith on Earth, but since there is no industrial base complex items will be rare and precious. For instance, the craft can create clocks, but only a few skilled people are capable of such precise work and it takes a long time for each clock. As a result, these items are virtually unheard of in the holds, where most people are skilled in telling time by the sun. Besides certain Lord holders who keep them as prestige items, only the seacraft uses clocks, as accurate timekeeping is essential for long-distance navigation.

Flamethrowers cannot be made by the average smith. All smiths can clean 'throwers and make basic repairs, but that is the limit. Even if a local smith is skillful enough, he lacks the proper tools and equipment; even some of the smithhalls at the major holds do not have the lathes and

presses needed for the manufacturing of flamethrowers and spare parts. Those who do have these tools do a brisk business.

The Southern Smithcraft has perhaps ten or twenty metal lathes, half of which are at the main Hall, and the rest scattered at the most major local crafthalls. The same goes for drills, and any other tools that require fast, powerful, and precise rotation; bearings are hard to make with the tools available, and the machines are often temperamental and require constant lubrication, cleaning, and frequent overhauls. Blacksmithing techniques, some of which are quite advanced, remain by far the most common means of crafting metal.

Due to a misunderstanding, in a previous version of the handbook there was one page that indicated that the smithcraft had hydroelectric power available to them. This is not really the case; waterwheels are indeed used for mechanical power, but the principles of electricity are entirely lost. In the time of AIVAS, there was an attempt to create a distance-writer network, but on the Southern Continent it was discovered that a common variety of large wherry seemed to enjoy sitting on the transmission lines, breaking them more often than not. Because strengthening or burying the lines seemed unfeasible, the principles behind the distance-writer have been dismissed as historical curiosities and are no longer taught to students.