



Notes on the Volduron Uprising...

“...Much debate surrounds the true motivations of House Volduron’s defiance. The official narrative suggests an inevitable clash born of arrogance and a desire to rival the Imperium. Yet, scrutiny of the house’s activities reveals a more nuanced picture ~ one where foreign contracts and unsanctioned alliances could have catalyzed fears within the ruling class of Or. The unfortunate destruction of Volduron’s archives and libraries only further obscures our understanding of their true intentions...”

The Hubris of Volduron: A study on Rebellion and Mercenary Culture in Or, Emel Kharad (Imperial Historian)

The Volduron Uprising (1984 N.C.) : A Dark Chapter in the Reign of the Empress

The reign of Empress Galg la Meera XIV, marked by both stability and moments of intense political upheaval, has seen many challenges to the authority of the Empire. Among these, the Volduron Uprising stands out as a particularly dark chapter ~ a stark reminder of the dangers that arise when ambition and power, left unchecked, intertwine.

The Rise of House Volduron

House Volduron known as a Lesser House within the intricate political landscape of Or had, over the centuries, carved out a unique place for itself through a combination of military prowess, mercenary activities, and strategic alliances. Known for their formidable private guard, House Volduron was often compared to House Drakaal, another house with a long history of sanctioned sellsword activities. Unlike Drakaal, who remained loyal to the Empire and aligned their military services with Imperial interests, Volduron frequently operated beyond Or's borders, serving as mercenaries for other world powers while maintaining a protected headquarters within the Empire.

This strategic arrangement allowed House Volduron to amass significant wealth, prestige, and an extensive network of influence. Their successes abroad granted them a level of autonomy uncommon among the Lesser Houses, making them a powerful and unpredictable force within the political

landscape of Or. However, this autonomy also bred ambition that slowly began to turn into defiance.

The Pursuit of the Arcane and the Forbidden

As their power grew, it was said that the heads of House Volduron shifted their focus from mere wealth accumulation to more esoteric pursuits. Whispers within the political corridors of J'ah Ga Noor suggested that the house had developed an insatiable appetite for ancient texts, forbidden tomes, and relics of a bygone age. They became patrons of scholars, collectors of lost knowledge, and, most dangerously, seekers of arcane mysteries.

Using their accumulated wealth and military assets, House Volduron began dispatching soldiers and agents on dangerous missions to forgotten ruins, desolate tombs, and remote locales ~ ventures known among those in the know as “retrievals” or “dungeon crawls.” The exact nature of their findings remains obscured by history, but it is said that whatever they unearthed sparked a change in the house’s demeanour.

Seeds of Rebellion and Defiance

In the years leading up to the uprising, House Volduron’s behaviour became increasingly bold and defiant. They began to refuse the payment of taxes, tithes, and tributes traditionally owed to the Empress, citing vague grievances that masked deeper discontent. Behind closed doors, rumours spread that they had uncovered dangerous secrets ~ truths that could

threaten the very foundations of the Empire. Though the nature of these supposed secrets was never publicly disclosed, it would seem that they were enough to fuel the house's growing isolation and rebellious stance.

The Volduron Uprising

Despite several diplomatic petitions from the Empire, repeatedly requesting the payment of dues, House Volduron remained obstinate. The tension between Volduron and the Empire escalated, culminating in the decision to send an official envoy accompanied by a small detachment of five soldiers ~ a symbolic restrained gesture of Imperial authority rather than a genuine show of force. However, upon arrival, the soldiers were killed, and the official was captured, imprisoned, and tortured within the Volduron estate.

When no report came back from the first envoy, a second retinue was dispatched by the Empire to investigate the situation. Upon reaching the area, the second retinue discovered what appeared to be a bandit attack, with the bodies of the first soldiers strewn about but no sign of the official. This scene of course was a ruse staged by House Volduron to fabricate the appearance of an intercepted Imperial envoy, and, when confronted by the second envoy regarding the whereabouts of the official and his escort, House Volduron denied that the official and his retinue had ever arrived at their estate, claiming ignorance of their whereabouts. Suspicious of House Volduron's evasive answers and sensing

something amiss, the second envoy covertly sent a messenger back to the Imperial authorities to report on the potentially troubling situation. Upon receiving this report, the Empire, wary of further escalation and the potential for rebellion, began mobilizing nearby garrisons and prepared a larger force for a swift response if required.

The entire situation from the point of view of House Volduron unravelled due to a simple oversight ~ they had not considered that servants sometimes entered the main building through a long access tunnel rather than the main gates. This tunnel provided a route that bypassed the main areas of the estate, allowing a maid Arya dar Vel to witness the imprisoned official without being initially detected. Having discovered the tortured official and aware of the arrival of the second envoy, the maid attempted to alert the envoy to the truth. However, she was captured before she could do so and was subsequently murdered in a manner most gruesome to prevent her from revealing what she had found.

Later that night it was, again through this tunnel, that the maid's son, who, noticing his mother had not returned, ventured out to deliver her more food, assuming that her tasks and services had been extended as they had many times before. As he navigated the dark passage, he stumbled upon the body of his mother and the still barely conscious official. Overcome with fury and grief, and driven by a burning desire for revenge, and knowing the estate's layout, he utilized his knowledge to evade security, enter the main chambers of the family heads, and butcher several senior members before



A Mother's Sacrifice: Arya dar Vel
by Zosa Mel'ar
commissioned by Imperial decree 1998 N.C.

fleeing, leaving chaos to seed panic and consternation through the household and its remaining leadership.

With the night erupting into riot ~ an unusual and overly suspicious set of circumstances ~ the second envoy dispatched a rider to alert the circling Imperial troops, who having advanced under the cover of darkness were awaiting orders. With the estate's defenses in disarray, and an order to breach the estate, the Imperial troops saw an opportunity and launched a rapid and overwhelming assault. The surprise and coordination of the attack left the usually highly skilled and co-ordinated Volduron forces unable to respond effectively, and though the ensuing battle lasted for several days it was considered a swift conclusion to what could have transformed into a long and drawn out rebellion. The estate was subsequently razed to the ground, and with it, the legacy of House Volduron was erased from the history of the Empire.

Reflection and aftermath

It is widely believed that House Volduron's rebellious actions stemmed from their amassed wealth, military power, and a sense of hubris that they could rival the might of the Imperium. However, those who have studied the personalities and details surrounding this event closely question whether this was truly their sole motivation. While many doubt that pride alone could have driven such defiance, few alternative theories have gained traction, leaving the true impetus for the uprising, for those who question the official narrative, shrouded in uncertainty.

The story of the maid's son, Zerin del Arya, however, was particularly powerful. He was portrayed as a tragic yet noble figure who, driven by grief and a sense of justice, took matters into his own hands. His actions in destabilizing the Volduron estate were framed as a courageous service to the Empire by a loyal vassal. Recognizing the potential to harness his story to strengthen their narrative, the Imperium invited the young man to the capital. There, in a grand public ceremony, he was knighted by Empress Galg la Meera herself, becoming a Knight of the Empire and a symbol of loyalty and bravery.

The knighting of the son was a masterstroke of Imperial propaganda; by elevating him from a humble background to the ranks of knighthood, the Imperium was able to reinforce the idea that loyalty and sacrifice for the Empire would be rewarded. His knighthood became a widely celebrated tale, demonstrating that even the most ordinary citizen could achieve greatness under the Empress's rule.

However, Zerin, deeply scarred by the trauma of his mother's death and the violence he committed, struggled to adapt to life at court. Despite his new status, he found it impossible to reconcile his personal loss with the politics and vacuity of noble life. Eventually, he withdrew from public view, retreating to a remote part of the northern Athuilles, where he allegedly still lives in relative isolation—a solitary figure whose story became both a source of inspiration and a warning to those who might consider rebellion against the Empire.

Overall, the handling of the Volduron Uprising by the Imperium provided both a demonstration of strength and a

reaffirmation of the divine right of the Empress to rule without question.

“...By decree of Her Imperial Majesty, Galg la Meera, let it be known that the insurgents of House Volduron, who dared defy the rightful rule of Or, have met their justice. The flames that consumed their estate serve as a warning to all who may harbor treasonous thoughts. Let the tale of the young knight, born of humble origins yet raised to nobility for his service to the Empire, be a beacon of hope to all loyal subjects.”

*Official Proclamation of EMPIRE from the archives of J'al Mara
Biel*

*The knighting of Zerin del Arya:
by Rosa Mel'ar
commissioned by Imperial decree 1998 N.C.
On permanent display at the Imperial Senate*



A critique of Zosa's masterpiece by Florian Gasparr

The Knighting of Zerin del Arya by Zosa Mel'ar is considered by many to be a masterpiece - perfect in composition, tone and symbolism - highlighting Me'lar's subtle skills as an artist, but doing so in a manner which does not remove the viewer from the scene, but rather draws them deeper to contemplate, given their knowledge of the context, the meaning present.

Solemnity is the word most often associated with the experience of viewing this piece and indeed understanding the facts surrounding the Volduron Uprising and moreover the implications of the event, not only for the individuals involved in it, but also for the Empire itself, develops an emotional resonance for the viewer which exceeds that of most known paintings, bringing many to tears when they first gaze upon it in the fullness of its splendour within the Imperial Gallery.

The kneeling figure of del Arya: his perfectly composed posture clearly expressing his tortured inner emotional landscape ~ the devastation caused by the brutal murder of his mother Arya dar Vel. Graciously above him, empathetically mirroring this emotional state the Empress herself. It would seem then that both bow their head in grief ~ a shared mourning, at least that is one amongst many interpretations that naturally arise. A grief therefore that is

both personal but also national, a grief borne by the individual and Empire.

The precise instant drawn by Zosa, thus appears to show the bowing of both Knight and Empress in grief, yet remove the context and look at this scene purely in terms of ceremonial symbolism and another interpretation presents itself to the viewer. Are we not witnessing the supplication of the individual subject before the ultimate representative of the Empire, whilst also the humility and supplication of the Empire to the individual ~ each therefore reliant upon and bound in service to the other? Each seems to understand, shoulder, and embrace the others' experience. And between them? That grasped at the moment by the Empress, a sword, a symbol of the power and might of the Imperial Army.

But return to the historical context and is this symbol, about to be passed to the young man ~ who could be considered fundamental in aborting what could have evolved into a military coup ~ not now a symbol of power and security, but one of violence and ambition ~ the very essence of the causation of the uprising itself, the very essence of the grief that we witness? A symbol that both seem to be contemplating.

Again we could continue... Notice that the bowing of the Empress might in part be due to the weight of the sword that she holds - the burden of ruling justly and providing protection to her subjects - and that del Arya, having performed the heroism that has led him to this ceremony,

amidst the loss of his innocence, now truly understands the weight of that responsibility, and representative of the population as a whole, he now symbolises the realisation of the weight of responsibility that the Empress herself shoulders on behalf of all. The scene can therefore be seen as a meditation on the nature of power and collective responsibility, and that without this balance there is only chaos and murder. And thus, hinted at via the careful construction of the slightly skewed triangular composition of the two figures which leads the viewer's gaze slowly but inexorably to the imperial crown, shadowed and hovering, positioned such that it too seems to be lending its weight to further bow the head of the Empress, we have this message re-emphasised in a manner most subtle.

Yes, *The Knighting of Zerin del Arya* by Zosa Mel'ar should very definitely be held up as a masterpiece, but more importantly the messages that it delivers to the viewer should not be forgotten.

Long live her Highness the glorious Galg la Meera! All hail the Empress!

Florian Gasparr
(2000 N.C.)