

The Altarian Federation

The Altarian Federation sprawls across star systems, an amalgam civilisation of civilisations governed from the Seat of Alta in the Central Systems (though, in reality, systems have their own independence to a degree since communications from the Central Systems can take months if not years to reach the fringes of the Federation). Generally, civilisations ceded into the Federation voluntarily as the Altarians expanded into the stars and brought with them technology that would withstand the Decay: their culture and history assimilated into the Altarian Identity. Whether those who call themselves Altarian on one fringe of the Federation would be even culturally recognisable to those on the other is often a matter of fierce discussion, but any who call themselves an Altarian Citizen have basic rights enshrined in Altarian Law and enforced wherever Altarian Law is upheld.

Summary

- The Altarian Federation spans the whole galaxy and incorporates all intelligent life.
- The Federation is millenia old but the expansion of the Federation has only ceased for the last few centuries.
- The Decay is a universal force that stunts technological development which the Altarians overcame using a mysterious power source called Ship Hearts.
- Altarian Space is roughly divided into rings based on time since systems ceded to the Federation.
- Altarian Culture is an amalgamation of hundreds of star systems, resulting in vastly varying norms and only a few cultural constants.

History

The Altarian Federation began its expansion shortly after developing interstellar travel, greeting the universe with a steel-clad hand of friendship or fist of conquest. Millenia of interstellar diplomacy, aggressive terraforming, and (at times) wars of conquest against those threatening the peace of the Federation, saw Altarian reach spread across the galaxy until all spacefaring civilisations had either been subsumed or subdued by the Federation. Confined to the bounds of the Galaxy, the Federation now enters the fifth century of peace as troubles on planets are confined more to intra-system conflicts on matters of rival would-be Governance, rather than interstellar war.

Altarian dominance is most commonly attributed to the Altarian discovery of means of interstellar travel that did not fall foul of the [Decay](#) - a universal constant that causes sufficiently complex mechanisms to cease functioning. Most civilisations were unable to progress beyond basic powered flight due to the [Decay](#) eating away at the intricate mechanisms required to progress, but Altaria uniquely has been able to shield its technology from this effect. The exact means of doing so remain secret to the Altarian Throne, but it is widely known that the shielding power is present on every Altarian ship christened by the Altarian Throne in the form of the powerful Ship Hearts that power the vessels and form the fascination of most sects of Ship Mystics.

Time in Altarian Society is measured in terms of the Era, with three distinct Eras:

- First Era (FE) - the period before the advent of the Ship Heart
- Second Era (SE) - the period of expansion of the Federation between the advent of the Ship

Heart to the acquisition of all intelligent Star Systems

- Third Era (TE) - the current period of peace

Structure and Culture

The Altarian Federation is split into the following tiers as both an administrative and security essential. The existence of a cultural hierarchy between these tiers is often supposed between those vying for political power and clout, but officially none exists. See also [Populous Planets](#).

- **Seat of Alta** - a psuedo-mythical location on the planet of Alta itself where the Altarian elite reside and make decisions and perform research of galactic significance
- **Central Systems** - a collection of star systems close to Alta where matters of Imperial Policy are discussed and decreed
- **The Zeitgeist** - the next closest systems to the Central Systems, most systems in the zeitgeist have been Altarian for millenia and most have assimilated entirely into the Altarian culture such that few planets are distinct beyond greatest output. Systems are technically governed by individual Governors, but in reality most are closely related or direct Dynasts.
- **The Fringe** - the edge of the Federation, worlds here have been ceded into Altaria within the last millennium. Systems are still mostly individually governed, and small scale armed revolts are still known to take place as would-be governors vie for control of resources or power.
- **The Beyond** - beyond the edge of the Federation, these worlds have never made any signs of containing intelligent life¹⁾ and are systematically terraformed or mined for resources.

Within planets, let alone within systems, the specifics of culture can vary hugely. One thing that remains constant as a principle throughout Altarian Society, however, is the common ideal of **Endeavour** - striving to achieve more. In the face of the universal force of the Decay, cultures differ on whether this concept alone is a philosophical imperative, a divine instruction, or even a galactic destiny, but universally great import is given to any strides that counteract the Decay. Beside that, the specifics within cultures - particularly further out in the Zeitgeist and the Fringe - can vary hugely from planet to planet, and it is often the thankless work of Diplomats to ensure those differences are overcome during communication.

Altarian culture - which all Altarian worlds will be aware of even if it is not the dominant culture present - sets a few more specific cultural touchstones:

- **Duty to Dynasty** - those who are directly descendant from the Throne (Dynasts) are generally considered to be important either for actual power, or political influence and Altarians are expected to go out of their way to accommodate those closer to the Throne than themselves. All Dynasts will know their Order from the Throne, and will take great care and glee in updating it should it decrease, and dismay should it increase.
- **Sanctity of Sustenance** - at all times, Altarians are expected to be keenly aware of the next mealtime and make proper arrangements such that any other activities do not overlap. Altarians have been known to sit down in the middle of battles amidst civil wars so that both sides can have lunch. It is considered the greatest insult to prevent an Altarian from finishing their meal, and poison is considered the basest of insults.
- **Respect of Ships** - off-world Altarians will have particular reverence for the ships that carry them. Prevalence of accidents in early space travel and the severity of any mishaps mean that Altarians have specific respect for their ships. For the Mystics who see and claim power from those Ships, this respect often tends further into reverence.
- **Forthrightness amongst Citizens** - Altarians prize transparency and sharing of information,

culture and ideas. Concealing information or lying is considered a negative trait, though outright stating that information exists but you cannot or will not reveal it is considered acceptable, and certainly necessary in many professions, particularly military. This forthrightness only extends as far as Altarians.

The dominant language throughout the Federation is the Altarian Basic Lexicon (ABL), and all Altarian Citizens²⁾ are expected to be fluent in ABL from an early age. However, the mass amalgamation of cultures and civilisations means there is a vast array of different languages spoken throughout Altarian Space. Speaking a non-Altarian language to those Dynasts in line for the Altarian Throne is often considered an insult, particularly if the Dynast in question cannot speak the language.

Linguistic Observations

Given the various evolutions of ABL that have been necessitated by the integration and amalgamation of cultures, the word "Altarian" has come to take on numerous synonymous meanings in Altarian culture. ABL speakers are expected to infer from context as to the intended meaning of words.

- Altarian (from Alta)
- Altarian (from the Federation of Alta)
- Altarian (a citizen of the Altarian Federation)
- Altarian (constructed or owned by the Altarian Federation)
- Altarian (proper)
- Altarian (equal)
- Altarian (important)

Consequently, to describe someone or something as **not** Altarian is to imply not only it is not geographically associated with the Federation but also to imply it is improper, inferior, and unimportant.

Notably, Altarian does **not** mean "human".

Family Relationships

Most civilisations that ceded into the Altarian Federation maintain some concept of a family relationship. Being a fiercely defended custom, and one that the Altarian Throne has held little interest in upsetting, Altarian family relationships are thus a tangled amalgamation of all forms. A parent may be related to a child biologically, by adoption, by mentorship, by nest-care, and more; families may expand by partnership due to romantic interest, friendship, kinship, and more; and in the rarest of cases a family may grow in experience but decrease in quantity when two individuals amalgamate together.

All culturally recognised relationships are considered valid, and this is a contributing factor to the sprawling size of the Altarian Dynasty family tree.

Naming Conventions

Naming Conventions massively differ from planet to planet across Altarian Space, and consequently

any local convention may be used for names. However, in a bid to standardise bureaucracy, Altarian Citizens are required to identify with at least one name in the form [TITLE] [NAME 1] [NAME 2] (with [TITLE] [NAME 1] being the formal address, and [NAME 2] being an informal address). Any names beyond this are considered optional and no space is made for them in Altarian Bureaucratic forms.

The knock-on of this is that many planets, particularly in the Zeitgeist, have adopted a convention in the style [TITLE] [ADJECTIVE] [NOUN] where the adjective is influenced by your planet, and the noun is influenced by your own culture. In formal scenarios where only Name 1 is used, the infinitive form is used. For instance, a Shipwright from the Shining Spires of Cerulean IV might name their child X. Glimmering Circuit (and would be referred to formally as X. Glimmer, or Circuit among friends).

A child - anyone who has not been declared an adult by any cultural means - takes a different name until they are declared an adult. The name will vary hugely from world to world, but usually be a diminished form of a full name. Upon reaching adulthood, the adult will select their adult name and pronouns moving forward.

Law and Order

Ultimately, the rules and laws set down in the Altarian Federation are sanctioned by the Throne of Alta itself, with changes distributed across the galaxy from the Central Systems. Given the variance in Altarian Culture, and the impracticality of managing minutia of star system management from multiple star systems away, the enforcement of law is generally down to the governance of a particular system, except in cases where the law of all of the Altarian Federation is in question.

Generally, then, enforcement will be down to how any one system Governor chooses to act, but the rule of a governor can be overridden by any present or occupying Naval force, since the power presented by a Ship Heart and an Imperial Officer is considered to be closer to that of the will of the Central Systems. Naval Officers will rarely overrule a Governor, though, except in extremis or in the case of a particularly arrogant Officer who believes they know better about local traditions. The balance of power is all the more precarious in the Fringe, and also wherever the Dynasty gets involved.

Within Ships, there is a strict chain of command with the Lifeblood of a ship each being answerable to their commanding Officer and those Officers answerable to the Lieutenants who are ultimately answerable to the Captain. Passengers and auxiliaries are similarly expected to default to the order of those who work aboard the Ship. Disobeying a direct order from a superior is considered a severe offence.

Punishment for breaking Altarian Law also varies based on the enforcement, but since the death of an Altarian Citizen is always considered murder (in itself a cardinal crime), execution is only possible with the will of [the Elegy](#), who summarily strip the citizenship of their victims. Consequently when Altarians fight, it is never to the death, for even a justified death is murder in the eyes of Altarian justice. Altarian justice also shies away from incarceration due to the loss of endeavour caused not only by locking people away but also in having to guard them. Instead, excepting in severe instances, criminals are punished by enforced recompensation to society. Breaking such recompensation agreements is a severe crime also, and a fast-track path to being on the radar of the Elegy.

1)

a term in Altarian Society often synonymous with “capable of joining the Federation”

2)

a tautology in ABL, since 'Altarian' and 'Citizen' have the same root

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