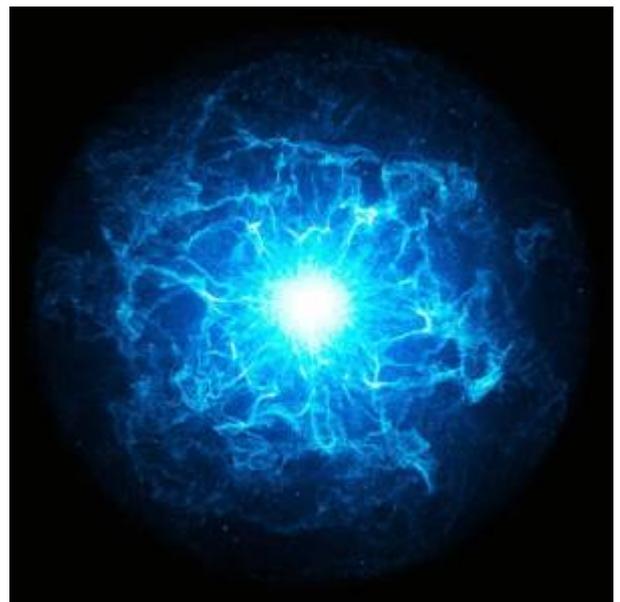


Technology and Decay

Summary

- The Decay is a powerful force that stunts technological development.
- Due to the stunting of technological growth, Altarian technology has large gaps and surprising advances - the most notable is the preference for simple melee weapons in combat.
- Ship Hearts, exclusively created in the Altarian Federation, keep the Decay at bay and enable use of Energy for complex technology.
- Ship Hearts are primarily employed in Starships but also in highly developed planets.
- Mystics commune with and harness power from Ship Hearts and are able to use some of its power off-ship.
- Aboard Starships, Ship Hearts project a Ship Personality throughout the Ship. This Personality is highly capable but it is **not** deemed a true intelligence.

Decay and Ship Hearts



The Decay is a universal force that has impeded technological advancement across the galaxy since humanity invented the wheel. The simple fact is that over time, any complex manufactured mechanism will break down and cease functioning. The more complicated the mechanism, the faster this happens. Simple machines, and complex mechanics all the way up to unpowered flight will tend to evade the Decay, but anything more complex will almost certainly begin to deteriorate as soon as it is used.

Due to the damning effects of the Decay, technological progress across the galaxy has been stymied, excepting for the leaps and bounds of progress made by the Altarian Federation after the advent of **Ship Hearts**. These incredibly powerful objects, the production of which has remained a securely guarded secret with the Altarian Throne, are capable of both powering large and complicated machines and in doing so protecting them from the effects of Decay. This effect - known as Energising - powered the Altarian expansion with the launching of Starships powered and shielded by these Ship Hearts, and the consequent prospering of Altarian cities was made possible by the protection of these

Hearts being conferred on entire planets.

Aboard a Ship, a Ship Heart will be kept in the most secure and well protected area of the ship, often guarded by Mystics and their machinations sometimes beyond the access of a ship's captain. In the event of emergency, ships are capable of ejecting the Ship Heart to keep it safe from harm, though on many ships inspectors have reported that the interference of Mystics may render those systems unreliable.

Though many in Altaria manage to live lives unbothered by Decay, the force remains a real and pressing danger to any travelling to planets in the Borderlands or Beyond, and still renders any attempt at space travel that is not reliant on a Ship Heart a doomed endeavour.

Complex biological machines evidently are not affected, but it is as yet unclear why the Decay only affects manufactured mechanics. The initial research that eventually spawned [the Various](#) hoped to defer the Decay by making use of its ambivalence toward biological mechanisms, and to some extent it has been successful, provided a balance is struck. The further an individual Various strays from the biological, the greater risk of Decay they open themselves up to.

Ship Hearts and Mysticism

The exact means and operation of a Ship Heart are still a tightly guarded secret of the Throne of Alta, but the mysteries surrounding the capabilities of the Hearts - their power, their ability to operate multiple systems in tandem, and indeed the relationship with the Decay - are the subject of devoted study and exploration by [the Mystic Sects](#). With great study, dedication, or sometimes sheer devotion, Mystics are capable of tapping into the power of Ship Hearts and harnessing it for later use. When a Mystic uses their power, they do exert the force of the Ship Heart they attuned with, though the mechanism of this phenomenon still remains unexplained.

Technology Levels



Due to the warping of technological advancement due to the Decay, there are strange gaps and leaps in Altarian technology. The most notable point is that most of Altarian military endeavours are focussed on simple melee weapons rather than complicated ranged weapons. When ranged weapons do enter the equation they are generally simple mass drivers. Though there are exceptions, the tried and tested Decay-proof methods generally prove effective. Similarly, while powered armour certainly exists, simpler armour is generally a preference for missions into Decaying space.

When powered directly by a Ship Heart, few need to worry about access to energy. However, those used to Borderlands exploration have had to find their own solutions to energy to power their equipment. Battery power, solar power, or petitioning a connection to a Ship Heart are all well trodden means of circumventing this problem, and solutions for portable energy transportation are generally the cutting edge of Altarian science.

Necessarily, telecommunications are only capable when powered by Energy, meaning that much of Altarian society developed around a necessity to deliver messages in person or by physical means. Since being able to employ Energy for the problem, long range communications have been made possible - used particularly for interstellar contact - but in general, Altarians are more suited to face to face interaction over remote contact.

Starships and Personalities

Starships, being necessarily powered by a Ship Heart, are the most technologically advanced capabilities that the Altarian Federation has. Ships, capable of faster than light jumps using incredibly powerful engines, are often equipped with high powered mass drivers, laser focussing technology, reactive armour plating, wireless networking capabilities and holodecks. Of these, only wireless networking and holodeck capabilities have become mainstream within Zeitgeist cities. Starships vary

hugely in size and purpose, though the requirement for acquisition of a Heart generally tends ships toward a certain minimum size. Unwieldy Battleships and Transports are just as common in space as sleek Destroyers or luxury Cruisers.

Life aboard Starships and Stations is consequently vastly more luxurious than planetside life outside of the Zeitgeist, despite decreased living space. In part this is down to the perpetual access to Energy-driven items, but also down to the omnipresence of the Ship Personality - a projection of the Ship's processes that manifests differently from ship to ship and maintains operations. Some Personalities are more personable than others, some prefer to consider themselves strictly functional, but only on a Ship will these personalities come to light. Interaction with these Personalities is also an important part of Ship Mysticism.

Personalities are, however, **not** considered to be true intelligence, unlike the outlawed concept of a [Synthetic Intelligence](#).

Crew



A Ship needs a crew - a Lifeblood to match its Heart. A Lifeblood is usually concocted of tens to hundreds of individuals (not counting any Troops that are being transported), as well as a selection of Lieutenants. Though Ships can be crewed by any number of variations, a staple Lieutenant roster across the Altarian Federation is considered to be:

- **A Captain**, responsible for giving orders and making decisions aboard the ship
- **A Navigator**, responsible for plotting courses between and within Star Systems
- **A Mystic**, responsible for the wellbeing and understanding of the Ship Heart
- **A Shipwright**, responsible for keeping the mechanical aspects of the Ship functioning and repairing damage that may occur to the hull or shields

Commonly, a Ship's Lieutenant roster will be considered incomplete without the following (though often the Core Crew may double into these roles):

- **A Medic**, responsible for the health of the crew
- **A Quartermaster**, responsible for the management of equipment and supplies aboard the ship
- **A Diplomat**, responsible for communication with other ships and also resolving any communication snafus between Borderland cultures
- **A Gunnery Officer**, responsible for the workings and operation of the weapon systems of the ship

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