

Encyclopdia Archonia

Providing a glossary of frequently used, obscure, or non-English terms found in the Tribes of Heaven series.

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Academy – Usually refers to the Junior Officers Academy on Holtiin.

Academy Annual – A thick, full-color, glossy journal put out yearly as a joint effort between the Junior Academy’s printing, journalism, design, and photography departments, containing pin-up images of particularly attractive, athletic, or otherwise notable students as well as interviews, poetry, and art by distinguished members of the student body. Since each year’s press run is limited, the magazines must be ordered in advance and often achieve collector value, especially if they feature a student who later goes on to become “famous” in some way (such as Haarnsvaar Commander or Cha’atz General).

Air Defense – Also referred to as “PAD” (“Planetary Air Defense”), “Civil Air Defense”, or “Air Squad”. Stationary units of pilots and communications officers that monitor the atmospheres and immediate space around Archon-dominated planets.

Archeoavis – Mega-fauna bio-engineered by Archon scientists to serve simultaneously as mobile population centers and living pollution processors.

Archon – 1) A native of the planet Archos. 2) A citizen of the Archon Empire. 3) The language of the empire, also called “Unified Archon” or “Simplified Archon”. Word roots are roughly 40% Ryzaan, 40% Shandrian, and 15% Vasiit and 5% “other”, but the bulk of the characters used and pronunciation tendencies are Ryzaan in origin.

Astrum – 1) An officer’s rank modifier within many branches of the Archon Imperial military (usually designating a “training” or “junior” status in a specific department; eg. “Lieutenant Astrum”). 2) Shandrian term for the page to a genadri-knight; used as an officer’s rank in Star Assault.

Aur – Ancient Shendiir and Kez embodiment of independent consciousness and/or awareness.

Aurian – Any member of the race of kaffir native to the region “Aurius”, now considered “Southern Eshandir”. The pure Aurians were mostly exterminated in pre-Imperial wars on Archos. Their genetic traits still surface among people of Shandrian, Islander, Holtiini, Mantzaar, and Ruhn descent. The most notable flags of Aurian heritage are crimson or copper colored hair, a warm amber-tan complexion, and deep blue or dark green eyes. Natural (pure) Aurians were nearly devoid of body hair – facial, chest, or armpit hair in those of Aurian descent indicate interbreeding with Kez tribesmen, far North Shandrians, or humans. A somewhat popular painting of a performance hall owner in Yetzjmaal (with saurtzek features save for amber skin) is interpreted by some as an indication that Aurian blood spread even further from the home world, long before the foundation of the empire. Some scholars dismiss the painting as “fantasy”, but a select few claim Aurians were the “first tribe” of the kaffir, ergo spread throughout the universe before even arriving on Archos.

Aurmalki – 1) A person of the nation of Aurmaalek (usually of human descent). 2) Their language or religion.

Baalphae – The Ryzaan word for the saurtzek peoples, specifically the Ilv'xukzuiy.

Black Feather – A medal awarded to one whose close comrade has fallen during a shared mission and/or sent to the parents/spouses of deceased career folk. They are symbolically sent to the surviving family members of Star Assault recruits due to the Vow of Sacrifice.

Brace – A piece of uniform underwear for male paratroopers which encourages circulation, reduces stress, and helps protect the ribs from impact or pulse-related damage. Also provides a padding buffer if one's symbiote climbs on one's back while un-armored. Its resemblance to a swimsuit top or a sports bra (albeit an under-bust sort of contraption; it encircles the ribcage just below the pectorals and covers the back up to the clavicles with straps over the shoulders to the front) has made the device a notorious source of harassment among non-paratroopers but the functionality is undeniable.

Cha'atz – Highly educated and experienced officers who coordinate actions between multiple units in the Archon military and who function as chief communications specialists between military heads and the civilian Council and/or the press. The Cha'atz General position is considered supreme in military power, coming second only to the Haarnsvaar and she (the job is usually held by a woman; the current chief is one Oraska Eavrellene) is usually unafraid to argue even with them.

Cheldyne – An Archon company which makes a variety of cleaning products, generally salt scrubs, waxes, oils, and the occasional nano-cleaner. A long-time sponsor of gen racers and racing events. While their products are of fair to excellent quality and efficiency their advertisements (never seen on the home world but prevalent on space stations where gaudy posters and radio spots are not banned) are notoriously obnoxious, brightly colored, and often completely ridiculous.

Chikkiba – A pungent vegetable common in lowlands and wetlands on Archos. Releases a pervasive astringent oil when fresh cut, which can be driven out of it or preserved in it via proper (or improper...) preparation. A common and inexpensive flavor additive in Ryzaan cuisine.

Chite – A louse-like parasite of the skin, scalp, fur, or scales of various creatures on Archos and Holtiin. Range in size by their specific species of host from nearly microscopic to 15-16 cm.

Chon – An Archon baton, used by police and prison guards for millennia. They can be electrified by concentrating pulse into the handle; the name 'chon' is an onomatopoeic reference to the slight hum the sticks make when charged, and the ringing sound they make during a charged strike.

Clarithane – A bio-engineered translucent or transparent resinous compound available in various grades to serve a wide range of purposes. Lower, thinner grades (used in packaging) biodegrade relatively quickly with little environmental damage. Higher, heavier grades (used almost entirely aboard space cruisers) can last thousands of years, withstand ludicrous amounts of pressure and heat, and only periodically need to be replenished with a thin layer of Renuclal (repairing varnish) to stay in top shape.

Conduit – Shandrian or (polite) Archon terminology for a sufferer of High Tension Syndrome (HTS). The implication (although often forgotten in modern times) is that the source of the sufferer's mighty reserves of energy is divine in nature.

Crown – A silver crown badge is the insignia of rank “colonel” in most branches of the Archon Imperial military, used for the various “majors” in Star Assault (gold is for the Squadron Commander, silver for the “Primary” or “Major Prime”, the title held by the second-in-command of a Star Assault crew)

Curry Shack – A Ryzaan chain that sells somewhat less than perfect versions of spicy sauce dishes which originated in inland Eshandir and/or in Mantzaar. Popular on space stations, the moons, and Holtiin but often mocked by home worlders. The catchiness of their commercial jingle is renowned.

Czeni's Syndrome – An auto-immune disorder in haki, humans, or (rarely) kaffir where the body ceases to defend properly against ambient or internal pulse radiation; usually manifests as a slow wasting illness with increasing systemic malfunction. Sometimes it is possible to arrest or reverse the damages through extensive therapies.

D-7 – An Archon jet fighter capable of space and atmospheric combat, based on a similar body plan to a Dash.

D-10 – The ICSM and Exo Corps modification of the Dash, capable of carrying up to 12 crew plus pilot and gunner or 2-3 staffed Exos plus pilot and gunner. Notably slower and more difficult to maneuver than a D-7 or standard Dash, but even tougher to penetrate.

Dahi – Rounded purple-blue fruits about 5-7 cm in diameter, native to the temperate forests of Archos. Popular among children for being mild yet sweet, juicy, and “cute”. A common flavor for juice or candy, a regular occurrence on party platters, but also dried and used as a salad topping or breakfast accompaniment throughout the Archon empire.

Dash – The name given to any number of similarly designed, speedy, and flexible small space and atmospheric craft (due to their intentional resemblance to ‘dashinki’). Star Assault's drop ships are a lightly armed Dash variant built to seat 6-8 crew plus genadri, some cargo, a pilot, and a gunner.

Dashinki – A sizeable molluscoid creature native to the seas of Archos. Measuring up to nearly 3 meters in length with 6 thick tentacles and an assortment of eyes, these bio-luminescent animals are curious, fast, and surprisingly graceful. They are rarely dangerous to swimmers or fishers unless hunger or curiosity gets out of control. The Aurian people felt a kinship with them and particularly clever or silly behavior was immortalized in song and art frequently, sometimes in the tales of the legendary hero Vojulheh

Death Battery – Ryzaan term for a sufferer of HTS.

Dhol – Large subterranean worms which have long been harmlessly converted or bio-engineered into living subway trains by Shandrians (on Holtiin, although they were spread throughout the universe by Ryzaan colonists).

Droka – Various arachnid species (ranging from the size of a small coin to the size of a large dog) common to Archos and Holtiin. Diet varies by specific breed, but fungus, bacteria, worms, and pestiferous arthropods provide the most common sorts of sustenance for these beasts. The Vasiit

peoples lived in harmony with and identified closely with the giant droka of their forests (using web strands for fishing or other necessities). Shandrian traders and explorers were entranced by the silk production and took droka eggs home, eventually engineering them to efficiently and harmlessly produce large quantities of silk for textile manufacture. Much artwork honors the droka of Eshandir and Vasa. The Holtiini varieties were mostly imported intentionally or accidentally from Archos but wild species (such as the taba-droka) have since established.

Douhmet – Mostly flightless (capable of short gliding spurts but often too lazy to bother), longlegged, hairy or spiny birds of unknown origin; found throughout Archon space as domesticated animals. They are primarily raised for their eggs; while not particularly large (30 cm from breast to tail – not including the small head or nearly meatless neck – is the higher limit of size even for those bred for their meat) the hens are prolific egg layers. The spiniest ones are characterized by irascibility but are reputed to have more savory flesh. The birds are commonly referred to in colloquial simile; e.g., “wet douhmet” (Holtiini) refers to a person who appears perturbed in a non-threatening, dumpy or laughable manner and “spiny douhmet” (North Shandrian) refers to an ill-tempered person – usually a woman - who is actually an exceptional catch (in bed or otherwise).

Echosangia – Marine invertebrate native to the southern sea trenches of Holtiin. Slow moving and confined to slurping their way across rocky surfaces, they employ a sonic wave to stun or confuse passing creatures, then tentacles to catch the sinking or disoriented animal, which they then inject with their digestive juices and slowly consume through sucking mouth parts.

Elf – To some kaffir (primarily Ryzaans), a negative term to describe the feral “ancestor” races and colloquially a way to call someone uncivilized and imply they might eat humans or other kaffir. To Shandrians, this term generally means all Folk with fangs and pointed ears, ie, kaffa, saurtzek, most Ruhn, all sarka, and some haki.

Exo – “Exoskeletal Armored Corps”, also referred to as “Armored Corps”, “Exoskeletal Tank Command”, and “Exo Div”. The armored division of the Archon Empire, employing bioengineered mobile combat suits and weaponized versions of bio-vehicles. Prior to the foundation of the Archon Empire, only Ryzaa had such units and they were referred to as “Tank Corps” or “Megax”; these terms are no longer used in the media or standardized briefings in order to avoid the pro-Ryzaan sentiment at which they hint.

Fangs – A relatively recent elite cross-over division of Exo and the ICSM.

Fenatja – Strong smelling cave lichen native to Gravian. Has a mildly analgesic or narcotic effect when ingested by kaffir; is a highly addictive narcotic when consumed by humans.

Flamethrower – In colonial Shendiir, the Flame Units put out fires in both civilian and military situations. In an attempted show of friendship, the Shendrians taught a Ryzaan naval unit how to put out fires on their ships using these methods. Immediately figuring out how to reverse these talents, the Ryzaan navy sailed about setting anyone they disagreed with on fire. The Archon Empire’s Flamethrower units are considered part of the “ground forces” (along with Infantry and Trenchers) and serve both emergency and offensive purposes. All Intergalaxy ships carry at least a handful and some are stationed in every major city to train local fire services departments. Flamethrowers employ genadri as assistance animals for search and rescue.

Flippipede – A pulse-driven semi-sentient bio-conveyance for one or two people, engineered from a multi-legged arthropod. They are best suited to fresh-water environments such as lakes or

ponds. Primarily used for recreational purposes but also as emergency escape craft in the Archon Empire.

Folk, the – Shandrian and Vasiit term which covers all beings related to the kaffir – humans, haki, sarka, and saurtzek – as well as all kaffir ethnicities. Ryzaans do not traditionally agree that humans count as Folk but (usually) grudgingly accept the saurtzek as such these days.

Framework – A career-oriented preparatory school for approximate ages 15-20. Framework schools exist to help children not intending to follow a parent's (or another major influential relative's) career – or children from retired, small, or foster families, or where parenting was weak, or any similar misfortune – find a productive and meaningful position in Archon society. Framework programs traditionally encourage a lot of dabbling and experimentation in various fields as well as athletics, entertainment, socialization, and so on. Coming out of Framework with no idea of what one wants to do with one's life and/or being poorly socialized is usually seen as a failing of the individual in question rather than the system.

GC – “General Clearance” or “Guild Clearance” (depending on whom one asks). An alphanumeric designation of Archon military clearance levels, standard across all branches.

Gaun-saur – Heavily-modified bio-cybernetic super soldiers, usually of the suicidal variety. The Ilu answer to Star Assault.

Genadri – Also referred to as “gen”, “symbiotes”, or “bugs”. Four legged, four eyed creatures with an arthropod outline, ranging from approximately 1.2 – 3 meters in length. Warriors (most are considered “female” as some seem able to lay fertile eggs under certain circumstances) additionally have four wings. Their actual make-up and taxonomy is somewhat mysterious. Genadri “carapaces” seem to be a fungally-threaded silicate skeleton of peculiar plates that can be shifted about, covered in gel or a retractable “skin”, or compressed around their apparently quite malleable organs. Autopsies on gen need to be performed immediately after death in a climatecontrolled environment as they tend to quickly decompose into a foul-smelling basic sludge (carbon evident in the decay) with a scum of silica flakes. Wild genadri tagged for research have been observed to live an average of 50 years; genadri in symbiotic relationship with kaffir live at least twice as long when not killed in combat. Genadri are distinctly intelligent; many have demonstrated more than rudimentary understanding of language, accept complex commands or requests, and can solve elaborate puzzles with appropriate motivation.

Goba – Small, 2-legged, long tailed amphibians native to Holtiin. Make distinctive mating calls on spring nights or when it rains.

Great Council – Civilian legislative body of the Archon Empire.

Guild – The Imperial Guild. Selects and trains the Archon military's most elite for various purposes, most notably, to become Haarnsvaar.

HTS – “High Tension Syndrome”. An excessively active or excessively weak pulse organ (causes vary; Factor N blood present at least 90% of the time) makes for an unstable personal field. The sufferer often builds up too much charge before they can learn to control it or while they are emotionally or psychologically incapable of doing so, becoming dangerous to themselves and the populace at large. The current solution to this condition in the Archon territories is either a risky surgery or euthanasia.

Haarkijetj – “The Terror Squadron” (literal translation of name: “Phantasmal Knights”). Wartime name for Star Assault.

Haarnsvaar – A group of elite soldiers who protect the Archon queen, approve major military actions, supervise intergalactic security, and arbitrate on behalf of the military branches in the Great Council. Most are unnamed and unknown to the public; only three are permitted to show their faces; the rest spend all their time in fully-masked helmets. (Literal translation of name: “Heavenly Phantasms”, usually explained as “Heaven’s Nightmare”)

Haarvakjya – Branch logo of Star Assault; an arcane sigil representing sacrifice for the greater good and/or an action so horrible none would willingly repeat it.

Hand – A designation within the Order of Maalek.

Haki – A human/kaffir cross breed.

High Councilor – The chief advisor to the Queen of Archos, usually an older man with extensive military and civil service in his history. He holds little or no technical legislative power but his speeches and/or support on a given issue tend to carry a great deal of weight.

Huari – A race of kaffir native to the Huar Archipelago. They are nocturnal and notoriously distrusting of outsiders, often branded as racists or xenophobes by other Archons. To their credit, they managed to preserve their culture for millennia without isolation and they managed to trade successfully with Ryzaa while remaining independent of Ryzaan rule even when the rest of Eshandir was occupied. It is said that the Huari only consented to join the Empire because some of the founders (including Kimetj Vanahar) had Huari blood. Many Huari receive Mandatory Service exemptions due to an inherited genetic condition known as “sekhoriyva” and/or latent mental illness (reputedly, although not formally proven, from the prevalence of inbreeding among the Islanders). Those who do serve leave the Islands for up to five years at a time; they seem to prefer civil service in war-torn regions (relief groups, soup kitchens, home builders, etc), service in public hospitals on Archos, or science positions in Intergalaxy, thereby not holding up the bloody reputation of their ancestors. Common traits to Huari are caramel-colored skin which freckles dark with sun exposure and yellow blond, ginger, or sand-colored hair. Webbed hands and feet, taloned feet, and lengthier fangs are not abnormal among them.

Human – Bipedal carbon-based life form notable for their problem solving skills, adaptability, and prolific breeding habits. Shorter lived and more susceptible to toxins and disease on average than kaffir. Ryzaan and Ilu scientists both note that their natural intelligence and curiosity can be bred or trained out of them at the cost of increasing their general hostility towards one another, while all of the above can be reduced more efficiently via the introduction of certain chemicals to their food supplies. The Archon Empire banned further research and experimentation regarding these subjects in IY 127 and insists that humans be treated in the Shandrian and Vasiit tradition – as Folk, with equal rights to kaffir, regardless of their ear shape or lack of developed pulse organs.

ICSM – Imperial Corps of Space Marines.

Ice Armada - Also, “Ice Battalion”. The code name for the elite assault forces of the latter Mior conflicts, including 17th and 23rd Star Assault, a Marine demolition unit, and two armored units.

Ichemius – Contagious disease with many strains, known throughout the empire (and apparently outside the empire wherever kaffir have made contact). While usually identified as a ‘virus’, forms of it have been found to lie dormant in parasites or bacteria, thereby capable of surviving

outside the body much longer than a virus normally could. Type III Ichemius (Ich-3), when it crops up, mutates rapidly into a respiratory contagion which spreads at horrific speeds. While inconvenient and uncomfortable for kaffir (sometimes risky for the aged and infirm), it is hemorrhagic in pure humans, killing with a rough turnaround of 24 hours from exposure. The dormant micro-organisms which carry it seem to be confined to Archos and careful quarantine has kept it isolated there, but the Universal Wellness Administration has failed thus far to solve the mystery of where Ich-3 specifically hides. Type II and IV Ichemius require salival or blood contact respectively to transmit and ergo are often passed on intimately, while Type 1 requires contact with digestive fluids or post-digestive matter.

Ilu – Short form of “Ilv’xukzuiy”

Ilv’xukzuiy – Saurtaf name of the current faction in control of the saurtzek peoples. Proper pronunciation of this word is nearly impossible for ordinary kaffir and humans, as they lack the additional throat and mouth muscle development of the saurtzek.

Infiltrator – A souped-up Dash or D-7, often heavily weaponized or with peculiar personalized modifications. They are often owned technically by a specific unit or Order, but through manipulation of hierarchy and programming fall into the singular possession of elite members therein.

Inshan-graehu – Intergalactic megafauna once hunted by both Ryzaans and saurtzek but rarely encountered in inhabited space. They normally feed off the radiation of dying or exploded stars and often support their own internal ecosystem. Both Archon and Baalphae explorers originally used these creatures as long-haul space craft, eventually borrowing the natural design of them for ships. Baalphae warlords well into Mior Wars kept a few of these enslaved with control devices to sic them on the stars of inhabited systems as a form of coercion.

Intergalaxy – Colloquially used term for all divisions of the Intergalactic Navy, which include Refuge and Rehabilitation (devoted to helping less fortunate or newer citizens of the Archon empire and/or rebuilding damaged worlds/societies), Research (the exploration and science division), and Reclamation (retribution and invasion division; includes the mega-carriers which carry and support other branches of the Imperial military as well as colonization cruisers)

Islander – A native to one of the archipelagos off the coast of Eshandir. “Islander” is considered a single ethnicity by most other Archons but the people of the Islands claim to distinguish eight separate ethnic groups among the natives. The most known are the Huari.

Jan-joh – A species of small parasitic hornet native to the sub-tropical rainforests of Holtiin.

Kaffa – A bipedal, carbon-based life form, with an internal skeletal system and warm blood. They prefer slightly moist oxygen-rich environments, although desert dwelling and high-altitude dwelling kaffir are known to exist. Kaffir hair – including what little facial and body hair they tend to grow – is soft and fine but grows quite densely. Their sharply pointed, usually rather elongated ears are capable of a range of motion and exceptional hearing. Most bear sharp canine teeth and have elliptical pupils. There are kaffir of both nocturnal and diurnal disposition and even small territories with a large population of kaffir will provide services around the clock. Their most unusual feature is their “pulse organ”, which seems to have atrophied in other related species; if healthy, this helps them focus and control their personal bio-electrical or magnetic fields, and, in unusual cases, the fields of objects or creatures around them.

Kdjek – (Ma’at Shi terminology) The explosive expelling of one’s total accumulated pulse. Occasionally accompanied by intentional suicide, almost always accompanied by injury to the perpetrator. The word may be spoken as a warning to comrades that an opponent is about to do so, or that “I intend to do something dangerous over a large area, take cover or project a barrier” which may or may not be an actual act of ‘kdjek’.

Khemyr – (also Kem-yaat, K’maat, Kemalphae) A Folk tribe of much-disputed origin, apparently native to the small continent **K’ahmaatyr** (which the Ryzaans call “Kemziir”). The Khemyr people exhibit facial and physical traits of both Aurian and Vasiit people, albeit having a much darker skin tone on average (deep brown to black being most common). This skin coloration gives them a supreme advantage in the nearly treeless, hot, rocky region from which they seem to come. A mutation crops up periodically where the tribe member is born blue, scrawny, and oddly jointed; traditionally, these youth were handed over to the “Night Tribe” and lived quite well among people like themselves. Ryzaan traders and slavers dealt poorly with the Night Tribesmen and spread strange rumors regarding them, generally leaving the island be, after a few of their ships moored nearby disappeared without a trace, shortly following an attempt to capture some of these awkward blue Folk and bring them back to sell as sexual curiosities (since their joint frailties made them poor for labor). The strong-backed Day Tribesmen, on the other hand, cheerfully jumped aboard the Ryzaan vessels and demanded to be taken wherever the ships could go. At first, the Ryzaans took this as a boon; the Khemyr so willingly worked hard labor and could toil much longer hours under greater stresses than human slaves. Some slavers even carefully abducted children of the Tribe and raised them as apprentices and body guards (this was necessary as Khemyr raised in the native land would refuse to be violent even under threat). As long as these Ryzaanized Khemyr were kept unaware of their origins, all went well. The revolt at Vol-Hryzmyr was led by Khemyr-descended slavers and mercenaries. Although the population on K’ahmaatyr has declined substantially since a volcanic eruption in 221 and a devastating quake in 378, evidence of Khemyr genetics crops up throughout the Empire, often combined unsurprisingly with Vasiit or Shandrian genes. Because the darkest skin colors seem to be a recessive trait, they are relatively uncommon; contemporary kaffir born so are considered a “find” and tend to be popular.

Kimetj – The smallest class of Archon warships, designed after star whaling ships. Heavily armored and armed, requiring a relatively minimal crew to operate, and capable of jumping without a stationary gate point. Named for Kimetj Vanahar, a rebellious Ryzaan Exo Corps general and the founder of the modern incarnation of the Haarnsvaar.

Kolzhi – An alcoholic beverage of Mantzaari invention, distilled from bark and nuts and infused with psychotropic drugs (traditionally, yinza/enzarine plus vyddarin, although a laboratory synthesized version of enzarine – synthenzin – is usually substituted for the former in modern recipes; kolzhi made with real enzarine is not considered legal for sale outside Mantzaar)

Ladders – The base of the Star Assault and Flame Thrower combat uniforms; pressureequalizing, environmentally resistant, self-healing thermal bio-suits. Get their name from the interlaced tubing which runs along the outside seams. While “ladders” can be applied to both the shirt and leggings of this uniform, it is usually used to describe only the leggings, ie. “He wore a brace and ladders”, with the shirt usually being described as a “ladder shirt” or “under armor shirt”.

Land Coral – Tiny colonial animals native to the western coastal regions of Archos, that leave behind layers of limestone upon which future generations live and perpetuate the cycle. Much like earthly sea corals but terrestrial (although they require specific moisture and temperature conditions to thrive). Shandrians long ago figured out how to encourage land coral colonies to grow over a frame (traditionally wood or vine, but many other strata have been employed) and thereby create architectural marvels. When buildings for some reason need to be torn down or

modified, coral portions are cut out, carved, and polished into art items (traditionally functional pieces, furniture and the like).

Lepitoxia – Small flying arthropod with strikingly beautiful, “frayed” looking scaled wings (physiologically resemble the butterflies or moths of Earth) having a painful venomous bite, known to cause several days of nausea and fever if not treated (more common on Archos) and possibly even death (more common on Holtiin).

Leviathan – To ancient Shandrians, the personification of the forces of the ocean and/or geophysical power (volcanoes, deep sea trenches, pressure, gravity, magnetism, etc). Usually depicted in art as a kaffa-like being with multiple faces or limbs and no distinct gender. Often has parts of a dashinki, serpent, sea bat, or van’ra mixed with the kaffa features.

Leviathan, Trench of – An elite secret order devoted to the preservation of ancient Shandrian traditions and to the specific Ma’at Shi arts of the order. Ma’at Shi spheres specifically studied by this order are blue (water-oriented), silver (gravity-oriented), grey (self-defense up to the first couple of stars; higher rankings/skills not well understood these days; the so called “gestalt” arts fall under grey), and black (domination/killing).

Luret – A strong but heavy, high-calorie alcohol made from genadri honey. Produced almost exclusively by Star Assault and prohibitively expensive on the civilian market.

Ma’at Shi – Traditional Archon (kaffir) martial arts. Each “sphere” is devoted to a specific environment, denoted by color. Silver, for example, focuses on motion, survival, and combat in low or no gravity, blue on survival and combat in water, red on fire, and so on. Within each sphere are a number of training ranks, referred to as “stars”.

Maalek – To ancient Aurians and Shandrians, the personification of celestial power, solar stars and radiation. Usually depicted in art as an elegant and beautiful prince, distinctly male (often with a barely concealed erection) and a robe made of butterfly scales or feathers which may or may not be wings; less common interpretations show him with wings of dripping flame or as a single bloody hand print surrounded by loose feathers.

Maalek, Order of – An elite secret order of warrior monks whose ultimate purpose is unknown to outsiders. Ma’at Shi spheres specific of study for this order are red (gas manipulation/pressure), white (light/reflection; levels of gold beyond a few stars are *utterly unknown* outside this order), gold (sonic/mental; same as gold), and black (domination/killing).

Mantzaari – The people of Mantzaar. Free with their bodies and hearts, pacifistic in nature, surprisingly hard workers when it comes to art, construction, or the production or service of food or liquor, the Mantzaari are prized as lovers and companions throughout the Archon empire but notoriously difficult to catch (at least on a permanent basis). They are, on average, smaller statured (especially when compared to Shandrians), with dark amber to deep olive complexions and dark red to black hair.

Mandatory Service – Also simply referred to as “Mandatory” or “ManServ”, a few years of military or civil service undergone by all able citizens of the Empire, usually performed between ages 20-25 by kaffa and 17-22 by humans.

Mauhm – “Cave ape”, an extremely derogatory term for a human. Note that the origin of this expression is disputed in common usage; only a lifetime scholar of Archon languages will give a definitive, correct answer about the word; in general, an Archon asked “from which root language

does ‘mauhm’ originate?’ will answer with whatever ethnicity he has the least of in his genetic make-up. The phrase is actually Shendiir in origin (although the spelling has been Ryzaanized) and refers to humans found living in caves when the continent that became Aurmaalek was originally discovered. Its original use was apparently affectionate in nature; they liked the furry, curious, but easily startled creatures they had found, and some less ethical Shendiir may have allowed themselves to be treated as deific beings by these tribes.

Mior (Wars) – A recurrent mess in the Vaursti system between the Ilu and Archons, largely instigated by claims on particular moons and the planet of Ruahanu.

Naarpu – A flying creature something like a warm-blooded stingray, native to Avenaur.

New Civility - A contemporary movement on Archos, following the third Mior War, strongly supported by Queen Marsura, to dispel the image of kaffir, especially Ryzaans, as barely-civilized oversexed beasts. Historical precedents aside, many kaffir would prefer not to be viewed as rapists, murderers, and man-eaters. While the overall aim of the movement is positive, Archons of many ethnic backgrounds find it too broadly sweeping and criticize it for diluting their unique cultures and attempting to white wash and homogenize them.

Novum – Archaic Shandrian term. A knight or warrior monk, often bonded in symbiosis to a non-Folk/bio-engineered entity (typically a genadri).

Nudj’t – A pharmaceutical cocktail usually served as a beverage additive or tea, containing, among other things, pseuvarsine and fenatja. It also includes a flavor agent with a comparable taste to a mix of peppermint and black licorice that serves additional purpose as a mild analgesic and scourge/repellent. The aftertaste on the first sip is reputedly “quite obnoxious, definitely acquired” but “after a few sips, the tongue is usually numb”.

Ostrekaal – Synthetic bone substance that can be formed through growing or carved after the growth has been arrested. The skeletons of space cruisers and the armored plates of Star Assault armor consist of a living version of this substance that is nearly unrivaled in toughness.

Pipes – Star Assault slang for the hangars on their cruisers. The name comes from the shape of the launch tubes. Also used as slang for various body parts on paratroopers.

Pohji – A small, hard, oily tree nut frequently used in hair and skin care products on Holtiin. It has a slight toxicity to humans when ingested, but kaffir are known to use a butter made from pohji nuts as a home-remedy laxative.

Pseuvarsine – Analgesic and tranquilizer (euphoric in large doses) modeled after the toxin excreted by the verchyne albeit theoretically safer.

Pulse – The electro-magnetic/static electric field produced by all living creatures. Kaffir and haki tend to generate a substantial amount more of one, the other, or both static fields or EMF, and much of Archon culture and technology has historically depended on or been otherwise shaped by this trait.

Queen - The technical leader of all Archon peoples; a woman selected via an elaborate process which starts at a minute regional level and ends with a final decision by the Great Council and the Haarnsvaar. The position is for life, so at the time of initial selection, she is usually rather young (although mature and savvy politically, well-educated, and at least some experience in local councils). She must take the same vows as any member of the Haarnsvaar – particularly, a vow of

infertility/ceibacy and the agreement that her finances are now a matter of the public record. Unlike most of the Haarnsvaar, however, she does not have the anonymity of the group to protect any personal purchases she makes or personal gifts she accepts. The only true privacy she has, in theory, is behind closed doors with the Haarnsvaar themselves.

Razor – Highly flexible specialized 2 or 3 man Archon craft. Most of these apparently reside in and around the Imperial Palace in Ryzaa City and are generally flown only by Haarnsvaar or high-level members of the Imperial Guild.

Retriever – Specially trained troops who take a vow of silence and seclusion, whose primary function is to prevent classified items and individuals from falling into enemy hands, by any means necessary. This frequently involves entering extremely risky locations or situations to bring something or someone back, dead or alive, or to leave nothing behind at said location whatsoever. The job is rarely done voluntarily.

Rim Patrol – A small branch of the Archon military devoted to patrolling Imperial space, particularly along the borders. It usually falls to them to intercept smugglers and pirates. They work with the Haarnsvaar and Star Assault in keeping jump gates and gate stations safe for civilian and merchant transit. Members of RP are usually female veterans of other units and/or widows. Age does not seem to hamper their efficiency; criminals fear them and most long-haul cargo pilots would rather not have to be stopped and questioned by them.

Rock Lizard – A number of thorny-scaled reptiles, most rather small, native to the southern regions of the Great Continent on Archos. Larger specimens can be found in the desert between Ryzaa and Vasa; more hardy specimens can be found in the lower parts of the Kez Mountains. They are a common protein source for many peoples although the Desert Folk and the Aurians used particularly large rock lizards as beasts of burden, breeding them to have smoother scales and a better temperament.

Runfi – A pestiferous rodent found in the swamps around Ryzaa and often in the city itself. Smaller and more numerous than shurn.

Ryzaan – 1) The Folk of the central swamps and hills of the Great Continent of Archos, who are often small of stature and thick of ear. They tend towards pale skin and hair, little or no body hair (often lacking any facial hair at all until an advanced age), wiry builds, angular faces, large eyes, and a bit of a sensitivity to strong sunlight. Notable common psychological traits include an obsession with organization or hierarchy, a tendency to be ultra-pragmatic about problem solving, and a bit short-tempered. Many scholars blame their invention of a super-complicated bureaucratic legal system on those three traits, possibly in part to protect the human slaves or house servants of one Ryzaan noble from another. Ryzaans kept and heavily traded in slaves from many other cultures for many centuries right up until the formation of the Archon Empire, when slavery was finally broadly outlawed. 2) Their language (sharp, harsh, descriptive), cuisine (fried or boiled, resourceful), architectural style (sharp-edged with stark outlines but containing a myriad of intricate details when viewed up close), etc.

Sarka or Saurka – A person of mixed blood, specifically kaffa/saurtek. The word is Saurtaf or Shandrian in origin (appearing in literature of both languages) but is rarely used in contemporary Archon society for various – somewhat obvious – reasons.

Saurtaf – The “common” tongue of the saurtek and Ilu, that which they will speak to and in front of outsiders. Whatever culture originated the language seems to have been wiped out prior to the formation of the Archon Empire and is not spoken of to outsiders, and/or kept concealed in

the destruction of its locations of origin. The fact that it shares a few words (although spelled in their unique, swirly characters and often pronounced with additional saurtzek throat sounds) with Archaic High Shandrian is somewhat telling.

Saurtzek – A bipedal, highly-intelligent life form preferential to nitrogen rich environments apparently native to the planet Baalphegor. The average male saurtzek is 1.9 meters tall with the females tending more towards 1.85 meters. They are usually slender, with angular faces, long jaws, sharp or serrated ears, and grey to blue skin. While many do not grow hair at all, those that do have a hairline which follows the skull ridge, and the “hair” is thick, far closer to flexible spines or feathers than that of a human or kaffa. This growth can vary in color from pale green to blue-black. Patterns on the skin are natural for saurtzek; spots or stripes across the cheeks, sides of the head, back, and upper arms are quite common, usually darker than the main skin tone. They usually have two rows of small, pointed teeth, substantially more numerous than a human or kaffa. Their eyes are large and dark, having tri-lobed pupils, capable of seeing better in low light or darkness and seeing well into the ultraviolet spectrum. Their peculiar joint structure gives them an impressive range of motion but also makes limb malfunctions and disabilities more common. In current times, the Ilu government has mandated the execution of “lame” children in poorer families. Noble saurtzek display even more physical variance, especially in the past five centuries, as the Gehshynzma (previously in power) tried to prove alliance by keeping Shandrian concubines and the Ilu (currently in power) consider the sexual subjugation of other species a mark of character and power. Ergo, noble blooded saurtzek may have long, silky Shandrian locks, no facial markings, kaffir-looking eyes or ears, shorter and more rugged frames, rounded or flat teeth, etc.

Sea bat – A warm-blooded creature native to all coastal regions of Archos that falls somewhere between bird and reptile taxonomically. Their body length ranges from about 15-20 cm with a wingspan roughly twice that. They have four legs, with the forward pair evolved into leathery wings, although on the ground or in trees they can still employ their forelegs to walk (with wings folded). Their heads are slightly crested and their bodies are covered in specialized feather/scales; males bear elongated, fancy head plumage. Most have long tails with a little tuft of pointed fluff at the end. Shandrian and Islander fishermen have long used the behavior of sea bats to reliably predict wind changes, current changes, weather, and volcanic eruptions. They are harmless although they can be rather noisy at mating and nesting season.

Sentinel – A specialty rank in Star Assault to denote expertise and control over a specific “domain” on a cruiser or in a base. Sentinels may hold other ranks as combatants et al and sit differently on the hierarchy when not in their station, but within their domain, they hold absolute authority.

Shandrian – 1) General term for the people of the western coast and hills of the Great Continent on Archos. May include Aurians and Islanders depending on the speaker. Common traits among these peoples are long facial features (long jaw lines, noses, and eyelashes; wide almond-shaped eyes; slender long pointed ears) and substantial height (1.8 meters is the racial average, taller in the south). The northern peoples tend toward heavier bone structure and build muscle well while the southern peoples are generally leaner. Both regions produce excellent swimmers and climbers. Dark hair is common to the north; red and orange common in the south. Blond and light brown hair are virtually unknown save on the Islands; naturally grey or silver hair occurs with some frequency in north and south, increasing as one goes further inland towards the mountains. Hair is traditionally worn long by all genders and clothing tends to be fully covering from neck to ankles (although layers of transparent or mesh fabrics were normal for a good period of independent Aurian rule). Islanders and dwellers of the farm valleys of the north traditionally wear garments that expose the collarbones, arms, and or shoulders, although this is considered trashy or “barbaric” in other parts of Eshandir. 2) The lyrical, meaning-steeped pre-Imperial

language of this region, having “high” and “low” forms; low being used for everyday commerce and activities – taught to outsiders – and High Shandrian being used for formal or ceremonial functions, among nobility, or for military command. All regions of Eshandir – Aurius, Shendiir, the Islands, and the Mountains – spoke their own dialect of Low Shandrian and all leaders/nobility of each region were known to speak nearly identical forms of High Shandrian even before the nation was unified by the Northern queen.

Ship sprite – Voiceless genetically engineered creatures that live inside the workings of Archon star cruisers, in a symbiotic group relationship with the ship itself. Their primary function is to clean, repair, and protect the vessel, and they are rarely seen by crew members if everything is going well. They are vat-grown rather than born and lack a gender or anything resembling sex organs. Fiddling with them for such purposes is considered a multi-level taboo; even general fraternization with sprites is looked at with some disdain.

Shoreling – Crustacean-like creatures of the Archon oceans and shallows. Resemble earthly trilobite fossils (albeit a currently thriving species thereof)

Shurn – Larger rodents, usually tree-dwelling or burrowing, found in temperate forests, marshes, and inland hills all over Archos. “Catch the Shurn” is a popular card game among children, students, and soldiers throughout the Empire.

Slate – A handheld all-purpose communications device; both civilian and military versions exist.

Staging – The colloquial name for the “improvement” process undergone by members of the Archon military. Nearly every citizen takes the first stage (usually as a part of mandatory service), which is simply a course of temporary prescriptions to assist with some of the rigors of space travel. Additionally, human and haki serving a term in the military and/or preparing to travel to Archos for the first time from another part of the Empire (or from outside it) must take a broad range of immunizations plus a buffer against constant pulse exposure. Supplemental shots or daily pills may be required to cope with the gravity on Archos, if they are from a moon, asteroid, base, or smaller planet. (Note: Archos is a bit larger than Holtiin, Avenaur, and Yrthyi.) The second and third stages include a broader range of immunizations and incrementally increase resistance and performance drugs. As a side effect of some of these pharmaceuticals, aging processes will become slowed as memory, cognition, reflexes, and nutrient use efficiency are improved. By the third stage, fertility is highly at risk; by the fourth stage it is irreversibly destroyed in most soldiers. On average, only career officers (command) enter even the third stage, except in Star Assault, the Imperial Guild, and the Haarnsvaar, who must enter it willingly or be barred from advancement. A small amount of SA and Air Defense choose surgical sterilization instead of the fourth stage under the belief that the fourth renders those of particular genetic or emotional frailties permanently adolescent and/or irrevocably insane. Kaffa who have passed through a complete fourth stage (and receive regular check-ups for level monitoring) may live over 300 years, although there have been no officially published reports since IY 403; the average may now be higher.

Stalker – Archon nick name for a formidable Illu weapon.

Star Assault – A section of the Archon military with roots deeply entrenched in Shandrian history. Publicly, since the last conflicts in the Vaursti Belt, these specialized units have been largely disbanded, downplayed, or outright ignored in the Archon media, relegated to a showy display at the head of the Armed Forces Day Parade in Ryzaa City every year. The general civilian and “low military” populace believes the remnants of Star Assault to be a “re-creation unit” only, an ornamental relic of a time long gone, and even a symbol of Shandrian or ancestral

pride, and therefore questionable in necessity of funding. Their historical purpose was multi-fold, primarily to terrify enemies into surrendering, thereby preventing long wars. In the event of a long war, they serve the function of a “fill-in” for all other units, as special combat forces but also as an elite search and rescue team.

Star Blood – An ancient Archon concept that the consciousness of all intelligent species, or at least of the Folk, comes from the remnants of exploded stars. The sense of ‘love’, it is said, comes from recognizing ‘blood’ from one’s originating star(s) in another person. (Monogamy is hereby something of an alien concept to Shandrians; they viewed and still view love as highly situational shared individual experience; Ryzaans were attached to the idea of monogamous marriage, often based more on politics and finances than love, to protect property rights within families. The idea of open extra-marital affairs and non-marrying affairs remaining unhindered by later marriage for the purpose of child-rearing, as the Shandrians did and still do it, clearly grew on them over time)

Synthenzin – A standardized (theoretically safer, more predictable) laboratory version of a powerful psychotropic drug (enzarine) found in fungi that infests plants and animals on the coastal cliffs of Archos. Among other things, the drug alters the speed at which the mind functions, incidentally increasing learning capacity and allowing heightened absorption of information. With long-term use in combination with other drugs, for a period of time before the body acclimates, the short-term memory is damaged and the user theoretically becomes highly susceptible to suggestion and programming.

Sypherion – A Vektaar codpiece approved for use with Star Assault, Exo, and Haarnsvaar uniform armor.

Taba-droka – Something like an earthly pedipalp or pseudo-scorpion, generally grey or black in color, about the size of a human hand when full grown. These are known to eat smaller pest animals and fungus and are generally considered beneficial or even “lucky” to have about one’s house. They themselves fall prey to genadri (on Archos) and to parasitic wasps (on Holtiin).

Terrapod – A multi-legged land mollusk, native to Avenaur but having spread throughout the Empire in captivity as curiosities or for research/engineering (due in part to their regenerative and camouflage abilities). Thanks to the current state of Avenaur, wild ones are rarely encountered outside of zoological parks and the species is considered highly endangered.

Tetrarch – Exceptional members of particular warrior sects.

Throkk – Large, long-haired, horned, notoriously foul tempered six-legged mammals of the Kez Mountains.

Tier – Rank designations within the hierarchy of the Trench of Leviathan.

Tongue – A designation within the Order of Maalek.

UC – “Universal Credit”. The Archon empire’s standard form of “currency”. See “Universal Bank”.

Universal Bank – A moneyless credit system based on the ancient Ryzaan “blood standard”. Service (community, military, civil, industrial, etc) nets a certain amount of credit on the system (known as UC, “Universal Credit”). One can carry a UC chip as a card or embedded in a piece of jewelry, or have it sub-dermally implanted to prevent misplacing it. Even when not implanted, the chips are difficult to steal and re-use. Using a UC Terminal, which are available all over Archon

space, one can make a transaction with the bank or directly to another institution or individual. UC records are, for better or for worse, bound permanently to military, employment, psychological, and criminal records, and any prohibition an individual has against buying certain items will automatically be flagged in any event where it would be necessary. Note that this information is otherwise inaccessible to those without top-level civil or military clearance; even a U Bank employee might not be able to pull up an individual's record. Civil records are protected even better than military, as far as UC transactions go; in some instances, high-level military or public servants may have their financial transaction records accessible by the news media or public records offices.

V-Tek – A series of rifles (distinguished by numbers) and some shorter arms (distinguished by cute names) made by the Vektaar Biotechnology Corporation.

Van'ra – Aggressive, toothy, cartilaginous fish found in the seas west of the Great Continent on Archos.

Vektaar – 1) An Archon corporation that supplies the military with bio armor and weapons. 2) The best armor made by said company, also referred to as “Animate Vektaar”.

Verchyne – Legendary, nightmarish parasite species which secrete addictive compounds into their hosts, apparently also performing other acts of body or mind control to assist their breeding cycle and possibly other aims. A creature of much rumor and speculation among civilians in the Archon Empire.

Vohjaadu – A multi-person civilian transit bio-vehicle, engineered from terrapods, dashinki, and other creatures, for getting around the boggy streets of Ryzaa and the often rain-slicked hills of coastal Eshandir. Breeds of these exist which can operate during periods of drought and/or up windy mountain passes, but they secrete emissions that need to be carefully cleaned from the streets and need to be washed regularly with a protective coating.

Vojulheh – A well-loved trickster-hero character of Aurian myth who could reputedly turn himself into a dashinki (or perhaps, was a dashinki who was so talented he could mimic a kaffa).

Vol-Hryzmyr – 1) A fortress, small village, marble quarry, and gemstone mine in the Kez mountains between Ryzaa and Eshandir, originally of Ryzaan possession long before the Empire. A massive force, mostly non-Ryzaan-born slavers, mercenaries, slaves, and draftees were assembled here to fortify the region, building roads and walls to secure operations from Kez and Shandrian raiders. Dissent grew over time and when the orders came from the King of Ryzaa for the forces to occupy Eshandir's farming communities on the other side of the pass, the stationery force rebelled, claimed the territory as their own, and successfully held it against the Ryzaan army for nearly a decade. Eventually they were dispersed, and Vol-Hryzmyr stands as a ruin and a monument; tens of thousands of Ryzaans died in the long siege before attrition allowed a “victory”. 2) A classified Imperial war vessel, a Haarkijetj ship, which is rumored to have been retired.

Vow of Sacrifice – “The Celestial Promise”, as it was known in Shandrian colonial times, is a renunciation of contact with one's civilian life/past/family made by members of Star Assault as well as all members of the Imperial Guild. At least one final visitation is allowed before the oath is taken.

Vyddarin – A pharmaceutical that enhances sensory perception.

Worms, the – 1) Older military slang for the verchyne. 2) General colloquialism for internal parasitic infections, a common problem in some parts of the Empire.

Yabbo – Archon slang for a throwback; an uncivilized person or someone who has devolved due to loss of a solid, healthy (Folk) cultural connection. Usually applied to humans; not considered politically correct even when 100% accurate.

Yashenja – An alcohol distilled from the sap of trees that grow along the rivers of Eshandir, flavored and colored with the blossoms of night-blooming plants.

Yi'ehmohrifeh – Sea elves. A loving Shendrian description of the most coastal tribes of Auriens, people renowned for their beauty, swimming and diving talents, as well as impressive singing voices. Evidence in art of black hair and blond hair among these peoples (although apparently quite rare) indicates inter-tribal relations between pre-historic Shendrians and/or travelers from the northern island chains.