

= Arbiter (Halo) =

In the Halo science fiction universe , the Arbiter is a ceremonial , religious , and political rank bestowed upon alien Covenant Elites . In the 2004 video game Halo 2 , the rank is given to a disgraced commander as a way to atone for his failures . Although the Arbiter is intended to die serving the Covenant leadership , the High Prophets , he survives his missions and the Prophets ' subsequent betrayal of his kind . When he learns that the Prophets ' plans would doom all sentient life in the galaxy to extinction , the Arbiter allies with the Covenant 's enemies ? humanity ? and stops the ringworld Halo from being activated . The Arbiter is a playable character in Halo 2 and its 2007 sequel Halo 3 ; a different Arbiter appears in the 2009 real @-@ time strategy game Halo Wars , which takes place 20 years before the events of the main trilogy .

The appearance of the Arbiter in Halo 2 and the change in perspective from the main human protagonist Master Chief to a former enemy was a plot twist Halo developer Bungie kept highly secret . The character 's name was changed from " Dervish " after concerns that the name reinforced a perceived United States @-@ versus @-@ Islam allegory in the game 's plot . Award @-@ winning actor Keith David lends his voice to the character in Halo 2 , 3 and 5 , while David Sobolov voices the Arbiter of Halo Wars .

The Arbiter has appeared in three series of action figures and other collectibles and marketing in addition to appearances in the games . Bungie intended the sudden point of view switch to a member of the Covenant as a plot twist that no one would have seen coming , but the character in particular and the humanization of the Covenant in general was not evenly received by critics and fans . Computer and Video Games derided the Arbiter 's missions as " crap bits " in Halo 2 . Conversely , IGN lamented the loss of the Arbiter 's story in Halo 3 and missed the added dimension the character provided to the story .

= = Character design = =

The Arbiter in the video games Halo 2 (2004) and Halo 3 (2007) is voiced by Keith David , a New York actor . David noted that he enjoys voicing complicated characters who have a past . To make an impact with voice acting , he says , is difficult ? " it 's either good acting or it 's bad acting " . David is not a frequent video game player , but stated that he has become more known for his work as the Arbiter than for his film and other voice roles .

The Arbiter changed very little during development , as the overall appearance of the alien Covenant Elites had been designed and developed for the previous game , 2001 's Halo : Combat Evolved . The only substantial difference between the Arbiter and other Elites is ceremonial armor seen in early concept sketches and which appeared in the final design . During Halo 2 's early developmental stages the character 's name was " Dervish " , a name from the Sufi sect of Islam . Out of context , Microsoft Game Studios ' " geocultural review " consultants found nothing wrong with the name . However , as Tom Edwards , a consultant who worked with Microsoft during the review noted , " within the game 's context this Islamic @-@ related name of ' Dervish ' set up a potentially problematic allegory related to Halo 2 's plot ? the [United States] -like forces (Master Chief / Sarge) versus Islam (the religious Covenant , which already had a ' Prophet of Truth ' which is one title for Muhammad) . Since this incident was not long after the September 11 attacks , sensitivity to the name remained high , and the character 's name was changed to the " Arbiter " .

In an interview with MTV , Halo developer Bungie 's former content manager Frank O 'Connor said that the inclusion of the Arbiter as a playable character in Halo 2 was supposed to be a " secret on the scale of a Shyamalan plot twist " and explains that Bungie was able to keep the public uninformed about this until the game 's release , to the point that O 'Connor never even considered including it on the weekly development updates posted at Bungie 's webpage . O 'Connor also stated that Bungie " had some other things that were secrets within secrets " and claimed that there was material related to the Arbiter that was kept secret during the development of Halo 3 because " There is an aspect of the Arbiter 's character that is still secret to this day and will remain so for a good reason . " Story director Joseph Staten said that the purpose of introducing the Arbiter was " to

offer another , compelling point of view on a war where telling friend from foe wasn 't always clear @-@ cut . We knew we had a trilogy on our hands , so we were looking past the shock of playing as the enemy [to the events of Halo 3] " .

= = Major appearances = =

= = = Halo 2 = = =

Presented in Halo 2 , the rank of " Arbiter " is bestowed upon a Covenant Elite by the Covenant leadership ? the High Prophets ? during a time of " extraordinary crisis " . The Arbiter acts as the " Blade of the Prophets " , undertaking highly dangerous missions to preserve the Covenant . It is expected that these soldiers will die in the course of their duties . Although it was originally a rank of great honor , it later became a rank assigned to disgraced or shamed Elites that nevertheless possessed great martial skill , both as a means to have them serve the Covenant , and as a convenient means of disposal after their assigned suicidal missions .

The Arbiter in the Halo trilogy , Thel ' Vadamee , was previously a Supreme Commander in the Covenant fleet , having commanded the ships that follow the human vessel Pillar of Autumn to the ringworld Halo during the events of Halo : Combat Evolved . A Prophet orders the Autumn not to be destroyed outright , lest the ring be damaged ; this hesitance allows the humans to land on the ring , coordinate a resistance , and ultimately destroy the ring to stop the spread of the parasitic Flood . In the aftermath of the incident (depicted in Halo : First Strike) , the commander also loses a Covenant ship to UNSC forces , resulting in the annihilation of a Covenant invasion force heading for Earth . As Halo 2 begins , the Covenant High Council brands the Commander a heretic for letting the ringworld ? which the Covenant consider a sacred relic ? be destroyed . He is stripped of his rank and branded . Though his public execution is soon to follow , he is spared by the High Prophets ; the Hierarchs give the disgraced Commander a chance to lead troops once again by becoming the Arbiter .

The Arbiter 's first mission is to silence a renegade Elite who has been preaching that the Prophets have lied to the Covenant . The Arbiter is then sent to retrieve the " Sacred Icon " from the library on the newly discovered Delta Halo , in order to activate the ring and bring about the Great Journey , the Covenant 's concept of salvation . Though he retrieves the Icon , the Arbiter is betrayed by the Chieftain of the Brutes , Tartarus ; Tartarus reveals that the Prophets have given him and his race carte blanche to massacre the Elites and replace them in the Covenant caste system . Though the Arbiter is believed dead , he is rescued ? along with his nemesis , the human soldier Master Chief ? by the parasitic Flood intelligence Gravemind . Gravemind reveals that the Great Journey actually spells doom for all sentient life , and sends him to stop Tartarus from activating the ring . In the process of stopping the Brute , the Arbiter and his Elites forge an alliance with the humans Miranda Keyes and Avery Johnson , and the Arbiter slays Tartarus with help from Johnson , halting the firing of the ring . The unexpected shutdown of Halo triggers a standby sequence , which the Arbiter learns has made all the Halo installations ready to fire remotely from a place known as the Ark .

= = = Halo 3 = = =

While the Arbiter remains a playable character in Halo 3 during cooperative gameplay (the second player in a game lobby controls him) , the game 's story never switches to the point of view of the Arbiter , as in Halo 2 . For much of Halo 3 , the Arbiter assists human forces in their fight against hostile Covenant forces alongside John @-@ 117 . After the Flood arrive on Earth , the Arbiter persuades Rtas ' Vadam not to glass the entire planet to quell the infestation . Along with a group of humans and Elites , the Arbiter follows the Prophet of Truth 's forces through a slipspace portal to the Ark , where he kills the Prophet . The Master Chief decides to activate the Halo under construction at the Ark to destroy the local Flood while sparing the galaxy at large ; the Arbiter helps to retrieve the artificial intelligence Cortana so that the installation can be fired . During the escape ,

the ship he and the Master Chief are on split in two ; while the Master Chief is presumed lost , the Arbiter crashes safely to Earth . After attending a ceremony honoring the dead , the Arbiter and the rest of the Elites leave for their homeworld .

== = Halo Wars == =

Taking place 20 years before the events of Halo : Combat Evolved , Ensemble Studio 's Halo Wars features a different Arbiter from the character seen in the trilogy . Lead designer David Pottinger described Ensemble 's Arbiter as a " mean guy . He 's Darth Vader times ten . " The characterization stemmed from a desire to make the Covenant more basically " evil " in order to provide a good guy @-@ bad guy conflict . Parts of the Arbiter 's backstory before the game 's events are explained in a tie @-@ in graphic novel , Halo Wars : Genesis . The Elite , Ripa ' Moramee , was given the rank after he fought and lost a campaign against his own clan .

== = Halo 5 : Guardians == =

Arbiter Thel ' Vadam , voiced by Keith David , narrates and appears in a trailer for Halo : The Master Chief Collection , first shown at the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2014 . The trailer acts as a prelude to Halo 5 : Guardians , in which Thel ' Vadam and his forces (Swords of Sangheilos) are locked in a bloody civil war with Covenant loyalists that reside on the home planet Sangheilos . During the game , the Arbiter meets with Spartan Jameson Locke who asks the Arbiter about his views on the Master Chief . The Arbiter tells him that even when the Master Chief was his enemy , he maintained a measure of respect for him and over time came to call the Master Chief has ally and even his friend . Before the Spartans leave , the Arbiter sends his greetings with them for the Master Chief in such a way that shocks the team as no Elite has ever greeted a human in such a way before .

== = Other appearances == =

An Arbiter appears as a playable character in Killer Instinct : Season Three , voiced by Ray Chase . He uses several weapons from the Halo series in combat , and fights in the Arena of Judgment , a stage set in the midst of a battle on Sangheilos . According to franchise development director Frank O 'Connor , this character is an " amalgam " of historical characters .

== = Cultural impact == =

== = Merchandise == =

Following the release of Halo 2 , Joyride Studios released an Arbiter action figure . This particular model was reviewed by Armchair Empire 's Aaron Simmer as a " great translation of the source material into plastic " . Simmer described the figure 's dimensions were in proportion with other figures released by the studio , and praised the level of detail in the armor and weapons , but found fault with the neck articulation and design . Other aspects mentioned were its compatibility with the Master Chief 's action figure and its durability . Several models of the Arbiter are featured in the Halo ActionClix collectible game , produced as promotional material prior to the release of Halo 3 . McFarlane Toys was given the task of developing a Halo 3 line of action figures , and a sculpt of the Arbiter was released in the second series of figures after the game 's release in July 2008 . A large @-@ scale , non @-@ articulated Arbiter figure was produced by McFarlane as part of the " Legendary Collection " .

== = Critical reception == =

The reception of the Arbiter as a playable character in Halo 2 was mixed ; O 'Connor described the Arbiter as the most controversial character Bungie had ever created . The character was described as a " brilliant stroke of a game design " because it provided an unexpected story line but also offered the player new options by allowing stealth gameplay . Several publications enjoyed the added dimension to the Covenant by having the Arbiter as a playable character .

Alternatively , publications like GameSpot thought that while the Arbiter and Covenant side added " newfound complexity to the story " , it distracted the player from Earth 's fate ; a panel of Halo 2 reviewers argued that though the decision to humanize the Covenant by the introduction of the Arbiter was welcome , the execution in @-@ game was lacking . The missions where the player controls the Arbiter were described as " anything but easy " and occasionally " boring " , due to the lack of human weapons to balance the gameplay . A review performed by Computer and Video Games described the time that the player controls the character as " [those] crap bits when you play as an alien Arbiter " and listed this as one of Halo 2 's flaws . Reviewer Jarno Kokko said that while he did not personally dislike playing as the character , the idea of " people disliking the concept of playing on the other side in a game that is supposed to be the ' Master Chief blows up some alien scum ' show " was a plausible complaint . Among some fans , the character was reviled .

The reception of the Arbiter 's elimination as a main playable character in Halo 3 was similarly mixed . Hilary Goldstein of IGN decided the change took away the " intriguing side @-@ story of the Arbiter and his Elites " , in the process reducing the character 's role to that of " a dude with a weird mandible and a cool sword " . Likewise , Steve West of Cinemablend.com stated that the one important event in the game for the Arbiter would be lost on anyone for whom Halo 3 was their first game in the series . IGN 's reviewer took issue with the poor artificial intelligence (AI) of allies in the game , and singled out the Arbiter in particular ; " The Arbiter makes me question why the Elites were ever feared in the original Halo , " Hilary Goldstein said . Describing the AI of the character , Goldstein felt players could " enjoy watching your supposed equal getting shot in the face repeatedly and generally making himself utterly useless . What is the point of sticking you with an AI compatriot if all he 's good at is respawning ? " The New York Times ' Charles Herold found that in comparison to Halo 2 , where the character played a central role , the Arbiter in Halo 3 was " extraneous " . On the opposite end of the spectrum were reviewers like G4tv , who argued that the Arbiter was more likeable , not to mention more useful , as an AI sidekick instead of the main player . In a list of the top alien characters in video games , MSNBC placed the Arbiter at the number two ranking .

Halo Wars 's cinematics and voice acting were widely lauded , although one reviewer wrote that the characters were stereotypical and unlikeable . Dakota Grabowski of PlanetXbox360 considered the Arbiter the most confusing character in the game 's story . Conversely , GamePro listed the Arbiter as one of the five best things about the game , saying that while it was a different character than the Arbiter seen in Halo 2 and Halo 3 , he was " like an alien Jack Bauer amped up on drugs " .

Despite the resistance to the character , Bungie staff defended the character 's introduction . " I 'd much rather experiment and do something surprising , and not have everybody appreciate it , than just turn the crank and do another alien war movie with a space marine , " said Halo 2 design lead Jaime Griesemer . Community lead Brian Jarrard attributed some of the fan backlash to a discord between the game 's marketing and the actual gameplay . " I think , even more so than playing as the Arbiter , the thing that people were disappointed with and angry about is that they were promised this experience , through the marketing , of being really backs against the wall , Earth 's under siege , we 're going to do all we can to save our home planet ... In reality , the game only had two missions that actually did that . " Referring to Halo 2 's cliffhanger ending , Griesemer said , " I think if we 'd been able to finish that last couple of missions and get you properly back on Earth , a lot of the reaction would have been placated . "