

# The NetBook of Cults

(Version 2)

by

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## **Disclaimer**

Blah, blahblah, blahblah-blah, ... as you well know it, but as I am still expected to WARN you :

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## **Introduction**

Well, finally here it is, the second edition of the Netbook of Cults. The original edition was created in 1997 by Juan Camilo Rozo, but he didn't wish/had time to continue it. Then I came across it, and took it upon myself to expand it ; so here is the version 2, in January of 1999. I did it all by myself, so there are only 17 cults compiled here today (I know, 20 would have been much better). The original version contained only 10, but these ten cults have also been expanded, and thus could be considered renewed. In fact I much changed most of the cults which were presented in the first edition, in addition to adding mine. I did this to improve the whole work as I felt that for being useful, these cults had to be more detailed, which wasn't often the case. But this is my point of view, and could not be the point of view of everyone. Therefore I felt the moral obligation to add the complete 1<sup>st</sup> version of the Cults' Netbook, at the end of this second edition (see fourth chapter).

Nonetheless, you will find there a collection of several strange sects, cults, secret societies, etc... intended to be used as encounters or bases for adventures.

## **Copyrights**

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## **Credits**

Here are the original authors of the first edition cults. I admit I messed up their original works, in expanding them. However, their original contributions are still to be found intact in the fourth chapter.

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## **Submissions**

If you want to add things to this guide, you are welcome. Just contact me (Dominique Crouzet) and I will include your additions in the third edition of this NetBook. However, see at the end (p.56) my requirements on this. Personally I won't write anymore cults ; in fact there is at the end of this netbook a call for submissions to another project entirely different, in which I hope to be able to invest time this year.

# Summary

## *Part One: Evil Cults*

**Black Rose (the) (p.03):** a secret organization of assassins dedicated to the brutal elimination of dwarves, for some ancient reason of revenge turned into sect fanaticism.

**Church of Rauma, God of the Downtrodden (p.04):** sect bent on raising the poor against the wealthy in a bath of blood.

**Church of Sainte Calysse (p.06):** a cult which disguises itself as some branch of a major LG religion, but which is in fact a cult dedicated to an evil local spirit feeding on bloody sacrifices.

**Dark Druids (the) (p.08):** a cult of fell druids bent on the destruction of the civilisation, to restore the world to its original state of wilderness.

**Demon-gods of Dread (the) (p.12):** nine absolutely nasty and horrible cults bent on depravation and the destruction of all humanity.

**Favoured of Tarigath (p.20):** a cult of vain female thieves worshipping the evil bird-goddess Tyaa. They also delight in making fools of men.

**Oracle of the Dragon-Spirit (p.22):** a pervasive and strange cult which is expanding quickly and discreetly. Its main aim seems of spreading fear and chaos among human civilisation.

**Paratheo-Anametamystickhood of Eris Esoteric (Poe) (p.24):** sect of chaotic people with no real purpose, save that spreading the philosophy of chaos in a much disorganised fashion.

**Red Cord (the) (p.25):** a secret organization of humans only, with a very strong bent on racism : their intend is to eliminate all non-humans who venture in "their" territory.

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## *Part Two: Neutral Cults*

**Brotherhood of the Shadow (the) (p.28):** a secret organization of Shadow specialists wizards. In fact more of a "cloistered guild" with a devotional aspect to their art.

**Dwarnoï Order (the) (p.29):** a dwarven order of priests dedicated to the guardianship of earth (underground caverns), not dissimilar to druids in spirit.

**Guardian of the Eternal Flame (the) (p.31):** a singular twin cult worshipping a magical fire. Both cults are identical, but one is made up of evil worshippers, and the other of good ones.

**Immortal Taoists (p.33):** a sect of oriental characters who try to achieve immortality in their flesh through various strange methods.

**Spinning Ones (the) (p.37):** a cult which is really an excuse for wild parties. No church, nor dogma, they only meet to have fun and pleasure.

**Wolf Cult (the) (p.38):** a village of peasants on the fringes of civilisation, who venerate the wolf spirit, in fact a druidic faith.

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## *Part Three: Good Cults*

**Heralds of the Warriors of Hope (p.40):** a group of spirits which support a network of people who share the same ideal of freedom and goodness against any evil tyranny.

**Voice of Kelaryon (p.41):** a great entity (some say a Solar), who speaks and brings comfort to humans through the single prophet who channels him.

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### *Part Four: Original Edition*

**Cult's Netbook (p.43):** the original edition, as I have changed everything in this second edition.

## **Part One: Evil Cults**

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### **Black Rose (the)**

*(Chaotic Evil cult)*

#### ***Worships***

The last "wish" of **Eldaran Blackrose's** spirit.

This "wish" was of making a genocide of dwarves (for reason of vengeance).

#### ***Known to Society***

Very secretive, almost no one knows about it.

#### ***Frequency***

Not very widespread; but wherever dwarves are serial-killed, the Black Rose is.

Anyway, the cult obviously won't appear in dwarven cities (too dangerous), nor in places where aren't any dwarves (pointless). Nonetheless, the cult being pragmatic, always searches for new opportunities to continue his nefarious business which is of getting money along with "vengeance". Hence, their search for new towns and cities with important dwarven communities. Then, their search for those non-dwarves who bear grudges against dwarves (such as human merchants or artisans who cannot stand the concurrence of dwarves in their field). And at last, subtly persuading these people that some money in the right hand...

#### ***Organization***

The cult is organised in cells of no more than five *Cloaks* so that if caught, only one cell will be captured. These cells report to a *Shadow* who will provide assistance to any cell that needs expert help on a particular contract. The Shadows themselves are organised into cells and they in turn reports to a *Master* who finally reports to the conclave and the *Grand Master*.

The conclave is made up of each of the twelve Masters and the Grand Master.

**Demands on the members:** The membership of the cult is limited to moon elves, no other race of elves are admitted and definitely no half elves are ever admitted.

Aside from this, members are expected to do their job professionally. This job is nothing more than that of professional assassins paid for their "services". However, unlike a more common guild of assassins, this one worships Mask for its god (or replace by any god of assassination / thieves / darkness / etc... of your choice); and members are indoctrinated into hating dwarves (if it wasn't already the case, or was just a mild dislike). Nevertheless, as for most other organizations of this kind, utmost loyalty and fidelity is of course required.

**Hierarchy:** The Black Rose's hierarchy is as follows:

1) Cloak : lvl.1/4.

2) Shadow : lvl.5/10 ; and 5 years membership within the cult.

3) Master : min 11<sup>th</sup> lvl. and 15 years membership within the cult.

4) Grand Master : min 12<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; and the highest level Master in the conclave. The Grand Master is the leader of the cult (Currently, a 16<sup>th</sup> level wizard).

**Members' powers and abilities:** The classes of the members vary but the priests are always members of Mask, and a large percentage of members are thieves. The other classes are also represented, the current head of the cult is a 16th level wizard.

All members of the cult are at least proficient with the dagger. Any possible specialisation is first taken with the dagger. Note that the dagger is always used for "marks" only, and in conjunction with poison. In other circumstances, different weapons will be used (its more a matter of secrecy, than a religious reason).

### **Description**

**Symbol:** A dagger along a black rose (stylized).

**Brief history:** The cult's history is as follows :

The elven shaman Tymor Goldenbark found and rescued a spirit on the ethereal plane. The spirit was of Eldaran Blackrose, an elf and former hero / priest of Mask. The spirit had been lost on the ethereal for many years after his physical body was captured and tortured to death by a dwarven raiding party. With his dying breath he cursed the dwarves and swore fell oaths to his dark god that he would have vengeance on the dwarves. With his release the spirit promised Tymor Goldenbark that if he would follow its teaching and swear to help the spirit gain its vengeance the spirit would give the shaman powers and knowledge.

Goldenbark returned to the prime material plane and gathered about him several of the more disreputable of his kin and started to hunt dwarves. The dwarves were always tortured before being killed in the same way that the dwarves of long ago killed Eldaran Blackrose. That is, the hands and feet were cut off whilst the victim was still alive and then a flaming arrow was shot into the chest to finish the job.

The cult stayed as a death squad against the dwarves for a short period of time until they realised that wealth and power could be gained by their skills as assassins. Now the cult is willing to kill anyone for a price, except fellow elves, but the main preoccupation is still to kill dwarves. Dwarves are still killed in the ritual way but methods vary with other victims. The prices of assassination vary depending on the wealth and position of the victim but for dwarves there is always a large discount.

### **Special Hindrances**

A member can call upon any other member of the cult of the same rank or lower to give shelter and aid in times of need. The cult pays 70% of the contract money to the members who took part in the contract, the other 30% is kept to further the cult's expansion. Members who are injured on a contract and return to the cult safe house will be healed for free, if healing is available.

Once you join the cult you are in it for life. If injured on a contract and unable to leave the scene then one of the other members will send the injured member to join Mask in the afterlife. Anyone who informs on the cult or one of its members will be hunted down and killed slowly. If caught by the authorities expect a quick and painful death.

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Slight additions by Dominique Couzet

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## **Church of Rauma, God of the Downtrodden**

*(Chaotic Evil cult, with outward appearance of Chaotic Good)*

### **Worships**

**Rauma** (really an aspect of Myrkul, but they don't know that).

### **Known to Society**

80% of poor people, 10% of the well-to-do.

### **Frequency**

In cities where it exists, 50% of the poor and downtrodden will worship it.

### **Organization**

The church is outwardly bent on restoring justice in behalf of the poor. However, the real thing is of furthering the nefarious objectives of the cult of Myrkul. As such, and to appear more believable, there is an apparent normal organization of the Church of Rauma. All those who join the church to become its clerics, are deceived about the true nature of their god and his "real cult". In fact, the upper ranks of the church of Rauma are held by priests of Myrkul who know what's really going on. The poor genuine clerics of Rauma are deceived and will never get access to the position of *Vicar* and above. In fact, should they be able to do so, they would be killed instead.

Now, the organization (and very existence) of the cult of Myrkul is of course hidden from the followers of "Rauma". Anyway, the leaders of the Church of Rauma will (of course) have connections to the secret cult of Myrkul, and its "regular" priests. Note that the (usually small) temples of Myrkul are near always hidden very close to the temples of the Church of Rauma.

**Demands on the clerics of Rauma:** The priesthood is only accessible to people of humble origins. They are expected to attend to the poor and make them know that their current misery is due to the evil and unforgiving wealthy elite who not only despise them, but exploit them.

**Hierarchy:** The following Church's hierarchy is in fact a decoy intended to deceive the worshippers, and genuine apprentices who don't know what really is that cult :

1) Novitiate : lvl.0 ; is only a cleric apprentice.

2) Curate : lvl.1/2 ; their duty is primarily of going in the streets, attending to the poor and preaching the dogma of the church. (Note that as they are drawn from the same social class, curates' preaching sounds even more believable to the poor who listen to it).

3) Prior : min 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl. ; as curate. In fact an honorary title showing that genuine clerics of the poor can rise above their condition and someday "restore justice in the world".

4) Vicar : min 5<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; overseer of the lower ranking clerics.

5) Deacon : min 9<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; local leader of the Church of Rauma.

6) High Minister of the Church : min 14<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; is the top leader of all the Church.

**Priests' powers and abilities:** There are two kinds of priests within the church : the priests of Myrkul (better explained in the appropriate TSR's supplement) ; and the clerics of Rauma. These latter are normal clerics (basic AD&D rules), except that they will never be able to get 3<sup>rd</sup> level spells and higher, unless they renounce this false faith. Otherwise, they could embrace the cult of Myrkul, in which case they become normal priests of Myrkul (in terms of game mechanics).

### **Description**

**Symbol:** Three circles, two on top and one meeting them underneath.

**Brief history:** As it is, the cult of Myrkul would be hardly worshipped by normal people... And most authorities would take steps to prevent it anyway. However, under the guise of Rauma things can go much better for Myrkul.

The Church is outwardly bent on restoring justice in behalf of the poor, that is : stopping the poor from being exploited if not enslaved by the (evil) wealthy elite who "take them the skin out of their already meager bodies". Therefore, Rauma advocates the eventual overthrow of the rich.

The way the cult works is to get a large populace of underprivileged peasants and else following, by proclaiming that Rauma is the god of the poor. Then the priests gradually work the worshippers into a mindset that the rich don't deserve what they have... and the poor outnumber the rich. Then usually bloodshed follows, with Myrkul quite happy about it all.

### **Special Hindrances**

**Clerics of Rauma** : From 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> level, clerics gain low level spells. These spells do not require in fact, that the deity or his minions should be involved in "bringing them to the priest". But upon reaching the 5<sup>th</sup> experience level and gaining access to 3<sup>rd</sup> level spells, things become another matter. Also, the more high level the cleric will be, the more he will be able to eventually discover the truth and become a threat to the cult of Myrkul. As such, when they reach the 5<sup>th</sup> level, clerics of Rauma are assassinated one way or another (unless they accept to become priests of Myrkul).

**Priests of Myrkul :** Once the true nature of the church is revealed, its local leader(s) must sacrifice themselves to Myrkul for their failure. This will happen if more than 50% of the followers leave after the PCs expose their folly.

### ***Role-playing Tips***

I strongly suggest you to think about this : arrange for a PC to become a 1<sup>st</sup> level *good* cleric of Rauma. Then, let him have some adventuring in which he will combat evil wealthy tyrants (but were they so truly evil ???). Then, upon reaching the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> level, he will be the target of assassination attempt(s). At first, he should be led into believing he is suffering retaliation from those wealthy tyrants he past opposed. Then let him discover in some memorable way, what the Church of Rauma really is... This plot should prove interesting.

Otherwise this cult is best used by introducing it as a normal church, then having peasants come in conflict with PCs so that the PCs notice the real attitude of the church.

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Then augmented by Dominique Crouzet

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## **Church of Sainte Calysse :**

*(Lawful Evil cult)*

### ***Worships***

Outwardly, the cult is a *True-Faith's church* (replace this by the most official, important, and LG faith of your own campaign world), with a specific patron saint : namely, Sainte Calysse.

However, this is only a decoy. The Church of Sainte Calysse is in fact an evil cult worshipping an ancient evil spirit residing deep underground the city (see more about this in the description).

### ***Known to Society***

The Church of Sainte Calysse is in fact a Theocracy ruling over the city-state of *Rel-Mort*. It is the official, and only religion authorized within the city.

Outside the city of Rel Mort, it is unknown (except for the few travelers who would remember of it, if they had any reason for this).

### ***Frequency***

The Church of Sainte Calysse is in fact unable of spreading outside the city of Rel Mort. The reason is that its priests are totally unable to regain their spells anywhere but in the city temples (any temple which would be built outside the city wouldn't work).

### ***Organization***

**Demands on the priests:** City's defense and preservation, as well as service to H'Rel for the highest ranking priests (i.e.: 9<sup>th</sup> level and above).

**Hierarchy:** The Church of Sainte Calysse's hierarchy is as follows:

- 1) Applicant : lvl.0 ; is only a priest apprentice.
- 2) Servant brother : lvl.1/2 ; assistant to a Master of Servants, or higher ranking cleric.
- 3) Master of Servants : min 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl. ; chief assistant to a Sacristan, or higher ranking cleric.
- 4) Sacristan : min 5<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; is generally assigned to a city's shrine, or to a civil servant's chief position.



5) **Dean** : min 9<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; is generally assigned to one of the twelve city's temples, or to one of the major city's positions: City Guards' General, City's Taxes Overseer, Great magistrate, etc...

6) **Patriarch** : min 14<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; is the leader of the Church, and the city's Theocrat.

**Priests' powers and abilities:** There are two orders of these clerics within the church : the "Protectors" (which represent 80% of all the priests and form the backbone of the organization), and the "Theologians" (the 20% remaining, who usually occupy the leading ranks).

**Character class:** Specialty priest (POS&M rules).

- Minimum strength, wisdom and constitution of 11 ; Alignment: LN, LE, N, NE.

- May wear any armor + shield, and use blunt and bludgeoning weapons.

- Have access to the spheres of spells of:

\***Major access:** All, Divination, Elemental earth, Guardian, and Wards.

\***Minor access:** Charm, Creation, Healing, and Protection.

- Gain access to the wizard school of magic of Elemental Earth. They memorize and cast these wizard spells as if they were priest spells. Their base maximum number of spells per day still apply however.

- May memorize their spells only in a shrine or temple of Sainte Calysse within the city. Moreover they can only memorize 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> level spells in one of the city temples (not shrines) and have to sacrifice a victim (who is energy drained) for this.

- *Protectors* have D10 hit-dice, and use the Thac0 advancement of warriors.

- *Theologians* have the Spirit-power granted ability (see POS&M rules p.35-38). It apply to several evil earth spirits, which obey to H'Rel (see cult history below). These spirits know nearly everything which occurs within the city and its underground, and grant earth-elemental spells. H'Rel, as the great demon-spirit who lies dormant under the city, could do many thing if asked by a theologian who can contact her: such as destroying buildings with localized earthquakes, etc...

- Kits available (POS&P rules): *Protectors*: Noble, Soldier ; *Theologians*: Noble, Scholar.

### **Description**

**Symbol:** A Chalice similar to the Mystical Holy Chalice of the True-Faith.

**Brief history:** The cult's history is closely linked to the history of Rel-Mort.

- **Acknowledged history:** In 1228 a holy woman of virtue, Sainte Calysse, came to the corrupted city of Rel-Mort and built a modest temple there, after having defeated its tyrant: the evil sorcerer of the Dark Tower of Midnight. Then, over the years, the city's inhabitants slowly turned to the True-Faith, as they gradually realized that this religion was their only way to salvation. Today, the Church still reveres Sainte Calysse "Our Virgin Lady of Pain" as the city's protector and savior from the Devil's clutches.

- **Real history:** In the beginnings, about two milleniums ago, the city was only a stone quarry. Then one day, the excavating miners penetrated a long forgotten burial ground, awakening its resident. The resident was an ancient evil spirit "H'Rel" who had been bound there for untold ages. The miners paid her homage, and soon built a temple dedicated to her worship.

Thereafter, over the years, the temple grew, became a religious center, then a town, and at last the city of Rel-Mort. During the Dark-Ages the city expanded its influence and became the capital of the Kingdom of Rel. However, H'Rel's priests could not gain power from her, outside the city. Then, the kingdom fell apart and only the city remained. Later in 817, the city was nearly destroyed by raiders, when it was saved by Holrun a minor priest of H'Rel but powerful wizard (i.e.: in game terms, a dual classed 7<sup>th</sup> level priest / 13<sup>th</sup> level Conjurer who later became the great 20<sup>th</sup> level archmage who built the Dark Tower of Midnight). Under Holrun's rule, the city was rebuilt and became more powerful and magnificent than it never had been. However, it was a city of evil, and remained only a city-state.

In 1112, Holrun died during the "Great Devil's Night". Holrun's shade (i.e.: in game terms, a 9<sup>th</sup> level conjurer simulacrum of the wizard) remained the sole master of the city. In 1228,

for political reasons (that is, because of the True-Faith crusaders coming from the southern lands) Holrun's shade reformed the cult of H'Rel to make it look like some sect of the True-Faith. Thus the cult of H'Rel became the "Church of Sainte Calysse".

Today, the Church of Sainte Calysse seems to be a peculiar sect of the True-Faith and has thus escaped much unwanted attention from the True Faith which is dominant in the neighboring lands, even if the city is suspiciously looked upon. The cult is dedicated to the worship of Sainte Calysse "Our Virgin Lady of Pain" (who is in fact H'Rel).

### ***Special Hindrances***

**Priests** : as already said, they may gain (memorize) their spells only in their cult's temples and shrines within the city. Moreover, bloody sacrifices are required to regain spells of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> level.

**Citizen** : as long as they pay their taxes, they don't face any problems. In fact, the church acts in a much LG manner, except that its services must be paid in gold pieces... However, it becomes another matter entirely when one loses everything and becomes a beggar. The beggars are the ones who are taken by the priests to be sacrificed to H'Rel...

As such, it will be noted that there seems to be less beggars and poor people in the city than everywhere else (provided the PCs have the idea of looking at this). But the usual answer given is that the city is more prosperous and just. On the other hands, apart the high level priests (the low level ones don't know of this) and city dignitaries, none knows of the truth. Anyone who comes across the truth will disappear sooner or later. In fact it occurred a couple of times, but each one of them, the witness did alert the religious authorities... (unknowingly, a very bad idea!).

**Strangers** : they do not have anything to fear from the cult, because the church does not want to draw unwanted attention to itself from the neighboring righteous crusaders.

### ***Contributed By***

Dominique Crouzet.

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## **Dark Druids (the)**

*(Neutral Evil cult)*

### ***Worships***

The **Witch Queen**.

The Dark Druids are a druidic order who instead of worshipping nature, worship an evil entity known as the Witch Queen.

(Note: during the medieval times –our real world–, witches were probably in fact, the last descendants of priestesses of pagan fertility cults. But then the Catholic Church banished all heathen beliefs, telling everywhere that their advocates were in fact "witches worshipping the Devil". Then, over time these old pagan fertility cults degenerated into petty sorcery and "satanic masses" for people who hated –whatever could be their reasons– the clergy. As such, it is only logical to have degenerated druids who now worship the Witch Queen, and are held by common people for "witches").

### ***Known to Society***

Peltam, Forlard, and remains of Legolis : Everyone knows of the dark druids. However, only priests, scholars, rangers, and well educated people know exactly who are dark druids. Common people (peasants, etc...) only know that "everything bad comes from witches who hide in woods, where they performs their evil doings". It is above their comprehension to

understand it better, but they know of the global history of the realms they live in, and what part the so-called witches took in it. Otherwise, they vaguely know that the witches are organised into covens who worship the Witch-Queen during black sabbats (i.e.: dark druids belonging to a druidic order and who meet regularly to discuss the business of the order, and perform their religious rituals).

Other regions : only 5% of people know of the dark druids. The people who know about it are priests, scholars, rangers, and true druids. Note that true druids are dire enemies of dark druids and will do all they can to prevent them expand in their territories. They are however unable to go in the remains of Legolis empire and wipe them, because dark druids are too powerful.

### **Frequency**

You can expect to find dark druids all over the remains of the ancient empire of Legolis. There in every villages, the common people fear those “witches who live and practice their evil sorceries in the deep of woods and forests”.

In Peltam and Forlard, you can expect a dark druid of being in the vicinity of any village who has got some problems of very bad crops without reasons, plagues, etc... This occurs every now and then, but cannot be rated. You can however count on 60% of wilderness areas to have some dark druid “in charge”.

Everywhere else, it is doubtful that dark druids will be ever found.

### **Organization**

The Dark Druid organization is very similar to that of normal druids.

**Demands on the dark druids:** The priesthood of the cult is limited to humans, no other race may join. Other races who traditionally have druids, usually embrace life (a statement which is shown by the fact that they are all longer living than humans), and thus could not become druids of the destructive aspect of nature. Also, humanoids cannot become Dark Druids simply because they usually cannot comprehend things like theology, religion, etc., although humanoids are usually used as cannon fodder by the Dark Druids whenever they have need of an army.

Dark Druids are otherwise expected to combat civilisation whenever they can, and make life miserable for all of those who live a kind of civilised life. For instance, peasants with their agriculture are considered such civilised people, and should have their crops destroyed. However, barbarians living from hunting and gathering are acceptable.

**Hierarchy:** The Dark Druids’ hierarchy is much similar to that of normal druids. However, the Dark Druids and the normal druids have no connections. The Dark Druids’ order is independent (or renegade, in the eyes of the normal druids), having its own Grand Druid.

**Dark Druids’ powers and abilities:** Dark Druids are of the druid class for the experience level progression, limited number of druids at higher levels, and special powers of Hierophants. Otherwise, their powers and abilities are different from that of true druids :

Character class: Specialty priest-druid (POS&M rules).

- Minimum strength, wisdom and constitution of 13 ; Alignment: N, NE.

- Dark druids have D8 hit-dice, and use the Thac0 advancement of Priests.

- May wear only those special armor/shield given to them by the cult (namely, a wood plate-mail and shield); and for weapons get proficiency in the dagger, mace (spiked), spear, and staff.

- Have access to the spheres of spells of:

\**Major access:* All, Animal, Combat, Plants, and Weather.

\**Minor access:* Charm, Protection, and Summoning.

- Gain access to the wizard school of magic of Necromancy. They memorize and cast these wizard spells as if they were priest spells. Their base max number of spells / day still apply however.

- Granted power of Immunity to normal diseases.

- Granted power of Pass without Trace ability as normal druids (gained at 3<sup>rd</sup> level).

- Granted power of Shape-change ability as normal druids (gained at 7<sup>th</sup> level).

- Dark druids have their own secret language which is unknown to other people.

- Dark druids all display fanaticism (POS&P limitation): they cannot tolerate those not of their faith, and cannot hide their contempt for them, thus suffering a -4 penalty on all encounter reactions. These guys are very antipathetic.

#### Character kit: Special

All dark druids get the same kit, which gives them the benefit of receiving a special equipment from their cult : a dagger (which also acts as their holy symbol), a spiked mace, a plate-mail, and a shield. All these items are made from a hardened black wood (hard as metal), engraved with all sorts of runes and flowery symbols. Then, these items gain magical properties and increase in potency when their rightful owner gains levels : +1 from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> lvl. / +2 from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> lvl. / +3 from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> lvl. / +4 from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> lvl. / and +5 at 15<sup>th</sup> lvl. and above.

The only drawback to this is that the Dark Druid must rededicate all of his equipment to the Witch Queen once a week and at a recognised temple. If the Druid fails in this task then his items begin to lose their potency (A comparison can be made to Drow items).

#### **Description**

**Symbol** : A ritual dagger of hardened black wood, engraved with flowery designs.

It should be noted that the symbol is a real dagger, not a pendant in the form of a dagger. This wooden dagger (as resilient as metal) becomes more and more magical as the dark druid owning it increases in experience level.

**History and Beliefs** : The organization of the Dark Druids stretches way back into the annals of history. Their original beliefs were actually quite passive, believing that just as everything lives, all things, in the fulfilment of time, must end. They believed that it was a perversion of nature to tend to the sick, or feed the starving, or even warn someone about the large boulder about to land on their head. To put it simpler, they were the ultimate in Non-interventionists.

Then one day, as in all things, something happened that changed the way the world looked at the Dark Druids and at the way the Dark Druids looked at the world.

It was during a siege at a city (time and place are now unknown). The populace of the city were starving, the Dark Druids at their temple in the city were not, and chose not to share their food with the populace of the city. Things turned from nasty to worst and all but one druid survived. That druid went immediately into isolation living on an island.

Nothing was heard about the Dark Druids for a few decades, until a village (Zebonis) near the island started having mysterious deaths.

Eventually the cause of the deaths was tracked down to a temple on the island, where a small band of Dark Druids lived. The temple was destroyed by the local population. 12 druids survived the slaughter and pronounced a powerful curse upon the dead body of their abbot (unknown to everyone this curse inhabited the body of a baby, who later became the Witch Queen). It was later found out that the people who mysteriously died had a form of plague which spread through the area soon after.

Since that day the Dark Druids have followed the practice of actively speeding along death. Therefore the religion has been outlawed and banned, hunted down and nearly wiped out several times only to come back stronger and stronger.

Their more current history is closely woven with that of the Empire of Legolis.

**6716** (or present year -579 years)

The Dark Druids, an outlawed religious sect of priests of a deity of death, managed to infiltrate some of their followers into the Emperors' private chambers in the palace at the

capitol Legolithiapolis. Once there they managed to capture the Emperor and his four generals and replace them with exact clones under the sway of the Great Dark Druid himself. A reign of terror began that night, unnoticeable at first but with each passing day, securing the Great Dark Druid's hold upon the Empire of Legolis.

Several years passed before normal life and the liberties of men were infringed upon at which time a Duke of a nearby state (a boyhood friend of the Emperor) chose to visit the Emperor and discovered that the Emperor was not who he portrayed to be. The Duke quickly left the capitol and retired to his own domains and began investigations into the person who claimed to be Emperor. After much work and consultation with the gods, the duke discovered the truth behind the Great Dark Druid's schemes and, calling his friends within the nobility, declared war upon the Capitol and fake emperor. Unfortunately the Great Dark Druid had been very busy during his years in control, placing loyal followers in positions of power within the structure of the Empire.

#### **6722** (or present year -573 years)

A great battle was fought on the plains and walls surrounding the capitol. For three months various offensives were made by the Duke against the forces of the Great Dark Druid until neither side was truly capable of victory. The Duke, sick of the thousands of deaths that had occurred, chose to retire from the field of battle and instead, knowing that his enemy was incapable of doing anything, split the empire into various fragments placing trusted friends of his upon the thrones of what in future years was to become the kingdoms of Peltam and Forlard. The Duke and the Fake Emperor of Legolis signed a treaty soon after the war declaring a state of non-aggression between the new kingdoms and the Empire of Legolis.

So began the rule of the Dark Druids placing Puppet emperors upon the throne for some 120 years.

#### **6838** (or present year -457 years)

The kingdom of Peltam under the rule of Llewellyn requested that a group of powerful nobles from within his kingdom seek out and destroy any dark druid incursions into his country. The result of this request were two major wars against Legolis effectively crippling its power and an epic attack upon the Dark Druids secret home base within a mountain. After the first battle between Peltam and Legolis a powerful being known as the Witch Queen was inadvertently released from her magical prison at the same time releasing the once Emperor of Legolis and his four generals, all of whom promptly vanished. Soon after the Dark Druids withdrew to their mountain base to contend with a challenger to the office of Great Dark Druid. The result was that the Great Dark Druid was defeated by the Witch Queen who then persuaded the Dark Druids to worship her (a deity in her own right) instead of the deity of death. None know whether the original Great Dark Druid died at the Witch Queen's hands or fled to safety. Soon after these events the nobles from Peltam attacked the mountain base of the Dark Druids whilst large forces from Peltam and Forlard attacked Legolis in an attempt to divide the forces of the Dark Druids. The nobles managed to infiltrate the mountain and with the help of the deity of death render the Witch Queen mortal in an attempt to destroy her, unfortunately during the fight with the Witch Queen one of the nobles in his haste managed to banish her to the astral plane hoping that she would be lost forever. The Dark Druids immediately lost all of their priestly powers due to the banishment of the Witch Queen.

The god of death, their earlier patron then sealed all the dark druids (that were there) in the mountain, confining them to exile, never to walk upon the surface of the planet again.

For the next 87 years what is left of Legolis is in ruins no one count or baron is around long enough to leave a lasting impression. The entire nobility of the so called empire can be challenged by those of lesser station and the phrase "Might is Right" becomes a cold hard reality.

#### **6925** (or present year -370 years)

Eight nobles from Peltam enter and take over a small piece of Legolis, over the next couple of years they gain partial control over all of Legolis.

#### **6931** (or present year -364 years)

The eight nobles become demi-gods after discovering the Temple of an ancient deity of good that was once worshipped in Legolis.

**6934** (or present year –361 years)

The Witch Queen returned in the body of an innocent woman during some dark ceremony carried out by a secretive group of Dark Druids. She then immediately attacked the eight demipowers of Legolis. Knowing that as a goddess herself, they would be unable to harm her, she decided to give them a choice : either become one of her followers and gain unimaginable power, or die an eternal death at her hands. From the eight, four chose to join her, and four chose to stand instead for the principles of good.

At this point a hitherto unknown entity entered the picture, calling herself “She who dreams”, stated that the eight demi-gods had been tempted beyond their capability to understand and somehow stripped the Witch queen of all her powers, a conversation then took place between the eight demi-gods and “She who dreams”, the result of which was that all eight became gods in their own rights, four became evil and four became good, the eight were then sent off to some other dimension, where all trace of them was lost.

**7295** (or present year)

Present Day.

### ***Special Hindrances***

Due to their peculiar beliefs, there are numerous hindrances to being a dark druid :

1) They do not have access to healing spells themselves ; and are moreover forbidden to receive the benefit of any kind of healing magic (it goes against their ethic). Fortunately anyway, they can regenerate themselves with their shape-changing ability.

2) At upper level, when a would be 12<sup>th</sup> (or higher) level dark druid must challenge one who already hold the position to take it from him, the combat is OBLIGATORY fought to the death.

### ***Contributed By***

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Then augmented by Dominique Crouzet.

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## **Demon-gods of Dread (the)**

*(Chaotic Evil cults)*

**“May the fool remember that there are no unjust power which comes for free !”**

(Patriarch Epeidemus the Saint)

These cults exemplify that eventually, evil will always bring woe to the ones who first spread it. (You are right! You've just come across the Moralists Campaign Setting !: the Devil's World campaign !!)

The great fear in the medieval times was the Devil. However, what you get here (in the Devil's World campaign) is not one, but nine of these dark entities struggling to take over the world, and corrupt it. These dark powers come from the outer world, far beyond the fringes of human settlements and civilizations. They are bent to (and crave for) degradation, corruption and destruction. Driven by inhuman hate and monstrous instincts, their goal is to enslave all living beings and submit them to their obscene alien will. In fact, the only thing that can be said about them is that they are the personification of Evil. These nine gods of chaos are :

### ***Worship***

Any one of the 9 Demon-gods of Dread, who are:

**AGRADOS** : Lord of Wealth, Dispenser of Abundance.

**BAALSHAUR** : Arch-duke of Power, Prince of Kings and Emperors.

**BEAST The** : Lord Supreme of the Wilderness.

**DAAG'TOTH** : Arch-mage of the Gods, Upholder of Dreams.

**KYOLLOL** : Lord of Jokes, Viceroy of Delight.

**LOBIAR** : Wrathful Avenger, Lord of True Justice.

**NECHROUL** : Guardian of Immortality, Keeper of Secrets.

**OSHRASSH** : Lord of Might, Prince of Heroism.

**SARRYLIAL** : Mistress of Love, Seductress of the Gods.

These horrid deities never stop working at seduce and corrupt the mortals, in their aim to suborn and foul the world. However, they are bent on their own destruction, and used to scheme among themselves. This sole fact has so far precluded them to take the advantage in this insidious war which is waged against humanity.

### ***Known to Society***

Everyone knows of the “Devil”, and that he is worshipped by witches and evil heretics. However, only 5% of the population (mostly scholars and priests) know that there are nine Demon-gods, and what are their attributes and cults.

### ***Frequency***

Every now and then\*, some fool will accept to become a servant of one of these foul entities : 50% of the time, rather than a true cult, there will be only that character serving the demon with whom he made a pact. 40% of the time, it will be a small cult numbering no more than two dozen of people. In these two cases, such “cults” are usually short lived because they are hunted down and destroyed (they rarely can remain hidden, because they are obliged by their patron demoniac to create havoc all around them).

However, 10% of these cults will be more organized (and thus well hidden), long-lasting, having a special place of worship and many followers (2d12 X 10). Note these will be found mainly in large cities, which offers much more possibilities for nefarious activities.

(\*: Cannot be rated, because it is too chaotic. However, if the DM needs some statistics, there is a 10% chance of finding such a cult at any given time, in any place populated by humans. Equal chance for any cult but that of Nechroul who gain twice chances.)

## Organization

None specific. All these cults are most of the time totally chaotic and without purpose, except for satisfying the monstrous/grueling desires of their leaders. Those few cults that are really organized, don't follow a pre-determined structure as each of them is different. Also, it should be noted that normally, these cults will never associate themselves, even when worshipping the same Demon-god. In fact, the cults are usually enemies of each others, and even within a given sect, deadly hates and rivalries may be found. Anyway, the Demons-gods do not seem to care.

Otherwise, as noted above :

50% of these cults, are not real cults, but a single character serving its master (i.e.: spreading evil all around; making other suffer, and suffer himself). This character will be a "witch-priest" of the demon only 15% of the time. However, whatever may be his class, he will be gifted with special powers and curses (See section C: *Description of the nine cults*).

40% of these cults, are small bands (2d12) of degenerated characters, under the leadership of a "witch-priest" (01-40%), or a strong leader (41-60: fighter ; 61-80: thief ; 81-00: wizard).

10% of these cults, are well organized groups (2d12 X 10) of corrupted characters, under the leadership of a "witch-priest" and his 1d4 assistants (also witch-priests). These well organized cults usually practice their important ceremonies (i.e.: black sabbat) under the direct supervision of their patron demoniac. (Whether the appearance of it is a powerful hallucination, a projected image, a lower demon in its guise, or itself personally, is up to the DM. Also, in this last case, the statistics are left to his appreciation, but the 1<sup>st</sup> edition MM I & MM II could be used).

Anyway, even if few of these cults are organized and have defined worship and objectives, their rituals (improvised or not) always involve fear, suffering, and the worst instincts.

## Description

All the cults basically work the same way : the prospective victims (would-be followers) are first offered what they crave for the most at that moment, for a low price which always include performing some minor evil doing. At that time, the Demon-god will always appear under its most appealing guise. Then, as time passes, and the follower asks for more favors, these are less and less fulfilling/satisfying, and cost more and more (in terms of personal sacrifice and evil deed required). All along, the Demon-god appears progressively more and more atrocious, until having reverted to its true appearance.

(See section C: *Description of the nine cults*, for a more detailed account on the Demon-gods and their ways.)

**Satanists' powers and abilities:** the "satanic priests" of these demon-gods are (of course) intended to be NPCs only !!

Character class: Specialty priest (POS&M rules).

- Minimum intelligence and constitution of 11 ; Alignment: LE, NE, CE.
- Have D8 hit-dice, and use the Thac0 advancement of priests.
- May wear any armor + shield, and use any weapons.
- Control Undead.
- Have access to the spheres of spells of:

\**Major access:* All, Chaos, Necromantic, Summoning.

\**Minor access:* Charm, Divination, and Protection.

- Gain access to one wizard school of magic, appropriate to their patron demoniac : Alteration (The Beast), Conjunction-summoning (Agrados, Baalshaur, Oshrassh), Enchantment-charm (Sarrylial), Illusion (Daag'Toth, Kyollol), or Necromancy (Lobiar, Nechroul).



- May learn and memorize their spells only as wizard do (i.e.: with spell-book, and intelligence). They however use the spell progression table of priests, but without any bonus spell for high wisdom scores (which will quickly lower anyway). These spells are generally given to them by their patron demoniac, or some of his lower demons. Note that no spell which cures, repairs, etc... will ever be given. When appropriate always use the reverse forms of the spells.

- Have the Spirit-power granted ability (see POS&M rules p.35-38). It apply to evil spirits of the dead (frequently appearing as small demons). These spirits know many things, and grant necromancy spells.

- Kits available : powers and curses given by their patron demoniac (See section C: *Description of the nine cults*).

### **Membership**

Every one who will accept/request a service or favor from the "Devil" (the generic name given by most people to these Demon-Gods), will irremediably become their slave, and lose his/her immortal soul to them... So, how could oneself being fooled to such a hideous bargain ?

To become a member, someone only has to be contacted by one of these Demon-gods, and accept the pact s/he proposes (See the section A: Diabolical Pact). An individual will always be seduced on one of his weaknesses or vices, and preferably when he will be facing hard times, crisis, and have his will weakened. A Demon-god will usually come to anyone in a dire wanting of what it pretends to represent. Then, the favor will be high (a renewed youth, beauty, wealth, power, magic...), and the price seemingly low. But if one accepts the bargain, it will be too late : sooner or later he will sink into corruption, participate in the foul rituals, and eventually become lost to his humanity.

### **Special Hindrances**

All members of the cult are eventually corrupted, and then destroyed by the atrocious demons they serve. Even as priests, they are in a constant fear of their patron demoniac. They live in torment, finding some illusionary relief of their own cursed life, in inflicting on others the horrid debasements they must themselves suffer. Usually, upon their deaths (when they have lost all their humanity), they become undead.

The kits' description will give specific curses which are laid upon the foul/fool followers (what a pun !!!). But the DMs are encouraged to modify them on a case by case basis.

### **Role-playing Tips :**

Here follows a description on how people fall prey to the Demon-gods of Dread.

**A) DIABOLICAL PACT** : they will vary, according to the different cults, circumstances, favors requested, and who is involved. Hence, the DM must handle it on a case by case basis. Here follow three examples of what could occur :

**1)** A man of old age is dying of his natural death, but nevertheless desperately tries to cling onto his life when the Devil (*Nechroul*) appears to him. He offers him one month more of life, and asks nothing in exchange. Nonetheless he tells him that at the end of the month, he will have to do something *special* if he wants to live a year more. This special thing will sounds ridiculous and without consequences, particularly if the individual has little ethics and morality, and is obsessed with his death : slaying a rat in the name of Nechroul, or kissing a corpse while saying the name of Nechroul, etc... . And then, nothing more until the year has elapsed.

However, in accepting the bargain, the man has unknowingly begun to enslave himself to Nechroul. That is, in game terms, he loses 1 Wisdom point without knowing it, and his alignment progress of one degree toward Chaotic-Evil. Next time that he will be tempted with a bargain (a little bit more evil that time), he will have to succeed a wisdom check, if incidentally he has changed his mind and wants to refuse it. (Note that even if he succeeds the check, he still will need to have an *atonement* spell cast on him if he doesn't want to do the check again, the next temptation. However, the wisdom point is definitively lost.)

Then, if he accepts all the successive bargains (note that when becoming Chaotic-Evil, he cannot choose and try anymore to refuse them), he may eventually become immortal...as a ghoul.

**2)** During the wedding day, the bride's sister is unknowingly burning of desire and lust. Full of jealousy and rage that her sister could have been preferred to her by the provost's son (even if he was much younger than her), she swears before the gods that she nonetheless will have him. It is when appears *Sarrylial* who offers to give him to her. Then, when comes the moment of the wedding night, she succeeds in taking the place of her sister, of whom she has magically taken the appearance, thanks to *Sarrylial*. A moment later she only has to revert to her own appearance and scream she has been raped; preferably when her newly-wedded sister enters the chamber.

The evil is done, but nonetheless the truth about it is eventually discovered. Having been severely punished, she is sent to a convent to expiate her crimes. However, once again with the aid of *Sarrylial*, she seduces the provost who is taking her off, and escapes. But for payment of that, *Sarrylial* orders that she will have to be "taken" by a dog as well. Later, after having escaped, she stumbles on a group of gnolls who decide to eat her. But once more with the aid of *Sarrylial*, she manages to convince them of instead keeping her for another use. On the following weeks, she is violently raped many times per day, and even if she hates these stinking brutes, she cannot live anymore without their painful copulations (thanks to *Sarrylial*).

As time passes, the gnolls grow tired of her, and she sees the coming of her end. Nonetheless, she convinces *Sarrylial* to give her another chance. And so she leads the gnolls to her old village, intending on kidnap as many girls as possible. If the raid succeeds, she will consecrate the captives as sexual slaves of *Sarrylial*, and in return will be granted to become a priestess of the foul goddess. (It is normally at that time, that PCs arrive to prevent this abomination).

(As you see, the process of successive bargains is the same in this story, as it was in the precedent.)

**3)** This example shows how a PCs who go astray from his alignment, could be involved with one of the Demon-gods of Dread. In fact, it is exactly what occurred to one of my players.

Solomon Kane, a LN 4<sup>th</sup> level fighter, once saved a young woman who was to be burnt at the stake. She was innocent, but had been accused of being a witch by a fanatical priest. Needless to say, that when S. Kane rescued the woman (in a much heroic manner !), he made himself a mortal enemy of that priest. Then later, for some other reason, S. Kane came again to the town where this event had taken place. And there, he decided to find that priest and "judge" him (*Note that it wasn't planned in the scenario, he decided of this on his own!*). S. Kane captured the priest and tried to have him admit he was a murderer of women ; then killed him as a "just reward" for his deeds, because the fanatical priest (convinced of his own righteousness), all the while refused to see things that way. This event attracted the unwanted attention of *Lobiar*...

The next gaming session (a solo adventure), S. Kane was in another town, searching for some information, when he stumbled upon the strange little shop of a fortune teller, who was incidentally looking at him, and inviting him to enter. The seer was a beautiful woman of pale skin, white hair, and immaculate clothes. However, she had nothing to say about the information he was searching for, but instead congratulated S. Kane for having so wisely slain that heinous priest who so justly deserved to be swiftly executed. (By the way, *Lobiar* told S. Kane that she witnessed the event in her crystal ball, and the PC accepted the explanation without a second thought). Then, the seer declared that such a meritorious act deserved an appropriate gift, which S. Kane gladly accepted (Ah! Greedy characters eager for magical items....) : his mundane rapier was transformed by the seer into a magical silver sword right on the spot (by way of a silvery glittering powder). The only thing S. Kane would have to do when using the rapier, to gain its full powers, was of saying: "In the name of the Lord of True Justice, you deserve to die criminal !!". Needless to say, S. Kane was much

pleased with the transformation of his rapier into a powerful magical weapon (I forget which powers I had given it), and never wasted his time thinking twice about it.

How did end this dismaying story ? Fortunately for S. Kane, the next time he used his newly improved rapier, it was broken during the first round of the fight ! (by way of a fumble-hit and the appropriate fumble dice-rolls, not because I wanted to "save" him).

**As it appears then**, the only aim of a diabolical pact, is to trick the mortal who accepts it, into servitude and complete submission to the devious power of the Demon-gods of Dread. The trick is, that when a character has agreed to a first bargain, the real thing is that it weakens his will to compel him to accept the next, even if it is worse than the precedent. That is, in game terms you will have to succeed a wisdom check to be able to turn down the offer. Furthermore, each new bargain accepted will permanently reduce the character's wisdom score by 1 point, and take his alignment a degree more toward Chaotic-Evil. Then at last, after several bargains of this sort, the character will have lost every humanity he could have had. In fact, even if at first, all his desires seemed to be satisfied, at last he remains only a hating being, fearful of his master, who can only alleviate his sufferings in assuaging his god's monstrous instincts, which also became his own.

**Now**, whatever the form which may take a pact with the Devil, for being effective it will always abide to the following rules, otherwise it won't be able to corrupt anyone :

**1)** It will always be clear and evident, that *the character will do something evil in accepting the bargain*. For example, killing a rat is not especially evil. But accepting the bargain of killing a rat saying the name of Nechroul, *in exchange* for a year of life, is evil.

**2)** It will *always be clear and evident, that the character is making a bargain with the Devil itself* (or at least a greater demon working for him). No mortal (even should he be a priest of one of the Demon-gods), can make a pact with anyone in the name of the Devil.

**3)** Furthermore, *the character must do his part of the bargain for the pact being effective*. In the example, the old man hasn't made any pact simply because he will live one more month, thanks to Nechroul. And if the Bride's mother who first accepted the bargain and received a magical power to do it, changed her mind and did nothing, she wouldn't have made any pact. (however, 3 aborted bargains in which a character has first requested and gained a power intending to do his evil act, will count as a pact concluded.)

**4)** A character *cannot be tricked in making a bargain*, and therefore considered as having made a pact. For example, the Devil appears as an absolutely ordinary man to the character, and offers him gold to bear a scroll to someone and say at the delivery an incomprehensible (at least to the character) text which incidentally means: "I give you this cursed scroll in the name of the Devil, shall you die horribly for fifty gold pieces!"

**5)** A character *must have the choice to refuse* (even if it leads to a certain death) a pact, and *cannot be forced in any manner* (magical or otherwise). For example, the Devil cannot appear to a fighter character and say: "the next creature you will kill, will be for me and the next treasure you will find would have been in fact put there for you as a payment". (even if the fighter kills someone and later finds a treasure, he won't have made any pact). Furthermore, the Demon-gods never do appear physically to tempt a mortal. So, if the Devil says to a Character who refuses his bargain : "If so, I'm going to kill you on the spot, foolish mortal !", it will be only words... (except maybe in a temple dedicated to him, and full of demons.).

**6)** Lastly, *a pact with the Devil will always and only further selfish and evil ends*. The Devil will absolutely never tempt into a bargain a character who, for example, would desperately want to live a couple more years in order to further an altruistic cause.

**B) REPENTANCE** : Another thing that must be known, is the possibility of "repentance" for a character who has fallen to the Devil and made a pact with him, but now conscious of the evil of it, wants to put it to an end.

First, the character must confess his sins, and second have an *atonement* spell cast on him by a priest of his faith. The result is that, next time the Devil will try to tempt him, he won't

feel compelled to agree. That is, in game terms he won't have to succeed a wisdom check if he wants to turn down the new bargain.

However, for this to succeed, the character must be *truly repentant*, and not only wanting to escape the consequences of his doings after having benefited from them. Besides, next to his atonement, the character will have to do something appropriate in order to redeem his faults. Moreover, this may work only once, and only before the character has become Chaotic-Evil. Otherwise, only two solutions remain : first, to be shut up in a monastery for the rest of his life (where the character will be an inmate, not a monk ; and where the Devil won't come again to tempt him.) ; or second, to be put to the purifying special death sentence of the faith.

Note that "repentance", is a Holy-Faith's concept. Things may be different with the barbarian pagan faiths. Usually, the character will come to a priest of his faith, and ask him to be freed from the pact. There are no concepts of "sin" in these religions, but the priest will nonetheless evaluate if the character is worth the trouble (by the standards of his culture and faith). If so, he will *quest* the character in doing something special for the religion, and in exchange cast the appropriate spells to free him. Otherwise he may only offer a quick, painless death. Here also the character may have only one (maybe two) atonement. Afterwards he will be only considered a despicable coward resorting to trickery to solve his problems, and unable to face the consequences of his actions.

Finally, the wizard spell *wish* will instantly negate any pact made with the Devil, provided the spell will have been correctly formulated. Nothing more is necessary (genuine repentance, quest, or whatever), and it works *any* number of times (even if the character has already fallen Chaotic-Evil). However, *wish* spells are rare occurrences, and the "Devil" won't waste his time with characters able to use it frequently.

### **C) DESCRIPTION OF THE NINE CULTS :**

Here follows for each of the nine demon-gods of Dread, a descriptions which states :

**Will first appear as** : describes the appearance the demon will take to seduce its victims, but generally also for most of its interactions with mortals.

**But eventually reveals as** : describes the demon's true appearance, as it would be revealed by a *True seeing* spell for instance, or as it will be in the end in front of its followers.

**Will always promise** : this is what the demon is supposed to give to people it makes pacts with. In fact it will be the case at first, but over time it will more and more altered as follows.

**But eventually bestows** : in the end, all promises and gifts of a demon will in fact become a curse as it is described there. The demons' followers may not want to get them, but will have no choice however than suffer them.

**Kit** : shows the powers and constraints typically bestowed by the demons upon their followers (i.e.: slaves). However, these have been presented there only for easing DM's work. In fact, a demon can grant upon its slaves many different sorts of powers and curses (for instance *The Complete Book of Necromancers* will provide a good source of ideas on this subject). Anyway, these should be related somehow to the demon's sphere of influence.

#### **1) AGRADOS :**

(Lord of Wealth, Dispenser of Abundance.)

**Symbol** : a claw-like hand.

**Will first appear as** : an elegant man, with golden eyes, sumptuously dressed and wearing expansive jewelry ; **But finally reveals as** : an obese humanoid, with greasy skin, claw-like hands, small greedy eyes, and a disproportionately huge mouth full of fangs.

**Will always promise** : wealth, endless money and gold ; **But finally bestows** : avidity, voracity, greed, avarice and envy.

**Kit** : followers/priests of Agrados gain the following abilities and hindrances:

- Special powers :

*Pick-pockets* skill : 35% + 5% per lvl.

*Detect-treasure* ability : 30 feet radius, always active.

- Duties / hindrances :

Must give 60% of all his income to Agrados (this wealth vanishes from the campaign).

Eating voracity : each day must eat as much as would eat a number of hungry men equal to his level (i.e. if is 9th.lvl., must eat every day as much as 9 normal men would have to). otherwise will loses 1 constitution pt. per day from "starvation".

## **2) BAALSHAUR :**

(Arch-duke of Power, Prince of Kings and Emperors.)

**Symbol** : a black sword dripping of smoke.

**Will first appear as** : a noble knight in black armor, wearing a shining black sword ; **But finally reveals as** : the same character, but with malevolent red eyes, and his face distorted in a grimace of rage. His sword is rusted and is continually dripping with smoke.

**Will always promise:** the true Power; **But finally bestows:** submission, slavery, and oppression.

**Kit** : followers/priests of Baalshaur gain a magical item of power, which of course is cursed (and evil). This item will aid the character in achieving his own goals (which must be related to gaining power over peoples), but at the expense of others, through evil doings. Also, the item always bears a curse which will happen at some time or another (i.e.: 5% chance per level, rolled once at each new level gained), and will enslave the owner to the item's will. Such a cursed item could be a demon-sword for example. Otherwise, these items will usually function only for the ones they were intended for at first.

## **3) BEAST The :**

(Lord Supreme of the Wilderness.)

**Symbol** : a sharp claw, or fang.

**Will first appear as** : a huge golden wolf with green eyes, which speaks of an ancient time when humans and nature were one ; **But finally reveals as** : a horrid werewolf with a poisoned mouth.

**Will always promise** : a return to the nature of the origins ; **But finally bestows** : the denial of thought and consciousness, in favor of bestiality.

**Kit** : followers/priests of the Beast gain the following abilities and hindrances:

- Special powers :

*lycanthropy* at will. With thac0 of a monster of same lvl. (or at least 17); otherwise see description of werewolves in Monsters' Handbook (p.240).

- Duties / hindrances :

Must turn to werewolf and kill, every night.

As a werewolf cannot cast spells, use items, or think clearly. As a werewolf only becomes a savage beast eager for blood and rampage.

## **4) DAAG'TOTH :**

(Arch-mage of the Gods, Upholder of Dreams.)

**Symbol** : an ivory and jeweled, horn.

**Will first appear as** : a handsome horned adonis with ivory skin ; **But finally reveals as** : a huge and terrifying horned demon.

**Will always promise** : a dream-world of thousands of magical wonders ; **But finally bestows** : unending deceits and nightmares.

**Kit** : followers/priests of Daag'Toth gain the following abilities and hindrances:

- Special powers :

Unknown power of self-delusion : each new level, the character seemingly gains a magical ability. However, whatever may be this spell-like ability (normally usable once per day), it only will be an illusion (as a spell), affecting everyone, including the character.

Special follower upon reaching name's level. This may be a wonderful magical steed, or perfect lover for examples. This followers will be (at first) a perfect servant in his field, always obeying the wishes of his master.

- Duties / hindrances :

The character will always believe that his special "powers" are real. Nothing can make him believe, or even know, the contrary. People who save against these illusions must have special magical powers of protection. Additionally, with each level gained, the character will get a cumulative penalty of -1 to all his saving-throws vs. illusionary magic.

The special follower will slowly reveal as a horrid monster who do not obey him, but leads him to his doom. With the examples above, the steed will reveal as a nightmare who will eventually bring him to Hell, and the perfect lover will reveal as a succubus. Such followers is under no obligation to obey the character, but lets him believe so. He will do as asked, in twisted manners.

**5) KYOLLLOL :**

(Lord of Jokes, Viceroy of Delight.)

**Symbol :** a sneering jester head.

**Will first appear as :** a colorful sympathetic jester always laughing ; **But finally reveals as :** a gray, distorted caricature of the viewer, having an evil chuckle.

**Will always promise :** eternal delight and laughter ; **But finally bestows :** humiliation, self depreciation, scorn, and mockery.

**Kit :** followers/priests of Kyolllol gain the following abilities and hindrances:

- Special powers :

*Tashas' Uncontrollable Laughter* once per day per 3 levels.

Bard ability of *Alter moods*, by telling jokes, making humor. However, this humor must always involve the humiliation of someone else, or the character himself.

- Duties / hindrances :

-4 to reaction, because of the evil, stupid, and perpetual grin the character will wear on his face, and the fact that he will laugh at the most inopportune times.

When using the *Alter mood* ability, the character must mock someone or himself. The result will be that when mocking other people making enemies of them, and when self-depreciating making people despise him.

**6) LOBIAR :**

(Wrathful Avenger, Lord of True Justice.)

**Symbol :** a white dagger in a white hand.

**Will first appear as :** a beautiful armored woman all in white (skin, hair and armor) ; **But finally reveals as :** the same frost maiden, but with a chilly face, and radiating an icy cold all around herself.

**Will always promise :** rightful vengeance ; **But finally bestows :** torture, pain, misery, and mutilations.

**Kit :** followers/priests of Lobiar gain the following abilities and hindrances:

- Special powers :

*Detect lie* once per day per three experience levels.

Retaliation power : the character gains the ability to make a special wounding attack, upon any "wrongdoer" discovered and confounded through the use of his detect lie power. Upon saying: "*In the name of the Lord of True Justice, you deserve to die criminal !!*", the character will be at +4 to hit, and double base weapon damage during all the combat, but against this "wrongdoer" only.

- Duties / hindrances :

Each time the character slays someone through the use of this "Retaliation power", he gets a cumulative 5% chance that next times he will use his detect-lie power, it will work

exactly the reverse (lies detecting as truth, and truth as lies). The idea is of eventually getting the character murdering innocent people (while criminals are respected).

### **7) NECHROUL :**

(Guardian of Immortality, Keeper of Secrets.)

**Symbol** : a skull adorned with a snake.

**Will first appear as** : a young smiling teenager, full of vitality ; **But finally reveals as** : a horrifying lich.

**Will always promise** : eternal life ; **But finally bestows** : undeath

**Kit** : followers/priests of Nechroul gain the following abilities and hindrances:

- Special powers :

Cease aging.

Command Undead as a priest of same level (or at +2 lvl if already possess this ability).

- Duties / hindrances :

Upon death, or when reaching end of normal lifespan, becomes an undead of equal hit-dice.

Loses 1 point of charisma each level, slowly becoming more and more like a living cadaver. Moreover, as times passes, they become more and more carnivorous: obliged to feed on meat, then raw meat, then finally putrefying flesh.

### **8) OSHRASSH :**

(Lord of Might, Prince of Heroism.)

**Symbol** : a spiked mace dripping with blood.

**Will first appear as** : a handsome powerful and heavily muscled warrior ; **But finally reveals as** : a horrid brutal demon with horns, cloven hooves, and so on.

**Will always promise** : valor and courage on the battlefield, as a hero ; **But finally bestows** : cowardice, brutality, and hate.

**Kit** : followers/priests of Oshrasah gain the following abilities and hindrances:

- Special powers :

Strength permanently raised to 18<sup>00</sup>.

+2 hit-points per level gained in addition to all other bonuses.

- Duties / hindrances :

Becomes berserker (as per the cursed sword of berserking), each time he feels he is insulted. There is no save against this, except that the character will never attack people more powerful than him (but in this case he will go and attack someone else). The insulted may well be imagined, in any ambiguous case must make a wisdom check for not feeling insulted.

Gets cowardice : the character will never dare attack someone who seems to be more powerful than himself. In fact, the character only attack people or creatures seemingly weaker, then slay them without pity ("the weak deserves to die").

### **9) SARYLLIAL :**

(Mistress of Love, Seductress of the Gods.)

**Symbol** : an ass.

**Will first appear as** : a beautiful nymph, with a much promising smile ; **But finally reveals as** : a stinking, nude, old, female human, with the head of a dog, and who constantly acts in an obscene manner.

**Will always promise** : love and pleasure ; **But finally bestows** : painful debauchery, sexual debasement.

**Kit** : followers/priests of Saryllial gain the following abilities and hindrances:

- Special powers :

Seduction : the character gains +1 point of charisma each level, but in the eyes of members of the opposite sex only. When doing sexual advances to members of the opposite sex, these must succeed a wisdom check at –1 per +1 reaction bonus due to their charisma, to resist the overture.

Immunity to diseases.

- Duties / hindrances :

Ugliness and sexual debasement : the character will get a –1 point of charisma each level, but in the eyes of members of the same sex, and any paladin, or cleric/priest of good alignment. The latter are also immune to the character's sexual advances. Otherwise note that the character will always make such proposals in an obscene and crude manner, and will take pleasure only in humiliation and masochism.

*Cause disease*, through sexual intercourse. It is an automatic and passive ability the character cannot prevent, and is usually unaware of.

### ***Contributed By***

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## **Favoured of Tarigath :** *(Chaotic Evil cult)*

### ***Worships***

"**Tarigath the Sublime** : Lady of Beauty and Birds" ; who is in fact a hateful and greedy deity of chaos and evil, who perform her petty deeds through the doing of crows and ravens.  
(see also : Tyaa, the evil bird goddess of Nehwon. TSR Legends & Lore book)

### ***Known to Society***

Very Secret, due a very limited number of worshippers, and because when known is promptly stamped out of society. Only 5% of society is familiar with it.

### ***Frequency***

Not very widespread, only about 25% of cities have a "base" in them. In any case, they are found only in big and rich cities. Currently, the head of the cult is located in a great merchant city (or in Lankmar if you use this setting).

### ***Organization***

With such a vain, chaotic and evil goddess, and also because the cult is so small, there isn't any real organization of the cult. Usually, any attempt at organization quickly falls into chaos due to leadership quarrels.

However at the present time, the cult is run by two strong leaders, who are also friends. As such, the cult is renewing, with a firm organization, and it has a very clear goal and plans for the future.

**Demands on the priestesses:** Recruit new followers for the cult, and steal from the rich and wealthy, preferably gems and jewelry. Make fools of men, whenever possible.

**Hierarchy:** The cult's hierarchy is as follows:

- 1) Feathered friend : lvl. 1/2 ; is only a thief or priestess apprentice.
- 2) Feathered sister : min 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl. ; oversee the apprentices, or assistant to a higher ranking priestess.
- 3) Winged sister : min 5<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; operates as a (leading) thief, or messenger, for the cult.
- 4) Talon sister : min 7<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; infiltrates thieves' and merchants' guilds, carry out the cults punishments.
- 5) Bird of Prey : min 9<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; a local temple high-priestess of the cult.



6) Voice of Tyaa : min 11<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; is the overall leader of the cult. (Currently two of them, see description).

**Priestesses' powers and abilities:** Specialty priest (POS&M rules).

- Minimum dexterity and wisdom of 11, and charisma of 15 ; Alignment: any evil.
- Priest saving throws, and exp. progression.
- D6 hit-die ; Thieves' weapons and Thac0 ; Proficiency crossover group with Rogues.
- Thieves' skills : Pickpockets, Hide-shadows, Move-silently, Hear-noises. As thief same lvl.
- Backstab and Thieves' cant at 3<sup>rd</sup> level. As thief same lvl.
- Shapechange at 5<sup>th</sup> level, as druids but birds only.
- Spheres of spells : *Major*: All, Animal, Chaos, Charm, Elemental-air, Summoning.  
*Minor*: Divination.
- Followers : as thieves ; Kits : burglar, seductress, spy, etc...

### **Description**

The cult is in fact primarily a cult of thieves. However, thieves who delight in cruelty and mischief, and are otherwise self-serving, vain, and hedonistic.

This organization does not have a long history. It supports evil and chaos by supporting Tyaa, the evil bird goddess. The cult is still run by its two founders : two women of great power and cold ambitions :

– The first (Cynthiaraa), is a beautiful human blonde (18 cha.) who actually holds a position of power and renown in the city. However, none knows she is the high-priestess and leader of the cult. She got, and now maintains this position, through her spying network of birds, the riches the cult stole, and her stunning charm which she uses to good ends. As a priestess, she oversees all the cult, but from her palace (she rarely ventures out). Cynthiaraa is a 14<sup>th</sup> level priestess of Tyaa, who owns (among any others) and uses *eyes of charming*.

– The second (Alysaraa), is a very cute half-elf girl with jet black hair and blue eyes (16 cha.). None knows of her, except for the cult upper ranks' members, who anyway never saw her under her real guise. As a priestess, she travels the different temples of the cult which are scattered over the land, telling of the cult's policies, collecting riches, etc... In fact she applies what Cynthiaraa decides for the cult. Alysaraa is a 13<sup>th</sup> level thief / 11<sup>th</sup> level priestess of Tyaa, who owns (among any others) and uses a *hat of disguise*.

Currently, the cult is trying to expand. For the first part, young beautiful women are recruited, and then trained as thieves (for the most), and priestesses (for the most promising of them). For the second part, the cult is infiltrating the local thieves' guilds, to double cross them. Needless to say, that sooner or later, there will be some retaliation (PCs characters ?). However, it should be noted that they not only do that for the money, but also for the sole pleasure of tricking the thieves, and also merchants, who are their victims (and incidentally are most often, men). The cult is working very efficiently at this, but so far, it doesn't seem to have any other ambition than enrich itself and making its victim anger. The cult has no desires, as it seems, to rule over all the thieves guilds, and create a vast criminal underground empire.

### **Special Hindrances**

Only evil women may join this cult (because their patron deity only tolerate of being worshipped by women). Moreover, to join, a supplicant must present at least one of the following characteristics : being cute (min. 15 charisma) ; being rich (upper classes) ; being a thief ; or have magical powers.

All potential new members have their gender and alignment checked by spells : all men seeking to join are first invited into the guild hall, and then promptly sacrificed.

### **Contributed By**

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## **Oracle of the Dragon-Spirit :**

*(Neutral Evil cult)*

### ***Worships***

Primarily the ideals of "Power and Richness".

Secondary, the being known as the "Dragon Spirit".

### ***Known to Society***

In the city where the cult operates, 60% of people in positions of power know of the cult (and are likely to be members of it). However, less than 5% of all other people (commoners, peasants, etc...) have heard of it.

### ***Frequency***

Currently only one city, but the cult has plans to expand his influence in other cities. At DM's discretion, this could begin in a city where the cult is beginning to develop, then lead into the original one which is totally corrupted by it.

### ***Organization***

There is no priesthood nor traditional worshippers in this cult. The cult is in fact organized into two branches: (1) the "Informers", who are a network of spies, thieves and spell-casters ; and (2) the "Chosen", who are all rich merchants and businessmen who work in fact for the cult's coffers. The Chosen don't know anything about the Informers, but these carefully spy onto the Chosen, and report to the "Oracle" (who is the Dragon).

**Demands on Members:** Give 50% of all their income to the cult. This may look excessive, but the cult help the members to acquire wealth increased in such a manner that even while giving half of it to the cult, they still have more than when they weren't members. Besides, the cult has found ways for its members to safely evade taxes; so members do not pay them anymore, replacing them by this tithing.

**Hierarchy:** This not really a hierarchy :

1) Chosen : wealthy businessmen and merchants. none can join because he so desires it. Instead, the cult search for new members itself, and once an appropriate one is found, the cult slowly work to eventually get him into the cult.

2) Informers : thieves and spell-casters. They have their own hierarchy which has five ranks. The 5<sup>th</sup> rank, the lowest is made up of low level "Informants" (thieves lvl. 1-3); the 4<sup>th</sup> rank of "Spies" (thieves lvl. 4-5); the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank of "Foremen" (thief/mages lvl. 4-6); the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank of "Supervisors" (thief/mages lvl.7-9); and the "Overseer" (a powerful wizard of 11<sup>th</sup> level). The Overseer himself reports to the Oracle, without knowing his real identity.

3) The Oracle : the dragon himself. However, none ever saw him under his real guise, as he always appears polymorphed into an old human seer.

**Members' powers and abilities:** No special powers or abilities are gained for being a cult member. However, the cult being a well organized underground Mafia, provides all the necessary information (via the Oracle) and criminal interventions (via the Informers), to help the Chosen have very successful businesses, and earn much more money than they were able, before being members of the cult.

### ***Description***

**Symbol:** An obsidian dragon figurine in a golden circlet.

**Brief history:** The cult was founded 10 years ago by a Saashta'matchas a venerable shadow dragon (characteristics of spells, and possible psionics left to the DM's discretion). His intent in doing this was to get great wealth without taking too much risks. Also, the whole thing much entertained him (not all dragons are mere beasts waiting in their lair for robbers to come). Thus, the cult is before all a criminal organization (it uses a thieves' guild) who mask under a strange religious cult, its real aim of stealing riches from human / demi-human

communities, without having to attack them (which has a tendency to attract unwanted do-gooders of great skills and abilities).

The cult developed as follows: At first, a seer with great knowledge and wisdom, made himself known, then employed by a thieves' guild of the city. This man was in fact Saashta polymorphed as a human. Once inside the guild he had no problems taking control of it. Then, he eventually managed to take control of all the other thieves' guilds of the city. After that, instead of openly rob the rich people, which would have been too risky, he organized a network of spies to get a maximum of information about the local economy. Afterward, he carefully chose the first members of his cult among wealthy and unscrupulous city merchants and businessmen. He appeared to them as a sort of seer charged to "reveal them who they really were". Through a good mixture of flattery and magic, he convinced them that they were of "draconian ascendancy" (!), and thus much above the petty lowly and inferior humans. Hence, the "Dragon Spirit" would help them achieve the true power and wealth "their kin" deserved. What occurred thereafter, was that through the invisible help of Saashta's criminal network, these businessmen got the good information and (unknown) interventions necessary to propel them into extraordinary success and wealth.

Nevertheless, in any case the Chosen don't know of the Informers. They believe they receive the divinatory advice and good luck from the Dragon Spirit (of whom they are the "spiritual children"). The truth is that the criminal network of Saashta controls the economy. He arranges for his "Chosen" to take all of the business from other merchants, artisans, etc... Then half of the money goes into his own treasure, but it is given freely by the Chosen !!. Now, the side effect of all of this, is that all the city's wealth is slowly drained to the benefit of Saashta. Bankrupt, unemployment, poverty, etc... are increasing at an alarming rate. It comes from that to get that so much money, the Chosen have to take the business of others; pay their employees less and less; etc..., and all of this as advised by the "Oracle".

All of this has provoked some riots in the city, and law enforcers have tried to investigate on what is really happening. However, the Informers are well informed (which sounds logical), and such rebellions always end quickly. Otherwise, if powerful characters intervene in it, Saashta will personally (but discreetly) "make something about it".

### ***Hindrances***

**Chosen** : Any member who wants to leave the cult is free to do so, and none will try to convince him otherwise. However, ex-members always end badly. This may be not necessarily in death, but these people will quickly fall into hard times and finally go bankrupt. If they speak openly against the cult, they will quickly be found dead. However, a ruined ex-member of the cult may redeem himself and be accepted back again into the cult ; but he will have to begin all anew. The intent of this is of appearing reassuring to other members, and incite them of staying into the cult, bringing more money to it. The dragon does not care for the cult's members, he only cares for his coffers...

**Informer** : All traitors, and those who try to leave the cult are mercilessly eliminated.

### ***Role-playing Tips***

Good aligned PCs, and especially paladins, should be reminded once they get the dragon's treasure, that it was mainly robbed from the city people who were victims of that criminal economy.

### ***Contributed By***

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## **The Paratheo-Anametamystikhood of Eris Esoteric (Poe)**

*(Chaotic Neutral cult, with evil tendencies)*

### **Worships**

**Eris/Discordia**, the goddess of chaos.

### **Known to Society**

15%.

### **Frequency**

Small cabals in many areas.

### **Organization**

Many small groups of people following their own ideals of chaos. There is no real organization in fact. In one town the cult could well have a temple open to all, but in the next, it will be a secret and underground organization bent to some nefarious end. In fact, all in all, it is only the will and power of the Polyfather that currently makes the cult appear organized.

**Demands on the members:** The members must be Chaotic and have a minimum wisdom of 8. Otherwise, the members are expected to show involvement, understanding and the acceptance of the philosophy.

**Hierarchy:** The cult's hierarchy is generally as follows, at least for the upper rank priests.

- 1) Disciple : lvl. 1/2 ; is only a cleric apprentice, or mundane worshipper.
- 2) Deacan : min 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl. ; oversee the disciples. There usually are one deacan for five disciples.
- 3) Chancelor : min 5<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; head of a local cult. He is always appointed by the Polyfather.
- 4) Holy Apostle : min 12<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; there are never more than five of them. What they do is unknown.
- 5) Polyfather: min 15<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; chief leader of the cult.

**Priests' powers and abilities:** Specialty priest designed with the customisation system (POS&M). Every priest is different in spells and abilities, from the others. Nonetheless, access to the sphere of Chaos (major access) is required, and to that of Law forbidden.

### **Description**

**Symbol:** The holy symbol was changed so many times, that none does know for sure what is it at the present time. The problem is that the Polyfather has yet to find one which pleases him.

**Brief history:** There is no real history for this cult. It seems to appear and disappear every now and then. Also, it seems that it exists solely by the will of his powerful head, the Polyfather. None knows from where does the Polyfather come from. A dwarf who was a member of that cult for some times is the only source of information (it was his 3<sup>rd</sup> enlistment in a religion, then he left and decided to become a mariner, but first felt the urge of saying all he knew about it to a sage): he pretended that the Polyfather came from another dimension because "he had become tired of his home world". The man was apparently powerful (in fact 19<sup>th</sup> level priest of Discord), and protected from detection magic (Immunity to any form of anyone trying to detect his alignment or lies).

It doesn't seem that there is much to be said about the cult. Most of its members are rebellious people, but not to the point of all of them intending to overthrow society in a bath of blood and take what they want by force. It is only the case for a few number of them. Otherwise, rumors abound on the cult, but they have to be verified (once, a vindictive deacan held that the Holy Apostles were in fact preparing the demise of the civilization, and would rule over a freed world thereafter).

The cult only appeared to be "evil" recently, when some high priest of the cult revealed that the half dozen of demons who had pillaged the village of Nühmriil (before being killed by

the Company of the Glowing Swords), had in fact been summoned by the chancellor of a "rival cabal". Then, shortly thereafter, as the informant was found dead, it may well appear that there may be truth in his sayings.

### *Special Hindrances*

None as it seems. If there are hindrances with this cult, that is, on a regular basis, it could be that members and priests tend to often have diverging points of view on what the philosophy of the cult should be, and how the goddess (some say he is in fact a god) should be worshipped.

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## **Red Cord (the)**

*(Chaotic Evil cult)*

### *Worships*

No one really. It's more a "philosophy" of hate, racism, and vengeance.

### *Known to Society*

Turmish land : Almost everyone knows of the cult (and fears it).

Others : Except for those who travelled extensively in Turmish, it is unknown.

### *Frequency*

Only a handful of cultists' groups remain, probably no more than a half-dozen.

Their head temple having been destroyed by the authorities some years ago, they now meet in some secret places, none of which is a true temple, but rather an abandoned building, etc...

### *Organization*

Red Cords intermingle with every level of society. As such, they are forced to take great pains to appear as mundane members of whichever social class they are trying to infiltrate during a particular assignment. Thus, they are all prominent and well respected members of their community who lead double lives, stealing out at night to prove their devotion to the Cult by strangling innocent victims with their knotted red cords. Their chief targets usually include the government officials, but also wealthy merchants who refuse to contribute to the cult's coffers. In fact they use their power to extort fabulous wealth from the terrified populace.

**Demands on the members:** To become a member of the Red Cord the person must be of true Turmish stock and human. They will be approached by a junior member of the cult and sounded out on their feelings towards foreigners and the government. If the answers are to the liking of the questioner then the prospective member will be taken to a place where the more senior members of the cult will question him. If they like the answers then the prospective member will be taken on as a probationary member of the cult. The probation lasts for as long as the cult feels is necessary to prove the persons loyalty and desecration. Once the prospect is accepted by the cult (if he isn't then he's dead), he will be initiated into the mysteries of the cult and can never leave, except by death.

The cult will teach the members all thief skills for free, if available by class, as they rise in levels. The cult will always try to rescue a member captured by the authorities (at least by

taking back the corpse to avoid spells such as *Speak with dead*). The cult once entered can never be left.

**Hierarchy:** The Black Rose's hierarchy is as follows:

1) Bravo (Apprentice) : lvl.1/4 ; a probationary member of the cult. They act as spies and infiltrate the upper classes of society, to get information on prospective members and victims. However, they don't know much about the cult's organization.

2) Murderer : min 4<sup>th</sup> lvl ; and 1d4 years membership within the cult. They are initiated into the mysteries of the cult (get the Red Murderer kit), and oversee the actions of the Bravos, and perform minor assassinations (traitors, witnesses, etc...).

3) Executioner : min 7<sup>th</sup> lvl ; and 5 years membership within the cult. They supervise a branch of the spying network, and perform semi-important assassinations (minor officials, etc...).

4) Senior Executioner : min 9<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; and 10 years membership within the cult. They organize the cult's agenda, and perform the major assassinations (officials, etc...).

5) Grandfather of the Red Cords : min 11<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; is the leader of the cult. He has made known that he did swear of murdering the king himself; however, the grandfather seldom kills anyone himself, except for the Executioners and Senior Executioners who would betray, or otherwise fail the order.

**Members' powers and abilities:** The classes of the members vary but the priests are always members of a god of assassination or chaos, and a large percentage of members are thieves. Anyway, all members of the cult, whatever may be their class all have the following kit (which should be restricted to NPCs):

### **RED MURDERER**

Murderers are members of the Red Cords, a secret and murderous cult whose intent was first of "getting rid" of all foreigners and non-humans, but then extended its activities to any who would "ally themselves" with the enemies (i.e.: targets) of the cult. Murderers are fanatical killers who spread death all over Turmish by murdering for the Cult. They advance it into the heart of society, efficiently eliminating any who speak out against them. They deviously believe that murder is their most sacred mission, a holy and meritorious enterprise under-taken in the service of their "national identity". The cult's goal is to subvert society and destroy the government through strife, terror, and coercion.

### **REQUIREMENTS :**

Murderers are all of evil alignments, with a majority of them being CE.

Allowed classes: any, but above all : thieves, and priests of a god of assassination.

### **WEAPON PROFICIENCIES :**

*Habitual proficiencies* : Silken-knotted-cord (with specialization), bow, dagger, short sword.

### **NONWEAPON PROFICIENCIES :**

*Habitual proficiencies* : Etiquette, Disguise, Reading-writing, Rope-use, Set snares, Tightrope walking.

### **SPECIAL BENEFITS :**

**1) Strangulation** : All Murderers know how to wield the silken garrote to strangle their victims. It is used as follows:

**a)** The Murderer must attack from behind with a normal to hit roll. Surprise provides a +3 modifier; no surprise incur a -3 modifier.

**b)** Holding the victim in the garrote for 3 consecutive rounds kills the victim. But, to do this, a successful attack roll is required for each of the 3 rounds. The first attack is rolled normally; the second and third are rolled against the victim's armor class calculated using only magical armor bonuses and dexterity bonuses.

**c)** Otherwise, the cord has a speed factor of 2 and inflict 1d4 points of damage. Note that Murderers receive also a +1 to hit / +2 damage bonus due to specialization.

### **SPECIAL HINDRANCES :**



**1) Murder restrictions** : Murderers must kill the victims of the cult with the knotted red cord only (which is left around the victim's neck thereafter). Such a cord is a specially enchanted item to escape magical detection of its user once left there (one use only). Murderers are otherwise strictly forbidden to kill people who were not targeted by the cult, by way of strangulation, and in such case must use normal weapons instead.

Also, they do not murder those individuals who purchased their immunity by making lavish contributions to the cult, or swearing to serve it as a mole or spy.

### **Description**

**Symbol** : A red knotted cord.

**Brief History** : This cult was prevalent in the lands of Turmish several years ago. The cult started quite small over two hundred years ago when a small group of nobles and priests decided that the influence of foreigners and none humans was starting to affect the traditional ways of life and must be stopped. They decided to form a secret organization to dissuade foreigners for settling in the land. This started by making goods and services hard to obtain and when this did not work then more drastic means where applied , setting fire to crops and killing live stock where used if this did not work then the settlers were killed. The killings where done in a ritualistic way by strangling with a red silken cord and the cord left tied around the neck with special knot as a warning to others to leave.

The cult flourished for many years until they started to kill their own people who had dealings with foreigners. As many influential persons at court made their money from overseas trade then the government decided to act. They did set up a secret organization of their own to track down and bring back dead or alive the leaders of the cult. The operation was a qualified success in that the government managed to capture or kill most of the leaders and many of their henchmen but several escaped and went underground.

That is the way things stand at this moment. The government is still trying to eradicate the cult completely but the cult has now changed it's targets from foreigners to government officials, members of the aristocracy and members of foreign governments in the land.

### **Special Hindrances**

Members who disobey or fail the cult's orders might well become the target of a murder attempt with the knotted cord.

The government and its agents go to great lengths to eradicate the cult. They will kill any one suspected of being a member of the cult. Foreign governments will also either kill or capture suspected members of the cult found in their lands.

### **Contributed By**

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## Part Two : Neutral Cults

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### Brotherhood of the Shadow (the)

*(True Neutral cult)*

#### *Worships*

The “**One Beyond The Veil**”.

Some clueless (low-level) members of the brotherhood pretend this is the “God of Shadow Magic”. However, there is no more god of shadow magic, that there are gods of abjuration magic, or alchemy magic. Nonetheless, this mysterious being is obviously a power to be reckoned, on the demi-plane of shadow. It could well be the greatest and most ancient shade in existence.

#### *Known to Society*

Only a few, about 5% of Society knows.

Anyway, all shadow mages know of the brotherhood, and normally belong to it.

#### *Frequency*

In almost any place where you find some shadow mage, you also find at least a connection to the brotherhood. In any region where are found shadow mages, there will be a headquarter of their brotherhood, usually in the nearest town or city.

#### *Organization*

This Organization is very secretive. It consists of all Shadow Mages. Those who want to study to become a shadow mage must first find a Shadow Mage sponsor. The Brotherhood is very secretive, only teaching those with the most potential. One can be evil, good or neutral but one must not fight each other while in the confines of Holy ground. Otherwise Good vs. Evil goes on as usual. In other words, Good and Evil Brothers will socialize in holy ground but fight amongst themselves on the outside.

There can be only one Dark Shadow; he is at least of the 20<sup>th</sup> level, and the only way one can be a Dark Shadow is to fight for the Position. The fight does not have to be to the death. No one can be of a higher level than the Dark Shadow, and one must be a Shadow to challenge the Dark Shadow.

**Demands on the members:** The membership of the cult is limited to Shadow Mages (i.e.: wizards specialists of the school of shadow).

**Hierarchy:** The brotherhood's hierarchy is as follows:

- 1) Brother (junior) : shadow mage of any level.
- 2) Brother (senior) : min 5<sup>th</sup> level ; and a five year membership as junior member. Then, as soon as a brother of at least 15<sup>th</sup> level becomes a shade, he is allowed within the ranks of Shadows.
- 3) Brother (head of a chapter) : min 9<sup>th</sup> level ; and a five year membership as senior member.
- 4) Shadow : min 15<sup>th</sup> level ; and also must be a “shade”. They are the agents and messengers of the Dark Shadow.
- 5) Dark Shadow : min 20<sup>th</sup> lvl. and also must be a “shade”. The Dark Shadow is constantly linked to the Shadows through a form of telepathy.

**Members' powers and abilities:** As wizard specialist of the school of shadow. Shades are characters who transmuted their flesh and blood substance, in that of the evanescent

stuff of the plane of shadow, thus becoming undying (but they aren't undead anyway), but also definitively apart of the normal and mortal world of men.

### ***Description***

The brotherhood has existed since there have been shadow mages. It is said that this school of magic was initiated by the "One Beyond The Veil", a mysterious and powerful figure about whom nothing is known. The fact is, that this being gets most of his power from the brotherhood. In exchange, the members get spell formulas, help and protection, etc... (Note for spells that it means all Shadow Mages of the brotherhood will gain access to all spells of that school as listed per the POS&M book).

Otherwise, the brotherhood doesn't have any particular agenda related to the prime material world. And for the demi-plane of shadow, only the members of the upper ranks know (Shadows, and Dark Shadow).

### ***Special Hindrances***

**Brothers** : All members of the brotherhood are expected to render some service to the brotherhood at some time or another. They otherwise must tith 25% of all their incomes (as well as one magical item out of four they find) to the Brotherhood.

**Shadows** : For acquiring that position, one not only has to be a shade, but also give up permanently one point of constitution to the Dark Shadow. Otherwise no Shadow may rise above the level of the Dark Shadow, unless winning the position through a fight which does not have to be to the death. Note that anyway, the Dark Shadow who lost such fight will generally disappear forever from the brotherhood. Maybe he gets a special assignment from the One Beyond The Veil, to do things which have nothing to do with the brotherhood.

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## **Dwarnoï Order (the) :**

*(True Neutral cult)*

### ***Worships***

The Earth Mother, and the Mountain Father.

### ***Known to Society***

70% of mountain dwarves and deep gnomes are familiar with the dwarnoï, but only 35% of other dwarves and gnomes know of them. Non-dwarves and non-gnomes never heard of them. As the Dwarnoï Order is a branch of the Druidic Order, any druid (who know of dwarves and gnomes) has 5% chance per level of knowing them. Note that the Great and Grand Druids all know of the Dwarnoï (even if they seldom speak about it).

### ***Frequency***

Every dwarven/gnomish town or city will have at least one dwarnoï ; and any underground clan of dwarves will get a 5% cumulative chance per 10 members of the clan to have a dwarnoï. For gnomish clan, the percentage is of 2% per 10 clan members. Towns' and Cities' dwarnoï will be of 1d6+6 levels ; and those of clans of 1d12 levels.

Note that Elder and Venerable dwarnoï reside in their own sacred caverns, which are always apart from towns and cities. Needless to say that such places are heavily defended.

### ***Organization***

The Dwarnoï Order is akin to the druidic order. In fact the Dwarnoï are a specific and demi-human branch of the druidic order : when nearly all druids (there are a very few exceptions) worship and protect nature on the surface, dwarnoï do it in the underground, especially with respect to rock and earth (not underground life, which is the province of a few gray druids --see CDHD). However the objectives are much similar in spirit.

**Demands on the priests:** A dwarnoi must be a dwarf or gnome (the DM may even wish to limit the class to Mountain Dwarves, and Deep Gnomes). Note that like any other dwarven priest, dwarnoï are limited to the 10<sup>th</sup> level of experience (9<sup>th</sup> for gnomes). That means that only dwarnoï with a wisdom score of 19 or more, may reach the 14<sup>th</sup> level (13<sup>th</sup> for gnomes), which is the ultimate level and position for a dwarnoï within his hierarchy.

The Dwarnoi are expected to protect the underground from the depredations of greedy miners (although they tend to be more tolerant when these are of their own race). No dwarnoï will ever dig the earth to get gold and gems.

**Hierarchy:** The dwarnoï hierarchy is the same as that of druids.

1) Initiate : lvl. 1 to 11.

2) Dwarnoï : lvl.12 ; There is only nine of them in any underground region.

3) Elder-Dwarnoï : lvl.13 ; There is only three of them in any underground region.

4) Venerable-Dwarnoï : lvl.14 ; There is only one of them in any underground region.

5) Grand Druid : lvl.15 ; (see the druid class). In any (munchkin) case, a Grand Druid *cannot* be a dwarnoï, because they don't know anything of the druidic things.

**Priests' powers and abilities:** This is a new character class open to dwarves and gnomes only. Stone is to the Dwarnoi as nature is to the druid. The Dwarnoi use the magic within stones to protect and serve their race, and are well regarded by other dwarves/gnomes.

Character class: Specialty priest (POS&M rules).

- Experience level progression of druids.

- Minimum constitution of 15, and wisdom of 12 ; Alignment: N.

- Have D8 hit-dice, and use the Thac0 advancement of priests.

- May wear any armor + shield, and use blunt and bludgeoning weapons.

- Have access to the spheres of spells of:

\**Major access:* All, Creation, Elemental, Guardian, and Healing.

\**Minor access:* Protection.

- Gain access to the wizard school of magic of Elemental Earth. They memorize and cast these wizard spells as if they were priest spells. Their base maximum number of spells per day still apply however.

- They can speak a secret language of their own (similar to that of druids, but not the same) in addition to any other they know (doesn't cost any slot). This language is limited to dealing with the earth and rock, as well as natural underground events. In addition, they have a secret language consisting of stone-tapping. It is rudimentary, at best, but is sufficiently developed to transmit simple messages. Like all secret tongues, it is jealously guarded.

- At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, they can automatically perform all the abilities of underground detection of dwarves and gnomes, with a 90% accuracy.

- At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, they can learn one language per level from the languages of mountain races or creatures of stone (cost 1 CP each).

- At 7<sup>th</sup> level, they gain a +4 bonus to their saves against earth elemental magic, and a normal, non-penalized save against such spells which normally do not allow a saving throw.

- Followers: as for druids (but with dwarnoï initiates).

### **Description**

**Symbol:** The holy symbol of the Dwarnoi is simply a piece of stone. As an acolyte, the dwarnoï receives his stone from the mother rock. This is a boulder from which all members gain their holy symbol from. As time goes by and the dwarnoï rises in level, the rock

becomes more smooth and well-rounded. Losing the stone require a penance of some sort; probably some minor quest if the loss was due to a good reason, a major endeavor if not.

**Brief history:** The Dwarnoï Order is akin to the Druidic Order. In fact druids revere the earth as mother and source of all life, but the earth is primarily that: a big rock in space. Thus it is only logical to have cousins of druids who revere the earth for what it is: an immense rock. However, only dwarves and gnomes (because they are an underground race) may be dwarnoï, for the same reason they cannot be druids or nature-priests.

The Dwarnoi ethos states that the earth is a living being, the source and mother of all life, and that extracting its riches is to lack respect for her. Dwarnoï believe that veins of gold are to the earth what blood vessels are for living beings. It would thus be a sacrilege for a dwarnoï to mine gold. As such, dwarnoï respect the mountains and stones, and the treasures they conceal within. They consider these metals (silver, etc...) to have been placed in stone to be shaped, and carved into new and wonderful works, not pillaged. Mining solely for profit is detested by the dwarnoï, though they will avoid entangling in such affairs.

### ***Special Hindrances***

All dwarnoï belong to the worldwide structure of druids, and as such, at their upper levels (12<sup>th</sup> and above), only a limited number of dwarnoï can hold each level.

At 12<sup>th</sup> level, a dwarnoï character acquires the official title of "Dwarnoï" (below the 12<sup>th</sup>, the official name is "initiate"). However, there can be only nine 12<sup>th</sup>-level dwarnoï in any geographic region (see campaign setting). A character cannot reach 12<sup>th</sup> level unless he takes his place as one of the nine dwarnoï. This is possible only if there are currently fewer than nine dwarnoï in the region, or if the character defeats one of the nine dwarnoï in a challenge, the loser dropping to 11<sup>th</sup> level. Similarly, only three Elder-Dwarnoï (13<sup>th</sup> level) can operate in a region. To become an Elder-Dwarnoï, a 12<sup>th</sup>-level druid must defeat one of the reigning Elder-Dwarnoï or advance into a vacant position. The Venerable-Dwarnoï (14<sup>th</sup> level) is unique in his region. He, too, won his position from the previous Venerable-Dwarnoï.

### ***Contributed By***

Original author unknown.

Then augmented by Dominique Crouzet. (Note: I came across the Dwarnoi character class in the tome I of the Great Classes' & Kits' Netbook. I did not like how the class had been made, but I otherwise found the idea much interesting. Hence I put there my own version of it.)

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## **Guardians of the Eternal Flame (the) :**

*(A twin cult, with one NE and the other NG)*

### ***Worships***

The "Eternal Flame".

A flame that never dies, nor can it be put out. It is clearly not a deity, and it doesn't give spells to its "priesthood". However, it is somewhat sentient and have magical powers.

### ***Known to Society***

0% to 30%, varies with region.

Near the cult's headquarters only 30% of the population knows about it. Other people believe it to be mere superstition and/or feud between the two families. Anyway, the cult doesn't attract much interest in people (after all, it isn't a real religion). Everywhere else this singular cult is totally unknown.

### ***Frequency***

Unique. This twin cult is only found in areas directly surrounding their two headquarters.

### **Organization**

Strangely enough, each one of the cult displays exactly the same organization. The reason lies in the nature of the “Eternal Flame” which imposes this, rather than the whims of the cults leaders. Otherwise, these cults aren’t faith (in the traditional religious sense), but resemble more some kind of monastic order, or sect. The members of the good cult call themselves the “White Guardians”, and those of the evil one, the “Black Guardians”.

**Demands on the members** : Promote the expansion and influence of the cult, while at the same time oppose the expansion of the other cult, and try to reduce its power and influence.

**Hierarchy**: The cult’s hierarchy is as follows:

1) Regular members : characters of any classes and levels, but more probably zero level commoners. These often follow the cult more for convenience than real faith, as they often don’t see it as a religion, but rather as a sort of clan or brotherhood.

2) Outer Circle members : 20 characters, of any classes (except priest classes) but who all are at least of the 5<sup>th</sup> level. They oversee the regular members, and carry out the various tasks of the cult (defense, promoting the cult, etc...). Otherwise, they are chosen by the inner circle members from the ranks of the regular members. In any case they cannot outnumber 20 (for some unknown reason).

3) Inner Circle members : 5 characters, of any classes (except priest classes) but who all are at least of the name’s level (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>). They supervise the cult doings. Otherwise they are chosen by the Oligarchs from the ranks of the outer circle members. In any case they cannot outnumber 5 (for some unknown reason).

4) Oligarchs : there are two Oligarchs, one for each cult. These are the founders of the cults, and are by no way priests. The “White Oligarch” is a 19<sup>th</sup> lvl human ranger (NG) ; and the “Black Oligarch” is a 24<sup>th</sup> lvl human thief (NE). They rule the cults from their respective fortresses, rarely, if ever, venturing out.

**Priests’ powers and abilities**: None, the cult members aren’t real priests. However, the members can have the following kit : *Guardian of the Eternal Flame*

– The kit is intended for the outer and inner circle members (and oligarchs of course), but not for the regular members. The only requirement is of being accepted within the ranks of the cult. Note that a character entering the cult automatically discards his own kit, to take on that one.

– Upon taking the kit (during a special ceremony), the character has his alignment turned to that of the Flame : NG for the White Guardians, NE for the Black Guardians.

– The kit imparts (as *imbue with spell ability* priest spell) the character with a 1<sup>st</sup> level priest spell, each time he participates in the ritual of prayer around the flame (but maximum once per day). It otherwise enables him/her to benefit from the flame’s powers.

–The character is now expected to serve the cult, and participate in the ritual of the Flame at least once per week (they usually do it once per day).

### **Description**

A long time ago, and far from here (i.e.: far from the twin cults’ location), in a mountainous region, there was a great battle who opposed some forces of good against others of evil. However, this battle occurred in a forest which was destroyed in the process. Seeing this, the archdruid who was in charge requested a Quest spell, then did cast it with the intent of striking both parties who had been engaged in that battle. Blasts of thunder and lightning erupted from the sky, and devastated the field. Thereafter, the only remain was that rock who burned with a supernatural and inextinguishable fire.

Then, about 200 years ago, Maëldan and Koriandos of Whitekeep, the two sons of a noble of xxxxxx (the region where the cults are located), came in this wilderness area, and found that flame burning on a rock on the side of a mountain. They were entranced by the magic which radiated from the Flame, and thus decided to pick up the rock, and brought it back to their keep. It is how the Guardians of the Eternal Flame were founded. Unfortunately,

one brother was good, and the other was evil, so they never got along very well. One day the evil brother took a torch, and lit it with the Flame. He ran off with the torch and then had his own fortress built, some distance from his brother's. After this happened, both brothers founded identical orders (perhaps at the request of the now double flame), one dedicated to good, the other to evil. The NG "White Guardians" and NE "Black Guardians" were born.

Nowadays, the main effort of both orders is to keep the other order from gaining too much power. In fact, it has turned into an unending feud over the years, with recurring periods of violence when one side seems to grow too strong. At such times, there is a near open war between the two cults (and the PCs could well become involved into one of them). As each one of the Oligarchs fears to be the target of an assassination attempt from his brother, they remain elusive. As such, they have so far kept their identities hidden from their followers. None knows what they look like, what are their habits, and so on. Only their names are known. There are many rumours about them (like they have powers related to fire ; or that their respective children belong to their respective cults in the inner circle hierarchy, etc...). The only thing which is sure is that they perform the rituals and ceremonies of the flame everyday (but wearing a hooded robe, masking their features). Also, these two Oligarchs have been alive for more than two centuries ; a fact which certainly may be explained only by the Flame which somehow kept them alive.

None can say what were the powers and characteristics of the Flame when it was one. Nonetheless, today both halves of the Flame look exactly the same (color, form, heat, etc...), and their powers seems to be identical : they give their "worshippers" who participate in the rites, the benefit of a *cure light wound* spell ; *cure serious* for outer-circle members ; *cure critical* for inner-circle members ; and *heal* for Oligarchs. They also give the benefit of a *imbue with spell ability* priest spell (see kit). In fact, the only way to tell the flames apart is by detect good/evil or by what they are burning on. The Flame of the White Guardians burns on a rock, while the Flame of the Black Guardians burns on wood, and must be kept fed.

Note lastly, that the two cults in their rituals, display a True Neutral obvious tendency. What makes the two cults different is primarily the cults' members behaviour in their everyday life.

### ***Special Hindrances***

Members of each cult are the regular targets of the other cult for assassination or eviction. Being a member of one of these two cults is to engage in a life of unending feud.

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## **Immortal Taoists**

*(True Neutral cult)*

### ***Worships***

The "TAO", sometimes called by Taoists: the "Jade Emperor".

Note, this is not a god in the sense of a powerful being. Tao is a concept, it is the ultimate void that encompasses everything ; all is born out of it, and eventually returns to it. Anyway, this concept has been better explained (if it can be explained, may the purists forgive me), by Lao Tseu in the Tao-Të-King.

(Taoism is primarily concerned with otherworldly mysticism. Taoists believe in a oneness-of-being. To them, life is the same as death and all things are part of the same harmonious state of existence. The only way to achieve knowledge of this mystic state is to enter a trance and merge with the infinite. The Taoists believe that any order imposed on nature is



destructive and bound to create unhappiness, so they are generally opposed to law and government.)

### ***Known to Society***

In oriental settings, everyone knows of Taoism. Immortal Taoists are men of great renown among common people who suspect them of wielding incredible powers and, as their name imply of course, of being immortal.

As Taoism is opposed to law and government, it is seldom popular with the ruling class. However, and maybe for that reason, it is the most popular religion of the lower classes. Taoism, as a religion, is organised into a church, complete with a formal hierarchy, rites, festivals, and an escape to the Mystical Garden for the faithful. Anyway, the Immortal Taoists discussed here aren't Taoist priests, but recluse characters devoted to their own enlightenment and "Transmogrification".

In non oriental settings, Taoism is unknown, and Immortal Taoists even more. The mere mention of such characters would be scoffed at.

### ***Frequency***

Taoism is much widespread, and most Asian cities will have Taoist temples. However, there is a distinction which must be made between Taoist Priests, and Immortal Taoists who are rather some kind of monks. Every Taoist temple is run by Taoist priests. But only 15% of these temples will have Immortal Taoists residing within their walls. As a sect, Immortal Taoists usually prefer to live in seclusion, that is, in small monasteries located deep within the wilderness, far from human settlements. As such, nearly 100% of Taoists monasteries found in such settings, will be of Immortal Taoists.

### ***Organization***

Monasteries' organizations are usually very simple (doing it otherwise, would go against their doctrine). There are usually an Abbot (min. 9<sup>th</sup> lvl), several Tao-shih (i.e.: adepts), and a few holy-men who remain apart of the others. These venerated holy-men are high-level characters (above the 15<sup>th</sup> lvl) who are on the brink of "Transmogrification" (i.e.: of becoming truly immortal). Only those latter characters deserve the name *Immortal Taoist*.

Immortal Taoists' monasteries are independent from each others. They do not belong to a religious organization of Taoism, as it would be the case in some western well organized religion. These monasteries are dedicated to the pursuit of enlightenment and immortality, not religious service. However, some of them may perform religious ceremonies for the common people, and help in any capacity they have, for the sole prospect of earning the necessary money to run the monastery.

### ***Description***

This "cult" is said to have been founded by the Eight Immortals, the first men to have discovered the secrets of immortality (*Legend-Lore* p.85, with but one change: add 6-10 to the level of each one of them).

The purpose of Immortal Taoists, is to obtain immortality. But this is not immortality as in eternal youth, and certainly not immortality in undeath! Their immortality is obtained through the fabled methods of "Transmogrification". Aside from this lofty goal, Immortal Taoists are not interested in the worldly affairs of men.

However some of them are supposed to belong to a Taoist organization devoted to the preservation of nature (like a druidic order), and opposed to the expansion of civilization. There also are rumors of Immortal Taoists who were unable to discover the process of Transmogrification (or had not the courage to perform it as it is), and thus turned to the darker paths of foul necromancy to become immortal (in undeath)...

The *Transmogrification* is a process by which a character turns himself into a higher state of being. This affects primarily the body, which is transformed into "something else" (DM's determination : an Avangion, a Deva, etc., or Unity with the Tao as described for the Ascetic character class). In addition, a character achieving this transformation also leaves

the mortal world, and disappears into the heavens. Thus, as a PC he is retired from play. However, no more worthy end could be thought of for an Immortal Taoist.

Now, the Transmogrification process may vary widely from one monastery to the other (DM's discretion). In fact there are several methods, but all of them require that the adept go through lengthy daily training, and periodic stage progressions. See at the end of this cult description, the *Sien-Jen* kit which better explains it. All Immortal Taoists should have that kit; and I suggest that PCs who want to become adepts of this cult, can discard their own kit, and replace it by this one (however, this should require some quest, tests, etc...).

### ***Special Hindrances***

Despite the fact that nearly anyone (i.e.: any character class) may be able to join and become an adept and benefit from it (as shown by the kit), only a few have the potential to become immortal. That means, in game terms, that only those of the Ascetic character class will ever be able to become truly immortal (after the 20<sup>th</sup> level).

The Ascetic character class will be found in the TSR *Legend-Lore* book p.125, or in the *Complete Net Psionics Handbook* of Charon the Boatman. In both cases, you may replace without problem the concept of Brahman, by that of the Tao (which, from my point of view, is pretty much the same thing, but described by two different cultures).

Another option is to introduce the Druid class, in oriental settings, as Immortal Taoists (but not regular Taoist priests). In the *Legend-Lore*, Lao-Tseu avatar is a druid; and druids share the following beliefs with Immortal Taoists : they revere nature, and the natural order of the "cosmos"; they live in the wilderness; and they believe that civilization is a sort of corruption of nature. Otherwise, powers of shape-change are coherent with the concept of "Change" central to Taoism; and lastly, the extended life druids get at 16<sup>th</sup> level is very much appropriate for Immortal Taoists. I only suggest the following revisions, related to level progression :

There are no limited numbers of Immortal Taoists at higher levels, as it is the case for 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> level druids. Nonetheless, there still can be some Taoist organization dedicated to the defense of nature, and opposed to civilization. This organization, would be similar to the druidic order, thus only a limited number of its members would be of 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> level. However this does not prevent other Immortal Taoists of these levels to exist at the same time, but they do not belong to the organization, as they rather spend their time pursuing their self enlightenment.

Anyway, Immortal Taoists who do not belong to this organization do not get any followers, and at 15<sup>th</sup> level, do not get the bonus spells the Grand Druid gets.

Moreover, Immortal Taoists who do not belong to this organization, use the experience level progression table of clerics. (In fact, you don't have to go against the rules with this, because you could well make some customized cleric very much like a druid, but which is still a "cleric", with the POS&P rules).

### ***Role-playing Tips :***

Here follows a description of the Sien-Jen kit, which fleshes out the adepts of the "cult":

### **SIEN-JEN**

Sien-Jen are those famed Taoist characters who devote all their time and efforts to obtain immortality. They may range from eccentric alchemists ingesting strange elixirs at preordained times, to recluse tao-shih practicing complex exercises of meditation and respiration everyday. However, all have in common the use of secret and dangerous techniques which may well bring them to their doom, if incorrectly performed, rather than making them immortal. It should also be noted that, where bonzes for instance, try to become immortal in spirit after their death, Sien-Jen try to become immortal in their flesh. Their ultimate goal usually is to have their body "transmogrified", that is, turned into an inalterable but also immaterial substance who will exist forever.

Sien-Jen are seldom found in large urban Taoist temples. Rather, they generally spend their lives in small secluded monasteries forgotten in the deep wilderness, far from the



agitation of the civilization. In these serene places, Sien-Jen are free to pursue their lofty objectives without being disturbed.

#### **REQUIREMENTS :**

Sien-Jen must have minimum scores of 13 in intelligence and wisdom.

Sien-Jen must be of neutral alignments.

Sien-Jen may be of any character class, but only Psionicists, Priests, and Wizards classes will get a chance to effectively become immortal in the end.

#### **WEAPON PROFICIENCIES :**

Required : None.

Recommended : Jo-stick, Kiseru, Lasso, Nunchaku, Sling, Staff, Tetsu-bo, Tonfa.

#### **NONWEAPON PROFICIENCIES :**

**Bonus** : Endurance, Slow-respiration.

**Recommended** : Alchemy, Astrology, Ancient-history, Ancient-languages, Concentration, Healing, Herbalism, Hypnotism, Iron-will, Religion, Research, Sage-knowledge, Spellcraft.

#### **SPECIAL BENEFITS :**

**1) Ruggedness** : due to their training, Sien-Jen become more resistant to suffering and injury than any other character. This ability manifests itself in the following ways :

Natural Healing (upon taking the kit): Sien-Jen heal twice faster (i.e.: natural healing only) as other characters (they get 2 hit-points per day of rest rather than 1).

Resist death (upon reaching 4<sup>th</sup> level): If missing a saving throw would result in their death, Sien-Jen are reduced to 1 hit-point instead. However, this ability doesn't work if they have less than 5 hit-points remaining when this occurs.

Will to live (upon reaching 7<sup>th</sup> level): Unlike other characters, Sien-Jen do not become unconscious between 0 and -10 hit-points. They cannot further attack or engage in any strenuous activity, but can bind their wounds and seek further healing.

**2) Immortality** : At higher levels, Sien-Jen become able to withstand the effects of aging, and extends their life.

Slow Aging (upon reaching 10<sup>th</sup> level): Sien-Jen's rate of aging slows by one half (that is, they age only one year for two years which pass), this also apply to magical aging.

Slow Aging (upon reaching 16<sup>th</sup> level): Sien-Jen's rate of aging now slow by one fourth (that is, they age only one year for four years which pass), this also apply to magical aging.

Cease aging (upon reaching 20<sup>th</sup> level): Sien-Jen cease aging. They are now immortal, but still can die from injury, etc... Moreover, they can now achieve transmogrification, the ultimate goal in their pursuit of immortality (however, when this occurs they definitively leave the mortal world).

#### **SPECIAL HINDRANCES :**

**1) Daily practice** : Sien-Jens must perform their meditation and exercises, at least 4 hours per day. Failure to do so results in the loss of their special powers of toughness for that day. Moreover, if a Sien-Jen too often neglects his training, he will be considered as having abandoned his kit (DM's discretion). Afterwards, the character won't have any reason to remain within his monastery. He won't be banished, but will politely be suggested to depart by the others Sien-Jens.

**2) Dangerous practices** : Sien-Jens will get their special powers (at 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and transmogrification), only if they successfully pass through the special rituals / alchemical ingestions / etc..., required for these powers to be obtained. Whatever the method is used, the adept must make a system shock survival. If successful, he gets the power and may continue ; but if he fails, he dies ! (If raised thereafter, he may not be anymore a Sien-Jen, the kit is lost). Note that if a Sien-Jen wasn't very strict about his daily training, he will suffer maluses (at DM's discretion) to his roll. Also, non-Sien-Jen who try the rituals, etc..., incur a 60% penalty to their sys. shock score, when making the roll (trying to do it a second time if raised from the dead after a failed attempt: direct death).

Note that some characters may try to pass these stages at different levels than shown in the special benefit description. If so, they get a malus/bonus of -10% /+10% to their sys. shock score, per level of difference, compared to the appropriate level to get these powers.

The practices Sien-Jen must abide to, will vary from one adept to the other. Here follow the most common of these paths to immortality :

– Alchemical way : the adept must follow a very strict regimen, and use unguents, creams, etc, with which he rubs his body for hours, and so on. Then, the gaining of the Sien-Jen powers, at appropriate levels, is done by ingesting special potions and elixirs which are made specifically for the character (one cannot use another's Sien-Jen mixture).

– Ascetic way : the adept spend untold hours in meditation and Yoga exercises. Then, the gaining of the Sien-Jen powers, at appropriate levels, is done by way of a special sort of psychic self surgery the adept performs on himself during some prolonged retreat spent in fasting and meditation.

– Magical way : the adept also spend untold hours in meditation and breathing exercises. Then, the gaining of the Sien-Jen powers, at appropriate levels, is done by casting special spells which they must learn (or even create), then cast upon themselves. These special spells (often of the *alteration* school of magic) serve no other use, and are long to prepare and then cast.

***Contributed By***

Dominique Crouzet.

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## **Spinning Ones (the)** (*Chaotic Neutral cult*)

### ***Worships***

**Lliira** (Forgotten Realms). You may also instead use Fu-Hsing (in oriental settings; LL p.77), Dionysus (in greek/roman settings, LL p.113), or any god of happiness, joy, etc...

### ***Known to Society***

In cities where the cult exists, most people have heard of it.  
Otherwise, only 20% of the population know about it.

### ***Frequency***

60% of cities and towns; but only 10% in rural settings. The rituals of the cult do not happen on a regular basis, but at random, and mostly in summer (never in winter for obvious reasons).

Otherwise, the cult is most favoured by bards and gypsies.

### ***Organization***

The cult has no real organization, nor hierarchy (see description on how it functions). As such, no special demands are put on its members, although most of them will usually be young people, and it is doubtful that anyone of lawful alignment will join.

### ***Description***

**Symbol:** The “holy” symbol is a multifaceted gem. This gem is not necessarily valuable.

**Brief history:** All worshippers of Lliira know of the cult, and many people in the towns where they hold their gatherings have heard and witnessed them in their strange rituals.

The gatherings are held frequently in many cities throughout Faerun. The gatherings start when one of the spinning ones has a vision of where to hold the next gathering. The information is passed by word of mouth throughout the city within a day.

The followers gather at the chosen site, usually a disused warehouse, and set up the bands and lights. The lighting is usually provided by local apprentice wizards who have mastered the *Dancing Lights* and other spells of similar vein, and the bands are usually young bards who are into heavy percussion. The gathering start at dusk and quite often carry on till the dawn.

It has been noted that certain narcotic substances are smoked and swallowed at these gathering. The local authorities in many cities have tried to ban these gatherings due to the disturbance caused to the residents and the narcotic substances sold at the gatherings, because of the suppression by the local authorities the gatherings are of necessity clandestine.

Usually the rituals are conducted as follows : It begins when the night has come, and the worshippers first drink some alcoholic beverages, or even consume drugs, although it's not required to participate in the rituals. Then, when they begin to feel joyous (or one could say: drunk), they work themselves up into a near hypnotic state of mind by looking at the holy symbol of the cult spinning in front of a light source, reflecting entrancing streaks and flashes of light. Eventually, then they are in trance, they go and dance wildly, in spinning upon themselves. Generally, it continues until dawn, where the worshippers end with a “spinning headache”.

### ***Special Hindrances***

The local authorities in many cities have tried to ban these gatherings due to the “disturbance caused to the residents, and the narcotic substances sold at the gatherings”. But the truth could well be that the more traditional and stern religions had a part in trying to forbid the cult (maybe from fear that their worshippers would leave them for this joyous cult).

Anyway, because of the suppression by the local authorities the gatherings are of necessity clandestine.

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## **Wolf Cult (the)**

*(True Neutral cult)*

### ***Worships***

The Wolf's Spirit ; not much as a deity, but rather revering wolves instead.

### ***Known to Society***

About 1-3% of the population have heard of it.

### ***Frequency***

Very isolated. Usually away from large centers of civilisation. In the author's world, so far there is only one village that has these cultists. The entire village are members, and there is a population of about 30-40 people.

### ***Organization***

Governed by priests of any nature religion (in the author's world, the priests are druids.). Shamans are particularly well suited to this cult.

**Demands on the members:** All members of this cult, upon initiation, must have their right arm scarred. This is done by raking the entire length of the forearm with a wolf's claw. This scar must NEVER be concealed, otherwise the cultist is shamed. Initiation gives them the special "kit" as shown below.

**Hierarchy:** The cult itself has no hierarchy. However, the priest leading the cult still abide by the normal hierarchy of his faith if any (as for example druids).

Worshippers' powers and abilities: Nature-priests, shamans, druids, etc... get the normal abilities and power of their class. However, all members of the cult, whatever may be their class get the following "kit":

- Wolves never attack a member of this cult (unless being magically controlled). It should be noted that werewolves and wolfweres will usually leave cultists alone.

- Cultists gain the "special resistance" of wolves (who can run after a prey for days without tiring, nor eating): They can go for one day of solid exertion (such as forced march) per three levels of experience (rounded up) without any fatiguing effects.

- Cultists will gain automatically a wolf of the greatest size and power for follower, when they reach name's level (this is in addition to normal followers). They will also gain the ability to *Speak with wolves* at will (as per the *Speak with animals* spell), if they are druids or rangers.

- Cultists will do everything in their power to protect a wolf, and would never consider attacking a wolf. If they attack a wolf on their own decision, it means that they do not belong anymore to the cult (and will be rejected by the other cultists). Otherwise, if forced to fight a wolf (such as a magically controlled one, or a werewolf), they suffer a -2 to their hit rolls. For werewolves, the position of the cult is ambiguous : they usually don't know what should be their policy about them.

### ***Description***

**Symbol:** A wolf head (stylized).

**Brief history:** The Wolf Cult is a small, little known cult that springs up mainly in small villages or hamlets. Often, where the cult is present, the entire village will be followers of this cult. Although the cult is best suited to rangers and druids, there are other followers of this cult as well.

Followers of this cult are mistrustful of large cities and towns, preferring to live in small rural areas instead.

The cult has a very odd sense of ideals, for they consider wolves to be above anything else. They would not even consider harming a wolf (thus the -2 to hit), and revere them as majestic beasts. Wolves do not fear members of this cult, and rarely do they attack cult members (usually only occurs if they are being magically controlled). Many cultists have a wolf as a companion, and these wolves are often well trained. Often, the village or hamlet where the cult is located will have wolf dens and a resident wolf trainer among their ranks. They are a proud cult, and will fight fiercely to defend their homes. They will give their lives to protect a wolf.

### ***Special Hindrances***

Things being as they are, members of the cult who are known as such will receive a -4 reaction roll for reactions. In fact most people will suspect them of being werewolves or something like that. Otherwise, the fact of displaying the scar (see membership) will lower the cultist comeliness (or charisma) by 1 point, in the eye of non-cultists (even if these do not suspect anything of the cult). Of course none of these hindrances are applied when dealing with other cult members, for they find the scars to be appealing rather than revolting.

Cultists cannot wear metal armors. Cannot own more items than they can carry with them.

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## Part Three : Good Cults

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### Heralds of the Warriors of Hope :

*(Chaotic Good cult)*

#### *Worships*

The cult worship the ideals of freedom and goodness, against any lawful evil tyranny.

#### *Known to Society*

Only 15% of society know of them.

#### *Frequency*

In any evil tyranny, the chance of finding some members of the cult is of: 10% in rural places (villages, etc...); 30% in towns; and 70% in important cities.

In areas without tyrannical oppression, the chance for finding members of that "cult" drop to: 1% in rural areas; 5% in towns; and 20% in important cities.

#### *Organization*

This is not really a cult (that is: a religious sect), but rather an organization devoted to freedom and goodness. It is considered a cult because of the members' shared belief in these ideals, rather than mere people only wanting to get rid of a dictatorial government. Also, it is a cult because it is supported and initiated by a group of powerful spirits, which is of course seldom the case with any political organization trying to resist an unwanted rulership.

The cult has a peculiar organization, which is intended to keep members free of any hierarchy (as the cult is chaotic), and relatively safe from treason. It is organized in a vast network in which every member knows a few other members (one per experience level), but not the whole of the cult. That way, it is very difficult to infiltrate the cult and dismantle it wholly. Also, due to the fact that there is no leader, the cult cannot be "beheaded". Nonetheless, the higher level members get more responsibilities and opportunities of actions than lower level members.

Otherwise there is no priesthood in this cult, and priests of various faiths could join without that this questions their faith or church (for those of freedom and goodness ideals of course).

**Demands on members:** Cooperation and good will between members, to achieve a shared objective of countering the evil tyranny. However, anyone is free of his decisions (one of the basic tenets of the cult), and is the only judge of what he should do or not. However, members who do not do anything for the cult, will sooner or later lose all contacts with it. It should be noted that it rarely anger the other members however: "No man (or demi-human for that matter) should be expected to be perfect".

Otherwise, the cult will tend to recruit good aligned members, and preferably members with access to magical or psionical powers.

**Hierarchy:** None, as stated above.

**Members' powers and abilities:** being a member of the cult does not give any power in itself (no special priest class, and no special kit). However, members of the cult will be somewhat protected by the spirits who initiated the cult. As such, they gain a +1 bonus for not being surprised, and a +2 bonus to their saving throws for not being detected (spells, psionics, or otherwise) as members of the cult. Otherwise, the members will be warned in their dreams of important things (pertaining to the cult and its agenda) by these spirits.

Needless to say that these spirits are not easily fooled and won't let traitors infiltrate the organization. Similarly, those members who are much involved in the cult agenda will receive more assistance than those who aren't. Note at last, that the spirits, or any other member of the cult, will never ask a member something beyond his/her capacities, or who would lead him/her to a certain death.

### ***Description***

**Symbol:** None.

**Brief history:** When the Pentocrator eventually conquered the city of xxxxxxx, thus finally setting his hold on all the empire of xxxxxxx, he had the leader of his last opponents executed in a much horrible manner, in order to firmly establish once and for all his dictatorship.

Thus, when Cellius Asundar died, all hope seemed to disappear forever from the heart of the vanquished. Anyway, during his long agony Cellius swore that if he had lost a battle, he had not lost the war, and that he would come back and bring down the tyrant. Then, once the former High-priest of **XXXXXX** dead and his mutilated corpse thrown to the dogs, the Pentocrator only laughed at his menaces.

However, Cellius' spirit survived his body, and joined his god in the afterlife. And as he had been the highest of His priests, **XXXXXX** rewarded Cellius with Deva status (not bad!). Cellius the Deva was then allowed years later to come back to the mortal world (as a spirit), and do what he had sworn he would. However, as an agent of the gods, Cellius may not personally attack the Pentocrator (which is of course still there, maybe as a lich, or maybe the last heir of his dynasty). He is only allowed to lead humans into rebellion (which is a fair play considering that the forces of "evil" do the same, but through the doings of demons).

The goal of the cult is to counter the spread of evil, and bring down the tyranny. They work primarily to anticipate the deeds of evil beings, head them off, and counter them whenever possible. Law is not important to the cult, everything is done in regard to goodness.

Note that apart Cellius who is a Deva, the other spirits may be anything (but "good") the DM want them to be. Choices could include Couatls, Ki-rins, etc... Nonetheless, all of these beings *never* do appear physically on the prime material plane, but instead remain in the Astral (or Ethereal), contacting the cult's members through magic or psionics. Would all these spirits be "killed", the cult would certainly disappear, but not necessarily.

### ***Special Hindrances***

Members of the cult will more often than not, be actively hunted by those they oppose. Death is the usual sentence (however, the organization will near always try to rescue them).

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## **Voice of Kelaryon :**

*(Neutral Good cult)*

### ***Worships***

The ideals of "Divinity of Mankind".

### ***Known to Society***

Only 5% know of the "cult", but it is considerable for a cult limited to one priest only.

### ***Frequency***



Unique. There is a single prophet of Kelaryon, and he (in fact Kelaryon) does not intend on taking disciples, and create a true cult / religion. This prophet always travel from places to places to tell of Kelaryon's revelations.

### **Organization**

There is no organization, and of course no hierarchy, of the cult, as there is only one priest/prophet, and only informal attendants at the communications given by Kelaryon through his prophet.

**Priest's powers and abilities:** The priest of Kelaryon never wanted to reveal his name, as he said that people should not appraise him, but reckon Kelaryon of whom he is only the "voice". For that reason, he is mostly known as "The Voice of Kelaryon".

Character class: Specialty priest (POS&M rules): Level: 14.

- Str.: 10 ; Dex.: 11 ; Con.: 15 ; Int.: 14 ; Wis.: 19 ; Cha.: 15 (17 due to pacifist kit).

- Hit-points: 60 ; Alignment: LG ; Age: 57 years old.

- Cannot wear any armor, and use only a staff for weapons.

- Have access to the spheres of spells of:

\**Major access:* All, Astral, Charm, Creation, Divination, Healing, Numbers, Protection, Sun, Thought, Time, and Weather.

- Has the benefit of a continuous *Sanctuary* spell at all time. Moreover, it incurs a -3 penalty to the saving throw roll.

- Turn Undead.

- When channeling Kelaryon, the prophet seems to remain the same, but in terms of game mechanics, he becomes in fact a solar (Kelaryon) under the guise of his prophet. Note however that the prophet remains conscious all the while.

- Will never get followers (Kelaryon doesn't want him to found a new religion)

### **Description**

**Symbol:** None.

**Brief history:** This is not really a cult, nor a sect. In fact Kelaryon is a powerful and "otherworldly" entity (probably a Solar), which speaks directly to humans through the mouth of the prophet who "channels" him. That is, the prophet does not speak his own interpretation, but lets Kelaryon invest him and speak through him.

Kelaryon's will is absolutely not of creating a new religion. (Kelaryon is a solar, who --as told in the monster manual-- could be a deity in his own right but instead chose of not having any priesthood). Kelaryon's will is to divulge that a new era is coming, when the gods and demons will come down on earth and battle. As such he encourages people of no longer rely on their religious or secular authorities, but take control of their own destiny. In fact Kelaryon promotes the compelling idea that mankind is nearly a divine being (having been made to the semblance of God), and should do as much as he can to achieve perfection (physical, mental, and emotional) always and in all ways. However, Kelaryon is devoted to the cause of peace and love. He will always advocate for all conflicts to be settled non-violently. Hence people are encouraged to develop power on their own life, but certainly not power on other people.

Kelaryon's prophet is constantly travelling, and goes wherever send him Kelaryon, that is, usually in places where people have lost faith, or have submit to some evil authority, etc... Note that the prophet has been many times the target of assassinations attempts. But always, it seems that fate did something for him, saving him in unexpected manners : PCs arrive to help him, etc

People who attend to the Channeling sessions (that is, when Kelaryon speaks through his prophet), will get the following benefit, provided they are not opposed to him : their next failed saving throw will be automatically successful instead (work only once per blessing, with only one blessing per channeling session, and these blessings aren't cumulative).

### **Special Hindrances**



None.

### ***Role-playing Tips***

This cult could be very useful for introducing a new campaign with low level adventurers. The prophet of Kelaryon is of no specific faith, thus there shouldn't be any opposition with any (good aligned) character. As he is constantly travelling, he could be found by the PCs when it is useful for the DM to help them with healing magic, introduce new scenarios, and so on.

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# Part Four: the original version of

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## The Cults NetBook

by

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### ***Introduction***

Well, finally here it is, the first edition of the cults net.book. I've worked hard with it, so I hope you enjoy it. I have seen very many things for role playing games on the Internet, but I never saw anything that could be used as encounters or bases for adventures, at least not in this way. What you will find here is a collection of cults, secret societies that worship a god, a creature, or an item. Unfortunately, not too many people contributed to this NetBook, so there are only 10 cults compiled here, although most of them are very complete. Note that some cults were changed in order to not violate any copyright policies of RPG development companies.

### ***Copyrights***

There's not much to say here, really. This guide is *not* copyrighted. Just please distribute this file, unaltered, and don't charge any money for it. If you want to add things to this guide, just contact me and I will include your additions in the next edition of this NetBook. Thanks to all contributors!

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## Part One: Evil Cults

### Tarigath

#### ***Worships***

Tyaa.

If you need more information on the Legend & Lore, then you can go to the following address <http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/4777/gods.htm>.

***Known to Society***

Very Secret, 5% of society is familiar with it.

***Frequency***

Not very widespread, only about 25% of cities have a "base" in them.

***Organization***

2 Leaders, currently both are friends. When this is not the case, the organization falls into chaos due to leadership quarrels.

***Description***

This organization is still run by its two founders. It does not have a long history. It supports evil and chaos by supporting Tyaa, the evil bird goddess. All the members of the organization are women, because their patron diety is worshipped only by women. All men seeking to join are invited into the guild hall and promptly sacrificed.

***Special Hindrances***

Only evil women may join this cult. All potential new members have their gender and alignment checked by spells.

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**Black Rose**

***Worships***

The last "wish" of Eldaran Blackrose's spirit.

***Known to Society***

Very secretive, almost no one knows about it.

***Frequency***

Not very widespread; wherever dwarves are killed The Black Rose is.

***Organization***

The cult is organized in cells of no more than five Cloaks so that if caught, only one cell will be captured. The cells report to a Shadow who will provide assistance to any cell that needs expert help on a particular contract. The Shadows themselves are organised into cells and they in turn reports to a Master who finally reports to the conclave and the Grand Master.

The conclave is made up of each of the twelve Masters and the Grand Master.

Cloak levels 1 to 4.

Shadows levels 5 to 10; membership of the cult for a minimum of five years.

Masters 11 level and over; membership in the cult for a minimum of fifteen years.

Grand Master; the highest level Master in the conclave.

***Description***

The elven shaman Tymor Goldenbark found and rescued a spirit on the ethereal plane. The spirit was of Eldaran Blackrose, an elf and former hero / priest of Mask. The spirit had

been lost on the ethereal for many years after his physical body was captured and tortured to death by a dwarven raiding party. With his dying breath he cursed the dwarves and swore fell oaths to his dark god that he would have vengeance on the dwarves. With his release the spirit promised Tymor Goldenbark that if he would follow its teaching and swear to help the spirit gain its vengeance the spirit would give the shaman powers and knowledge.

Goldenbark returned to the prime material plane and gathered about him several of the more disreputable of his kin and started to hunt dwarves. The dwarves were always tortured before being killed in the same way that the dwarves of long ago killed Elderan Blackrose. That is the hands and feet were cut off whilst the victim was still alive and then a flaming arrow was shot into the chest to finish the job.

The cult stayed as a death squad against the dwarves for a short period of time until they realised that wealth and power could be gained by their skills as assassins. Now the cult is willing to kill anyone for a price, except fellow elves, but the main preoccupation is still to kill dwarves. Dwarves are still killed in the ritual way but methods vary with other victims. The prices of assassination vary depending on the wealth and position of the victim but for dwarves there is always a large discount.

The membership of the cult is limited to moon elves, no other race of elves are admitted and definitely no half elves are ever admitted. The classes of the members vary but the priests are always members of Mask, and a large percentage of members are thieves. The other classes are also represented, the current head of the cult is a 16th level wizard. All members of the cult are proficient with the dagger.

### ***Special Hindrances***

A member can call upon any other member of the cult of the same rank or lower to give shelter and aid in times of need. The cult pays 70% of the contract money to the members who took part in the contract, the other 30% is kept to further the cult's expansion. Members who are injured on a contract and return to the cult safe house will be healed for free, if healing is available.

Once you join the cult you are in it for life. If injured on a contract and unable to leave the scene then one of the other members will send the injured member to join Mask in the afterlife. Anyone who informs on the cult or one of its members will be hunted down and killed slowly. If caught by the authorities expect a quick and painful death.

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## **Church of Rauma, God of the Downtrodden**

### ***Worships***

Rauma (really an aspect of Myrkul, but they don't know that).

### ***Known to Society***

80% of poor people, 10% of the well-to-do.

### ***Frequency***

In cities where it exists, 50% of peasant populace will worship it.

### ***Organization***

Hidden from followers, but one priest in every town with connections to a priest of Myrkul who never appears himself (usually a small temple of Myrkul is hidden nearby).

### ***Description***

To explain why Myrkul would be worshipped by normal people... Rauma advocates the eventual overthrow of the rich, the way the cult works is to get a large peasant following by proclaiming to be the god of the poor, then gradually the priests work the worshippers into a mindset that the rich don't deserve what they have... and the poor outnumber the rich. Then usually bloodshed follows, with Myrkul quite happy about it all. Usually this cult is best used by introducing it as a normal church, then having peasants come in conflict with PCs so that the PCs notice the real attitude of the church. The symbol of Rauma is three circles, two on top and one meeting them underneath.

### ***Special Hindrances***

Once the true nature of the church is revealed, the leader must sacrifice themselves to Myrkul for their failure. This will happen if more than 50% of the followers leave after the PCs expose their folly.

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## **The Paratheo-Anametamystikhood of Eris Esoteric (Poe)**

### ***Worships***

Eris/Discordia, the goddess of chaos.

### ***Known to Society***

15%.

### ***Frequency***

Small cabals in many areas.

### ***Organization***

1 Polyfather, 5 Holy Apostles, 1 Chancelor or High Priest per cabal, the latter is a chancelor appointed by the Polyfather, a number of deacans and disciples in roughly a 1:5 ratio.

### ***Description***

Many small groups of people following in their own ideals of chaos. The organization of the ranks is merely to show involvement, understanding and the acceptance of the philosophy.

### ***Special Hindrances***

Must be Chaotic and have a wisdom of 8. Deacans are always of at least 3rd level, chancelors of at least 5th, and only 5 apostles at one point in time may exist, those being at least 12th level. The polyfather(1), is at least a level 15 priest of Discord. (further information later) Immune to any form of anyone to try to detect his alignment or of lies.

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## **The Dark Druids**

### ***Worships***

The Witch Queen.

### ***Known to Society***

Author doesn't tell, but read the description.

### ***Frequency***

Same as above.

### ***Organization***

Read the description.

### ***Description***

History and Beliefs

The organization of the Dark Druids stretches way back into the annals of history. Their original beliefs were actually quite passive, believing that just as everything lives, all things, in the fulfillment of time, must end. They believed that it was a perversion of nature to tend to the sick, or feed the starving, or even warn someone about the large boulder about to land on their head. To put it simpler, they were the ultimate in Non-interventionists.

Then one day, as in all things, something happened that changed the way the world looked at the Dark Druids and at the way the Dark Druids looked at the world.

It was during a siege at a city (time and place are now unknown). The populace of the city were starving, the Dark Druids at their temple in the city were not, and chose not to share their food with the populace of the city. Things turned from nasty to worst and all but one druid survived. That druid went immediately into isolation living on an island.

Nothing was heard about the Dark Druids for a few decades, until a village (Zebonis) near the island started having mysterious deaths.

Eventually the cause of the deaths was tracked down to a temple on the island, where a small band of Dark Druids lived. The temple was destroyed by the local population. 12 druids survived the slaughter and pronounced a powerful curse upon the dead body of their abbot (unknown to everyone this curse inhabited the body of a baby, who later became the Witch Queen). It was later found out that the people who mysteriously died had a form of plague which spread through the area soon after.

Since that day the Dark Druids have followed the practice of actively speeding along death. Therefore the religion has been outlawed and banned, hunted down and nearly wiped out several times only to come back stronger and stronger.

Their more current history is closely woven with that of the Empire of Legolis.

### **6716**

The Dark Druids, an outlawed religious sect of priests of a diety of death, managed to infiltrate some of their followers into the Emperors private chambers in the palace at the capitol Legolithiapolis. Once there they managed to capture the Emperor and his four generals and replace them with exact clones under the sway of the Great Dark Druid himself. A reign of terror began that night, unnoticable at first but with each passing day securing the Great Dark Druid's hold upon the Empire of Legolis.

Several years passed before normal life and the liberties of men were infringed upon at which time a Duke of a nearby state (a boyhood friend of the Emperor) chose to visit the Emperor and discovered that the Emperor was not who he portrayed to be. The Duke quickly left the capitol and retired to his own domains and began investigations into the person who claimed to be Emperor. After much work and consultation with the gods, the duke discovered the truth behind the Great Dark Druid's schemes and, calling his friends within the nobility, declared war upon the Capitol and fake emperor. Unfortunately the Great Dark Druid had been very busy during his years in control, placing loyal followers in positions of power within the structure of the Empire.

## **6722**

A great battle was fought on the plains and walls surrounding the capitol. For three months various offensives were made by the Duke against the forces of the Great Dark Druid until neither side was truly capable of victory. The Duke, sick of the thousands of deaths that had occurred, chose to retire from the field of battle and instead, knowing that his enemy was incapable of doing anything, split the empire into various fragments placing trusted friends of his upon the thrones of what in future years was to become the kingdoms of Peltam and Forlard. The Duke and the Fake Emperor of Legolis signed a treaty soon after the war declaring a state of non-aggression between the new kingdoms and the Empire of Legolis.

So began the rule of the Dark Druids placing Puppet emperors upon the throne for some 120 years.

## **6838**

The kingdom of Peltam under the rule of Llewellyn requested that a group of powerful nobles from within his kingdom seek out and destroy any dark druid incursions into his country. The result of this request were two major wars against Legolis effectively crippling its power and an epic attack upon the Dark Druids secret home base within a mountain. After the first battle between Peltam and Legolis a powerful being known as the Witch Queen was inadvertently released from her magical prison at the same time releasing the once Emperor of Legolis and his four generals, all of whom promptly vanished. Soon after the Dark Druids withdrew to their mountain base to contend with a challenger to the office of Great Dark Druid. The result was that the Great Dark Druid was defeated by the Witch Queen who then persuaded the Dark Druids to worship her (a deity in her own right) instead of the diety of death. None know whether the original Great Dark Druid died at the Witch Queen's hands or fled to safety. Soon after these events the nobles from Peltam attacked the mountain base of the Dark Druids whilst large forces from Peltam and Forlard attacked Legolis in an attempt to divide the forces of the Dark Druids. The nobles managed to infiltrate the mountain and with the help of the diety of death render the Witch Queen mortal in an attempt to destroy her, unfortunately during the fight with the Witch Queen one of the nobles in his haste managed to banish her to the astral plane hoping that she would be lost forever. The Dark Druids immediately lost all of their priestly powers due to the banishment of the Witch Queen.

The god of death, their earlier patron then sealed all the dark druids (that were there) in the mountain, confining them to exile, never to walk upon the surface of the planet again.

For the next 87 years what is left of Legolis is in ruins no one count or baron is around long enough to leave a lasting impression. The entire nobility of the so called empire can be challenged by those of lesser station and the phrase 'Might is Right' becomes a cold hard reality.

## **6925**

Eight nobles from Peltam enter and take over a small piece of Legolis, over the next couple of years they gain partial control over all of Legolis.

## **6931**

The eight nobles become demi-gods after discovering the Temple of an ancient diety of good that was once worshipped in Legolis.

## **6934**

The Witch Queen returned in the body of an innocent woman during some dark ceremony carried out by a secretive group of Dark Druids. She then immediately attacks the eight demipowers of Legolis. Knowing that as a god herself they were unable to harm her she decides to give them a choice, either become one of her followers and gain



unimaginable power, or die an eternal death at her hands. From the eight four chose to join her and four chose to stand instead for the principles of good.

At this point a hitherto unknown entity entered the picture, calling herself 'She who dreams' stated that the eight demi gods had been tempted beyond their capability to understand and somehow stripped the Witch queen of all her powers, a conversation then took place between the eight demi gods and 'She who dreams', the result of which was that all eight became gods in their own rights, four became evil and four became good, the eight were then sent off to some other dimension, where all trace of them was lost.

**7295**

Present Day.

### ***Special Hindrances***

Only Humans can become Dark Druids, the reason being that of all the demi-human races, they all embrace life, this is shown by the fact that they are all longer living than humans.

Humanoids cannot become Dark Druids simply because they usually cannot comprehend things like theology, religion, etc., although humanoids are usually used as cannon fodder by the Dark Druids whenever they have need of an army.

All weapons, shields, armour and magical items of the Dark Druids are, at the least, quality items. As the Dark Druid gains levels their items become more potent, some becoming magical in nature, increasing in power as the Dark Druid gains levels. The only drawback to this is that the Dark Druid must rededicate all of his equipment to the Witch Queen once a week and at a recognised temple. If the Druid fails in this task then his items begin to lose their potency (A comparison can be made to Drow items).

### ***Contributed By***

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## **The Red Cord**

### ***Worships***

No one really, just they want to get rid of foreigners.

### ***Known to Society***

Almost everyone knows it exists.

### ***Frequency***

Not shown by the author.

### ***Organization***

None specific.

### ***Description***

This cult was prevalent in the lands of Turmish several years ago. The cult started quite small over two hundred years ago when a small group of nobles and priests decided that the influence of foreigners and none humans was starting to affect the traditional ways of life and must be stopped. They decided to form a secret organization to dissuade foreigners for settling in the land. This started by making goods and services hard to obtain and when this did not work then more drastic means were applied, setting fire to crops and killing live stock were used if this did not work then the settlers were killed. The killings were done in

a ritualistic way by strangling with a red silken cord and the cord left tied around the neck with special knot as a warning to others to leave.

The cult flourished for many years until they started to kill their own people who had dealings with foreigners. As many influential persons at court made their money from overseas trade then the government decided to act. They set up a secret organization of their own to track down and bring back dead or alive the leaders of the cult. The operation was a qualified success in that the government managed to capture or kill most of the leaders and many of their henchmen but several escaped and went underground.

That is the way things stand at this moment. The government is still trying to eradicate the cult completely but the cult has now changed its targets from foreigners to government officials, members of the aristocracy and members of foreign governments in the land

### ***Membership***

To become a member of the Red Cord the person must be of true Turmish stock and human. They will be approached by a junior member of the cult and sounded out on their feelings towards foreigners and the government. If the answers are to the liking of the questioner then the prospective member will be taken to a place where the more senior members of the cult will question him. If they like the answers then the prospective member will be taken on as a probationary member of the cult. The probation lasts for as long as the cult feels is necessary to prove the persons loyalty and desecration. Once the prospect is accepted by the cult, if he isn't then he's dead, he will be initiated into the mysteries of the cult and can never leave, except by death.

### ***Special Hindrances***

The cult will teach the member all thief skills for free, if available by class, as he raises in levels. The cult will always try to rescue a member captured by the authorities. The cult once entered can never be left. The government and its agents will kill any one suspected of being a member of the cult. Foreign governments will either kill or capture suspected members of the cult found in their lands. Members of the cult never wear armour heavier than leather and may only wear one magical item of protection. Members of the cult are free to use magical spells if they are allowed by class but they are not allowed to use magical weapons. Other magical items are useable depending on class but the victims of the cult must be killed by the Red Cord.

### ***Contributed By***

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## ***Part Two: Neutral Cults***

### **The Brotherhood of the Shadow**

#### ***Worships***

God of Shadow Magic.

#### ***Known to Society***

Only a few, about 5% of Society knows. But all Shadow Mages must belong to it.

#### ***Frequency***

In almost all cities.

### ***Organization***

1 Dark Shadow, 10 Shadows, the rest Shadow Mages.

### ***Description***

This Organization is very secretive. It consists of all Shadow Mages. Those who want to study to become a shadow mage must first find a Shadow Mage sponsor. The Brotherhood is very secretive, only teaching those with the most potential. One can be evil, good or neutral but one must not fight each other while in the confines of Holy ground. Otherwise Good vs. Evil goes on as usual. In other words, Good and Evil Brothers will socialize in holy ground but fight amongst themselves on the outside.

There can be only one Dark Shadow; he is at least of the 20th level, and the only way one can be a Dark Shadow is to fight for the Position. The fight does not have to be to the death. No one can be of a higher level than the Dark Shadow, and one must be a Shadow to challenge the Dark Shadow. The same goes for all Shadow Mages that want to move up in the world. They must challenge.

### ***Special Hindrances***

None showed.

### ***Contributed By***

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## **The Guardians of the Eternal Flame**

### ***Worships***

The Eternal Flame (a flame that never dies, nor can it be put out; its other powers are up to the DM).

### ***Known to Society***

0% to 30%, varies with region.

### ***Frequency***

Rare. Only found in areas surrounding their 2 headquarters.

### ***Organization***

2 Oligarchs (one for each sect), 2 inner circles (5 members each, again one circle per sect), 2 outer circles (20 members each, again, one for each sect), then regular members.

### ***Description***

The Guardians of the Eternal Flame were founded over 200 years ago by two brothers, who found the flame burning on a rock on the side of a mountain. They picked up the rock, and brought it back to their keep. Unfortunately, one brother was good, and the other was evil, so they never got along very well. One day the evil brother took a torch, and lit it with the Flame. He ran off with the torch and built his own fortress, some distance from his brothers. After this happened, both brothers founded identical orders (perhaps at the request of the now double flame), one dedicated to good, the other to evil.

The main effort of both orders is to keep the other order from gaining too much power. The Oligarchs are the Original Founders, who have kept their identities hidden from their followers. Apparently, the Flame itself has kept them alive. Both halves of the Flame have taken on the respective alignment of their owners and Guardians. The White Guardians are Neutral Good. The Black Guardians are Neutral Evil. Both Flames are the same color, so the only way to tell them apart is by detect good/evil or by what they are burning on. The Flame of the White Guardians burns on a rock, while the Flame of the Black Guardians burns on

wood, and must be kept fed. The Oligarchs choose the Inner Circles, the Inner Circles choose the Outer Circles, the Outer Circles initiate new members. Only people from the towns near the HQ's of the Guardians will know them 30%. Farther away it lessens.

### ***Special Hindrances***

The White Oligarch is a high level human ranger. The Black Oligarch is a 24th level human thief. Members of the Inner Circles will be at least 10th level, any class. Members of the Outer Circles will be at least 5th level, any class. Regular members will be anywhere from 0th level up (but few will be very powerful, or else they'd be in the Circles).

### ***Contributed By***

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## **The Wolf Cult**

### ***Worships***

Wolves (not as a deity but honors them).

### ***Known to Society***

About 1-3% of the population have heard of it.

### ***Frequency***

Very isolated. Usually away from large centers of civilization. In the author's world, so far there is only one village that has these cultists. The entire village are members, and there is a population of about 30-40 people.

### ***Organization***

Governed by priests of any nature religion. (In the author's world, the priests are druids.)

### ***Description***

The Wolf Cult is a small, little known cult that springs up mainly in small villages or hamlets. Often, where the cult is present, the entire village will be followers of this cult. Although the cult is best suited to rangers and druids, there are other followers of this cult as well. All members of this cult, upon initiation, must have their right arm scarred. This is done by raking the entire length of the forearm with a wolf's claw. This scar must NEVER be concealed, otherwise the cultist is shamed.

Followers of this cult are mistrustful of large cities and towns, preferring small rural areas instead. None of the hindrances reducing ability scores are applied when dealing with other cult members, for they find the scars to be appealing rather than revolting.

The cult has a very odd sense of ideals, for they consider wolves to be above anything else. They would not even consider harming a wolf (thus the -2 to hit), and revere them as majestic beasts. Wolves do not fear members of this cult, and rarely do they attack cult members (usually only occurs if they are being magically controlled). Many cultists have a wolf as a companion, and these wolves are often well trained. Often, the village or hamlet where the cult is located will have wolf dens and a resident wolf trainer among their ranks. They are a proud cult, and will fight fiercely to defend their homes. They will give their lives to protect a wolf.

### ***Special Hindrances***

Cannot wear metal armor. Cannot own more items than they can carry with them. Can go for one day of solid exertion (such as forced march) without any fatiguing effects.

***Contributed By***

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**The Spinning Ones**

***Worships***

Lliira.

***Known to Society***

Most people have heard of them.

***Frequency***

Not shown by the author.

***Organization***

Non-existent; read the description to understand.

***Description***

All worshippers of Lliira know of the cult, and many people in the towns where they hold their gatherings have heard and witnessed them in their strange rituals.

The gatherings are held frequently in many cities throughout Faerun. The gatherings start when one of the spinning ones has a vision of where to hold the next gathering. The information is passed by word of mouth throughout the city within a day.

The followers gather at the chosen site, usually a disused warehouse, and set up the bands and lights. The lighting is usually provided by local apprentice wizards who have mastered the Dancing Lights and other spells of similar vein, and the bands are usually young bards who are into heavy percussion. The gathering start at dusk and quite often carry on till the dawn.

It has been noted that certain narcotic substances are smoked and swallowed at these gathering. The local authorities in many cities have tried to ban these gatherings due to the disturbance caused to the residents and the narcotic substances sold at the gatherings, because of the suppression by the local authorities the gatherings are of necessity clandestine.

***Special Hindrances***

None shown by the author.

***Contributed By***

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**Final Note**

I know this is not a big collection of cults, but I do think that the cults you found on this book can be very helpful when designing adventures, as here you have encounters and even full bases for adventures. I've worked hard (believe it or not) on passing on the cults that

were given to me. Please distribute this file as it is. Any addition should be sent to me via email.

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## **Editing Notes**

The document has been edited for legibility purposes by

**Olik — Ole A. Ringdal**  
<olear@online.no>  
<http://home.sol.no/olear>

Spelling errors were removed, and the layout generally edited for consistency and ease of view. Nothing of the contents has been altered, except for some weird language constructs.

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**AND HERE IS THE LAST, BUT NOT THE LEAST : THAT CULT ABOUT WHICH YOU ALWAYS DREAMED TO KNOW EVERYTHING, BUT WAS AFRAID WOULD NEVER EXIST ! :**

## **Hellish Order of the Black Soul :**

*(Lawful Evil cult)*

### ***Worships***

Agaïda, the foul goddess of all painful deaths, and mistress of the Ashorzaathu devils.

Her cult is so horrible that it has been nicknamed the "Abyssal Munchkins" (which is in fact a misnomer as they are lawful-evil).

### ***Known to Society***

80% of the weak (if not wicked) populace have heard of it, and fear it. Besides, even the ignorant fools who don't know the cult are nonetheless scared of it...

### ***Frequency***

Very spread, the cult is almost found in any city.

### ***Organization***

The organization is lawful evil (which in itself is self explanatory).

**Demands on the priests:** All followers of this order must wear black robes, with a symbol of Agaïda on their robes. If they don't, they run the risk of losing their powers for one full day.

**Hierarchy:** The cult's hierarchy is typical of powerful lawful-evil cults:

1) Preacher : min. lvl. 15. There is only one preacher per temple, and only one temple per city. Any preacher will get 10 anti-paladins of 10<sup>th</sup> level for his clergy, plus one baatezu as a personal servant. These servants are loyal to the death (they are lawful-evil after all), and are connected at all time to the preacher through a telepathic link.

2) Holy-Guardian : min. lvl. 25. There are only two Holy-Guardians, who are "elected" as follows: when one preacher or anti-paladin of 25<sup>th</sup> level wants to become a Holy-Guardian, he must abide by several constraints (see special hindrances) in addition to slaying one of the two current Holy-Guardians. Then, the Supreme resurrects the dead Holy-Guardian who must then fight another postulant of 25<sup>th</sup> level. When this is done, the Supreme chooses between the PC and the second winner (who may be the original Holy-Guardian anyway). However, magic can be used to influence that choice.

3) Supreme : min. lvl. 40. When a Holy-Guardian reaches the 40<sup>th</sup> level he can challenge the Supreme to take his place. However, before the 40<sup>th</sup> level, he is simply unable to even think of it (by way of a powerful divine "wish" cast by Agaïda herself).

**Priests' powers and abilities:** As per the customization rules. PCs always begin play at 10<sup>th</sup> level with maximum hit-points and two magical items of their choice (vorpals included, but not relics).

### ***Description***

**Symbol:** An exquisitely carved figurine of a pit-fiend, which can act as a mighty figurine of wondrous power (ebony pit-fiend), once per day.

**Brief history:** This very antique society was founded by TERFT the UNHOLY, a Dark Paladin of 40<sup>th</sup> level who did own no less than 3 powerful relics of pure evil: the Hand of Vecna, the Bastard-Sword of Kas (more powerful but less known than the shortsword), and the Wand of Orcus. He was so powerful than no weakling of less than the 20<sup>th</sup> level ever *thought* of attacking him.

Nowadays, the cult is well spread, in the legendary plane of Dark-Raven-Hell. Most people bow to the priests of the cult, hoping in their heart of not being the next victim of their



atrocious sacrifices. Anyway, the cult is powerful, and people respect power... In fact, the cult is ultimately evil, and wishes to give her goddess all the sacrifices they can, as legend says that one of the people who makes sacrifices shall be chosen to serve as an incarnation of Agaïda herself.

### ***Special Hindrances***

For an evil priest or anti-paladin wanting to access to "Preacher" position, not only must he be at least of the 15<sup>th</sup> level, and build a temple costing no less than 750 000 gp. (all of black marble, inlaid with red gold and carved blood-stones). He must also prove his worth by slaying single-handedly all the clergy of the good temples residing in that city (sacrificing them to Agaïda the foul). Thereafter, only the neutral and evil other cults will be allowed to remain.

For a "Preacher" wanting to access to "Holy-Guardian" position, not only must he be a 25<sup>th</sup> level priest or anti-paladin, and defeat one of the current two Holy-Guardians; but he must also abide by the three following requirements: (1) own a powerful artifact of pure evil ; (2) bring the head of a balor he personally slew single-handedly in melee combat. Note that this may not prove so easy as balors usually explode when slain in the abyss. However, a wish from a ring of wishes solves the problem easily ; (3) Have a charisma inferior to 7. If the postulant can have a negative charisma, the better.

For a Holy-Guardian wanting to access to "Supreme" position, not only must he be a 40<sup>th</sup> level priest or anti-paladin, and defeat the current Supreme and his two pit-fiends servants; but he must also abide by the three following requirements: (1) own two powerful artifacts of pure evil ; (2) bring the head of a deity's avatar he personally slew single-handedly in melee combat, along with 2 devas ; (3) Have a negative charisma worse than -7.

### ***Contributed By***

Well, huh...

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# **Annex : Submissions**

Dominique Crouzet <the\_scribe@post.club-internet.fr>

## **Netbook of Cults Version 3:**

I personally do not intend to add anymore cults to this netbook (I have other projects, along one called "*AD&D Netbook to Fantasy Space-Opera*", of which you will find a call for submissions below). Nonetheless, it could be that some of you would be pleased to send me new cults, and thus I could decide to produce a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of this netbook of cults. **However!**, in order to **help me succeed my saving-throw against laziness**, I ask you to do your submissions as follows:

- 1) Send cults as thoroughly detailed as those presented in this *second* edition.
- 2) There won't be anymore munchkin cults like the one presented above (Hellish Order of the Black Soul), one is enough for the laugh.
- 3) Use the format below, and put useful text in *each* entry.

## **Astonishing Name of the Cult (the) :**

*(Alignment of the cult)*

### ***Worships***

Name of the deity worshipped, or the cult's peculiar philosophy. It's not bad to add where that deity may be found for reference.

### ***Known to Society***

What percentage of population know of the cult. It may vary with social classes, the locations considered, etc... You can also add other information such as general reaction toward the cult, etc...

### ***Frequency***

Similar to above, but explain where the cult can be found and at what rate.

### ***Organization***

How the temple is organized, is it open to all or secret, etc...

**Demands on the priests:** Requirements to become a member of the faith. Duties of the priests, and/or worshippers.

**Hierarchy:** Usually the different positions and titles within the cult, and the requirements (of level, how long having been a member, etc...). Begin with the lowest ranking members, and end with the chief leader of the cult. Of course, there are cults without any hierarchy.

1) Xyxyxyxy : lvl.00 ; the low, etc...

2) Wxwxwxw : lvl.00 ; the average, etc...

3) Xcxcxcx : min 00<sup>rd</sup> lvl. ; the high, etc...

4) Yhyhyhy : min 00<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; the above, etc...

5) (etc...)

6) Mememem : min 00<sup>th</sup> lvl. ; the leader of the cult, who...

**Priests' powers and abilities:** If you have created a new specialty priest (especially with the POS&M rules on customization), or a special kit, it should be good to show it. Otherwise you may simply state that priests are clerics, or druids, or etc...

Character class: Specialty priest (POS&M rules).

- Minimum requirements of... ; Alignment(s) of...

- May wear armor, and weapons of...

- Have access to the spheres of spells of:

\*Major access: etc...

\*Minor access: etc...

- Granted power of Turn Undead, Spitting in one enemy's face, etc...

- Kits available (POS&P rules): etc...

### **Description**

**Symbol:** A cross, a dagger with a skull, a snake, etc...

**Brief history:** You don't need to tell where the cult does come from (but it would be more interesting anyway), and how it was born; but you should detail its goals, agenda, etc...

### **Special Hindrances**

What are the hindrances of being a member of the cult, not what are the constraining duties its members, priesthood, etc..., must abide to. Typical hindrances include : being hunted by the law, despised by others, murdered if wanting to leave, etc...

### **Contributed By**

If you don't want to put your name there... well, you do as you want.

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## **AD&D Netbook to Fantasy Space-Opera**

I am currently working on a new project, a little crazy. It is of making an AD&D world of heroic-fantasy set in the far-future. In fact it has nothing to do with Alternity, which is based onto science-fiction. My intent is to create something of "Laser & Sorcery".

I think this can be done. Take a look at **Star-Wars**, it has a fantasy flair about it, more than science fiction. The first thing is of course the "Force"; but small spaceships which cross the galaxy in a few hours; worlds where many different races breath exactly the same air without problems; and much more; all of this gives it an irrational look which is much more fantasy than science-fiction. On the other hand for example, **Star-Trek** is completely science fiction and nothing fantasy, even if the heroes meet gods at times. Another classic which certainly has a fantasy flair about it, is **Dune**. The "Spice", the methods of crossing the gulfs of space, this society where Mentats replace computers which have been forbidden, all of this is very much in touch with heroic fantasy. Now, in fantasy literature, there are also several novels which blend heroic fantasy with science fiction. Ann Mac Caffrey for instance, has written great stories in this style. And lastly, just take a look at the TSR's Chronomancer Game Accessory. There are futuristic worlds of AD&D merging science fiction with magic there (chapter 7, p.75 to 85).

What's the use of such a weird netbook ? It's up to you; but many DMs have at one time or another send their PCs in the far future. This netbook, if you help me do it, will be for them !!

## **The AD&D Netbook to Fantasy Space-Opera**

There are many things which should be included to get a good overview of the subject. I have listed the following chapters which will appear in this work. However, there are many other things I have not thought of, which may prove essential. So, if you have an idea, a text, or something not shown on the list below, but that you would like to submit, don't hesitate. Otherwise, if you want to write on any of the subjects below, don't hesitate to send it to me. However I must warn you about something which may not please you. I will certainly adapt what I will receive, in order to get a coherent ensemble. Of course I will ask your agreement

before changing your work. In fact, the closer to the basic AD&D rules will be your submission, the less I will feel to mess it up. For example, I saw in the *AD&D Netbook to Star-Trek*, that phasers can do up to 10d10 of damage. I can't allow this, it unbalances the game too much.

So, if you are still interested, lets have a look at the following chapters to come :

### **Character Races :**

I think that character races should at the same time be very close to the traditional AD&D races (dwarves, elves, halflings, etc...), but also remind of typical races of the Sci-Fi classics. If you have better ideas for their names too, don't hesitate. Otherwise, the following races are only a few examples, and others could be included.

**Elvunians** : Elves / Vulcans : tall, of noble demeanor, and a deep interest for the arcane.

**Ewk'hlings** : Halflings / Ewoks : kinds of furred small-people living in forests.

**Gamorcans** : Orcs / Gamoreans : mercenaries, usually on the wrong side of the law.

**Githzerai** : the normal Githzerai, who I feel are much at home in such a setting.

**Gnoidahs** : Gnomes / ?? : small people of green skin and pointed ears, masters of psionics.

**Humans** : for some reason, they are found everywhere in the galaxy.

**Jawals** : Gobelins / Jawas : spacefaring stinking pests used to technology.

**Woorkens** : Bugbears / Wookies : more wookie than bugbear anyway.

**Xxxxxxx** : a POS&P customization generator for all sorts of extra-terrestrial races.

### **Character Classes :**

This is my preferred chapter, and I certainly will do it my way. However, I will be pleased to get your clever ideas on **Bene-Gesserits**, **Mentats**, and **Rogues**. Also, some ideas on higher level psichical and physical transformations for **Ascetics** and **Dark'Mancers** are welcome. As will be other classes which could be invented on that subject. Otherwise, and except for the Ascetic, Jedi-knight, and Dark'mancer who will be much more powerful than all the other classes ; all these classes, will be designed as to be close to TSR regular sources (mainly the Player's Options rulebooks). The differences being mostly adaptations to a futuristic universe.

#### Priest group :

**Channel** : as priest, but gets some restrictions on the customization rules. He/she is a sort of solitary prophet given spells by some powerful spirit, who also speaks through him.

**Bene-Gesserit**: a member of a secret, yet pervasive order of priestesses, who use genetics, and specialized training, and ? (*help required* !!).

**Templar** : fanatic wielding anti-magic powers, who works for the Imperial Inquisition.

#### Psionist group :

**Ascetic** : master of the "Good Force" (Yoda); becomes an Avangion after the 20<sup>th</sup> lvl.

**Medium** : as a psionist, but with customization rules.

**Mentat** : sort of psionist-sage with Legend-lore ability? (*help required* !!).

#### Rogue group :

**Adventurer** : a customized character with many skills to choose from (*help required* !!).

**Criminal** : as thief, but gets improvements on the customization rules (*help required* !!).

**Official** : character skilled in many abilities, but above all those pertaining to civil service, bureaucracy, diplomacy, and at ease with technology? (*help required* !!).

#### Warrior group :

**Trooper** : as fighter, but gets improvements on the customization rules. He is a warrior of the future, used to technology, spaceships, battle-armors, and so on.

**Jedi-Knight** : (*of course!*) sort of paladin / anti-paladin with psionics. (light-saber specialist). I will certainly use the class already found on an existing netbook.

**Freeman** : ranger-barbarian of primitive cultures. Lots of customization abilities like rangers, but no magic allowed.

### Wizard group :

**Mage** : as wizard, but gets some changes on the customization rules. These users of old magical ways have been outlawed by the Emperor.

**Technomancer** : sort of wizard of the future using Mana magic, and who creates and repairs magical-technological devices. However, all technomancers are conditioned civil servants who cannot betray the empire without risking their own lives.

**Dark'mancer** : master of the *Dark Force* (Emperor), becomes Dragon-king after 20<sup>th</sup> lvl.

### *Character Kits :*

There certainly is work to do there, but no munchkin rules ! Take a look at typical TSR's kit before submitting one. Below, only a few of all who may exist.

**Pilot** : Luke & Anakin Skywalker, and Han-Solo (?) were pilots.

**Bounty-hunter** : characters who track down people for money.

**Noble** : Princess Leïa is a Noble.

**Sardaukar** : soldiers of the harkonnen house (with a cardiac valve).

**Storm troopers**: elite soldiers in white kevlar plate armors.

**Doctor** : a modern healer, who use magical technology to cure people.

**Hermit** : Obi-wan Kenobi and Yoda were hermits.

### *Magical Technology :*

In my point of view, do not invent new rules for technology, but adapt magic as follows : Techno-magic devices in fact cast spells using a source of power for their magic (maybe an equivalent of the "Spice" ?). Technology is in fact the use of magic at big scale, requiring engines, etc... : for example, a spaceship with a magical shield equal to a spell of *Globe of invulnerability*, protecting it from lesser "spell-weapons" (*Laser-beam*, rifle of *lightning*, etc...), but not great canons (*Laser-blast*, *Meteor Swarm*,...). Thus a mage can cast *Globe of invulnerability* on himself which will protect him normally against those techno-magical weapons, but would be unable to cast the spell on a spacecraft hull. This requires that techno-mancers design techno-magic devices and have them built in special factories with machines, workers, and so on, along maybe with some elementals, etc...

**Techno-magic spells** : laser-beam (3<sup>rd</sup> lvl); laser-bolt (4<sup>th</sup> level); laser-blast (5<sup>th</sup> level); etc...

**Techno-magic items** : Girdle-shields (Bracers of defense), Storm-trooper armors (magical plate-mail), Blaster weapons (wands of lightning), Vibro-daggers (magical dagger), Light-sabers (Sun-blades of force), Micro-computers (crystal balls), etc...

**Creatures** : Robots and Droids.

**Spaceships** : See Spelljammer to create appropriate statistics, however these ships are definitively not galleons cruising in space. They are instead the kind of vessels seen in Star-Wars movies. But propelled by full magic power (*Fly* for anti-grav, ?? for propulsion, *Teleport no error* for warp-drive, etc...).

### *Campaign factions :*

Many things should be written on this subjects. But for interest of play, I suggest they all remind of classics of science-fiction, or otherwise AD&D transposed in space. The following are suggestions only, and only a small part of all that may be included in the campaign :

**Empire** : is an evil (LE) tyranny. The emperor is a 30<sup>th</sup> level psionicist/wizard dragon-king. He is everywhere in the galaxy : in every important place, he rules through a simulacrum of himself, that is a 15<sup>th</sup> level psionicist/wizard dragon-king. The emperor is attended not only by his armies and evil Jedi-knights, but also by his own church: the Imperial Inquisition, whose templars are sworn to destroy all renegade mages they can find.

**Bene-Gesserits** : I forgot exactly what they were supposed to be and to do. Has someone ideas to translate them into this mixed AD&D setting ?

**The Jedi-Knight order** : has been destroyed by the emperor. But here and there some knights still survive and take on disciples. Needless to say that they are outlawed within the empire.

**The Force** : psionics powers, but also a source of magical energy. Two forces : the Good-side (positive plane), the Dark-side (negative plane). Psionicians get new powers, as those enabling them to detect other psionic-able characters.

**Undead** : hordes of undead, and other fell creatures, grow in great numbers on the fringes of the empire, and within its less civilized parts. This fact has been used by the emperor to justify the spreading of his church : the Imperial Inquisition, with the excuse they protect people, when in fact its real purpose is to control them. Now the dark of it is, that the emperor is responsible for the increasing number of these creatures, because of his link with the negative material plane (his source of magic, the Dark Force).

### *Legendary NPCs :*

Yoda is a 25<sup>th</sup> level Avangion (or something), the Emperor a 30<sup>th</sup> level Dragon-king (or something), but aside from this, what are their (non-munchkins) characteristics ? And are there some people out there to send me the class, characteristics, etc... of heroes like Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, Chewbacca, Spock, Kirk, Duncan Idaho, Baron Harkonen, etc...

### *Other chapters :*

Many other things may be added. I leave it to your cleverness and imagination.

I hope that this work will be done !!

And you know what ? : May the Force be with you !

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