

The Forgotten Deities of the Dying Earth

A Background Article for DERPG

By Ian Thomson



CREDITS

Author, layout and General ~~Erbs~~body: Ian Thomson

New Illustrations: Jerome Huguenin – Cover & pp 14 & 20; Commode Minstrels Collective – pp 4, 19, 23 & 24;

Carrie Walters – p17; All other pics with thanks to Dover Books.

Please print this article Duplex (double-sided) so as to save paper.

Copyright Delgrane Press, 2006 (www.dyingearth.com/violetcusps.htm)

Introduction

Subsequent to the Law of Equipoise, here is the follow-up to my book "Demons of the Dying Earth" (Pelgrane Press, 2003). Consider this (*Forgotten Deities of the DE*) a bonus Appendix to that earlier volume.

Some amongst you might wonder how an article so entitled could relate to the milieu of the Dying Earth. However, refresh your memories. Within Cugel's tales you will surely recall the worshippers of Yob the Fish God, or the followers of the xenophobic Dangott; and most certainly the pilgrims of Gilfig will 'ring a bell' as they say. Likewise, Cugel himself casually refers to various gods, such as Zita and Mandingo, as if he knows of many. "Well", you reply, "what of it? These gods are clearly no more than the creations of false priests - merely using tradition to support themselves in positions of influence and wealth!"

Certainly that is one interpretation, but it is a concept contradicted by Vance himself in other Dying Earth stories. Appearing in the original tales is Ethodea the Goddess of Mercy - summoned to a Black Sabbath in vast manifestation and attacked with demonic magic. (Thus establishing at least that she existed as some kind of otherworldly entity and was at one time well-known.) Another potent reference is the unnamed - until now - 'divinity of utter justice' that restored Ettar's face where normal magic was shown to be unable to alter reality in this fashion. This god's origins are even discussed in some detail.

Also in Ettar's story, he describes the Cape of Sad Remembrance as slumbering like 'one of the gods of the ancient earth'. Furthermore, and perhaps the most telling reference of all, Pandelume (the mightiest and most knowledgeable magician in the original DE stories) spoke of the undeniable existence of gods: "*I am no god. A god may will things to existence; I must rely on magic, the spells which vibrate and twist space.*" Plus Javanne confirmed that the power of a god was "*stronger than the wizards of Earth and the demon-worlds possess*", and potentially "*strong enough to make a mold of the past*".

Thus the option clearly exists in Jack Vance's early conceptions of the Dying Earth for gods to (at least within previous aeons) have been widely worshipped and in return to have provided divine favors of a reality-altering nature. Vance was quite possibly using this concept to again illustrate that the world was once far more vibrant and noble than its current condition. At Tustvold, for instance, Nisbett mentions to Cugel that a certain fourth-level ruin contained a white marble temple to Miamatta, whom the people at that time considered the greatest of all gods. Bearing all of this in mind, we hereby provide descriptions of several relic forms of religions that can be introduced into your campaign - whether at Cugel- or Turjan-Level - in order to further enhance the Odd Customs (DERPG p130) aspect of Dying Earth adventures.



The History of the Divine Worship

In Ettar's story we learn that the divinity of utter justice was invoked by a race of honest people who had need of a god worthy of their worship. They gathered in vast congregation, and according to legend brought into being a god shaped by their will. These people were enlightened folk with advanced understanding of the metaphysical realms, and this being is likely one of the most powerful entities Dying Earth adventurers could encounter. Nothing like this summoning could even be attempted in these decadent latter days of the Earth, but nonetheless, we can assume that this was the basic means by which divine beings were brought into existence in the world. We cannot know that these 'gods' did not exist elsewhere prior to such a summoning, but if they did this was apart from the common world.

If there was one god capable of palpable action, it is not unreasonable to assume that there were several others. In fact, we can envisage a previous aeon where various gods exerted palpable influence through their worshippers. Probably those of the greatest power were, by definition, incapable of casual destructive thought; or else one of them would surely have smashed the imperfect world of mankind in a fit of pique at one time or another. However, once the great gods had been summoned - and especially after humanity's noble ambitions started to crumble - petty gods also become accessible. These beings might have been lesser versions of established divinities, called via corrupted worship of the original greater gods, or may have been summoned for more specific purposes. The exact nature of their origins is beyond the scope of this piece.

Modern Worship

Exactly where gods come from, what they really are, and how they are summoned is irrelevant today - save to the most industrious of researchers¹. For, such evocations are no longer possible. No vast coherent congregations exist, and no champions of sufficient unwavering devotion and spiritual magnitude have emerged into society for uncountable generations. What gods remain in existence are memories, entities that have survived through sheer chance - worshipped yet by small numbers of specialists or by only one small association, or at best within a scattered handful of settlements - which in many cases might not even know of each other's existence.

Often these petty religions will indeed be merely conveniences maintained by a lineage of priests in order to sustain (or recreate) lifestyles of influence and privilege for themselves. It would of course be contrary to the thrust of the Dying Earth stories to undermine the existence of such ignoble charlatans, who represent so beautifully all that is cruel and selfish in these final days of the world. This we shall not do; nonetheless, this still leaves the opportunity for a minority of peculiar divine beings to have retained some small practical spiritual influences that resemble spells, curses or enchantments. (We shall leave it to the GM to create the details for deities that have no influence whatsoever, other than to allow priesthoods to live in comparative prestige and luxury.)



Bringing Deities into the Campaign

We explore here several examples of religious organizations that follow divine entities, and present differing levels of possibility as to the actual level of divine effectiveness in the world. We do not always indicate which are more suitable for Cugel- or Turjan-Level play, although we suggest that perhaps those options containing the most duplicity (and least actuality) are more suitable for the original roguish style of Dying Earth gaming.

It is up to the individual GM as to how prevalent religious groups become (irrespective of whether they are authentic or fallacious). In the author's interpretation of the Dying Earth stories, it seems as if divine beings were relatively commonly known of. (At least eleven deities were mentioned or encountered, and other references hinted towards the presence of even more religions.) However, this aspect of current society was never explored in detail (even though Cugel himself claimed to have once worked in a temple - albeit as a lowly incense-blender).

The GM may decide to utilize religions only as part of the 'Odd Customs' section of a campaign, having them encountered as curiosities or threats in isolated communities, and/or as the province of unusual bands of fanatics. Alternatively, she may decide that any settlement of note has several small shrines, and the larger places possibly even hold a temple or two. Or, the reality may lie somewhere in between: with some deities being commonly known and others being rare cultural oddities. We allow for any of these interpretations. Nonetheless the author has fond memories of the works of Fritz Leiber (Lhankmar), Terry Pratchett (Discworld - esp. 'Small Gods'), Glen Cook (Garrett P.I. series - esp. 'Petty Pewter Gods') and other authors of classic fantasy, in whose worlds shrines to odd deities are an integral part of any settlement.

It is possible that the characters (after encountering one or two examples where divine reverence seems to have had practical value to the worshippers in question) may even decide to venerate a deity themselves. In the suggestions that follow we have discussed several such options in ways we believe complement the feel of gaming in the Dying Earth. That is to say we feel such worship can occur whilst retaining the decadent and ephemeral feel of the world (rather than changing the atmosphere inappropriately towards a more noble kind of fantasy environment).

In the body of this article, eight of the Dying Earth deities that Jack Vance mentioned, or alluded to, are discussed in detail; plus three others invented at whim to flesh out their ranks in suitable style. Vance's original deity Gilfig and his progenitor, Zo Zam, are omitted, covered as they are in the forthcoming adventure supplement 'Fields of Silver'. Likewise the - fortunately localized - worship of Vance's unsociable Dangott is also disregarded, as this too is covered in 'Fields of Silver'. (Dangott in any case - unlike Yob, who is described in this article as well as in 'Fields of Silver' - is actually a demonic being, falsely named as a god.)

¹ And even amongst the few such as these, none have as yet divined this information.

Bampath: God of Wisdom

"I can indeed alert you to the wisest course. First, let us prostrate ourselves before this representation of Bampath and perform the thirteen obsequiences."



Manifestations

Bampath is shown most usually as a scholarly gentleman peering into the pages of a great book. This might be a wooden carving, old stone statue, or - most often - sketch or painting.

Credo

The key to enlightenment is to study wisely, to know what is worth knowing and to ignore what is not.

Worshippers

Unsurprisingly, Bampath is the god of librarians, academics and students, or at least technically so. In previous aeons, centers of learning often supported a shrine to this divinity, and all major exam halls had a statue overlooking the proceedings. Nowadays he is all but forgotten in the few such places still extant. Instead, his remaining worshippers are sages and other wise folk - usually those who live outside of large settlements. (They maintain shrines usually because their father, father's father, and father's father's father did so before them)

Sacred Precincts

Few such remain, save ruined shrines and fallen temples buried beneath the muck of ages. A few of the older academic institutions still maintain a statue of Bampath, but nobody pays this object any heed - believing it to be merely a superstitious affectation. Some sages honor a small personal shrine to Bampath, but this hardly qualifies as a sacred precinct.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Amongst those sages who call upon Bampath to aid their researches there is a common belief that he awards them with greater comprehension and discernment.

Game Option 1: Some few Kaiin academics still traditionally touch the old statue to Bampath outside the Great Hall in the Scholasticarium before beginning a lecture. (This act grants them a boon of 1 on all Pedantry rolls made to support that lecture, but costs them 2 points from their Magic pool.)

Game Option 2: Sages who maintain a shrine to Bampath, provided they perform the correct rites at least weekly, gain a boon of 1 on all Pedantry rolls when reciting or recalling facts or conducting research. (However, this benefit only applies when they are within 10 ells of the shrine itself.)

Game Option 3: In Val Ombrio, Bampath is recalled as a worthy deity (SVG, p88), and is especially revered at the famous Sapitentiary, where an actual shrine room exists - with its own acolyte to tend the incenses and dust the ornaments. The local variety of bestial leucomorph tends to devour only the brains of its victims and is hence deemed to be a seeker of knowledge, and allegorical representative of Bampath. In the town itself a small temple to Bampath has its own priest. Here, the god is known to be the sponsor of all intelligence, and ceremonies are held with great formality and intrinsic convolutions. Those of good breeding are expected to attend ceremonies with reasonable regularity, and to prove their continued suitability to high station through mastery of these intricacies. Only the oldest families still maintain a committed involvement in this tortuous religion. (Students and academics at the Sapitentiary have a far more liberal interpretation of Bampath's worship requirements, and consider him the God of Mathematics.)

Game Option 4: In certain settlements of the west, Bampath is revered as the God of Philosophies, and his worshippers are encouraged to spend their days in contemplation and their evenings in learned discourse. These monks must of course be supported by the local populace, and their ways have become so entrenched, that these people are now pathetic pedants who talk riddles and half-formed theorems, often becoming profoundly drunk. The local folk still work to uphold their lifestyles. Perhaps this is because the leading philosophers are strong-willed individuals who lead false worship to Bampath before his statue in the main square, and know how to mechanically simulate a divine voice and various special effects that keep the populace cowed. (A band of rogues might inadvertently expose this trickery whilst passing through the town on their ill-favored journeyings.)

Game Option 5: Though this was probably not Jack Vance's original intent, perhaps the Museum of Man is one huge temple to Bampath? Deep within its echoing halls is a shrine room dedicated to this god, the last such place still in reasonable preservation. Here, divine energy daily recharges great copper vessels that in turn power the machines that store the knowledge of the previous aeons. This state of affairs would partially explain why the demon Blikdak

sought to devour and desecrate this place. In a game, Turjan-Level adventurers might visit the Museum in order to seek forgotten lore from Guyal the new Curator (IT p128). Once inside they will find that Guyal is now a religious man, a true follower of the genuine Bampath. He insists that they accompany him in worship of this being before he will allow them to access the stores of wisdom. Perhaps other worshippers who have joined Guyal in his unusually altruistic position as keeper of lore now staff the Museum? All of these people are engaged in the mammoth task of cataloguing and uncovering the information contained in the hundreds of machines - as well as still learning the mysteries of the Museum.

Game Option 6: If your game supports PCs with a scholarly bent, magicians or otherwise, one may seek to use worship of Bampath as an adjunct to the PC's personality. It is probably easiest to incorporate this into the game, by having the character learn various cantraps and small rituals that assist with learning and remembering information, as well as discerning what is true and what is false. These magics only function for someone who maintains a weekly ritual of honoring Bampath, and wears the sacred sigil on a personal amulet. The most likely place to become a worshipper is at the Museum of Man (see above).

Ethodea: Goddess of Mercy

"The wavering shape of a woman, beautiful, grave, stately --- glowing with an unearthly green light."

Manifestations

Statues to Ethodea are few and far between, existing mostly only in ruined temples of former ages. However, many village healers have a small wooden carving of this ancient goddess in their abodes or healing halls. In classical pictures she is always shown as noble and beautiful, often with hair elaborately coifed in a historical style, and - in the old statues - clothes of an unfamiliar type. Modern urban worshippers prefer simple woodcuts of a plainer but clearly compassionate woman in contemporary dress of good quality. Ethodea was once summoned to a Black Sabbath, in order to be harmed unto death (TDE p49), but Valdaran's Green Legion thwarted this effect. During the short time she was visible, she was a towering and splendid ethereal figure.

Credo

Ethodea's credo is simple: she advocates peace, understanding, and mercy. This bizarre system of priorities shows that her main worship periods were long ago, when such sentiments held sway over significant numbers of people.



Worshippers

Many small communities support a local healer, who hands down their skills generation after generation. Amongst these people, Ethodea is remembered and revered. Even in some of the major settlements certain reliable herbalists number themselves amongst her followers. These people are the first to be sought after by the sick and injured, because when they become followers of this goddess they must forswear all manner of violence and personal gain, dedicating themselves to the relief of suffering. These folk may otherwise differ enormously in character. For reasons just covered, it is advised that no opportunities to join the worship of Ethodea are presented to player-run characters. Other games may support benevolent healers amongst the ranks of adventurers, but DERPG does not lend itself to this. However, this does not mean that significant GMC healers might not be close contacts of the characters.

Sacred Precincts

Shrines to Ethodea are largely personal affairs, constructed in the rooms of a healer, or merely against the wall of a study or bedchamber. No temples remain extant, nor even any rumors of such places, although certainly they would once have existed. The most prominent sacred precinct to this goddess these days is the venerable statue at the end of Azenomei's market street. This is maintained as part of the town's general upkeep, as it is locally believed to bring good luck to the settlement. Some locals (notably those who are sick or who are caring for ill or injured relatives) still leave gifts of petals or small sweetmeats at the feet of this statue.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Long ago, the Ethodeans were a huge religious body, but nowadays her worship is uncommon and informal. Characters cannot expect to find one or more of her healers in any major settlement, although in some regions this will be the case. Worshippers of Ethodea who hold to their vows receive a boon of 1 on all attempts to heal the sick. Those who attack her worshippers or steal from them receive a minor curse. This manifests as a levy of 1 to be applied to all attempts (magical or otherwise) to heal from injury, disease or poison. The GM describes this curse only as faint memories (and guilty feelings) about the deed in question whenever such a healing is attempted. Because of Ethodea's purity, any attempts to resist this curse are rolled at a penalty of 1. Normally to lift

the curse requires suitable penance - usually long and difficult journeys to collect rare healing herbs. Ethodeans tend to have a rating of at least 6 in 'Physician', and almost always know the spell 'Edan's Thaumaturgic Poultice' (DERPG p106) plus cantraps to stop bleeding, cure headaches, ease childbirth, and the like.

Game Option 1: The first Ethodean encountered in the game should be introduced as an unusual vestige of ancient days - a person concerned with the general welfare of their fellows. Perhaps this person operates a small hostel for the sick in some major settlement, or is a renowned and eccentric regional herbalist. Definitely avoid the slightest indication that they are part of some widespread 'healing cult', though the healer might have some scant knowledge (and tales) of long ago times when such was the case.

Game Option 2: Notable persons of wealth who become ill (or whose close friends or family do) may go to great lengths to find a healer of great renown to come and assist them. (Presuming that magic is unable to solve the problem.) Such a person may well be an Ethodean, and may require finding, persuading, and escorting across dangerous or unknown territory in order to make best speed.

Game Option 3: Ethodea's worshippers have no particular uniform, and generally wear a simple version of whatever local garb is commonly adopted. They follow local customs, although they are less likely to manifest violence, and not likely at all to live in communities that routinely practice violence as part of their customs - or who have anything to do with demons. Healers may be exempted from their vow of pacifism when it comes to self-defense or protecting their shrines or patients from harm. Those who offend local healers suffer the wrath of the entire community.

Icon of Vitality

(20 points, permanent)

This small silver statuette of Ethodea is capable of healing an injury up to three times in any single day. To activate it one must chant the correct veneration of Ethodea and expend three points from one's Magic pool. It will not work for someone who has demonic taint, is a half-man, or has a negative sympathy rating. Such a useful item would likely arrive in a game when recovered from the coffers of a witch-cult, since worshippers of Ethodea would value it far too highly to give it away.

The Solar Emosynaries

As well as the reverence of divine entities (whatever they may actually be), various forms of false worship of other less noble beings exist. In many cases, due to the immense passage of time, this worship has degenerated into a form totally unrecognizable from its original structure. As well as subworld beings viewed as gods - such as Dangott (mentioned above) - Overworld entities have also been revered. In either case the actual nature of the original entity has usually been forgotten, and sometimes so has the entity's very existence.

The ancient order of Solar Emosynaries believes that the purpose of their existence is to support the sun's floundering vitality. The common members labor towards this end through the use of contrivances composed of various lenses and mirrors and multi-wicked lamps supported above a pit containing a vigorous fire. They direct the vitality of the flames towards the failing sun through careful focusing of the lenses towards that faltering orb.

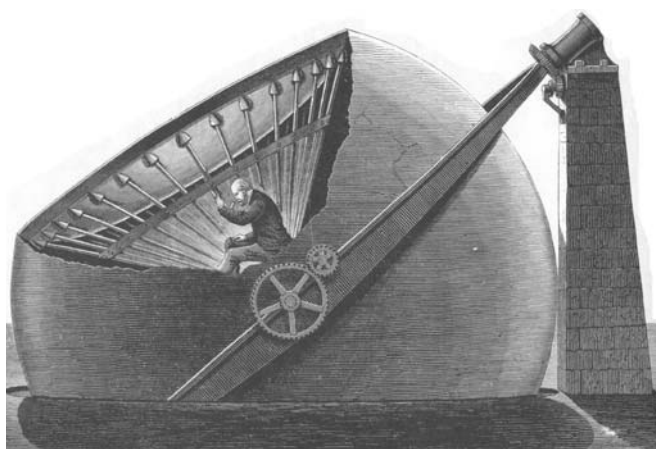
Once such activities were undertaken at a chain of world-spanning locations, but that was long ago. Currently only three of these support stations remain in existence. One is in the town of Gundar, a week or more to the north of Lumarth; the second is part of the observatory complex at the settlement of Vir Vassilis to the south of the Silver Desert. The third is at Blue Azor - which lies at the edge of a great ocean bay, far inland from Cansapara.

Gundar

A town constructed of buildings in the shapes of huge gourds - the activities of the Emosynaries are considered a crucial part of the local traditions, though this importance is largely symbolic. The tradition is by and large maintained only through the persistence of the local Nolde (currently one Huruska), who sees the continuation of their efforts as a great enhancement to his own prestige. Those young men who are actually rostered to maintain the flames, and see to the direction of the lenses, often grumble that their task may well by now be superfluous to the requirements of the quite clearly moribund sun. And yet that injured celestial body flickers and heaves with sufficient regularity to maintain their basic diligence.

Vir Vassilis

This was once a great city and is now much reduced in splendour. Nonetheless, it retains some of its former greatness, and the residents live reasonably well amongst the still largely sound central district that surrounds the observatory complex. By tradition, the Astronomers of Vir Vassilis are supported by the efforts of local farmers and craftsmen. In their turn the astronomers oversee a multitude of complex established tasks that are essential for the continuing well-being of the universe. As distant as they are from any other settlements (though once the ruined roads that pass through this place formed a crossing of two

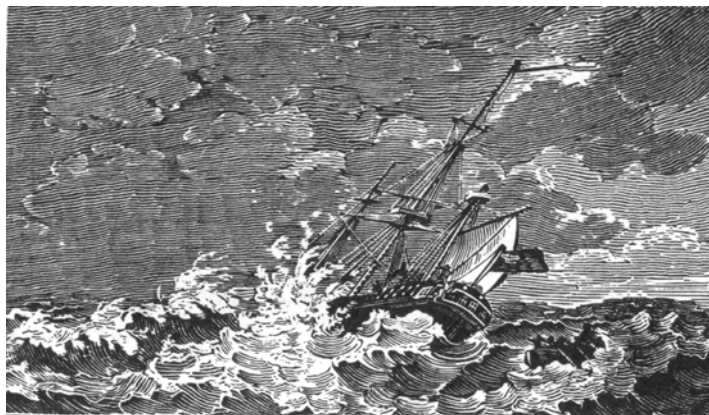


world-spanning thoroughfares) the inhabitants are haughty with outsiders, yet take the claims of their Astronomers at face value. After all, their lives are otherwise peaceful and relatively enjoyable. Occasionally travelers from afar still reach their city, but are not welcomed as bold adventurers, rather treated with extreme condescension. It is worth noting that Vir Vassilis holds the only remaining original machine of the Emosynaries - an impressive device of metal panels, silver mirrors, and diamond-ground prisms. They are supported over an engineering marvel - a furnace in the shape of a six-pointed star, upon which is engraved the face of an unknown being of flame.

Blue Azor

These Emosynaries live in a village on a rocky promontory jutting from an area of dangerous jungle, and separated from it by a chasm crossed only by a single stone span. They too are isolated from the rest of the world, though occasionally trading ships put in to the aging docks at the ruins of a nearby ancient seaport. (Often in fact drawn to the region by a distant sighting of the flames of the Emosynary fire visible on the

headland.) The original Blue Azor was the ruin itself, and at one time it housed an observatory not unlike that at Vir Vassilis. The current inhabitants of this region are friendly towards peaceful traders, and the only habit that drives them to aggressive acts is that of attempting to plunder the sacred ruins of the original city in search of curios and the relics of the dead. Again the tradition of maintaining the shrine of flames is continued despite common local feeling that their task have little or no actual significance in maintaining the sun's longevity. However, since the work is effectively minimal, why take the risk?



Braving the coast near Blue Azor

Solar Emosynary Scenario:

A magician PC discovers, via some odd means (perhaps coincidental research or the timely warning of a rogue archveult), that the activities of the Solar Emosynaries are part of an ancient binding. The maintenance of this enchantment it seems truly does have a crucial role in the health and safety of the folk of the Dying Earth. However, it is not the longevity of the sun that is supported. Rather the presence of the solar replenishment stations themselves imprisons a terrible fire demon (really a fractious Overworld daihak) named Hexamonus. It was once worshipped as a god, but its priests grew greedy and misused its powers. Hexamonus did not care, and for a time walked the land at the head of power-hungry armies. Eventually an arch-magician fought him and imprisoned him in the sun. The erection and preservation of a series of flame-stations was part of the magic that bound him there. Over time the stations became assumed to have another purpose altogether. (This misunderstanding having been deliberately encouraged in order to enhance the public perceptions of those responsible for its continuance). Regardless of all this history, one or more of the stations has given up its practice, and this has been sufficient at last to break the binding. Hexamonus is now free to enter the world of men and wreak his revenge, and is presumably making his inexorable way to Earth from the sun even now.

It can only be weeks at most before Hexamonus arrives. The magician has a choice: either to sit by and wait for Hexamonus to begin the systematic destruction of humankind, or to act to ensure that the traditions continue at all three locations. (It can be learned through research that a minimum of three is required to fulfil the binding conditions.) It will be necessary to recover lost parts of the original machine at Blue Azor as part of this adventure; also possibly to ensure that the idle folk of Gundar renew their project with greater zeal. (Although if Huruska finds out what is really going on, he may try to contact Hexamonus and gain his favor. And this may prove a substantial plot device as Huruska and other agents of Hexamonus sabotage the efforts of the characters.)

If Hexamonus is not stopped, he will arrive upon the earth. He may prove to resemble Sadlark (TDE pp571-574), though golden and red, with licks of flame emanating from his form. Hexamonus may descend upon Gundar and (with Huruska as his lieutenant) put all its folk into thrall, intent on the manufacture of a new temple to himself. Not such a terrible goal in itself, but his casual disregard for human life is surely the first of many evils he intends to impose on the world. How and where will the characters find the means to vanquish this entity before its project is complete and more of its kind are called? (Or perhaps he merely constructs a gateway in order to return home - and the adventurers only discover this at the last moment, when their final attempt to slay him has failed.)

Huruska the Nolde

"Direct the regulator aright and instantly! Would you have us groping for the rest of our lives in the dark?"

Persuade (Forthright) 8, Rebuff (Wary) 6, Attack (Strength) 11, Defend (Parry) 8, Health 9, Magic (Studious) 3, Appraisal 4, Athletics 7, Etiquette 4, Gambling 3, Pedantry 9, Perception 7, Wherewithal 6.

Resistances: Avarice 2, Indolence 4, Rakishness 3



Klesbu: God of Earthly Delights

"Why do you vacillate? I merely wish to venerate Klesbu at the two-fold temple? What could be more pure?"



Klesbu still retains the highest number of lay worshippers

Manifestations

Klesbu is most commonly pictured as a lusty gentleman of prime middle-age, usually with a mug of ale in one hand and a younger woman clutched lasciviously in the other. Some commentators note (probably correctly) that this is a crude depiction of what was once a far more complex deity. In rare ancient texts Klesbu is pictured as the male counterpart to Paphnis, and this seems to indicate some pantheonic relationship between the gods, but only the most veiled of references to such an interaction remain extant.

Credo

Eat, drink, fornicate and be merry (preferably without causing harm to anyone else). This at least is how his current worshippers generally view him. In fact, Klesbu was once the god of joy, dance, and food, and his worship covered a wide range of activities.

Worshippers

Klesbu is worshipped by no major organized groups, but is still popularly remembered. At many settlements across the world, his name and/or image is associated with popular festivals. In many places hardened drinkers still raise a mug in his memory, without necessarily recalling who or what he was.

Sacred Precincts

In several out of the way locations, are small semi-ruined temples (usually in places of great natural beauty) at whose precincts local revelers make merry, usually on days seen as traditionally important (such as the solstice). These places are old in the extreme, but somehow have been preserved – although plants and fruit trees commonly grow amongst and within the few remaining sacred buildings.

Remaining Worldly Significance

As mentioned above, Klesbu is still associated with public and private ceremonies of greater or lesser debauchery. In some areas this is totally symbolic – restricted to representations of the deity being used as parts of the decoration. In other areas, dances are held in his honor, and drinking competitions reveal who can hold the most alcohol whilst still remaining conscious. (*This person is crowned 'King of the Festival' and placed on a podium in a throne decorated with grapes and flowers – where he usually slumbers in a thin coating of his own fluids.*) Some few settlements still worship Klesbu in the ancient ways, engaging in orgies of feasting and fornication. At such places there is also often a 'Queen of the Festival' who joins the king (both are chosen for physical prowess rather than powers of imbibation) in an energetic display of couching. These ceremonies may be either held unashamedly in public or at one of the old sacred sites, depending on the settlement in question.

Game Option 1: A profoundly 'Odd Custom' would be for travelers to find themselves residing in one of the settlements that still reveres Klesbu in the ancient way when a ceremony of some sort takes place. Enthusiastic engagement in the proceedings is likely, and whilst Klesbu does not encourage human sacrifice the locals may find it offensive when visitors do not fulfil the requisite ceremonial requirements at appropriate intervals. Such wrong-doers may be punished in a variety of non-fatal ways – each one lending itself to a scenario.

Game Option 2: Monks of Klesbu would make interesting characters at Cugel-Level. These jolly folk travel in small groups, usually with a senior monk and several novices. Though they talk of high matters of religion and can engage in theological debate with any other savants, they believe that life is meant to be filled with pleasure and that all who suffer do so needlessly. This does not mean that the monks of

Klesbu are buffoons, far from it. They travel the world journeying from one marvel to another, from festival to festival, enjoying good food and fine wines, and may engage in profound discourse on all aspects of Gourmandism as if it was high art. However, they will not follow rogues through a dark alley merely at the sight of a haunch of meat, nor do they regularly get so drunk as to be easy targets for pickpockets and con artists. As far as they are concerned, their religion is as valid as any other. It may indeed be that Klesbu protects his own, and any who abuse these folk find themselves unable to attain pleasure (penalty of 1 on Seduction and Persuasion rolls towards the end of attaining pleasure) until they make amends. The monks themselves enjoy pleasures of the flesh, and may even be trained well in the advanced erotic arts. (Each has a high rating in Seduction and a bonus on Athletics rolls in certain situations.) Again, however, they are not slaving lechers, but true aficionados of the art of enticement and the joys of couching.

Game Option 3: Klesbu might seem like a fine option for a deity if one is a certain type of Cugel-Level character. However, full worship requires joining one of these bands of monks as a novice for a considerable period of time, and is thus not conducive to campaign play. Nonetheless, an appropriate character might find a statuette to Klesbu and (after learning who and what it represents -

perhaps from one of the monks or a friendly GMC sage) choose to offer it prayers or adoration. This odd custom seems quite in keeping with the quirky behaviors of many of Cugel's travelling companions. The character would need to acknowledge the statuette nightly (unless prevented by dire circumstance) at least by placing it on the ground and saying a few words before it. If they then claim themselves to be a worshipper, and faithfully maintain such actions to the best of their ability, the GM could reward them with enhanced resistance to despair. (Such things are rare of course, but possibly result from curses or demonic magic.) Additionally, such a person might detect spoiled or poisonous food and drink with relative ease, and never get so intoxicated that they are incapable - no matter how much alcohol (or even soporific drugs) they imbibe.

Game Option 4: In some locales across the Dying Earth, brewers may know of and revere Klesbu. Each brewery maintains a small statue and shrine area, and they believe that Klesbu blesses the fermentation process. Characters who sample the product are forced to agree that this is a superior beverage. In these situations Klesbu is acknowledged in much that way as the fisherfolk acknowledge Yob in Cugel's tale. That is, they respect his utility, but do not accord him with a high place amongst the divinities.

Mandingo: Goddess of Luck

"The idea has merit ... but let us use my cards, which are newer and easier on the eyes."

Manifestations

Mandingo is rarely portrayed in any detail, save as a three dots arranged in triangular formation. In certain ancient tomes she is shown as a woman both sly and attractive, with a third eye either on the palm or back of her hand, on the back of her head, or floating disembodied somewhere nearby. Some few professional criminals wear amulets on which the three-dot pattern is etched - hoping that this will add luck to their nefarious endeavors.

Credo

Mandingo's tenets have long since gone to dust, save as brief summaries in the few surviving pedantic compendiums of previous aeons. These texts are unlikely in the extreme to be owned or read by any of her followers (see below), save perhaps in an attempt to evaluate their worth before passing them on to a receiver of stolen goods. Basically she advocates making one's own luck through skill, clever pretence, and by learning to take advantage of any situation.



Worshippers

In previous days Mandingo's followers were clever thieves, sometimes operating in organized bands. No such organizations remain, for trust is rare (especially amongst thieves) and organization in any significant level even more so. Nonetheless, those who choose the lifestyle of the opportunist are sometimes drawn to the few remaining references to this goddess, and find an affinity with such words. She is also remembered in popular parlance, although few right-minded people would speak her name out loud, for fear of attracting her attention.

Sacred Precincts

Even when she was widely known, Mandingo had no permanent places of worship.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Mandingo has left to the world only her name, some few simple records, and a handful of magics sometimes associated with her. She requires no worship, no recognition, nor even that those who use these magics ever consider themselves her followers. Note that the rules terms that accompany the following magics are not apparent to the characters (nor necessarily even to the players) and the GM could be forgiven for describing them as purely advantageous, which is normally how they would be described in contemporary criminal literature. (Though of course some commentators may mention vague penalties such as the pollution of one's soul.)

Mandingo's Stealthy Acquisition

Range: Self

Duration: Concentration

Difficulty: Straightforward

The caster grows a third arm, which sprouts from under either armpit as desired. This can be used as required. In game terms it gives a boon of one to any attempts to Pick Pockets or otherwise avail oneself of small objects without arousing suspicion. On a Dismal Failure the arm is hard to control, and jerks involuntarily, abruptly revealing itself to all and sundry before the caster can end the magic.

Mandingo's Catechism

Function: This cantrap of criminal blessing is commonly used prior to casting one of several nefarious spells. (Specifically, Archemand's Unlikely Self-Restraint, Arnhoul't's Unimpeded Egress, Arrant Verbal Accomplishment, Bergi's Triumphant Compression, Calactus' Precise Deception, the Enchantment of Another's Face, Extensible Auditory Range, the First Felicitous Progression, Klopag's

Inaccurate Recollection, Klopag's Wandering Manipulator, Lubyon's Concealing Mist, the Mantle of Stealth, Sequestrious Digitalia, and the Spell of the Seductive Frontier.)²

Gestures Required: One need only mutter the magical phrase and thrust any three fingers bluntly forward.

Variations in Effect: This cantrap alters the results of the spell cast immediately afterwards. An Exasperating Failure becomes a Hair's-Breadth Success, and a Quotidian Failure becomes a Dismal Failure. (The drawback is that an Exasperating or Quotidian Failure - although they are adjusted as described - cannot be re-rolled.)

The Luck of Mandingo

Function: Assists gambling attempts.

Gestures Required: To mutter the simple phrase (often disguised as a cough into one's hands, or blowing on the dice) and shake one's hand three times (which can be done almost imperceptibly).

Variations in Effect: For the cost of a single point from the Magic pool, the success level of the next Gambling roll is raised by 1. This is described in game terms in whatever way is most appropriate. For instance the gambler may be able to see his opponent's cards in his mind's eye, or else the dice may fall particularly well. On a Dismal Failure, the fact that the gambler said something odd, or moved their hands, in a dubious way was obvious to any suspicious observer (but not to those with no reason to strongly suspect trickery).

Diversión of Guilt

Function: If any remotely feasible alternative focus for blame is at hand, you temporarily divert attention to that person. Even if you were seen to undertake some minor transgression, a phrase such as 'he made me do it' becomes oddly and impulsively plausible.

Gestures Required: Surreptitiously bending back thumb and little finger on either hand (so that the three middle fingers project), one merely points, calls, or otherwise directs attention to a nearby person who is not locally well known as an incorruptible individual.

Variations in Effect: Unless protected by magic that blocks mental manipulation, anyone who notes this accusation turns their indignation upon the person you have indicated. An EF means that this lasts for only one round; however a HBS grants three rounds of freedom from suspicion, a PS five rounds, and an IS - seven rounds. (GM decides how many rounds it

² Some have wondered if these magics originated from Mandingo and were appropriated by others.

takes to clear the mob and how far one can sprint in the remaining time.) On a DF your pathetic attempts to transfer the blame cement your guilt in the eyes of the mob. (This cantrap does not work on anyone who directly saw you commit some grievous crime such as murder or sacrilegious vandalism, but may confuse their companions sufficiently to prevent the one who saw you from acting effectively.)

Game Option 1: Perhaps a few followers of Mandingo do remain. Petty felons of more than usual ingenuity, who believe her to be one of the Fates. In this case, a small number of shrines to Mandingo may exist - each at the headquarters of a small criminal band in a large settlement or highly populated region.

Game Option 2: Adventurers may learn of Mandingo through making the acquaintance of one of her followers or finding a description of her worship in some aged tome, along with details of her spell and/or cantraps. It is entirely possible that a Cugel-Level character may wish to give reverence to this entity, in the hopes of taking unfair advantage. No obvious physical representation is required, merely any configuration of three similar objects - often objects associated with gambling, such as dice. These can simply be laid out on a table or any surface, prior to performing one's devotions.

Game Option 3: After several uses of Mandingo's magic, the goddess herself begins to appear in the PC's dreams, and later in their waking thoughts. The experience is neither invasive nor unpleasant, but the PC realizes that they have inadvertently sworn to her worship by learning her magic. Mandingo encourages nefarious deeds, although not criminal stupidity. She will suggest valuable target goods and other criminal activities, or merely point out those most likely to be relieved of some of their valuables by whatever means the PC has skill in. In game terms this translates to intuitions, whispers, encouragements, and mild chiding for missed opportunities. The GM decides how often such things occur for optimum game enhancement. If the PC continues to act reasonably often in a criminal fashion then no disadvantages accrue - indeed the GM might have Mandingo assist the PC with occasional practical advice. However, if the character refuses to follow any suggestions, they will find that from time to time they are wrongfully accused, and that they become the victims of petty crime on a regular basis. Removing one's allegiance to Mandingo is as difficult as negating a powerful curse. (That is to say it would be the focus of a scenario.)

GMs are advised to play all communications with

Mandingo in a subtle fashion, so that they don't interfere with the normal atmosphere of the game.

Game Option 4: Several magical artifacts imbued with the power of Mandingo still exist. On any use of such item for motives of pure profit a negative sympathy point is attracted. (Restrict this to one point per evening of Gambling, and if the user shares at least a third of his profits with impoverished companions or other destitutes then the point may be rescinded.)

Ivory Dice of Peculiar Favor

(15 points, permanent)

Prior to beginning any gambling match involving this pair of dice, the owner must mutter a few words in honor of Mandingo. At a cost of 2 points from their Magic pool, for the duration of the match, the owner's Gambling rolls are at + 1. Although slightly larger than regular dice, this size difference is not so great as to unfailingly evoke comment. They are ivory, and although old and battered appear pleasing to the eye. This makes a tempting target for thieves.

Singular Cards of A Former Aeon

(20 points, permanent)

These cards are of suits no longer known, but since there are four of them, with all the requisite numbers and pictures, it is possible to persuade others to join 'in a hand or two'. At any point in the game the owner may spend a Magic pool point - indicated in the game by a sub-vocalized imploration to Mandingo. This gives a bonus of 2 on the next Gambling roll, and imposes a penalty of 1 on every other player for that same round. (Should the GM decide that all such games are resolved by one roll, increase the Magic pool cost to 3.) One problem is that these cards look unusual. After the owner wins a game or two, they gain a local notoriety - no-one who's played before, or knows anyone who has, will take play again.

Bracelet of Uncanny Accuracy

(10 points, permanent)

This peculiar bracelet is made from links of unknown dull metal. It contracts and expands to fit the wrist of any human owner. When the wearer throws an object towards a non-living target, he may expend a Magic pool point (indicated in game by an arcane shake of the wrist). This grants + 1 to the three following rolls (Quick Fingers or appropriate Attack) against the same target. (If the whole game is decided by one roll for each player, and consists of much more than three throws each, increase Magic pool cost to 2 points.)

Miamatta: God of Justice

"To each who comes, justice is done"



Manifestations

Miamatta once had statues, engravings, and multiple glorious renditions in many other mediums. Now, all such things are lost in the mists of time. His image is only observed when he occasionally manifests in the shattered ruins of his single remaining temple; when he passes judgement on supplicants. He appears as a golden, six-armed human with serene visage, and speaks with a low, sibilant voice, always without malice, no matter what judgement is made or the pleadings of those judged. Once the effects of his decision have been performed his image will vanish.

Credo

The credo of Miamatta is simple; this being exists only in order to enhance honor, purity and justice. Long ago its precepts, like its duties and privileges, were multiple; now all are forgotten - save its ability to pass dispassionate judgement on the wronged and the unworthy. Unknown to most, Miamatta is the origin of the Law of Equipoise - the only one of his many wisdoms that has continued in popular usage.

Worshippers

None now exist who can influence Miamatta, so this divine being makes its own judgements as it sees fit. His name is rarely even recalled save by extremely unusual folk such as Pandelume. (It is recommended that no PCs are ever able to become worshippers of Miamatta, since this would require an inappropriate sense of grandness and honor in the DE milieu.)

Sacred Precincts

This god once had several magnificent temples constructed of white marble, but these are all gone. Beyond the Great Erm, to the north of the Central Steppe is a place where beautiful green woodlands surround a huge lake. Here lies the ruin of a city so old that it no longer has a name at all. Once a beautiful place of low domes and glass spires, it has left little trace beyond a few weathered columns jutting from the shallows. The columns, however, indicate the location of Miamatta's last remaining temple, and in calm weather may be reached by only a few minutes of wading carefully across the sandbanks.

At the center of these remaining pillars is a large raised circular platform, and surrounding this fractured edifice the air itself is thick with the feel of a powerful, brooding divine presence. Here one stands in a mere foot or two of water, and the honorable and pure-hearted can call upon this divinity for aid.

NB: This is beyond the NE corner of the official DE map.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Miamatta, like Ethodia, is one of the few remaining superior gods still with influence in the common world. This makes it both powerful and incredibly dangerous. It is entirely just and totally unable to be influenced in any major way; this makes it an unwise choice for any DE adventurer to approach casually. However, any character who has mostly behaved in a benevolent manner towards his fellow humans could approach Miamatta in humble and appropriately apologetic supplication to have a curse revoked or some other affliction negated, especially if they were supplicating on behalf of someone else. This is still unlikely to be without cost. A vain character might find they have been somehow humbled, an avaricious character find that their wealth or most valuable items have vanished. Whatever justice is meted out to balance the benefit will be something from which the character can learn. Benevolent GMs might reward characters who take this on board in their actions from then on, by granting them a free point of Resistance, or adding positive sympathy points.

Game Option 1: Miamatta also still has a few human followers. These name themselves Atwellan Purists and live in independent isolated settlements (perhaps no more than one or two still extant). They behave according to rigid social codes. Over long centuries these have of course become degraded and/or inflexible. At Cugel-level these laws are tortuous, entirely unnecessary, and likely to be broken with hazardous and/or amusing consequences. (There may also be highly tempting altar decorations of minor magical potency.) At Turjan-level these precepts may merely be representative of a strangely archaic - and yet welcoming enough - society, and the Ecclesiasts of Miamatta may possess unusual magical powers. (E.g. Innate abilities to recognize truth and/or lies; knowledge of ceremonies to cleanse a person's soul³; and absolute resistance to harmful magic.)

³ Remove points of Demon Taint or evil curses.

Game Option 2: Amongst the world's few noble pedants are some that believe in justice and honor. One by one several of these have discovered the existence of Miamatta's temple and journeyed there to beg guidance in how to live a righteous life in these troubled times. Those able to comprehend and adopt the precepts in this deity's response are now holy. These rare folk dress in plain gray robes and travel preaching nobility of the soul. They are widely derided, and yet something about them reminds one that within every fractured human soul is a spark of divinity. This very revelation often gains them instant enemies. Yet in some way these folk are provided for; everywhere they go someone will give them food and lodging, and any time they are seriously threatened someone will be there to help. (This does not mean that they take foolish risks.) At Cugel-Level they will most likely be encountered within a travelling party - merely as part of the color of an adventure or as objectors to be avoided or tricked in the course of some ignoble pursuit. Should their disfavor be aroused they are capable of evoking minor curses (DERPG pp 81/82). These may include causing Lugwiler's Dismal Itch (DERPG p108) or the Astounding Oral Projection (DERPG p105) to activate on a thief each and every time in the future they physically touch goods that are known to be stolen. At Turjan-Level they might be interacted with in a more meaningful way. Perhaps they have observed a gross injustice that they would wish to be annulled, or perhaps they require safe conduct through difficult terrain⁴. In return they may nullify a curse, remove Demon Taint, or provide information.

Game Option 3: If you own *Demons of the Dying Earth* (Pelgrane Press, 2003) you will have access to much information about Valdaran the Just and his Green Legion. Only ambition and a desire to rid the world of evil motivate these fanatical heroes and magicians. However, Valdaran and several of his lieutenants might well be worshippers of Miamatta. GMs need not alter their basic concept of these folk being dangerously obsessed zealots, for throughout known history humans have taken the words of persons of spiritual integrity and twisted them to suit their own ends. In this case Valdaran and his men worship Miamatta in order to gain unusual magical abilities to resist demonic magic and otherworldly terror - the 'strong countermagic' mentioned in the story. Miamatta's anti-demonic leanings are of course only

one part of his reasons for existing, but at the time Valdaran petitioned him a decade ago, Valdaran's obsessions had not grown so extreme - and Miamatta welcomed the opportunity to have active worshippers once again. When designing these powers for the Legion, keep everyday powers simple - things like a bonus of 1 on rolls to withstand demonic magic, heal from demonic wounds, and resist the demonic aura of fear. However, perhaps the reason why the Legion could attack that Black Sabbath with impunity is that they had performed a special ritual to Miamatta and gained temporary immunity to demonic spells.

Game Option 4: A handful of magical religious items dedicated to Miamatta remain extant.

User Restrictions: None of these items function if the would-be user has a negative sympathy rating, or any demonic taint rating, nor if the wielder has murdered.

Locations: All such items could be located in dusty alcoves in the altar rooms of forgotten temples, or as highly-protected (but never utilized - since their powers have been forgotten) sacred relics in one of the few (probably generalist) temples still remaining.

Miamatta's Helm

(50 points, permanent)

It has no user-restrictions (but does not function for anyone with demonic taint, nor a non-human). The wearer is immune to fear and to mental attacks/control. It is a winged helm of brightly shining steel. It costs 1 point from the wearer's Magic pool per 20 minutes.



⁴ Presumably Miamatta is offering the characters a chance to practice charity, since he can normally take care of his own.

The Sword of Law

(100 points, permanent)

This is a great steel blade that may only be wielded by the Pure-Hearted. (Those who either possess a 'Pure-Hearted' Rebuff of 9+ or who have sworn themselves to the tenets of Miamatta. In any case must not have 'Intimidating' as a Persuasion, or 'Ferocity' Attack.)

Those who can wield this sword find that it swings especially lightly and easily against certain targets.

(Foes that have demonic taint, demonic blood, or have ever committed intentional murder.) If a would-be wielder does not qualify, in combat the sword to

them weighs as much as a loaded wheelbarrow and is hence useless as a weapon. In game terms it applies a bonus of 1 on appropriate Attacks, and applies a levy of 1 on Health rolls by appropriate injured foes.

The Cuirass of Purity

(40 points, permanent)

This bronze breastplate has a rearing dragon molded into it. A rightful wearer gains a +1 bonus to Health rolls when resisting any kind of physical damage from demons (whether weapons, claws, whatever), and a +1 bonus when resisting demonic magic.

Paphnis: Goddess of Beauty

"Paphnis paused on the summit of Mount Dein to rest. Nearby she found a spring where she laved her feet, thus charging the water with virtue."

Manifestations

Paphnis is most often represented as a classically beautiful woman. Sometimes she wears a fine robe, other times a revealing kirtle, and sometimes nothing at all. She is never lewd, nor engaged in sexual acts. She is present both in statues at misunderstood and neglected sacred sites and in ancient illustrations.

Credo

Paphnis is these days seen (in those few places she is remembered) as the goddess of earthly beauty. However, this was once merely a part of her significance. Long ago she was revered also as the god of dance and sensual expression, and to some societies was the subtler expression of Klesbu (who was occasionally depicted as her consort). These wider forms of understanding included the awareness of her other roles as manifested in the Tracynthian Graces. These three beings - Sush, Skasja, and Rlys - were the representations of dance, comportment, and sensuality, respectively. Paphnis' current worshippers interpret her in various ways - some claiming that it is a divine duty to present beauty to the world - whilst others say that true beauty is internal and can be cultivated in various ways other than just cosmetic.

Worshippers

In some of the larger cities, courtesans and women of high social standing worship Paphnis. Both do so in order to maintain their beauty, but do so in divergent fashion. Courtesans may have a statuette of Paphnis somewhere about the premises, and may speak her name when setting alight to smoldering essences, but mostly remember the primal aspects of Paphnis, and call out her name whilst engaged in coitus. Women of wealth keep tasteful shrines to this goddess in their

boudoirs or upon their dressers, and gift her with scents, burning herbs, & beautiful petals.

Sacred Precincts

In a handful of remote settlements, an ancient temple to Paphnis stands half-forgotten near a sacred grove or spring where she is said to have rested. Often these places are reputed to restore or promote beauty, but in almost every case the rites to activate these magical attributes have been long forgotten.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Local women may come to the sacred places of Paphnis - and some few travel from further afield - and amongst these some may name themselves as worshippers, but in truth are not. Only rarely has a local family actually retained any knowledge of how to call upon Paphnis for aid. Nonetheless, the name of Paphnis is relatively widely known, and numerous charlatans claim to be able to manufacture potions and salves which restore beauty - and are often named in some manner after the goddess⁵.



⁵ Such as 'Paphnis' Elixir of Comeliness' and the 'Pahnissian Balm of Glorious Countenance'.

Game Option 1: In the town of Ranlod a local woman continues her family's small magics. The great gift that this family has had is the ability to manufacture herbal balms that ease away the wrinkles of time - restoring youthful looks in persons of both genders. Her services are regularly sought by the wealthy and desperate from the entire surrounding region. In a Cugel-Level campaign, the characters may be hired to uncover the secrets of her magic. (She knows of a forgotten grove sacred to Paphnis, where certain normal plants are imbued with magical properties.) In a Turjan-Level campaign, witches eager also to learn her secret have kidnapped this woman, and the adventurers are hired to assure her safe return.

Game Option 2: The few remaining ruined nymphariums by and large no longer retain the enchantments that enticed nymphs (see box) to cavort in their waters and engage in playful sensuality with the worshippers of Paphnis. Nonetheless, some extremely rare exceptions exist. For instance, deep in the Great Da Forest is a forgotten vale where glades of wild fruit trees surround a wide paved portico and great fractured stone dome. Within is a dry oval pool and deserted marble couches, but on certain nights of the year (times sacred to Paphnis, though few recall this) the pool magically refills itself, and a dozen nymphs arrive to sport with any carefree souls that are present. Should they be threatened in any way the magic instantly ends, and the waters and nymphs vanish in a moment.



Game Option 3: On the upper slopes of Mount Dein on the island of Lausicaa are the Paphnissian Baths. The Pandalect Cosmei apparently constructed these in the previous aeon, at a site where Paphnis herself had rested. Once, these baths granted beauty to all who bathed in them, and also hosted a fine nympharium. However, they are ruins now, though the spring attributed with the beautifying properties still flows into a pool and then onward down the

mountainside as a sprightly stream. Occasionally the ghost of Cosmei, who wanders the mountainside, surprises those who travel this far. Although this is not widely known, she may be petitioned to restore lost beauty or reverse other effects of aging or injury - providing one makes the correct sacrifices. Another eerie effect of this location is that visitors may often here the distant playful singing of the nymphs, as if these beings merely wait around a corner in the dimensions, ready to return if only the magics were remembered. One wonders why, if these baths have the properties that local folk ascribe to them, not all of the local people are uniformly pleasing of feature?



Game Option 4: Some powerful magicians have explored the reality of Paphnis. One would like to say that they did this through altruism - in an attempt to restore an element of grace to their benighted planet. Sadly, this is not the case. In the previous aeon, a magician-sage named Suboy divined that Paphnis was in some way connected to one of the overworlds. (Perhaps she was summoned from there, perhaps the Overworld appeared after she did, nobody knows.) In that Overworld he discovered the nymphs - spirits of sensuality often associated with Paphnis in ancient texts. After years of painstaking, and often exhausting, research he rediscovered the means to magically persuade these creatures to return to frolic in one of the sacred Paphnissian 'Nymphariums'. These days a handful of extremely potent magicians maintain nymphariums as one of the privileges available to their loyal workers. This state of affairs is, we are reliably informed, extremely effective in ensuring loyalty and productivity.

Nymphs

Known Facts

Whilst some unpopular pedants have suggested that the irreverent sandestins are in some way products of the interaction of the arrogance of arch magicians with the forces of magic, what then of the nymphs, which some powerful magicians can control with care? Are they the reflection of more physical desires?

These delectable creatures house themselves in forms resembling youthful humans (usually female, but occasionally male or hermaphrodite) no older than the early years of their second decade. Always supple and agile, the nymphs seem to have adequate intelligence, but absolutely no intellectual aptitude. Their exotic looks (ranging across many pleasing peculiarities such as multi-colored or oddly toned, eyes or hair - or even skin) and pliant dispositions nonetheless make them ideal consorts for those learning the secret of their control.

Nymphs are capable of conversing sensibly, and with an apparent full grasp of language, on simple topics such as the rudiments of fashion, the choice of musical entertainment, or the pleasing beauty of the rose garden. However, they are incapable of comprehending magical formulae, scientific conjecture, or almost any other field of pedantry. (Although of course it is possible that as a race they simply choose not to give these subjects any attention.)

In these latter days of the Dying Earth, with magicians of these times lacking the mental strength of previous generations, it is now more common to be able to access the services of nymphs through arcane items. (These devices call and bind them on your behalf, removing the need for grueling visits to their realm.)

Game Statistics (Typical Nymph)

Persuade (Charming) 9, Rebuff (Pure-Hearted) 7, Attack (Speed) 3, Defense (Dodge) 15, Health 4, Magic (Resistance only) 30. Appraisal (of beauty) 8, Athletics 7, Concealment 4, Etiquette 3, Perception 5, Quick-Fingers 11, Seduction 22.

Resistances: They have no Resistances, or are immune to all, depending on the GM's whim.

Summoning and Binding

To bind a nymph, a magician may learn the Recitation of Cha-charam, an ancient spell of seventeen separate pervulsions, or else come into possession of an artefact that uses this magic to bind the nymphs in some fashion. If without such an artefact, the magician must enter the Overworld realm of the nymphs and bargain for the service of one or more of these delectable creatures, each of which may be bound to him for the period of a single year. Such interaction demands great care, for the Lord of Nymphs is capricious, and quick to take offence. However, he lusts after pretty magical baubles, expensive ornaments, and dalliances with comely human females, so bargaining is possible.



Keeping Your Nymphs Happy and Healthy

To maintain nymphs in your service one must feed them well on fruit and other pleasing foods, provide them with comfortable quarters (preferably a nympharium overlooking a fine garden to which they have access). It is also sensible to allow them at least two thirds of every day to take their leisure in the various ways that it pleases them to do so. Mistreatment of nymphs - such as forcing them to work long hours, insisting they wear clothes for long periods, beating them for slowness of mind, or insisting they engage in any taxing physical labor (other than sensual exertions) - will cause them to depart. Clever magicians watch their nymphs for early signs of displeasure, and offer incentives and kind flatteries to prevent such an occurrence.

Nymphs and Physical Damage

Nymphs are unable to comprehend or engage in acts that cause physical injury. Although they are agile, they are not robust, and are thus easy to physically extinguish. Although, since their bodies dissolve to star stuff moments after they are slain, it is possible that rather than dying their spirits return to their own realm.

Quishmaer: God of Vengeance

"Your punishment must be absolute, for in this region we hold Quishmaer the Vengeant in high esteem!"



Manifestations

Quishmaer is represented as a warrior or a cultural weapon of unusual ferociousness. In the oldest surviving pictures he has archaic tribal appearance.

Credo

This angry god demands that his followers never let abuse go unpunished. This is not his only credo: like the other gods, he demands various strange rituals performed according to the locale in which he is worshipped. However, in game terms these odd rites are unlikely to often come directly into play.

Worshippers

Quishmaer is not the patron of any community, but rather a religious adjunct (even if the community has no other gods). His worshippers believe that the nature of the universe is such that to neglect vengeance is simply unthinkable and intolerable behavior. It matters not to them that the existence of Quishmaer logically suggest that other deities must exist for other purposes, for to their minds these other deities have fallen out of recall and therefore are unlikely to still exist.

Sacred Precincts

Quishmaer is another deity who is unlikely to have any precincts worthy of mention that are still maintained. Perhaps the ruined fortress of Golickan Kodek the cruel conqueror contains a significant shrine within its fractured halls, but none these days risk the wrath of this deity through such formal interaction.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Only in isolated communities whose daily lives are highly formalized does Quishmaer still find fertile ground for belief.

Game Option 1: Certain bands of brigands or pirates may be worshippers of Quishmaer, having dedicated their lives to cruel acts in accompaniment of their thefts. These individuals will be especially feared in areas where they express their predations, and might be the focus of a Turjan-Level scenario - especially if they plunder the manse of a junior magician, or steal all the goods from an inn where one of the adventurer characters happens to be staying. Their manner will be rapacious and unusually savage, totally at odds with the lackluster and idle characters of most other DE villains.

Game Option 2: At Cugel-Level, it is inevitable that the characters will at some point make the inhabitants of an isolated community extremely unhappy. Usually, simple precipitous flight will solve this problem. However, worshippers of Quishmaer are likely to send out a fanatical posse of vengeance-seekers. These crazed folk will follow our unfortunate rascals across desert and sea until they can catch them and deal out appropriate punitive measures. In the course of such a pursuit, Quishmaer may grant his worshippers resilience (boon or bonus of 1) to their attempts to stay on the trail of the miscreants, and to their chances to evade ambush or other trickeries or diversions.

Game Option 3: A statue of Quishmaer may overlook civic gibbets, or other locations of righteous punishment. This imposing figure looks down upon the condemned with a baleful eye, and a gaze of superior scorn. Locals may refer to his justice as they admonish the condemned.

Quishmaer's Horn

(20 points, charged)

As with many of the other items in this article, this is not the original item that was used by the deity, but a far inferior copy used by the divine being's priests long ago. In this case the horn is charged, and each time blown brings a fury or other minor demon to aid in a particular vengeant task. Most likely to be used against the PCs by the bad-guys than vice versa, but you never know.

Wiulio: God of Endings and Beginnings

"Stand among the shadows; Divine Wiulio protects his own."



Manifestations

Wiulio is depicted only as a cloaked figure with a deep cowl - so that his face is never seen. He is humanoid, and is sometimes shown with human hands protruding from this robe. In certain ancient texts he is shown holding an hour-glass or a great slicing-knife, but few if any of his current worshippers are privy to such information.

Credo

Once, Wiulio had many tenets and tracts that revered his names and laid out the principles of his philosophy and the manner of his preferred worship. All have now gone to dust. Those few things that are still remembered are small rites of protection, or charms to ease the pain of the dying. In short, what little aspects of his worship remain are mere fragments. For instance, his awesome influence as arbiter of the passage from this world into the next is totally forgotten.

Worshippers

Typical worshippers of Wiulio are superstitious peasants and persons who dwell in small and insignificant towns. The segments of ritual they still recall are farcical things such as whether to place one's right hand on buttock or abdomen when making obeisance, or remembering to whitewash one's hair on the sacred days. (This latter practice was originally in remembrance of the dead.)

Sacred Precincts

Apart from a place amongst other forgotten gods in a handful of remaining ruined temple complexes, Wiulio has no sacred precincts.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Some communities retain vestigial awareness that Wiulio once decided who lived and died. Many in such places know a few practical cantraps that ward away specific dangers. They acknowledge Wiulio as a divinity, and may worship him in small rituals from time to time, but do not form a large religious body.

Game Option 1: Next to the Plain of Standing Stones, itself in the same part of the world as the Vale of Coram and the city of Lumarth, are several villages where Wiulio is known. One is Samsetiska, and amongst the cantraps and charms known to some of the locals is a tri-grammatic sign to ward away half-men. This must be carved or scrawled upon a flat stone, and its use accompanied by a firm vocal statement that you carry a sacred object. It functions only when the user travels a certain trackway - marked by sarsens - across the Plain from a point near Samsetiska to a point near Cuirnif. (And a new stone must be selected and adorned at each sarsen or else the protection fails.) In game terms, this rite (when performed correctly) wards away untimely death and injury - and thus half-men cannot attack, approach or restrain the holder. Contrary to rumor, no local half-men (the commonest being the asm) worship Wiulio, though some are conversant with the nature of this particular rite. (These beings watch carefully for those who make the slightest mistake.)

Game Option 2: As the god of Endings and Beginnings, Wiulio is also the deity of change. His role as a monitor and instigator of progress has (understandably in this decadent world) been even more neglected. However, according to ancient texts his name may be evoked by those setting out on expeditions into unfamiliar territory, engaging in potentially dangerous activities that have not (to the best of the knowledge of those present) been attempted before, or questing for a solution to a particular problem. For instance, Wiulio is the originator of a powerful blessing that protects travelers going to unknown lands from being attacked whilst they remain upon a visible trail.

Game Option 3: Though no ancient bands of noble assassins exist in the Dying Earth, certainly in large urban areas it is possible that certain criminals may exist who specialize, amongst other things, in profitable murder. Such folk may rationalize their behavior through a veneration of Wiulio. At Turjan-Level, this small cabal may even gain small magics from this worship - cantraps to assist them to slay a victim with a single blow, or to assist them in reaching victims protected by guards or wardings.

NB: Though this style of worship makes Wiulio appear to be a god of death, this merely indicates the fragmented nature of divine worship in these elder days of the Earth. Where apparent contradictions such as this exist in this article, only one part of the deity has been focussed upon - and its wider nature forgotten. Each is equally valid, and invalid, at the same time. It also adds to game confusion, where characters may later assume that since the same deity is revered, the same practices must be in operation.

Yelisea: Goddess of Fate

"It is the mercy of Yelisea which sees fit to grant a speedy extinction, rather than the duration of a possibly agonizing canker."



Manifestations

Yelisea is most often depicted as a proud and beautiful woman standing aloof, with her head partially turned to one side. Often she carries a set of scales in one hand, but holds them casually as if they hold little interest for her. In statues found amongst ruins, and in pictures in ancient texts, she wears the garb of former times, but contemporary worshippers that create her image do not necessarily follow this trend. Sometimes she is shown with her two sisters, as together they are the 'three Norms', but the other two sisters are not often recalled.

Credo

The Goddess of Fate still has several credos extant, and of those deities listed in this piece is in fact the most widely worshipped in any formal sense. This is because her tenets are so open to interpretation that any would-be priest can easily extrapolate a

convenient doctrine from the few reliable historical references available. Yelisea is by and large a dispassionate observer of the trials and rewards of mankind; however, she occasionally acts upon her own whimsy to either ameliorate or heighten a consequence. Hence, both fatalists and optimists worship her in a variety of fashions. Different groups of worshippers accord her differing levels of sympathy with the fortunes of individual humans (and with humanity itself), but purists state that her involvement is entirely whimsical.

Worshippers

The majority of Yelisea's current worshippers are charlatans attempting to capitalize on the uncertainty of existence and the gullibility of the masses. They do not know that their disingenuous reverences actually convey their small lives (and those of the folk who consult them) into her hands.

Sacred Precincts

Although not mentioned as such directly within the Dying Earth tales, Yelisea is the goddess revered at the Temple of Teleologues in Kauchique at which Cugel once served as an incense-blender. The priests of this temple name themselves the Teleologues because their version of Yelisea's doctrine claims that Fate assists those that are most active in their own advancement. However, organized temples to the Fates are few and far between. It is much more common⁶ to find a local shrine where a priest claims to be able to enhance your fortunes with a blessing from Yelisea (at an almost negligible cost).

Many gambling establishments showcase a statue of this goddess, either above or adjacent to the main doorway, or looking down upon the main gambling hall. She is believed to bring luck to the owners of the establishment - though the owners do

⁶ A comparative term for any form of worship these days.

not advertise this fact. (Conversely, Mandingo is believed to bring luck to the patrons, and so in some establishments effigies of the goddess of luck are banned.) Few recall that the original Shrine to Fortune statue at the edge of Kaiin's gaming district (KPG, p158) was a rendition of Yelisea.

The members of the Aumoklopelastianic Cabal are a third group of worshippers. In previous aeons, this organization of seers used to divine the stars and other natural phenomena to predict the fates of kings and nations. It is on the whole no longer in existence; however various fortune-tellers have discovered its existence and attempted to use its magical sigils and the scattered descriptions of its methods to forge themselves a living. These folk may or may not claim to be actual worshippers of Yelisea like the members of the original cabal, but many use a statue of Yelisea as part of their ornamental furnishings.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Yelisea exists, and her powers are significant, yet none can say how and why they exert an influence at some times and not at others. Those who claim to be able to attract her favor according to their own wishes are usually lying or mistaken.

Game Option 1: A small number of fortune-tellers have correctly interpreted some of the wisdoms of the Aumoklopelastianic Cabal, and can - through the use of auguries - correctly advise their clients on the advisability of a course of action or some other such indeterminate outcome. (The GM must determine according to their own wishes how great their chances of success are and how precise is their understanding of the insights returned from Yelisea.)

Game Option 2: When Pharesm cast Cugel into the past (TDE pp217-225), our hero encountered the town of Farwan where the residents resigned themselves to the predations of certain local winged anthropophages. They did this through an elaborate self-deception, wherein they claimed that these beings served Yelisea by noting the time of a person's impending death and transport them to the blessed land of Byssom. (This land happened to be at the reached through portals at the back of the inaccessible cliffside caves in which these beings roost and - coincidentally - devour their prey.) Though this encounter was long in the past, such activities are not unknown in these present days, and the GM might create some similar situation in which fatalistic residents of a remote village allow their lives to be ended by some predatory beast. Like the residents of Farwan, they may have developed habits

which normally keep them out of range of such creatures (and reconciled these with further dubious rationalities). Newcomers - failing to understand such niceties - could be at considerable risk.

Game Option 3: Priests who name themselves rather grandly as the high Teleologues run the aforementioned Temple of the Fates in Kauchique. They claim to worship Yelisea alongside several other Fates, and have an impressive temple complex, wherein various shrines and hallowed halls are open to members of the public who wish to petition the fates to solve any one of numerous worldly problems. This situation is an example of a religious organization that is totally and utterly false. The priests have created an ingenious system of echo chambers, fire-spitting devices, and mirrors to reflect sunlight from outside the building. These serve to make the statues of the various deities produce sound and other special effects, for the 'benefit' of the supplicants. The priests conduct a variety of ceremonies (all at differing entrance costs, dependent on what benefits they are supposed to provide) that are steeped in ritual designed to both confuse and impress the audiences. All of these things create the impression of a group of holy men who are in direct contact with the gods, which is far from the truth. In a Cugel-Level scenario, this state of affairs could be somehow revealed (whether inadvertently or by design) by the characters. The short-term benefits of this could include holding power over the priesthood, and the long-term detriments might include repeated attempts to have them assassinated before they can tell anyone else.

Yelisea's Token

(Various, charged)

Likely to be found in some ancient horde of plunder. Whomever holds it hears a voice saying that if they ever wish to call upon the fates, all they need to do is touch the coin (along with any companions who wish to be included) and toss it. When tossed, this coin comes down either heads (a typical representation of Yelisea, though in this case smiling benevolently) or tails (a hangman's noose). Each person who wants to be included in the benefit must touch the coin before it's thrown, and invest 3 points from their Magic pool. If heads is the result, some unexpected and wonderful benefit occurs, no matter how likely. If it's tails some awful disadvantage occurs instead. Those who don't touch the coin or don't have the pool points spare are affected by a considerably lesser effect or some balancing advantage or disadvantage.

The Aumokloplastianic Cabal

In ancient history the Aumokloplastianic Cabal was a group of respected prognosticators that served the needs of the wealthy and the wise. Sad to say that their days of glory and influence are no longer much more than a memory, being relegated to indeterminate folk tales, and footnotes and speculative comments in dusty tomes – themselves relics of ages gone by. Nonetheless, there are those alive today who through luck or persistence have uncovered certain records of the cabal and attempted to replicate some of their methods and enchantments in order to predict the future and divine hidden meanings from events. Largely the motivation for such actions revolves around the wish to make one's own fortune (or at least a decent living) in the most practical sense. However, to be fair, certain of these individuals also hold a modicum of scholarly interest in the material. Though such folk claim still to be part of an ancient and mysterious world-spanning organization, these claims are fabricated in order to support an air of validity. Active membership in the cabal is these days restricted to fortune-tellers and seers of varying levels of competency.

Aumokloplastianic Cabal Scenario:

One of the Kaiin seers has been conducting the same old rituals in order to impress their clients, and has somehow started to actually be able to divine events of import. Two other local fortune-tellers have joined with her as apprentices and have also begun to make minor accurate prognostications (though as yet none of any real import). Can it really be? The cabal is reviving? Such noble thoughts must be put aside in the face of a very real danger facing this newly-effective seer. One of her recent clients was an underling from the palace, working in disguise on behalf of one of the more dangerous power-brokers. This woman was following rumors about a new seer that could actually predict the future and reveal a person's motivations. The reason for this visit was that the woman's master is planning a political coup, a coup involving murder, intrigue, and of course relying on a great deal of secrecy. Unfortunately for the seer, she revealed too much, and the spy has returned to the palace with a warning. Yesterday a falling statue crushed one of the seer's apprentices when she volunteered to go and collect the seer's laundry on her behalf. The seer's suspicions have been aroused, because no statues normally adorn the roof from which this one descended; and she has cast her mind back to the guilty-acting client who claimed not to have come from the palace despite what the augurs indicated.

The GM must derive some impelling link between one or more of the PCs and this seer. Perhaps she is a mother, sister, favorite cousin, or even a love interest (which the craft GM can introduce in a previous Kaiin scenario). Alternatively, the seer may contact a known adventurer-magician with promises (and proof) of irresistible magical powers or information that they offer as reward for revealing or ending the palace intrigue. (Or both motivations may be combined, especially if the seer is gaining the magical information in increments, and especially if this places the character/s also in danger - as known close associates of the seer) In any case, the seer knows Kaiin well, has friends and family here, and refuses to leave. They are noble, brave, and honest (how refreshing!) and beg for assistance. During the progression of this scenario the characters will of course have to rely upon cryptic clues provided from the seer using odd (and sometimes unpleasant⁷) divination techniques.

A Less Successful Seer

"Do not measure my efficacy against the humbleness of my attire and abode. I favor the life of simplicity so as to enhance precise augury."

Persuade (Obfusatory) 7, Rebuff (Obtuse) 8, Attack (Ferocity) 3, Defend (Dodge) 10, Health 6, Magic (Studious) 3, Appraisal 4, Athletics 2, Concealment 9, Gambling 6, Imposture 7, Pedantry 5, Quick Fingers 4, Scuttlebutt 12, Stealth 5, Wherewithal 3.

Resistances: Pettifogery Ω



⁷ How often for instance can one lie in a bath of the intestines of freshly-killed owls and still remain fashionable?

Yob: the Fish God

"We prostrate ourselves before the fish-god Yob, who seems as efficacious as any."



Manifestations

Yob is pictured and carved as a humanoid fish, carrying a net and a trident. Despite his non-human physiology he looks kindly and peaceful.

Credo

The credo of Yob is simplicity itself: Whilst catching fish, give thanks to Yob for the aquatic bounty available; before killing a fish bless it in the name of Yob, before launching a boat for the purposes of fishing commend its fortunes to the benevolence of Yob. These practices are all carried out in simple phrases and gestures, sometimes with a song of several lines (such as when hauling in nets). Yob is a peaceful deity, devoted to survival needs and respect for nature.

Worshippers

Yob's worshippers are without exception small communities of fisher folk that rely upon the waters for a large proportion of their foodstuffs. These need not be entirely fish, perhaps including edible seaweeds, crustaceans, eels etc. Nonetheless, these folk acknowledge Yob as lord of the waters and their bounty. By and large the worshippers of Yob tend to be peaceful folk. If approached in a friendly fashion they will respond likewise, and they even extend the benefit of the doubt to trail-worn travelers. It would not unbalance a game to have one or more of the characters be worshippers of Yob. In

order for this to be so, such a state would probably only be sensible if this was part of the character background. (That is to say, that joining the worship of Yob once play has begun is hardly likely to be a goal an adventurer aspires to. However, at the start of some campaigns a pair of brothers from a remote fishing village might be perfectly suited character-types, and they might include various rituals and minor religious benefits within their identities.)

The improbability of characters wishing to become worshippers of Yob could be reflected by priests of Yob refusing to initiate non-locals; unless the would-be initiate is intending to become a permanent member of the community (and is prepared to dwell in the community for some months first to prove their sincerity). A character whose background makes them a worshipper of Yob gains benefits as described below. However, they also attract a levy of 1 on all attempts to start or stop a fire, and must practice Yob's devotional requirements continually (barring occasional absent-mindedness or incapacity) or else are automatically excommunicated. Since Yob is a peaceful deity, acts of assassination or other types of murder also precipitate automatic excommunication.

Sacred Precincts

Any community that worships Yob maintains at least a small riverside (or shoreline) shrine, decorated with shells and/or colored and contoured stones. Some of these are even small ceremonial buildings, a few of which are even maintained by a priest of Yob and his (or her) apprentice. These latter places may contain a few semi-valuable decorations. Major fishing settlements may even maintain a small temple with icons carved of precious metals and embedded with jewels, but the followers of Yob do not usually covet wealth, and so no great haul can be gained from such places.

Remaining Worldly Significance

Yob has little interest in anything except respect for the fish of the waters and the survival needs of his faithful followers. Anyone who worships him receives a boon of 1 on all attempts to catch fish, swim, or operate small boats. If a priest of Yob discovers anyone abusing one of his worshippers, damaging a religious area, or stealing valuables from his shrine or temple they may activate a minor curse. This invokes a levy of 1 on all attempts to fish,

swim, or operate small boats. (This curse will not take effect if the person cursed is not actually guilty, and expires when the transgressor makes appropriate penance or suffers some significant drawback as a result of the curse.) The spell 'Phandaal's Repudiation of Curses' may be used at the time of the curse to resist it. In game terms, the effects of the curse should be described as the character suffering an unease in, on, or near water, and an uncharacteristic clumsiness when attempting to fish, swim or operate a small boat.

Game Option 1: If a person significantly injures a worshipper (with malicious intent whilst the worshipper is within the locality of a shrine), significantly - and purposefully - damages a shrine, or steals major religious valuables, the minor curse comes into play automatically - and its effect is permanent unless recompense is somehow made. (The character no doubt also 'gains' negative sympathy points.)

Game Option 2: Despite being peaceful folk, followers of Yob may evidence other Strange Customs as well as their worship. For instance, on the coast of the Songan Sea is a settlement of Yob worshippers that file their teeth for the better tearing of coarse fish flesh, spike their hair and comb it with thick paste to ward of certain scalp parasites, and make a habit of chopping off a finger for the monthly ritual feast. This last act is done to signify their willingness to give back of themselves in return for their aquatic harvest. However, they benefit from the oils of a certain local piscine, which

stimulates digital regeneration. Visitors reneging on participating in this ritual will cause the villagers to become uncharacteristically aggressive. This is the only settlement of Yob worshippers that practices this particular rite, but other settlements may have equally strange practices.

Game Option 3: In Kaiin's district of Canal Town, only two streets from the Temple of Dijekom, is a shrine to Yob. The priest (Yanner) and his female apprentice (Hannop) maintain this run-down edifice for the benefit of the small number of Kaiinese who actually sustain their living through honest fishing of the waters of Sanreale Bay. Their typical congregation numbers only in the dozens, but these followers are devout.

Game Option 4: At the village of Troon, adjacent to the Tsombol Marsh the locals live through fishing rivers and streams that flow in and out of the swampland, and by harvesting crustaceans and other creatures from the swamp itself. They also breed an amphibious pack- and riding-animal called the Lompod. This creature is extremely hard to breed in captivity, especially the larger sub-species that serves the villagers so well, and thus it is regarded as a sacred beast. The villagers maintain the simple reverences to Yob as noted above, but also hold an annual festival to the Fish God, where much effort must be made to find sufficient foodstuffs to cater for the hungry folk that arrive from surrounding settlements. (Ostensibly to revere Yob, but actually just for the chance of a free feed.)

Zita: Goddess of Secrets

"I cannot tell you, for that knowledge is as lost as if Zita herself had taken it for her own."



Manifestations

Like Wiulio, Zita is indicated only by a humanoid figure in a cloak that obscures every aspect of herself from view. And although the form encased within can sometimes be seen to be very clearly female, this is an affectation. In the most aged of tomes, no indication of Zita's true form is given. Never in any depictions is a hand, foot, or glimpse of a face ever present.

Credo

Known also by some as the Goddess of Unknowable Things, Zita was the patron deity of the secretive, criminal, and clandestine. Whether a spy, a thief, a forger, or a saboteur, many folk would pray to Zita before setting out to engage in an

activity they did not want to be observed, or to search for information that was not supposed to be revealed. Any professional connections have long ago been forgotten, and to most of those who still recall her name she is merely a mythic entity on whom to blame the irritating loss of household objects, or the inability to recall an obvious fact.

Worshippers

Nobody worships Zita regularly anymore, not since her utility as a criminal deity was forgotten. However, her ability to hide objects or information from discovery has been retained in the knowledge of some. In a curious historical reversal, certain money-lenders, palace treasury-officials, prosperous merchants, and even a few worried magicians, will chant a prayer to Zita when they hide their wealth or choicest goods from the eyes of the world. Only a very few professional criminals occasionally still call upon Zita to obscure their activities.

Sacred Precincts

No sacred precincts are known, and it is possible that she never had any of note. Perhaps she too features amidst the statues of multiple gods at a handful of ruined major temples.

Remaining Worldly Significance

If the rite of obscurity is performed correctly, Zita will answer - and make goods or activities more resistant to detection. (This is effectively a cantrap that applies a levy of 1 to all detection rolls over the next 12 hours, and costs 1 from the Magic pool.)

Game Option 1: PCs may find clues to hidden treasures, which include statements describing how ceremonies to Zita were performed to hide these from the prying eyes throughout the following centuries. At the heart of any such complex, the fabled treasure may indeed be magically hidden by some unknown (difficult to detect/dispel) magic.

Game Option 2: In a Turjan-Level city campaign, a local female magician-thief may have stumbled upon ancient references to Zita and begun performing ceremonies in her honor. This thief is now effectively a minor avatar of Zita - able to vanish at will, obscure their identity, force people to forget her face, and hide goods (even magical ones that should be able to be detected) beyond all ken. The focus of this scenario is to track her down, by following the extremely minimal clues available. This thief will have access to all of the spells that obscure things or people, and perhaps she knows slightly different (more effective) versions than those commonly

available. In a Cugel-Level campaign, this person might be their sponsor, encouraging them to greater and greater criminal activities. (Her motivation would be to run several small groups of petty thieves, whilst establishing herself as a super-criminal figure. Yes, ego-gratification.)

Game Option 3: On a more sinister note, some worshippers of Zita may have adopted her worst aspect as their patron deity. They have the ability to read the thoughts of anyone attached to a fiendish machine. Thus, some folk may be drugged, kidnapped, mind-read, and then returned to the place from which they were taken. (There to regain consciousness feeling hung-over and confused, but otherwise unharmed - save for a red bruise on each temple.) Thus truly a market in secrets might be established - although this is realistic only in a large urban area. Turjan-Level characters might be called to solve the mystery, and follow a trail that leads to an unscrupulous local power-broker. If they lack solid evidence, how are they to confront him or prove his guilt? The worshippers of Zita in this case would be perhaps minor officials desperate to break out of their lives of drudgery, and selling personal secrets on the black-market, as well as running a profitable black-mailing operation. (If one of the characters is taken and returned, all their plans will be known, and much difficulty will ensue.)

Game Option 4: A small group of Zita's worshippers actually collect information, and store it painstakingly in vaults beneath a ruin some small distance inside the Great Erm. This ruin was (long centuries ago) a place of learning, and from this place they have retrieved many forgotten facts. Not only this, but their members travel far and wide, stealing and collecting the last fragments of information on many subjects - from taxonomy to magic. They believe that when the world ends, only the information held within the bosom of Zita (in effect stored within their vaults) will survive. These zealots will stop at nothing to protect the information within the vaults, and will go to great lengths to procure more wisdom to be added to their secrets. In game terms, adventurers may have to uncover this group in order to recover information that has been stolen, or may be seeking some lost piece and hear a rumor that such an organization has it. It would not be unseemly for the climax of such an adventure to feature the last surviving zealots setting their vaults aflame - and the adventurers fleeing with armfuls of whatever invaluable tomes and scrolls can be scooped up.