

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]

Player's Handbook **2nd Edition** Rules Supplement

The Complete Priest's Handbook

by Aaron Allston

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Since the creation of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game system, the cleric has been one of the most popular character classes. He has been a happy bridge between warriors and mages: Capable of armoring up and wielding heavy weapons, capable of casting useful magics, he was a very versatile adventurer and the favorite choice of countless players.

With the release of the AD&D® 2nd Edition game, none of that has changed. The cleric is the same magic-hurling, mace-wielding hero that he always was. And in *The Complete Priest's Handbook*, we're going to see to it that he's even more than that.

In this supplement, we're going to elaborate on what the priest (including the cleric) is to the campaign, to the setting's civilization, and to the adventuring party.

We'll be providing guidelines for the DM to work up the cleric's faith: The god or philosophy he serves, the rules and mores he follows, the duties he practices, the restrictions he suffers, the powers he possesses, and the relations he and the others of his faith have with the followers of other faiths.

We'll show you how to work up priests devoted to specific mythoi. The druid, from the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, is one example; this supplement describes many, many more, and provides rules for the DM to create new priesthoods of his own design.

We'll talk about priestly orders. Some priesthoods have soldierly orders, scholarly orders, missionary orders, oracular orders, and many other types. If your priest character belongs to a faith with several orders, he may choose one of them, which will give him spe-

cial abilities and duties beyond those of ordinary priests.

We'll talk about role-playing the priest character. Certainly, priest characters don't have to have the same sort of identical personality (the kindly father-confessor with the bloody mace in his hand) which many players imagine them all to have.

We'll describe whole campaigns devoted to priests: How to run them, how to give them a purpose, how to determine what goals and interests are most appropriate.

And we'll talk about the sort of equipment that priests use in their devotions and adventures, including weapons, armor, holy symbols, priestly vestments, and other items.

The Complete Priest's Handbook is equally useful if you're a Dungeon Master or a player. It will add depth to the campaign world and the range of NPCs for Dungeon Masters, and add detail to the abilities, backgrounds, and responsibilities of player-character priests.

* * *

In the text, for reasons of simplicity, we normally use masculine nouns and pronouns inclusively. When we say "god," "priest," or "man," we're normally also implying "goddess," "priestess," and "woman."

In order to be able to use this supplement, you must use the Weapon and Nonweapon Proficiencies rules from the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. If you're not yet familiar with them, you ought to read them before continuing in this rulebook.

A special note for those of you who are using this *Complete Priest's Handbook* with your origi-

nal AD&D® game instead of the new edition: This supplement mentions a lot of page numbers from the *Player's Handbook* and the *DMG*. The page numbers cited are for the newest edition, not the original; they won't be correct for those of you using the old books.



This chapter is for DMs who want to design the mythic history of their campaign world(s). It's not prohibited for the campaign's players to read this. . . but not all of them will find it useful. Players may wish to skip on to the third chapter, "Sample Priesthoods."

* * *

One of the first things the DM can do to add color and detail to his campaign world is to work up that world's *mythic history*. Such a history will help establish, in his mind and those of his players, the relationships between the gods, and between gods and men. It will help set the tone of the campaign and the attitude of the player-characters' culture. It will give the players some idea of what their characters expect from their gods and their future. And once it's done, the DM can then elaborate on it and decide how each individual god relates to other gods and to the sentient races of the world.

In this chapter, we'll discuss some of the common themes that run through myths; the DM can use these topics as a framework for his own mythic history.

Creation

The first place to start is the creation of the universe and the world.

In most creation stories, there was usually some disinteresting, stable condition in effect at the dawn of time. It might have been a formless void, or darkness, or unending ice and snow.

Then, we have the first great being, the one who brings about creation of the world. Note that this great being doesn't have to be the

god who is now dominant in the campaign world. The myths are packed with tales of gods who created their worlds, became oppressive, and were then cast down by other gods, even their own children, who now rule in their place.

Nor does the creation have to have been a deliberate event. It might have been an accident; the god could have been dreaming and his dreams became reality.

The creator could be a tremendous monster, one which began the process of creating the world, but was overthrown before it finished making the world to its own satisfaction. . . and one which, legends say, will return some day to finish the job.

It could be a simple creature, one not necessarily deserving of worship, which shapes the world simply by acting as the animal it is. As one example, if the original state of the universe were a giant block of salt, this creature could be a giant cow which licks it into the shape of the world.

In some mythologies, the great being that shapes the world stays around after that task is done; he or she might be the principal deity of the world. More often, that great being perishes, or is cast down by descendants, or settles for a lesser role once creation is accomplished.

Basic Astronomy

What is the shape of the world and the universe once they are created? What are suns, moons, planets and stars?

The entire universe could be a single huge world, with a dome overhead which holds the stars and confines the sun(s) and moon(s). The world could be a

disk, a sphere, a bowl, or an unending surface continuing in all directions to infinity.

The sun and moon could be glowing chariots, or bright gods continually flying across the sky (perhaps as a service to the world, perhaps because they're being chased). They could be worlds unto themselves, and the player-characters might someday have the opportunity to visit and walk the bright surface of the sun in search of adventure. They could be the great, glowing eyes of the most powerful deity. They could be gigantic, fiercely-burning lamps created by the craftsman-god, lamps which circle the world on some giant mechanism. (Perhaps, instead of circling the world, they just shut off each day when the time is due; the sun just turns off, and the moons just turn on.) They could even be suns and moons as we understand them, though some of the charm of fantasy lies precisely in making such things *different* from our cold, modern explanations of them.

The planets and stars could be holes in the dome of the sky, suggesting that there is a great brightness beyond. They could be decorations placed in the sky by the gods. They could be worlds unto themselves. They could be glowing creatures forced to trace paths through the sky every night. They could be the suns of distant worlds.

And, of course, the DM can choose for all these astronomic bodies to be one thing, but for the prevailing belief of the people to be different, an incorrect belief; nothing says that the world's deities want the humans and demihumans to know the truth.



Effects of Terrain on Creation

In the real world, the terrain of the human culture to which a mythology belonged often had a strong effect on the myths. Norse mythology started with a huge abyss filled with ice, for instance.

If one race's religion is dominant in the campaign world, the DM should decide whether or not their creation-story has a setting like the land where that race originated.

In a fantasy world, this situation could come about from one of two reasons:

The gods, having emerged from a particular type of terrain, would find similar terrain in the mortal world to be their favorite land for creating new races, exploring, and interacting with humans; or

The sentient races might have erroneously re-interpreted the story of the world's creation as a reflection of the terrain in which they live, and the legend is simply wrong.

Propagation

Once creation of the world and universe are established, the DM can move on to the propagation of the gods. In other words, once the setting is in place, the cast of gods gets larger and larger.

Naturally, the DM can always do this the other way around. Perhaps all the gods were in place before they decided to create the world. There's nothing wrong with this choice; it's simply backward from the way the best-known Earth mythologies operated.

Regardless, unless the DM is creating a monotheistic faith (one dedicated to only one deity), he must now begin creating the other gods of the faith.

These gods could be children of the first great being. They could be that being's creations instead. They could be representations of natural forces brought to awareness and life by the catalyst of Creation. They could emerge from some less wholesome process (for example, they could be created by the decay of the body of the first great being, or could merely spring forth whole from its corpse: One god from the bones, one from the brain, one from the heart, etc.).

Each god should have some special *attribute*, an area where he or she is dominant. Some can have several attributes. Such attributes include Thought, Strength, War, Love, Craftsmanship, Earth, Sea, Sky, Sailing, Farming, Hunting, and many, many others. Any activity that is important to humans (or demihumans) can be an attribute for a god.

Not all these gods need to have been "first-generation," or born to/created by that first great being. Obviously, some should be. But they, too, can create or become parents to other gods.

In some mythoi, the god of a particularly important attribute will have children who bear lesser forms of that attribute. For instance, the god of Love might have children who represent Passion, Marriage, Infatuation, and Unrequited Love. The god of Sleep might have children who represent Dreams and Nightmares. The god of Intellect might have children who represent Memory, Poetry, Song, and Riddles or Puzzles.

Characteristics of the Gods

The DM can create as many gods for his pantheon as his imag-

ination will allow him. He doesn't have to work up an extensive set of legends about every god; even in the real world, many gods of various mythologies were scarcely more than a name and an attribute. As his campaign continues, the DM can flesh out the descriptions of these gods to his heart's content.

Some of the traits which characterize the gods, and can be defined by the DM for each god or pantheon, include:

Immortality: Are the gods immortal? In most pantheons, the gods are certainly *ageless*; that is, they do not grow old. But in some, they are not just ageless, they also cannot be killed; regardless of how severely they might be wounded, with time they will always fully recover from injury. In others, the gods can be killed by sufficient force. For example, in the Greek myths, the gods are undying, while in the Norse myths the gods face eventual certain death at the battle of Ragnarok.

Indestructibility: As a further level of what was just described, some gods which are immortal are also described as indestructible. No force on heaven or Earth can hurt them (except by hurting their feelings, by betraying them). This is sometimes the trait of the greatest god of a pantheon, and is usually the trait of the only god of a monotheistic religion (one which believes in only one god).

Influence on the World: How much influence does the god have on the mortal world, the world of animals, the world of plants? With some gods, there is very little of such influence. A god whose attribute is the unchanging stars, for instance, might exert a little influence on the sailors who navigate



by stars, but could have very little effect on anyone or anything else. On the other hand, gods relating to powerful human emotions or preoccupations (such as love, war, creativity, and so forth) might exert a great deal of influence on the world, especially if it is said that every application of his attribute requires the god's help or permission. For instance, if it requires the aid or permission of the god/goddess of childbirth for every human birth to take place, then that deity is exerting a profound effect on the world.

Interest in the World: Additionally, some gods are very interested in what goes on in the mortal world, while others are entirely disinterested. Naturally, those who are interested are more prone to meddle in mortal affairs than those who aren't. In fact, gods who are disinterested in the world might punish characters who are bold enough to call upon them.

Intentions Toward the World: Finally, there's the question of what the god's intentions are toward the world... especially toward the sentient races of the world. Some gods are content just to pursue their attributes and make sure they are properly worshipped and recognized. Others may have more far-reaching plans. This is especially true of evil gods, who wish to bring about the destruction of races, other gods, or the entire world; it is also true of ambitious gods, who wish to cast down the ruling gods, take their place, and reshape the world to their own liking.

Inhibitions: Some gods and pantheons had limitations placed upon them. These might have been limitations placed by some greater power of the universe, or

merely enforced by the greatest of the gods. Often, these inhibitions dictate how much aid or hindrance the gods can offer to mortals, whether or not they can help their favorite men and beasts directly or indirectly, etc.

Example

As an example of how a familiar god matches these characteristics, let's look at the Greek goddess Aphrodite.

She was immortal, as were most or all of the Greek gods. She certainly was *not* indestructible, and was in fact once wounded in battle by the Argive hero Diomedes.

She had a very profound influence on the world, for it was she who put all varieties of the emotion of love in the breasts of man and beast. Even the other gods, with the exception of Hestia, Athena, and Artemis, were regularly affected by her power.

Her interest in the world was limited to a couple of areas: Making sure that all humankind respected her (which generally meant that all humans knew love at one time or another, and thus did not deny her); and making sure her special favorites, such as her mortal son Aeneas, survived and prospered. Other than that, she appeared to have no special intentions toward the world.

Aphrodite had a couple of inhibitions restricting her: First, she and all the Olympians were subject to a higher destiny, which not even Zeus could thwart. Second, physically, she and most other gods could be hurt or even defeated in battle by the mightiest Greek heroes. Third, the god-king Zeus obviously preferred for gods to help their favorites indirectly rather

than by showing up in person. All these inhibitions affected the way Aphrodite and the other Olympians related to their favorite "player-characters."

Humans, Humanoids, Animals, Plants

At some point in the history of the gods, they probably created all living things. (It's possible for the flora and fauna of the world to have been created by some other factor. For example, they might have just *been* there when the great ice-cap melted. But it's a more common element of the story that the gods created them.)

This creation process might have involved an accident; for instance, the greatest god sneezed, and blew fully-formed living things all over the world.

More commonly, it's a deliberate process, and the gods or one particular god methodically created all the living things known to man.

When working up this aspect of the story for his own campaign world, the DM can use this to help define the way the gods look upon specific forms of life. Was Man created so the gods would have something entertaining to watch? To fulfill a higher destiny? So that his brightest and best might one day add to the ranks of the lesser gods, or accompany the gods on one last, great battle? This kind of decision helps define man's view of the gods and their requirements of mankind.

It can also be used to define mankind's opinions on certain matters. If, for instance, animals in general were created to serve Man, then Man might have little regard for them, except as pets and beasts of