



MAGIC OF INCARNUM™

A New Source of Power for
Your D&D Game

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Introduction

Lidda emerged from the bushes, startling Ragnara.

"Well?" Tordek demanded in a loud whisper. "What did you see?"

Lidda pulled some briars from her cloak as she considered her answer. Impatient, Tordek drummed his fingers on his waraxe as Ragnara leaned closer to hear. "Well," the halfling said, "it looks a bit like the asylum decided to relocate. Only there's no walls or doors and no healers. Just a bunch of crazies wandering around the ruins."

"Crazies?" Tordek spluttered.

"Are they armed?" Ragnara asked.

"I didn't see weapons, but I did see two of them fighting each other—tooth and nail, you might say." Lidda smiled sardonically, but her voice dropped to a whisper as she heard a rustle in the nearby woods. "Shh! Someone's out there!"

"Hold your fire, strangers," came a voice from the brush, stern and quiet. "I offer aid against the enemies you have chosen." A moment later, a man strode into the clearing—a man such as the three companions had never before seen.

He was clad in full plate formed of a metal none of them could name. It was rich gold in hue, and the greatsword he carried over his shoulder was the same color. It was his eyes, however, that caught their attention, glowing with a faint blue light in the gathering dark.

"Who are you, man?" Tordek demanded. "And what do you propose to do about those lunatics?"

"I am Arstor, pentifex monolith and guardian of the ancient temple that lies yonder." The man gestured in the direction of the ruins Lidda had scouted. "Those that infest the temple are not lunatics; they are the lost."

"The lost?" Ragnara's voice betrayed her keen interest.

"Their spirits have been corrupted by stray wisps of incarnum that bonded with powerful emotions of hatred, anger, or despair. They are now wholly given over to those destructive passions, and must be exterminated before their corruption spreads."

"Incarnum?" Tordek interrupted. "What in the Nine Hells is incarnum?"

This book came about as an attempt to do something brand-new, something the vast multiverse of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS had never seen before. We set out to create an entirely original idea—not just interesting twists on existing mechanics and familiar themes, but a whole new system to add new landscapes and horizons into an existing D&D game.

Like the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, this book presents a new system that is similar to magic but different, a novel way of looking at characters who deal with the supernatural. The heart of this system is the substance called incarnum.

Chapter 4: Soulmelds presents the full rules system for the use of incarnum; this introduction is intended to introduce the core concepts used throughout the book.

INCARNUM

Incarnum is an amorphous magical substance made up of the soul energies of all sentient creatures—living, dead, and, it is theorized, those even not yet born.

In its pure form, incarnum resembles a radiant mist, deep blue in color. Those trained or gifted in manipulating incarnum

can shape it into physical objects (called soulmelds) or simply use it to imbue themselves with power.

Shaping incarnum has no ill effect on the soul energy used. Incarnum is not consumed when it is manipulated by a meldshaper or other character—it is merely "borrowed" from the nigh-infinite supply in the multiverse. That said, the wielders of incarnum recognize that the substance is more than mere magic. It is, very literally, the essence of all creatures. Talented wielders of incarnum learn to harness specific qualities of incarnum (and by extension, properties of the souls tapped for this power), including particular alignments, insights, experiences, and the like. In fact, most wielders of incarnum have strong moral and ethical outlooks inextricably linked to their use of the substance.

SOULMELDS

A soulmeld is a semipermanent magical effect crafted from raw incarnum. Soulmelds are "worn" much like magic items. Once shaped (a daily process much like prepping spells), a soulmeld lasts as long as its creator wants it to.

The characters who make use of the options in this book—new classes, prestige classes, feats, and other options—gain the ability to shape incarnum into magical objects called soulmelds. Characters who can shape soulmelds are called meldshapers.

A soulmeld somewhat resembles a magic item or a spell effect in physical form. It is the physical embodiment of incarnum, linked to the meldshaper's body and worn almost like a physical item. Shaping incarnum into soulmelds requires time and effort, much like a wizard preparing spells. Unlike spells, though, soulmelds generally last until the meldshaper decides to unshape them, withdrawing the incarnum for future use.

ESSENTIA

Essentia is a character's personal store of incarnum. Most characters can't access this pool of energy, though certain classes and feats open up this potential. Essentia can be invested into soulmelds in order to enhance their effects. Essentia can be reinvested each round to augment soulmeld and other effects as the meldshaper wishes.

Essentia is the substance of a character's personal soul energy. Everybody has it, but only some characters learn to manipulate it to enhance magical effects. Meldshapers, for instance, can invest it into soulmelds to make them more powerful. Every soulmeld can be enhanced by investing essentia into it, in much the same way as spells improve with higher caster levels. Unlike caster level, a soulmeld's invested essentia is not a fixed number; it can shift up or down as the meldshaper desires. The more powerful the character, the more essentia he can invest into his soulmelds and thus the more powerful they can become.

In addition to its use in soulmelds, essentia can sometimes be invested into feats, class features, and other abilities. Chapter 3: Character Options presents a new type of feat, the incarnum feat, which grants abilities that scale up with

invested *essentia*. Chapter 5: Magic introduces spells and magic items that have similar scaling effects. Any character, regardless of whether he can shape soulmelds, can gain access to his personal pool of *essentia* by the selection of the proper feat or other option.

CHAKRAS

Chakras are the body's ten centers of power: crown, feet, hands, arms, brow, shoulders, throat, waist, heart, and soul.

Similar to and closely linked with ten of the magic item spaces on the body described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the ten chakras represent locations on the body where a meldshaper can place a soulmeld. Meldshapers have access to all their chakras for the purpose of shaping soulmelds to occupy them.

CHAKRA BINDS

A soulmeld can be bound to a chakra in order to gain a secondary (and often more potent) effect from it. Doing so cuts off the corresponding body slot from magic item use—binding a soulmeld to your feet chakra means you can't wear magic boots, for example.

A skilled meldshaper can bind some of his soulmelds to chakras to gain new powers from those soulmelds. When a meldshaper binds a meld to a chakra, it becomes supernaturally tied or affixed to that body location. As a side effect of the chakra bind, the meldshaper loses the ability to benefit from a magic item occupying the body slot associated with that chakra.

A meldshaper can shape soulmelds to occupy any of his chakras even at 1st level. However, the chakras are defined by a relative level of power or difficulty for the purposes of binding soulmelds to them. As a meldshaper increases in level, he learns to bind soulmelds first to his least chakras (crown, feet, and hands), then lesser (arms, brow, and shoulders), then greater (throat and waist), and eventually to his heart and soul chakras.

A meldshaper can only bind soulmelds to a limited number of his chakras, but that number increases as he gains levels. Each soulmeld description indicates which chakra

or chakras it can be bound to, and the effects of binding it to each chakra.

In general, binding a soulmeld to a chakra produces an effect similar to that granted by a magic item worn on the corresponding body slot. For example, binding a soulmeld to the throat chakra often grants the meldshaper abilities related to protection or discernment, just as a magic amulet or scarab usually does. Other thematic ties link the powers of soulmelds to their chakra



*Arstor, a Pentifex Monolith
(see page 209)*

Illus. by W. Reynolds

SWIFT AND IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Some of the rules and features described in *Magic of Incarnum* use two new action types: the swift action and the immediate action. A description of how each works follows.

Swift Action: A swift action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. You can perform one swift action per turn without affecting your ability to perform other actions. In that regard, a swift action is like a free action. However, you can perform only a single swift action per turn, regardless of what other actions you take. You can take a swift action any time you would normally be allowed to take a free action.

Casting a quickened spell is a swift action (instead of a free action, as stated in the Quicken Spell feat description in the *Player's Handbook*). In addition, casting any spell with a casting time of 1 swift action (such as *divest essentia*) is a swift action.

Casting a spell with a casting time of 1 swift action does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Immediate Action: Much like a swift action, an immediate action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. However, unlike a swift action, an immediate action can be performed at any time—even if it's not your turn. Casting *feather fall* is an immediate action (instead of a free action, as stated in the spell description in the *Player's Handbook*), since the spell can be cast at any time.

Using an immediate action on your turn is the same as using a swift action, and counts as your swift action for that turn. You cannot use another immediate action or a swift action until after your next turn if you have used an immediate action when it is not currently your turn. You also cannot use an immediate action if you are currently flat-footed.

binds. A soulmeld bound to the throat chakra might also grant the meldshaper a breath weapon or some ability related to speech, since these abilities are symbolically connected to the throat. See the Behind the Curtain sidebar entitled Body Slot Affinities on page 288 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more about the abilities granted by magic items that occupy different body slots.

CAMPAIGN AND CHARACTER OPTIONS

Central to the concept behind this book is the idea that you can use as much or as little of it as you want to in your game. Through the chapters of this book, we've introduced incarnum-touched variations and options for every aspect of a character and a campaign.

A player who is very excited about incarnum might choose a new race from Chapter 1, one of the meldshaping standard classes from Chapter 2, and feats from the new feats presented in Chapter 3. His character can shape soulmelds drawn from Chapter 4 and wield magic items from Chapter 5. When he's ready, he might adopt a prestige class from Chapter 6. For such a player, this book can almost replace the *Player's Handbook*—in much the same way that the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* can for a psionic character.

Others might prefer to simply dabble in incarnum. A player can choose a race and a class from the *Player's Handbook*, then choose feats from Chapter 3 to open up incarnum-related options. If he has a spellcaster or psionic character, abundant options await in Chapter 5. He can make extensive use of the items in Chapter 5, even if he can't unlock all the potential of those items. Several of the prestige classes in Chapter 6 are available to characters with little previous exposure to incarnum, so they open up additional opportunities.

A player who wants his character to dabble in incarnum can use this book as an additional resource at the table, without having incarnum dominate the character's capabilities. If playing such a character appeals to you, consider the following feats and prestige classes from this book, based on your character's class:

Barbarian: Cobalt Charge, Cobalt Critical, Cobalt Power, Cobalt Rage; totem rager.

Bard: Incarnum Spellshaping, Midnight Metamagic, Soultouched Spellcasting; soulcaster.

Cleric: Azure Turning, Divine Soultouch, Incarnum Spellshaping, Midnight Metamagic, Sapphire Smite, Soultouched Spellcasting; sapphire hierarch.

Druid: Azure Wild Shape, Incarnum Spellshaping, Midnight Metamagic, Share Soulmeld, Soultouched Spellcasting.

Fighter: Cobalt Charge, Cobalt Critical, Cobalt Expertise, Cobalt Power, Cobalt Precision; incandescent champion, incarnum blade.

Monk: Azure Touch, Azure Toughness, Sapphire Fist; incandescent champion, umbral disciple.

Paladin: Azure Touch, Azure Turning, Cobalt Charge, Divine Soultouch, Incarnum Spellshaping, Midnight Metamagic, Sapphire Smite, Share Soulmeld, Soultouched Spellcasting; incandescent champion, incarnum blade.

Ranger: Cobalt Precision, Incarnum Spellshaping, Midnight Dodge, Midnight Metamagic, Soultouched Spellcasting; incarnum blade, umbral disciple.

Rogue: Azure Enmity, Cobalt Expertise, Indigo Strike, Midnight Dodge; umbral disciple.

Sorcerer or Wizard: Incarnum Spellshaping, Midnight Metamagic, Share Soulmeld, Soultouched Spellcasting; soulcaster.

Psionic Character: Azure Talent, Midnight Augmentation, Psycarnum Blade, Psycarnum Crystal, Psycarnum Infusion; incarnum blade.

Any Character: Azure Toughness, Bonus Essentia, Cerulean Fortitude, Cerulean Reflexes, Cerulean Will, Healing Soul, Incarnum-Fortified Body, Open Greater Chakra, Open Least Chakra, Open Lesser Chakra, Sapphire Sprint, Shape Soulmeld, Soulsight.

A campaign might introduce incarnum in tiny fragments: a single villain with a meldshaping class from Chapter 2, an encounter with members of a new race from Chapter 1 or monsters from Chapter 7, or a strange item from Chapter 5 that holds the promise of more abilities than it immediately reveals—if a character can learn to access his essentia pool. The player characters might explore an ancient ruin strangely laden with incarnum-related items and opponents, and learn new capabilities themselves as they progress through the ruins and uncover their secrets. Like Tordek, Lidda, and Ragnar in the vignette at the start of this introduction, the PCs in your campaign might stumble upon a horde of lost infesting a dolmen circle and turn to the dolmen's sole defender (an NPC or even a new PC) for aid against these unfamiliar foes. Chapter 8: Incarnum Campaigns includes a wealth of options and advice about incorporating incarnum into an ongoing or all-new campaign.

Whatever options you choose, you'll find *Magic of Incarnum* injecting a unique flavor and never-before-seen effects into your campaign. Whether you're as new to the game as incarnates and azurins or you've been playing since psionics made their first appearance, we trust that the arrival of incarnum will spark your imagination and give new life to your campaigns and adventures to come.