

CULTS OF
CTHULHU

Chris Lackey, Mike Mason, and Friends



CREDITS

Authors

Chris Lackey and Mike Mason

Editorial and Development

Mike Mason and Paul Fricker

Art Direction

Mike Mason

Cover Art

Loïc Muzy

Interior Art

Alberto Bontempi, Thomas Brown, Irene Cano, Kristina Carroll, Caleb Cleveland, Stephen Cornu, Kring Demetrio, Emanuele Desiati, Michael Ellis, Andrey Fetisov, Doruk Golcu, Nicholas Grey, Patrik Hell, Kali Houisse, Pat Loboyko, Sam Lofti, Ernest Mason, Loïc Muzy, Aleks Shcherbakov, John Sumrow, Johnathan Torres, and Arrigo Verderosa

Cartography and Handouts

Matt Ryan

Layout

Nicholas Nacario

Copy Editing

Barnaby Dicker and Chitin Proctor

Proofreading

Richard Hardy

Licensing Manager

Daria Pilarczyk

Licensing

Michael O'Brien, James Lowder, and Mike Mason

Call of Cthulhu Creative Director

Mike Mason

SPECIAL THANKS

To Paul Fricker and to play testers: Gemma Mitchell, Steve Dempsey, Paula Dempsey, Jason Woodburn, Jules Fattorini, Keith Maddocks, George Jopson, Jon Hancock, Martin Slowey, Nick Clements, and Jason Rainbird.

CLEAR CREDIT

Background elements of the Esoteric Order of Dagon derived from Chaosium's *Escape from Innsmouth* written by Kevin Ross *et al*, and revised and written for this book by Mike Mason and Chris Lackey. All other elements written by Chris Lackey and Mike Mason. Paul Fricker undertook initial development of the scenarios created by Chris Lackey, which then underwent final development with additions by Mike Mason. Cult flowchart and worksheet designed by Chris Lackey and created by Matt Ryan. Public domain art from Wikimedia Commons.

This supplement is best used with the *Call of Cthulhu* (7th Edition) roleplaying game and optionally with the *Pulp Cthulhu* sourcebook, both available separately.

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Chaosium Inc.
3450 Wooddale Court
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

CHA23177 978-156882-439-0

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MATURE CONTENT WARNING

The material in this supplement deals with mature themes—coercion, abuse, violence, murder, assault, moral corruption, and sexual activity. The presentation of the Cthulhu Cult deals with such subject matter in the context of weird cult activities and crimes. All Mythos cults are unsavory, with most downright diabolical and wicked in their actions and effect upon others. These are “evil” cults in the fully human sense of the word, and their attitude to life and their hideous crimes are meant to be diametrically opposed to societal norms, as well as the moral steadfastness of investigators and pulp heroes. Of course, while some humans do not require the impetus of the Cthulhu Mythos to enact the most dire and awful things, the cults in this book are composed of humans who have been somehow touched by the corrupting and malign influence of the Mythos.

Keepers are advised to think carefully about and adjust their presentation of this subject matter—and the specifics thereof—in accordance with their own and their group's comfort levels. While some groups may want to explore certain themes and realize their game world as a full-on visceral and gritty diorama, others may desire a subtler approach and seek not to address certain matters. Adjusting or eliminating details to suit your group's tastes, and fading out from difficult material as needed, are all tools that can be used.

Ensure your group has the opportunity to discuss how they wish the game world to be presented, what subject matter should be off the table, and what level of detail they will enjoy. This should inform you, the Keeper, how the cults operate in your portrayal of the game world. Remember, the game is designed to be a shared experience and everyone in the group should feel they can contribute to it in a safe and enjoyable manner. Taking time to discuss how, and if, such darker material should feature in your games is time well spent and ensures that no one is uncomfortable or distressed by the events and depictions that occur. This is, after all, a game—adjust the material so that everyone can have fun.



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"Cthulhu still lives, too, I suppose, again in that chasm of stone which has shielded him since the sun was young. His accursed city is sunken once more, for the Vigilant sailed over the spot after the April storm; but his ministers on earth still bellow and prance and slay around idol-capped monoliths in lonely places. He must have been trapped by the sinking whilst within his black abyss, or else the world would by now be screaming with fright and frenzy. Who knows the end? What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise. Loathsomeness waits and dreams in the deep, and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men. A time will come—but I must not and cannot think! Let me pray that, if I do not survive this manuscript, my executors may put caution before audacity and see that it meets no other eye."

—H. P. Lovecraft *The Call of Cthulhu*

That final paragraph from *The Call of Cthulhu* story leaves us with an open door we cannot close. Or, a lid to a Pandora's Box that can never be shut. We know that evil still lurks in the world and we have only seen a glimmer of that darkness. We can choose to ignore it and hope we are lucky enough to never cross its path or we can try and fight, no matter the cost and how hopeless it may be.

In *Cults of Cthulhu* we delve into the human side of a dark and horrific world. Where humans twist their minds and souls into crazed shapes to survive the hopeless universe, or

seek to find meaning in their fleeting and insignificant lives. We delve into the world of the Cthulhu Cult and those who hear its master's call.

In the *Call of Cthulhu Roleplaying Game* there are many people who serve the dark forces of the universe, from sorcerers to cultists, who trade favors with all manner of malignant entities like Nyarlathotep, Hastur, and Shub-Niggurath. But, it is Lovecraft's seminal tale—the story after which this roleplaying game is named—that paints the picture of an insidious cult. One that has secretly permeated human civilization since before human civilization even existed.

This book attempts to throw open that door and step inside, exploring the intricacies of a Cthulhu Cult and its varying permutations. As a Keeper, writer, or storyteller, this book can be used as a tool to help inspire you to expand on the fiction of Lovecraft and others, to create something totally new, but still rooted in the twisted brambles and sunken seaweed of the Cthulhu Mythos.

Cults of Cthulhu will guide you in the creation of complex and believable antagonists for your scenarios—villains who are more than just faceless, robed minions. Cultists are people too. They have hopes and dreams. They have families and friends. They have loved and been hurt. They are human. They are us. And, these things are what make them the most terrifying threat in all of the Mythos. For they are us, and if they can become the corrupted servants of the Mythos, then so can we.

COMPOSITION

Chapter 1: History of the Cthulhu Cult. A collection of historical accounts of events that may be connected to the worship of Great Cthulhu. It is divided into two parts: the first is the collected research of Mildred Schwartz, a woman who found the infamous Angell box and continued the research of Francis Wayland Thurston; the second part is a look at the Cthulhu Cult in the modern age, when David Eberhart, a documentary film student, discovers the work of Mildred Schwartz and follows in her footsteps. Both accounts provide inspiration and potential material, although it is up to the Keeper to decide if either have any basis in the reality of their game world.

Chapter 2: Cults of Cthulhu. A detailed look at five Cthulhu cults from different periods in history. Two of these cults were created by Lovecraft, while the other three pose new threats for your investigators to face. Each section explores the history, beliefs, and social structure of the differing cults, as well as detailing the leaders and key members, along with possible plot and story ideas for your own campaigns or scenarios.

- **The Elevated Order of Morpheus:** a Cthulhu cult based in 1890s London, where the wealthy and elite are not satisfied with mundane power and influence.

- **The Louisiana Swamp Cult:** a detailed depiction of the brutal Cthulhu cult disbanded by Inspector Legrasse in the swamps just outside of New Orleans in 1907.
- **The Society of the Angelic Ones:** a Cthulhu cult thriving in 1920s Los Angeles, preying on those that came west chasing the California dream, only to be left hopeless and desperate.
- **The Esoteric Order of Dagon:** an expanded look into the deep one cult from Lovecraft's *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, where serving Cthulhu is only part of a far greater plan.
- **The Church of the Perfect Science:** a modern-day cult that uses psychology, technology, and mass media to prepare humanity for the coming of Great Cthulhu.

Chapter 3: Creating a Cthulhu Cult. Gets into the nitty-gritty of creating your own Cthulhu cult, providing details about what makes a Cthulhu cult different from other types of Mythos cults, as well as going into the basics of organizational structure. This chapter details a step-by-step process for designing a cult from the ground up, looking deep into aspects such as financing, recruitment, and organization. Advice for creating a cult leader, arguably, the linchpin of any cult, is included. Three example cults are included to demonstrate the method as well as offer inspiration.

Chapter 4: Cultists, Monsters, and Artifacts. Provides resources for Keepers, including profiles for generic cultists

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that you can use in your own scenarios. This chapter also details some new monsters, supernatural artifacts, and new spells to keep things fresh for your investigators and cause them nightmares.

Chapters 5 to 7: Scenarios. A collection of three adventures, set in different time periods and locations, which can be linked together by an artifact—an idol of Cthulhu. You can play these scenarios as separate adventures or link them together to paint a much broader picture of the Cthulhu Cult across the world. While structured to take place in differing eras, the scenarios can be adjusted to allow play in a single time period, be it the 1920s–1930s or modern-day.

- **Loki's Gift:** set in 1890s London, the investigators must look into the death of a talented young musician who seemingly committed suicide. This scenario explores the

darker side of the arts and music, reflecting the ills of society back onto the investigators.

- **Angel's Thirst:** set in 1920s Los Angeles, the investigators are hired by a young woman whose taxi-driving father has been missing for over a week. This scenario delves into the power of religion, community, and family, and how everything can be twisted to serve a dark purpose.
- **A God's Dream:** set in 2017, the investigators must track down their friend in the heart of Chicago. This adventure looks at how technology can aid a cult—granting wealth and corporate influence to potentially awaken the Great Old Ones.

Appendices. Cover suggested further reading and inspiration, using Mythos tomes when researching Cthulhu, and collected player handouts and maps from the scenarios.



A Cthulhu symbol

Sample file



HISTORY OF THE CTHULHU CULT

The Cthulhu Cult is mentioned sparingly in Lovecraft's fiction; *The Call of Cthulhu* and *The Shadow over Innsmouth* being the two major exceptions. But, even within those stories, the author says little about what they are and how they actually operate. This chapter's primary purpose is to present a fleshed-out history of the Cthulhu Cult, while also attempting to preserve some of the mystery surrounding it.

The Cthulhu Cult is comprised of seemingly separate and disparate cults, all worshipping Great Cthulhu in different ways. Whether communication between these cults exists, and whether they all fall under the direction of the Deathless Masters, should remain in the purview of the Keeper. Thus, on one hand, the Keeper could decide that all the various cults devoted to Cthulhu fall under the umbrella of a single "Cthulhu Cult" or, on the other hand, that numerous unconnected cults exist that are collectively (in the eyes of outsiders at least) regarded as the Cthulhu Cult. Alternatively, one might suppose that alongside numerous unconnected Cthulhu-worshipping cults, there is also the Cthulhu Cult, which does loosely connect some of these cults together—this proposition suggesting that the Cthulhu Cult is the major player, while there are others who operate to their own (often limited) agendas. It's feasible to expect that some of these disparate cults may, in time, be discovered by the Cthulhu Cult and embraced into its fold or, quite likely, used as cat's paws to further the Cthulhu Cult's aims without the lesser cult's knowledge.

Cthulhu cults, like Cthulhu itself, should be enigmatic. They receive/interpret commands from a being that thinks beyond human understanding. Trying to understand Cthulhu would be like a dog trying to understand what a human is doing when sat at a computer. No matter how much time you sat down with that dog, how many analogies you use, how many doggie treats you offer, that animal is incapable of understanding a computer. And so are we, when it comes to Cthulhu.

We can never understand Cthulhu. So, how do you write for a Great Old One? You don't. You write for its cult.

A cult's ultimate goals may be unknowable because the supernatural forces they worship are unknowable; however, the leaders and members of a cult have human emotions and agendas, and they perceive Cthulhu's messages through a human filter. They don't fully understand Cthulhu either, although in their insanity they may glean insights beyond the average human mind. Thus, for most cults, their tactics and daily activities are (to some degree) understandable. Cults need money to operate. Cultists need to eat, pay the bills, and operate within society, all of which allows them to remain under the radar of law enforcement. Cult members have hopes and personal goals, and they sometimes have families. Cultists are humans and therefore have human limitations and desires—be they a quest for power, knowledge, money, or simply wanting to be among the "chosen ones" when Cthulhu rises.

This chapter provides examples of Cthulhu cults through history—but what they were doing, and why, can never be fully understood. A group of cultists may want to make sacrifices to Cthulhu. That's understandable. But, what does Cthulhu get out of people being killed in its name? Power? What kind of power? What for? How does it work? There is no answer to these questions we could properly comprehend or understand.

Cults, on the other hand, have many small goals that can, and should be, understood by the Keeper. The cult wants to sacrifice 13 people. The cult needs to steal a gemstone or an artifact. The cult must cosmetically modify themselves to look like Edgar Allen Poe. These goals, which the investigators can understand and interfere with, are the human level of the story and where the Keeper's focus should lie. Don't sweat the big picture. The more a Mythos god's actions seem strange, random, and confusing, the more horrified your players will be.

PREFACE

The following sections are drawn from the research of Mildred Schwartz, dated October 5, 1939, and express her personal findings and opinions on the matter of Cthulhu cults. Schwartz's text is presented in full, with minor editorial corrections.

The Cthulhu Cult is real. I cannot express to you how difficult it was to write those words, but this is the irrefutable truth. I have gathered information on the worshipers of the Sleeping God over the last eight years, traveling across the United States and Europe, and collecting records of events that I believe show a global threat to humanity.

I have never personally experienced the supernatural. Unfortunately, in doing my research, I fear I have caught the notice of people that want to keep these groups and incidents hidden. When I began looking into the Cthulhu Cult, it was out of boredom and curiosity. Now, I realize the importance of this research. I know there are living people that believe in, and worship, the ancient god Cthulhu.

I had never heard of Cthulhu or its cults until nine years ago. I was working for a clipping agency and was assigned with cleaning up the storeroom. Doing so, I discovered a locked box and odd key on a back shelf, hidden away among the files and dust. When I opened the box, I discovered that it had belonged to one of our clients, Francis W. Thurston, who died in 1927. No one in the office knew how we received the

box, but it seemed to have been in the agency's possession since just before Thurston's death.

The box contained the research of a Professor George Angell (1841–1925) of Brown University, documenting several eyewitness accounts of Cthulhu worship. I possess a master's degree in theological studies, and found the idea of this "Cthulhu Cult" most intriguing. Thus, I began my own investigation, undertaking extensive research and interviewing a number of individuals regarding Cthulhu's worship. I feel I have only seen the tip of this dread iceberg.

The practice of Cthulhu worship extends through different cultures and time periods, with a surprising lack of connection between different manifestations of the cults. There is no Cthulhu "bible" or doctrine, though Cthulhu is described in many ancient tomes.

Ultimately, I'm not sure how these cults originated. My findings suggest that the worshipers are connected to Cthulhu in their dreams, with their commands dictated by the "Great Old One." Or, perhaps, the so-called "Deathless Masters" have been passing information to new generations throughout history, with their true power and influence being cleverly obfuscated. Perhaps, the source of the Cthulhu cults is something totally unknown to us, with no historical records in existence. Only time will tell.

The following historical accounts I have included in this document are all the records I could find that have some connection to Cthulhu worship, if not cults in and of themselves. Some seem more solid than others, and I'll let the reader conclude on the ultimate validity of the accounts. I speak only English and French, so am limited to records in these languages. I guess that there are other accounts I am unaware of, due to the lack of English translations of these records. Indeed, I feel that my research only scratches the surface. I'm releasing these materials with the hopes of extending knowledge and bringing these cults into the light of day.

ON CTHULHU

Cthulhu is said to be an extraterrestrial deity that came to this planet, along with others of its kind, tens of millions of years before the existence of humanity. It is often depicted and described as a giant humanoid with scaly, rubbery skin, bat-like wings, and an octopus-like head with a mass of tentacles erupting from its face. Cthulhu and its kind were not necessarily composed of flesh and blood. It is theorized that their physical presence does not consist of matter as we understand it.

Cthulhu lies dead or sleeping in the sunken city of R'lyeh, from which it dreams, sending out psychic visions and



Mildred Schwartz

messages to “sensitive” humans. It is said that R’lyeh will rise “when the stars are right” and with it, Cthulhu and its kind will awaken to regain mastery of this world. What Cthulhu is supposed to do, once risen, is a matter of debate among worshippers. Some believe that Cthulhu has already risen and returned to its slumber, but again, the legend varies.

By piecing together the records of William Dyer from his expedition to Antarctica, accounts from the *Necronomicon*, and the confessions of a Louisiana cultist known only as Castro, a more detailed history of Cthulhu and its kind can be extrapolated. According to Dyer’s account of an ancient alien mural, created by creatures he calls the “Old Ones” or “Elder Things,” we find some insight.

The Elder Things created a vast civilization, tens of millions of years before the dawn of man. At some point in this ancient history, octopoid beings, who are said to be the spawn of Cthulhu itself (or smaller examples of this god-like race), came from the stars to Earth. Cthulhu and its spawn populated the planet and started a war with the Elder Things. Such warfare may have come to pass due to the encroachment of Cthulhu’s spawn, which pushed the Elder Things into the oceans. The Cthulhu spawn (also known as “star-spawn”), at some point came to an understanding with the Elder Things. The Cthulhu spawn would possess much of the Elder Things’ former territory, leaving the Elder Things with a small portion of land as well as the seas, since the oceans were somehow inhospitable to Cthulhu and its kind.

Great cities of the Cthulhu spawn were built all over the earth, with R’lyeh, their greatest city, being built in (what is now) the South Pacific. Some time passed and, for an unknown reason, the Pacific lands of Cthulhu, including R’lyeh, sank into the ocean. R’lyeh supposedly still rests at the bottom of the ocean, at coordinates of S. Latitude 47° 9’, W. Longitude 126° 43’ (according to an account by a Norwegian sailor, Gustaf Johansen). The journal of Johansen states that R’lyeh rose in 1925, albeit temporarily. And with it, Cthulhu.

THE AWAKENING OF CTHULHU

The work of Professor Angell and Mr. Thurston creates a well-documented account of what happened in the South Pacific in 1925. The first signs were seen on February 28. Angell collected numerous reports of artists and poets having strange, yet similar dreams revolving around Cthulhu and R’lyeh.

Angell met one such person, a young artist named Henry Anthony Wilcox, who studied sculpture at the Rhode Island School of Design, and who came to Angell with a bas-relief depicting strange hieroglyphics. Wilcox wanted to know

what the writing meant, having sculpted the bas-relief after experiencing a strange dream.

Wilcox described his dream to Angell, telling of great cyclopean cities made with giant stones, the structures dripping with green ooze. The hieroglyphics he had carved in the bas-relief had covered the walls and pillars of these strange cities. As the dream came to an end, Wilcox heard an inhuman voice say, “Cthulhu fhtagn.”

Wilcox had said he was “psychically hypersensitive” and had been since childhood. Many of the other accounts gathered by Angell not only involved artist and poets, but patients of asylums. Something seemed to have happened on both a global and a psychic level.

The intensity of these dreams continued to grow, until the night of March 27, when the victims of these visions entered a state of madness, drifting between sleep and delirium. Angell monitored Wilcox while he endured a weird mental state, slipping in and out of consciousness. This continued until April 2 at 3 pm, when Wilcox snapped out of the fugue with no memory of what he had experienced.

Angell went on to collect news reports corresponding to the dates between March 27 and April 2, with the material showing a widespread increase of reported psychotic episodes, mob attacks, murders, and suicides—over twice the normal numbers during that period of time. Angell found that most of those “psychically sensitive” had similar recoveries to Wilcox, though a few had suffered permanent mental trauma.

All of these episodes seemed to be some kind of warning, or indication, of the event described in the journal of Gustaf Johansen, a sailor serving on a two-masted schooner, the *Emma*, which had left Auckland for Callao on February 20 with a complement of 11 men. On March 1, the *Emma* was thrown off course by a terrible storm that coincided with a large earthquake. While correcting course and trying to make up for lost time, the *Emma* encountered another vessel, the *Alert*. The commander of the *Alert* warned the crew of the *Emma* to turn back, but when the captain refused, the *Alert* opened fire on the *Emma*—it was very unusual for a vessel such as the *Alert* to be armed with a cannon. The *Emma* was hit and began taking on water. The captain of the *Emma* was able to get her close enough to the *Alert* to board the enemy vessel. After a heated battle, the crew of the *Emma* took control of the *Alert*. The encounter left the entire crew of the *Alert* dead, while the *Emma* lost three men, including the captain and first mate, leaving Johansen to take command of the *Alert*.

After securing the vessel, Johansen found an altar to Cthulhu on board, as well as records of illegal activities that the *Alert*’s former crew had been involved in. From what I have been able to put together, the *Alert*’s crew

were members of a Cthulhu cult based out of Fiji, and one possibly connected to the **Esoteric Order of Dagon** (page 84). The cultists set off from Dunedin for the coordinates of S. Latitude 47° 9', W. Longitude 126° 43' on March 1—the same day as the earthquake and storm.

Following the direction of those coordinates, the crew could see a large tower rising out of the sea. No landmass has been recorded in that area before or since. The crew decided to investigate and proceeded to the great stone tower.

Moving closer, they could see that the tower was part of a larger landmass made of a strange city that had emerged from the depths. Johansen and his crew went ashore to investigate this alien structure. Johansen postulated that perhaps only the tip of a great city had emerged, with a majority of the landmass still lying under the sea.

The city's architecture was unlike anything made by human hands, the stones used in its construction were gigantic and made from an unknown material. Strange hieroglyphs marked many of the structures, and the scale of the archways and steps seemed as if the city was made for creatures much larger than humans. But, most importantly, many of the structures were non-Euclidian; they did not fit with any known understanding of geometry or physics. The buildings defied the laws of nature by their very existence. Such information confirms (perhaps) that the creatures that built this place had a grasp of physics superseding not only our understanding, but our perceptions. This varies greatly from the structures built by the Elder Things, which, while alien in design, seem to conform to humanity's understanding of physical space and structure. Cthulhu and its ilk are not just alien, they are truly "other."

The seamen found themselves at the pinnacle of the island, near the foot of the monolithic tower, the base of which was carved with an octopoid-dragon image (most likely Cthulhu) on the surface of an acre-sized door. The men examined the door, touching and climbing its surface. I find their behavior curious. I'm not sure what possessed these men to go to this door, or even to enter the risen city. These men were sailors, not explorers. Johansen often states how terrified he was, yet he continued to lead these men. To what end? What is it that they hoped to gain? It was hypothesized to me by professor Wilmarth, that some supernatural force might have compelled these men to act as they did. And, in truth, I feel he must be correct.

By the acts of the men, or by chance alone, the great door slowly opened. An opaque darkness filled the entryway as a noxious odor seeped out. Then a green, gelatinous mass, squeezed out of the doorway. Once emerged, the shape shifted into the giant form of a scaly, octopus-headed, dragon-winged humanoid. Johansen emphatically states in his journal, that this was Cthulhu.

The creature quickly snatched up some of the sailors in its giant claws. I assume they were consumed, but Johansen is vague in his account, with their deaths only being implied. In their panicked fear, other sailors lost their footing and fell to their deaths. One, named Parker, was said to have fallen into "an angle which was acute, but behaved as if it were obtuse" and simply disappeared. Again, the account shows us this place does not only exist in different dimensions, but it also enables humans (and others) to move into or through them.

Johansen and one other sailor, Briden, made it back to the rowboat and then to the *Alert*, with Cthulhu lumbering behind them. Johansen, knowing that the creature would overtake his ship, decided to turn the vessel around and attempt to ram the beast. When he did, the creature, surprisingly, popped—Johansen describes "a bursting as of an exploding bladder, a slushy nastiness as of a cloven sunfish, a stench as of a thousand opened graves..." All that was left was a noxious, green smoke. This account, again, illustrates a creature completely alien to our understanding. It seemingly had no skeleton or muscle structure, but was composed of a gaseous material. Or, perhaps, it can disassemble itself on a molecular level. Possibly, such behavior could be the result of Cthulhu existing in multiple dimensions simultaneously. Of course, Cthulhu's true nature remains unclear and we may never fully comprehend or understand such matters.

Johansen continued on, moving away from the risen city, only to look back and see the green cloud reform into its previous shape. This moment seemed to be a mental breaking point for Johansen, as his account ends with no further description of the creature, the city, or any coherent thought. Within his crazed ramblings, Johansen described another powerful storm on April 2, after which he experienced a feeling of relief.

The survivors of the account are now dead. Briden died before the *Alert* was found floating aimlessly at sea, while Johansen died a year later at his home in Oslo. Thus, further interviews with the supposed eyewitnesses are impossible.

One is led to ask: is this account true? This being the only record I have found of anyone actually ever finding R'lyeh or Cthulhu. Why rise and quickly descend again? Johansen was the only survivor of the incident, with no physical evidence ever acquired. So, did it happen? Perhaps Johansen and his crew experienced something else entirely, a group psychosis or some form of mass hysteria. If this location was the actual source of the world-wide psychic event, perhaps the crew of the *Alert* experienced some kind of mental attack or shock, with Johansen's record being his interpretation of what transpired, and thus must be viewed as his perception rather than a statement of fact. There is no evidence to corroborate my theory, but there is also no physical evidence whatsoever of the event. What actually transpired, truly remains a mystery.

BELIEFS OF CTHULHU WORSHIPERS

The most comprehensive testimony of a Cthulhu cultist is found in the *Angell Papers*. The cultist known only as “Castro” let slip insightful facts during his interrogation at the hands of Inspector John Raymond LeGrasse of the New Orleans Police Department.

According to Castro, Cthulhu was a high priest of its species, able to use great magics to preserve its dead (or sleeping) kin as well as itself. Such magic is connected to the stars and their position in the heavens, although this may be a correlation and not necessarily a source of power. The stars, however, dictate when Cthulhu and the “Great Old Ones” can arise. The cults waiting for this resurrection spend their time in worship of Cthulhu, perhaps somehow assisting the Dead God and its kind to awaken and rule the planet once more. From Castro we discover the chant used by Cthulhu cultists in almost all cultures and periods in history:

“Ph’nglui mglw’nafh Cthulhu R’lyeh wgah’nagl fhtagn.”

The phrase is said to mean: *“In his house at R’lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.”* The original language is unknown and relates to no known language, living or dead.

A common element in many Cthulhu cults is the connection to an idol or statue of some kind, usually

depicting Cthulhu. Typically, such idols are made by a cultist although some statues are implied to be created by Cthulhu’s spawn, discovered by humanity long after the creature’s imprisonment. The idol found by Johansen was made of an unknown material, perhaps from some kind of meteorite or brought to Earth by the creatures themselves.

Castro, in his younger days, was a sailor and had spent some time in China. It was there, he claims, that he was introduced to Cthulhu worship by “Deathless Chinamen.” In my research, I have found references to Deathless Masters and Undying Ones—perhaps, they are all one and the same.

Prayers and rituals are not only performed to gain insight into the Dead God’s wishes, but to somehow access its power. Castro claimed that the Old Gods would come back and teach new ways of “shouting and killing and reveling in joy.” Humanity would evolve beyond good and evil, with societal rules thrown aside to indulge in a “Great Ecstasy.” These end times would come at a point where humanity had already “become as the Great Old Ones.” What he meant by these things we can only speculate. Perhaps liberation from not only morality but from a Euclidian way of thought. Perhaps followers of Cthulhu will be granted insights into our very existence and purpose, providing its worshipers with greater power over their destinies as well as over others. This is a common idea found in many of the Cthulhu cults that I’ve discovered in my studies. Cthulhu will give you something no one else can give you—if you pay its price.



A Cthulhu idol

TIMELINE OF CTHULHU WORSHIP

Following is a timeline I have constructed from historical accounts of what I believe to be Cthulhu or Cthulhu Cult related worship. Some of the evidence is, I admit, tenuous, but I will allow the reader to judge for themselves if the information is helpful or not.

CULT OF SUMER (2000 BC)

The Cult of Sumer is the oldest record I have found of a possible Cthulhu cult. The account is attributed to the Greek scholar, Aeschines, who heard the story from a Persian merchant.

During the reign of Shulgi, in the Third Dynasty of Ur, the city of Ur was struck by a “plague of madness” that lasted for a few days. During that time, the city was in chaos, paving the way for an attempted coup. The unnamed leader of the revolt was said to call “demons from the sky” and to “poison the minds of the people.” The cult leader said he was given

his gifts from the “god before gods who sleeps dead in the city under the sea.” The leader and his followers were able to perform a number of rituals in the city’s streets and market, most of which included orgiastic rites, as well as animal and human sacrifices.

The power of the cult was so great that it was able to recruit most of Shulgi’s trusted servants. Shulgi and his remaining scholars knew that this threat could not be defeated by force, and so sought out ancient knowledge to destroy the cult. For two days, Shulgi and his men searched for answers in ancient writings and prayed to the gods for guidance. On the morning of the third day of madness, Shulgi claimed that a demon came to him in a dream and showed him a sunken city that would again rise. But also, the dream showed him answers.

Shulgi went alone to the marketplace where the cult was performing a ritual. He calmly walked up to the cult leader and stood before him. The leader of the cult believed that Shulgi had come to join in the ritual; however, Shulgi pulled his dagger and slit the cult leader’s throat. With the death of its leader, the cult’s followers seemed “to wake from a walking slumber” and life returned to normal.



Abas-relief of the Cult of Sumer

CTHULHU IN ROME (60 AD)

The Roman historian Tacitus writes an account of a possible Cthulhu cult. In the port of Ostia, a group of sailors was arrested for the murder of 24 people over the span of three weeks. The leader of the group, a merchant and sculptor known as Fabius, had collected like-minded sailors from around the empire to help him bless the world for “Kathlulu.”

It seemed that Fabius planned to create ten-foot-tall sculptures of his god—described as having the head of squid and the wings of a bat—and place them around parts of the greater Roman Empire. Once each sculpture was erected, Fabius and his cult followers would sacrifice a person and cover the statue in the victim’s blood. Fabius did not recall how many statues he had made but, according to Tacitus, 31 were discovered by the authorities and destroyed. While the account leaves out many details, it appears Fabius and his followers were executed.

Note: see **Cthulhu Statues of Fabius**, Chapter 4, page 183, for further details.

IRAM: CITY OF CTHULHU (4TH CENTURY)

Little is known about the lost city of Iram. It is mentioned in the Quran only briefly, described as “having lofty pillars” and, due to its corruption, was destroyed by God and now lies buried in the desert sands. The only other documentation I could find on the “City of Pillars,” is attributed to the Arab scholar Ali ibn Isa al-Asturlabi, allegedly written in the 9th century. The strange gods worshiped in Iram could point to a cult of Cthulhu operating in the heart of the city.

According to the story, the ruler of this city-state, referred to only as the Last King of Iram, may have been a devout worshiper of Cthulhu. The Last King was said to be nearly 200 years old and was accepted by his people to be a messenger of the gods. A direct translation of the name of the primary god is difficult, but seems to be pronounced “Kah-tho-oo.”

The Last King received dreams of a sunken city where a god dreams and waits. This dreaming god would send visions to the faithful, teaching them the true ways of the universe and granting supernatural powers. Thus, such dreams provided uncommon knowledge to the king, as evidenced by the Last King creating strange structures in his city—buildings that “could move while standing still.”

So great was his connection to Cthulhu that the Last King was able to commune with “unearthly creatures” that lived “below and above” the city. At the center of Iram, a great statue was erected depicting an immense god with

the head of an octopus, the wings of a bat, and a tail that wrapped around its own throat. The statue stood before a temple built of unnatural stone—the stone was said to have been found deep in the desert and identified through visions received by the Last King. After its construction, it was said that this temple was difficult for people to look upon and impossible to describe.

As the legend goes, God saw this city of devils and turned his back upon it. The beginning of the end for Iram was when a holy man came to the city, who it was claimed possessed a greater understanding of demons than even King Solomon. The stranger warned all that God was going to destroy the city, and that anyone who knew and feared the one True God must flee or be taken away with Iram into the desert sands.

The Last King sent winged demons to slay the holy man, but they burned in the skies before they could act. The Last King called giant worms from the earth to eat the holy man, but the beasts split open in the fresh desert air. The Last King finally sent his trusted followers to capture the holy man, but once they looked into the holy man’s eyes, they threw down their weapons and fled. The holy man, and those he swayed, left Iram. At dawn the next day, the city was gone.

THE ROYAL CTHULHU CULT OF JAPAN (781 AD)

In 781, Prince Sawara, the fifth son of the Emperor Kōnin of Japan, became the heir-presumptive after his older brother, Kanmu, became emperor. There had been rumors that Prince Sawara had a keen interest in the occult, but as royalty, his obsessions were accepted as noble fancy.

It was said that Sawara would hold strange, nighttime rites near the ocean and that he was often seen wearing curious jewelry adorned with octopoid imagery. Sawara’s followers, who participated in these dark rituals, were known to be fiercely loyal and undertook his directions without question.

In 785, the administrator of the capital city, Fujiwara no Tanetsugu, was assassinated. Sawara and his followers were implicated in the murder, which was carried out in a bloody and ritualistic fashion. The motivation for the murder was painted as political, but the true reason seemed to be that Fujiwara discovered that Sawara was performing human sacrifices to his sea god.

Prince Sawara’s followers were executed, while he was exiled to the Awaji Province. On his journey, he began to waste away. In a matter of days, the prince lost so much weight that his guards described him to be “like a skeleton.” Sawara died before he reached his destination, with his final words said to be, “The dead god sleeps and dreams in his house.”

WITCH CULT (1290)

A German Benedictine monk, Aldo Keller, writes an account of a witch cult with hundreds of members near the city of Weihestein. Keller notes that the cult was unusual, not only because of its large membership, but because the members of the coven came from all walks of life. He claims the cult stretched across social classes, with worshipers consisting of farmers, merchants, and members of the nobility, as well as some from within the clergy. For months prior to the surfacing of the cult, many people in the area were openly performing pagan rituals and spells.

According to eyewitness accounts, an elderly man in the village was said to have grown younger by almost 30 years; a woman went into labor and then proceeded to give birth to seven children, all of which were able to walk within days; and “stones of gold” were found lying in the street, with nobody paying any notice or taking them.

The authorities, feeling that they were losing control to dark forces, began hunting down and executing witches. One account speaks of the men of the militia hunting for cultists, whereupon they were “set upon and taken by winged fiends,” while others were pulled into the ground by “tree roots like serpents.” It wasn’t until soldiers were brought in from out of town that the cult leader was found and captured. The unnamed leader of the witch cult was said to have command of the village and had a small altar in her home with a statue of an “octopus-demon” at its center. On the gallows, she was said to repeat, *“The dead god will rise and none can stop him. You will see him in your dreams and know the errors of this day.”*



Woodblock print of the Witch Cult

A CURE TO ST. VITUS' DANCE (1381)

St. Vitus' Dance (better known as Sydenham's chorea) is an affliction causing uncontrollable jerking movements affecting the face, hands, and feet. The disease is often accompanied by mental instability, causing victims to cry or laugh uncontrollably. This affliction has historically manifested or been characterized as uncontrollable dancing.

One account of St. Vitus' Dance comes from Augsburg, Bavaria in 1381. Fifteen people spontaneously began dancing uncontrollably. Often these stories revolve around a church or religious ceremony, but this time the affliction seems to have no obvious cause or instigation. The people danced until they passed out from exhaustion, only to wake up the following day to start again. By the end of the second day, three monks came into the village claiming to know how to cure the victims. They performed an “ungodly” ritual for over an hour, at the end of which, the victims had control of themselves once more. A local scholar wrote down what he was alleged to have heard the monk's repeating over and over again during the ritual: *“Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.”*

THE WELL TO HELL (1485)

This account comes from the German inquisitor Heinrich Kramer while in the Austrian province of Tyrol. It was reported to Kramer that the village of Vomperberg was a haven for heretics and witches.

When Kramer began his investigation, he found the locals of Vomperberg to be god-fearing Catholics, but sensed this might be a ruse to cover up demonic activity. Thus, Kramer made a gesture of leaving, but stayed the night in the woods just outside of the village, allowing him to observe events. He saw a group of eleven villagers perform a ritual around the town's well. As the ritual reached its climax, a “malformed shape” emerged from the well. Kramer believed this creature to be a demon, describing it as being “larger than a horse, but having the basic shape of a man, while its over-sized head was that of a squid, with tentacles grabbing at the air. As it emerged, great bat wings unfolded.” He claimed that its aspect was so horrific that most of his men took leave of their senses and ran deep into the woods.

Soon after, Kramer gathered a local militia and arrested the cultists who had participated in the ritual, burning down their homes and destroying the well for good measure.

CULT OF CTHULHUL (1486)

The reign of the Aztec king, Tizoc, was short-lived. After ascending the throne, Tizoc fought the Otomies at Metztitlán, but was able to capture only 40 prisoners for sacrifice at his coronation. Such a low number of sacrifices is believed to have weakened his position and caused him to constantly fight for control. Tizoc's ultimate downfall is said to have come at the hand of this younger brother, Ahuitzotl, who poisoned him. Ahuitzotl is described as worshipping a lesser-known Aztec god, called Cthulhul.

There are very few accounts of Cthulhul in Aztec mythology, all of which say that the god dreams from within its temple under the sea, in a place called Ya-R'lyeh. It is said that Cthulhul's worshipers could journey to Ya-R'lyeh in their dreams, where they could learn the secrets of life and death.

NARVÁEZ EXPEDITION (1528)

While exploring what is now, western Florida, the Narváez expedition landed at the Jungle Prada site. After claiming the land for Spain, Narváez spoke to the local native population and discovered legends concerning a city of gold, called Apalachen. Wanting to find Apalachen and its gold, Narváez split his party, taking 300 men inland with him to search for the city, while the rest sailed north to Panuco.

On arriving at Apalachen, Narváez discovered the people had very little gold. The villagers, wanting to be rid of the invaders, told the Spaniard of another village called Aute, where there was so much gold that the people sewed it into their clothes. Eager to claim the gold, Narváez and his men moved on, their sights now set on Aute.

The villagers of Aute, again, had very little gold. This time, the people of Aute said that they had once been rich, but they had been raided by men from the village of Rutno. The people of Aute were afraid of the men of Rutno not only because of their aggressive behavior, but for the fact that they worshipped a dark god. The gold that they had stolen was used to make a large statue at the center of the village in the shape of their dark god. Thus, Narváez and his troops moved on to Rutno.

Narváez found that Rutno did indeed have a statue that was nearly 20 feet tall, but it was not made of gold as the people of Aute had said. Instead, it was fashioned from a dark green, almost jade-like, crystal, in the shape of a terrifying creature. The statue was said to look like a dragon with the head of an octopus and possessed long, clawed arms and the wings of a bat. Narváez wanted no part of the village, nor the statue, and planned to return Aute. But, before he left, the Rutno villagers began smashing their own statue with rocks. Some of Narváez men, against orders, joined in and helped the villagers destroy the statue of the squid-like god. As the statue fell to the ground, the villagers began to fight with one another. Narváez

ordered his men to withdraw. Narváez describes watching the villagers kill each other, and then, themselves.

Some days later, on arrival back at Aute, the Spanish found the village had been burned to the ground. No sign of the villagers could be found.

THE SUBTERRANEAN WORLD OF XINAIÁN (1545)

The Asturian explorer Pánfilo de Zamacona y Nuñez claimed to have discovered a race of subterranean people in 1545, near what is now Binger, Oklahoma. This bizarre account tells of a vast underground city, called K'nyan, where these "Indians" (as Nuñez describes them) lived with strange creatures and advanced technology. Nuñez claimed these people worshipped a pantheon of gods, including Yig, Shub-Niggurath, Tsathoggua, and Tulu—this is one of the few accounts I have found where worship of Cthulhu ("Tulu") is placed on par with other entities.

The K'nyanians were said to be immortal and, with their technology, were able to breed strange creatures that they subjugated for their own dark deeds and pleasures. According to Nuñez, the K'nyanian civilization was declining, seemingly abandoning learning and growth for absolute hedonism.

Nuñez's account was discovered on a scroll found in a metal cylinder (made of an unknown material) in 1928. No physical evidence corroborating the existence of the K'nyanians has, to date, been found.



Detail of Narváez Expedition from 16th century manuscript.

CULT OF FIJI (1643)

The Dutch explorer Abel Tasman visited Fiji in 1643. Within the great collection of islands in the South Pacific, Tasman happened upon an isolated community of people shunned by other Fijians due to their strange religious beliefs.

These "Others" (as most Fijians described them) claimed to be visited by the "Children of the Shark God," who would guide the community to secret places where fish were abundant. These people from the sea were described as "fish in the shape of man." The island community said the fish-folk told tales of the time before man came to be, and would on occasion take both men and women from the community to breed with. The offspring of such mating were believed to be blessed by the Shark God with everlasting life.

The Fijians informing Tasman of the Others believed them to be a cursed people, and that while they claimed to be communing with oceanic gods, the fish-folk were actually evil spirits. Such tales piqued Tasman's curiosity and he decided to visit the island of the Others.

Tasman didn't stay long. He described the Others as malformed and unpleasant; off-putting in both appearance and demeanor. While he and his crew attempted to trade with the Others, the Dutchmen quickly learned these people

were disinterested in the goods offered. Tasman noted that this was the first time he had seen Fijians living in stone structures; their homes constructed with large stones and covered in strange hieroglyphs. Tasman wondered at the Others ability to move and work such great stones and concluded that these stones and structures must have originated from an earlier and more advanced civilization.

COVEN OF NORFOLK (1645)

The self-pronounced "Witchfinder General," Matthew Hopkins relates his encounter with a group of witches that, I believe, may have been worshipers of Cthulhu. In spring of 1645, Hopkins went to the village of Broomholm to investigate a group of four women suspected of performing witchcraft. When Hopkins arrived, the women had already been released from custody, and upon questioning the village leader as to why the women had been arrested in the first place, Hopkins was told that the women had been accused of killing livestock in sacrifice to Satan. The official claimed the women had laughed at him and said their god was far older than Satan. Fearing supernatural retribution, the village leader let them return to their homes.

