CULTS OF THE YOUNG KINGDOMS

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This book concerns the cults of the Young Kingdoms: mankind’s largely futile attempt to codify and venerate the various powers of the Multiverse in a bid to understand them, his own place in the world and find a means to explaining the larger questions of life, death and existence after death.

Futile? Almost certainly. Whilst the Lords of Law, Chaos and the Elements need and require veneration in order to sustain their continued existence, they care little for most mortals. The gods of the Young Kingdoms did not create man in their own image and nor do they seek to offer hope in eternal life beyond the veil of existence. At best the Lords of the Higher Planes are uncaring and distant. At worst they are manipulative, selfish and concerned only with how mortals can be used in the Eternal Struggle, as already outlined in the Elric of Melniboné Core Rulebook. Elric himself explains it best:

‘Would that we’d never met, Shaarilla of the Dancing Mist. For a while, you gave me hope – I had thought to be at last at peace with myself. But, because of you. I am left more hopeless than before. There is no salvation in this world – only malevolent doom!’

But this negligence does not prevent humans and other races from worship. It is a mortal need, it seems. Moreover it is a mortal need to codify and ritualise such behaviour in the hope of attaining greater insight and a closer relationship with the object of veneration.

This book, then, explains these codifications, these cults and offers them as tools for those Elric of Melniboné players and Games Masters who wish to see Pacts made with such beings.

**NOTES CONCERNING THE EARLIER EDITION**

This book is a considerable update of the earlier edition of Cults of the Young Kingdoms. Subtle changes have been made to the listed cults and each now has a myth associated with it. Some cults included in the earlier edition have not been included in this edition simply due to reasons of space: these include the Mereghn and the societies of Quarzhasaat. It is envisioned that these will be covered in a separate supplement or in Signs & Portents. If you have the earlier edition, the cults that appear...
there that do not appear here are by no means redundant and can continue to be used, although a little conversion work may be necessary to bring them into line with the cults in this volume.

NEW CULTS AND CANON
Certain new cults have been included in this edition. The names may not be instantly familiar but are referred to in the Elric saga albeit obscurely. Students of the Eternal Champion saga will also find references to the Corum saga here and there, where it is appropriate to intersect those stories and myths with the Elric cycle.

CULT STRUCTURE
The structure of the cults found in these pages is based on the structure described in the RuneQuest Core Rulebook and the Cults chapter of the Elric of Melniboné Core Rulebook. It is as follows:

**Name**
The name of the cult. This is often the same as the god venerated but not always.

**Purpose and History**
What the cult seeks to attain and its history in the Young Kingdoms.

**Myths**
At least one key myth held true by the cult, with its Mythic Resonance and any behavioural lessons that the myth enforces.

**Beliefs**
What the cult believes and how it acts, both towards its own members and the world in general.

**Worshippers**
The core worshippers of the cult.

**Membership Requirements**
Specific requirements for membership of the cult. An entry of ‘Standard’ indicates that the standard cult membership requirements, as described in the RuneQuest Core Rulebook, apply.

**Benefits**
What benefits the cult offers to its members and how these apply at different stages of membership.

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About the Myths in Elric of Melniboné
Every cult in this book has a myth associated with it. Each is a subjective truth as the cult perceives it. Myths are contradictory in many cases and competing myths are often the source of cult tensions and enmities.

In a world where the Lords of Law and Chaos shape entire universes, each with a singular agenda, there can never be an objective truth save for the ones mortals create for themselves. Myths help shape and explain the current state of being and, in many cases, their origins can be traced to real events. In other cases they are no more than stories created to explain and reinforce behaviour.

Games Masters must decide whether or not a cult’s myth is subjective and based on real events. Either way, the myths are bound to the psyche of the worshippers meaning that they can be experienced as DreamQuests with the right magic. However, the nature of the DreamQuest might be subtly or fundamentally different to the underlying myth, depending on whether or not the Games Master has decided on the nature of its subjectivity and core basis in tangible history.

Gifts and Compulsions
The Gifts and Compulsions specific to the cult. Both Gifts and Compulsions are given more detail in the Benefits chapter.

Cult Skills
Skills held important for membership by the cult and which are taught to its members.

Cult Runes and Magic
What Runes and Magic the cult has access to and teaches.

Heroic Abilities Available
The Heroic Abilities available to champions of the cult.

Retribution
What may happen to cult members who cede membership and choose to ally themselves with another force.

Politics and Relationships
How the cult relates to other cults, including alliances and enmities.
This chapter offers details on the myriad Gifts, Compulsions, Heroic Abilities and other benefits membership of a cult confers.

WHAT MAKES A CULTIST?
The cults are by no means widespread. The Young Kingdoms’ towns and cities are not filled with temples, churches or cathedrals dedicated to the Lords of the Higher Powers; dutiful worshippers do not flock to ceremonies and high holy days, following proscribed religious routines or ecumenical doctrine. Most of the Young Kingdoms’ populace is blissfully unaware of the Eternal Struggle, going about their drab, daily lives ignorant of the higher powers waging war above, around and, sometimes, through them.

Cultists then, are the most ardent and enlightened. Something within them has been awakened, turning them towards a dedicated course of worship and service. Sometimes even the word ‘worship’ is too strong, because many cultists never utter so much as a prayer or offer anything approaching a sacrifice (whether physical or spiritual), save the portion of their own souls that are mortgaged in exchange for temporal power. Cultists, whether they follow Law, Chaos, the Elements or even a personality cult, such as Aubec or Terhali, are pursuing a specific agenda from an informed position. Following one of the Higher Powers is a matter of choice more than culture.

Any Adventurer deciding to join a cult is likely to make this choice based on one, or a combination of, several factors:

- **Cultural leanings.** Pan Tangians are indoctrinated into the worship of Chaos from an early age; Oinians and Yuites are aware of the Dhoz ancestors constantly; the people of Vilmir see the stagnancy of the Lawful church daily. Cultural background certainly shapes the likely disposition an individual has but does not necessarily guarantee it. There will be Pan Tangians who observe Law or the Elementals; Vilmirians who sense the power of Chaos and feel drawn to it. Cultural leanings suggest the likely affiliation of a person but it is not an absolute dictate.

- **Demonstrations of power.** All the higher powers are capable of demonstrating their capabilities through supernatural manifestations and displays of magic. Those who witness...
these demonstrations are more likely to be swayed into worship than those who have not. Has your Adventurer been exposed to the appearance of a Lord of Law or Chaos at sometime in his past? Is this what has contributed to your current affiliation?

- **Desperate circumstances.** The Young Kingdoms is a brutal place and everyone suffers some form of distress or crisis that appears to offer no hope or respite. Law and Chaos take advantage of such events, either directly, but usually through the timely presence of an existing cultist who explains and demonstrates how their affiliation can offer that much needed hope or redemption. This is how souls are snared and captured. The demonstration of the powers of a cult, to those who are in the most dire need of salvation, are often the most forceful and persuasive methods of recruitment.

If your Adventurer is going to join a cult before play begins, spend some time considering what factors have contributed to his decision. The three factors mentioned previously are the most common reasons but others exist and some will be specific to an event or circumstance. Joining a cult should not be a light undertaking; it needs context and a driving event: both are excellent contributors to defining your Adventurer’s saga and development.

## Gifts and Compulsions

Each cult has a certain set of Gifts and Compulsions associated with its membership. These are the typical, most likely Gifts and Compulsions offered and imposed by that cult but by no means are they the only ones. If, as the Games Master, you feel a Gift or Compulsion from a different cult fits a particular Adventurer or set of circumstances, then by all means use it. The Lords of the Higher Planes are fickle and devious, taking a perverse pleasure in the things given to their mortal adherents.

This section lists all the Gifts and Compulsions available through the various cults. The table notes which cults are likely to offer the Gift or Compulsion; if a cult's initial (C for Chaos, L for Law, A for Air, E for Earth, F for Fire, W for Water and so on) is not listed, it indicates that the Gift or Compulsion is contrary to the cult’s nature (a demon feature will never be offered as a Gift by a Lawful cult, for example).

**Gifts**

All Gifts are bought with Dedicated POW. In general one point of Dedicated POW buys one Gift, although it is possible to enhance that Gift with a further purchase. The Cost entry of the Cult Gifts table shows what the base and enhanced cost is for each Gift.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gift</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Cults</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstinence</td>
<td>Exist without one requirement, for example air, food, water, sleep.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Familiar</td>
<td>The recipient receives the companionship of a natural animal (choose from the animals listed in either the Creatures of Law and Chaos chapter, or agree a creature from <em>RuneQuest Monsters</em>) with a SIZ in D6 no greater than the POW spent on this Gift. The familiar obeys simple commands but will not go against its nature. If a further point of POW is invested, the creature can speak with its master.</td>
<td>A, E, C, L</td>
<td>1 POW per D6 of SIZ; additional 1 POW for a talking creature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automaton</td>
<td>Gain a self powered automaton as a servant.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>1 POW per 20 Characteristic/Armour Points invested in the automaton’s assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Gender</td>
<td>The Adventurer changes from male to female or vice-versa. All Characteristics and skills remain the same but the voice and physical functions of the new sex are gained.</td>
<td>C, L</td>
<td>1 POW to change gender once, 2 POW to change a second time, 3 POW to change a third and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaotic Blessing</td>
<td>Roll once on the demon features table.</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1 POW for the first blessing, an additional 2 POW for a second, 3 for a third and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Acuity</td>
<td>Increase Combat Actions by +1.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW for the first, 2 POW for the second and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Training</td>
<td>Raise a cult skill to 100%.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW the first skill, 2 POW for the second, 3 for a third and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elemental</td>
<td>Gain an elemental helper that may be called once per adventure.</td>
<td>All (element appropriate to the cult)</td>
<td>1 POW per metre of the elemental’s size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift</td>
<td>Effect</td>
<td>Cults</td>
<td>Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endurance</td>
<td>Endure any pain. Never needs to check Resilience to prevent unconsciousness when wounded and immune to torture.</td>
<td>E, F, C, L</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced Learning</td>
<td>Results of Improvement Rolls are doubled (thus, a failed Improvement roll means a skill advances by 2 points; successful Improvements improves skill by x2 1D4+1.</td>
<td>C, I.</td>
<td>1 POW for one Improvement Roll; 2 POW for a second, 3 POW for the a third. Thus, an Adventurer who wants 3 enhanced Improvement Rolls must spend 6 POW on this Gift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal Life</td>
<td>The recipient will not die of natural causes during the lifetime of the Gift, although they are still vulnerable to death through violence.</td>
<td>C, I.</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fate</td>
<td>The recipient is capable of appraising, with reasonable accuracy, the likely fate of someone he meets. He does not gain prophecy about the individual but gains a general impression as to whether the individual will be prosperous, lead a full life, die peacefully and so on.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>The agent regenerates 1D3 Hit Points to a hit location of the player's choice each Combat Round, whilst he is still alive. He need not be conscious for the regeneration to work but if a wound is sufficient to kill him, the regeneration ability will not restore him to life.</td>
<td>C, I.</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroic Ability</td>
<td>The Adventurer receives a Heroic Ability pertinent to the cult.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horde</td>
<td>May at a future point, when summoning a demon or elemental being, call forth an army of the same entities, equal in number to the sorcerer's remaining Magic Points, per POW invested in the Gift.</td>
<td>A, E, F, W, C</td>
<td>1 POW. One use. Once used, this Gift can only be regained if the cultist qualifies for a further Gift and if he has dedicated POW remaining. It costs 1 additional POW each time the Gift is taken again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Damage Modifier</td>
<td>Increased Damage Modifier. The agent's Damage Modifier is recalculated, based on the sum of STR, SIZ and POW.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Health</td>
<td>Increased Health. The Adventurer’s Hit Points are recalculated, based on the sum of CON, SIZ and POW.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Reactions</td>
<td>The Adventurer adds his critical score in a weapon to his Strike Rank (for example, an Adventurer with a weapon skill of 60% would add +6 to his Strike Rank).</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innate Luck</td>
<td>When rolling for any Skill Test, the Adventurer can choose which way to read the D100 result. For example, a roll of 90 could be read as 09. Note: if double digits, such as 00, 11, 22 and so forth, are rolled, the result cannot be reinterpreted.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invulnerability</td>
<td>Adventurer is invulnerable to damage from one, specified, sorcerously created or summoned creature.</td>
<td>A, E, F, L, W</td>
<td>1 POW for the first named creature, 2 POW for the second, 3 for the third and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magical Recovery</td>
<td>Magic Points regenerated at twice usual rate.</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiversal Polyglot</td>
<td>Understand any language spoken to you. You cannot, however, read or write the language and your replies are always in your own language but translated into the second tongue.</td>
<td>C, L</td>
<td>1 POW.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>