

CRYPT CRAWL

Crypt Crawl Beta History, Background and Religion by Susan Van Camp

History:

The continent of Bensulia is inhabited mostly by farmers who live in farming villages. As a people, most inhabitants have no learning and no concern for historical events; they know what happened in their parents and grandparents' time. After that, everything is legend.

For a long time, matters were no better than this even for scholars. No dependable historical record went back more than eight hundred years. Most learned folk agreed with priests, who said that the world was 2,000 years old. In the light of recent events--population booms in growing large towns, the establishment of the first large libraries and new information regarding ancient times being brought out of ruins by Spirit Warriors--debates have begun about matters that used to be considered solely a matter for priests. Arguments have started regarding the age of the world, events during ancient times and the origins of the Accursed. Needless to say, these debates are not public; the few scholars foolish enough to speak of such things openly have faced banishment or worse for their heresy. Most people accept priests' account of ancient times and the details of their version can be found in the Timeline of the Celestial Pantheon. This history regards what has happened in the last eight hundred years.

Eight hundred years ago, Bensulia was made up of many small kingdoms ruled by petty kings. The kings were supported by nobles and knights, who drew their wealth from land they owned and the serfs who were bound to the land. The great mass of people were serfs; a few were specialized crafters; rarest of all were the landed nobility who lived off the efforts of their subjects. Little kingdoms engaged in little wars that were not much more than glorified raids, although they were made out to be much greater than that in old stories.

Over the next few centuries, these innumerable weak kingdoms gradually combined to form powerful city states. As their name implied, city states were ruled from a single large town. Of course, large in those days meant nothing compared to current times; a town of 2000 people was big enough to found a city state. Even from so small a start, a town could grow to dominate all nearby villages, tribes and towns, if its luck held, its rulers proved wise and its army stayed strong.

Armies themselves were the great innovation of this time. Instead of landed knights, rulers began to let first merchants and then even rich peasants to bear arms in their name. Instead of rabble, these forces learned discipline, tactics and obedience to officers. Eventually, city states began to field armies that deserved the name and the first great wars came to Bensulia.

This was the period of Zurma's ascent in the celestial pantheon. Worship of Zurma, considered the king of gods, and of his brother Fyza, god of war, dovetailed well with the ambitions of Bensulia rulers. A series of wars left the continent under control of eight city states. The nearby large island of Fenaltland came under control of Chalists, but no other ruler considered them a legitimate state; only the expense of wars against other cities, combined with slow development of navies prevented continental rulers from

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attacking Fenaltland.

This was the state of things when Accursed attacks started. Whether the story of Quegon's part in the Accursed invasion is literally true is not a matter that wise scholars debate openly. From the point of view of most people, the results on their lives were quite terrible enough for them to accept events as the acts of an evil god. Again, the Celestial Timeline gives a the priests' version of events regarding the Accursed. After the invasion began, history and religious authorities largely agree about what happened next.

Accursed attacks started a little over a century ago. The first demons to show up were strange vermin--Spawn Rats and similar creatures. People were frightened by this portent but their fear was nothing compared to their horror when the second wave arrived: Skeletons, zombies and ghouls. Shortly afterwards, the first demon spawn attacked. City state rulers fought back as well as they could but their armies were overmatched and demoralized. It proved nearly impossible to get all but the most elite troops to stand and fight against living nightmares. When troops fled, the Accursed overran entire regions, slaying appalling numbers of people. Fleeing survivors spread disease, terror and panic to other regions as they attempted to escape death.

Five years after Accursed attacked, Chalist temples were established on the mainland. This was, necessarily, done secretly and on a very small scale. It was terrifically dangerous for Chalist priests to set foot on Bensulia. Their lives were threatened by rampaging Accursed and rival priests. They persevered against these twin perils due largely to their faith in their holy writ. The prophecy of Chalise had been quite explicit about the Accursed invasion. They knew when to expect it, what to do when it started, and how to fight if effectively. This they proceeded to do, by using their holy knowledge to create Chalice baths and bring forth the first Spirit Warriors.

Despite the arrival of Chalists, for twenty years the war went badly for humans. There were many monstrous Accursed and they seemed to stream out of the ancient ruins in an unstoppable flood. Additionally, much of the nobility and the Zurma priesthood refused Chalist help. A lot of people had to die--whole regions were overrun--before rulers were desperate enough to accept the arrangement that Chalists insisted upon. To get the help of Spirit Warrior, Chalise had to be declared Empress of the Night, as Zurma was know as Lord of the Day; A temple must be built next to Zurma's with her Dragon Seal displayed prominently over it's front door;she must be acknowledged as co-equal with Zurma in the Celestial Pantheon and her priests and worshippers must be shown respect. Priests and rulers sometimes let Accursed overrun them before they would accept such terms, but such cases were rare. In most city states, the ruling class eventually proved more interested in survival than religious orthodoxy.

Of course, these treaties signed in desperation sometimes failed as soon as panic ended. In a many cases, the nobility and priests allowed the Chalists in--then betrayed them as soon as the Accursed had been driven back. This was expected, and Chalise had provided instruction to her priests for this contingency. As soon as it was apparent that they had been betrayed, the Chalists gathered up all their Spirit Warriors and left the region (sometimes fighting their way out, if things had become especially nasty). They then made their way to a friendly kingdom where they made their services freely available. Inevitably, Accursed attacked and the desperate kingdom called for help. The Chalists were happy to return, for a price. They demanded that all the betrayers be killed.

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Chalists knew the names of their foes--for part of the priesthood kept careful track of their enemies, and nothing would placate them except the execution of people who had been key in betraying them. The policy was quite ruthless. For instance, if Chalist enemies fled, the Chalists would not return. The residents of region were required to hunt the betrayers down, take their heads and deliver them to the nearest Chalist temple.

This brutal policy had the desired effect. Zurma priests and nobles soon learned that it was better to share power with Chalists than cross them. However, this victory sparked problems of its own. A few resentful priests and nobles began a whispering campaign, claiming that Chalists and Accursed were in league together. The Chalists commanded Accursed to attack a region then swept in and 'rescued' the people. It was patently ridiculous but a few bitter nobles and disempowered priests secretly believed this lie. As Spirit Warriors drove back the accursed, this libel was no longer spoken aloud, for Chalists were too strong and powerful to openly smear.

From eighty years ago to the present, humanity fought a bloody, nasty but ultimately victorious war against the Accursed. There were setbacks but, over the long run, Accursed were pushed back to the ancient ruins. At the same time, ancient knowledge Spirit Warriors recovered from the ruins provided the fuel for a reawakening of learning and sparked the beginning of a golden age. Farming and trade thrived, populations recovered and then boomed, art, architecture and rudimentary science enjoyed more progress in fifty years had been seen in eight centuries before. About thirty years ago the first cannons appeared; in the last five black powder firearms have shown up. The affect off all this has not been as disruptive as might have been, if everyone had not been focused on driving back the accursed. In the last decade, however, with the Accursed apparently cowed and hiding in the ruins, rulers became less frightened of demons. Without a shared threat to keep them unified, each ruler began to consider his own interests first.

Nobles formed armies. City states began to turn into nations. Merchants guilds formed and trade routes expanded. All of the dirty politics and secret intrigues that proceeded large wars between human popped up --but (until recently) they took place small scale, in back rooms, and without sparking serious conflicts. This uneasy peace lasted because Chalists continued to point Accursed ruins and tell princes, "Your majesty, while you're plotting to cut your neighbor's throat, there is a whole race of demons getting ready to jump you while you're distracted." One way or another, rulers who ignored this advice didn't live long. Either they led their kingdoms to disaster, or the Chalists threatened to withdraw from the kingdom and other nobles assassinated them before this could happen. Through tactics such as these, Chalists managed to keep the kingdoms unified against the Accursed.

Accursed demons, understanding that human unity had foiled them, began scheming to turn humans against each other. The perfect tools for this job was the Corrupted. These beings, formerly humans, were recruited from the ranks of disaffected nobles--many of them descendants of people who had been killed as part of the blood price for Chalist protection. The Overlords granted them dark powers and sent them out to reignite the old rumors about Chalists working with Accursed.

In one kingdom, a Corrupted noble managed to rise to power, using the abilities granted by Demons to gain his throne. Once there, he sent his army to attack the Chalist temple. Following the usual strategy, the Chalists fought their way out of the kingdom and withdrew, then waited for the inevitable Accursed attack to bring the gentry begging for help. However, when the Accursed attack came, the Corrupted

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prince easily drove it off with his army. Another attack was made and was again repelled. The prince then announced that he had won through divine intervention. Zurma had come to him in a dream and made him high priest of the temple, telling him that he had the god's special favor. He would have the power to defeat any Accursed force, so long as he followed the exact precepts of the god. Those precepts, as interpreted by this traitor, included hunting down and killing any Chalists who lived in his kingdom.

There was, of course, no divine intervention. The Accursed had arranged for a number of sham fights with their servant, making him look like a savior when he was the exact opposite. This gent, and the others like him, believe they are being set up as overseers of enslaved humanity when the Accursed win. The Accursed see them as idiotic but extremely useful dupes who will break the unity of their enemies and allow them to isolate and destroy the Chalists. After that they will destroy all human vermin at their leisure.

Chalists were quick to take action once their spies figured out what was going on. The High Priestess traveled back to the Great Dragon Shrine on Fenaltland to consult the original writings of their goddess for guidance. There she had a vision, which was enlightening but grim. Chalise had indeed foreseen such a strategy on the part of demons. She had shown a way to counter it, but it was not pretty. The Chalists were in for a long slog. They were going to have to fight on two fronts. Against the corrupted they would fight a war of attrition. There were always going to be dupes and idiots who followed dupes. To try to wipe them out completely was useless and besides, the Chalists were here to preserve humanity, not help extinguish it. The Corrupted kingdoms were to be fought, as much as possible, with political intrigue, counter propaganda and back alley assassinations by groups all human spirit warriors were created for this work. They would slow, though not halt, the progress of the Corrupted, buying time for Spirit Warriors to complete their most important duty: To search out and destroy all Demons.

This is a very difficult. Demons are brains of the Accursed and there are only a finite number of them. Without them the entire Accursed race would become nothing but a witless nuisance. No one knows this better than demons, so they go to great pains to stay alive--building up strong defenses and secreting themselves deep in the most dangerous ruins. Still, even with all these defenses, they can be killed. Until now, wasn't worth the risk for Spirit Warriors to hunt demons; Since the demons had fled to the ruins, Chalists were handily winning a war of attrition against the Accursed. They had discovered that demons themselves could not reproduce and that they would eventually die of old age (which some of them had, indeed, already done). All they had to do was keep the Accursed at bay and time would win the war for them. Now Spirit Warriors no longer have the luxury of waiting for Demons to die of old age. Corrupted Princes are preparing for war. They must destroy the traitors' demonic masters. When the last demon dies, not only will the Accursed be broken, but their puppets will lose their power like marionettes with cut strings. Only then will humans regain their place as unchallenged masters of this world.

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Politics:

At the present time, eight city states are Chalist and four have gone Corrupt. The threat of Corruption is in the air and religious tension is worse than in has been in decades--due largely to a split among Zurma worshippers. Most of them still believe in sharing power with Chalists, but a loud minority have joined a new cult, propagated by the Corrupt, and believe that all Chalists are heretics. There is not all out war between Corrupt and Chalist kingdoms but there are small scale wars, raids and political intrigues. Trade, so far, has largely continued and even prospered; the demonic strategy of not attacking corrupt kingdoms has actually made the roads safer.

Within Chalist city states there are many minor political tensions, but so far the need for unity against common foes has kept these from boiling out of control. The most notable tensions are between Aristocrats and Chalists. This is an old conflict, stemming from the necessary surrender of power that noble were forced to make to gain Chalist aid. Some noble families have resigned themselves to this arrangement and have even joined the Chalist church themselves. Other maintain a cool distance from Chalists and Spirit Warriors and, while not directly opposing them, do what they can to hinder and snub and harass the 'upstarts'. Most nobles have attitudes somewhere in between these extremes.

Another common tension pops up with older, reactionary priests of Zurma and Fyzza, who remember the old days where their religions enjoyed the top spots in the Celestial Pantheon. Nowadays they are secondary to Chalist, no matter how many sermons are given about co-operation and power sharing. The Empress of Night is queen of the gods. Some old priests cannot hide their envy and resentment; however, most of these people do little more than complain about their diminished status. A few make the sign of protection against evil when they pass near the Dragon Seal that hangs over the doorway of all Chalist temple, but they do so under their robes.

Another ingredient in the political stew are the freedmen. When Accursed attacks began, farmers were driven off the land and took refuge in towns. After Chalists pushed Accursed back to the ruins, new farming techniques allowed more food to be produced and harvested with less labor. As a result, many serfs remained in cities, taking up work as laborers, craftsmen, merchants, traders, mercenaries and more. They claimed to be freedmen, even though most of them were escaped serfs; when nobles tried to force them back to the land, they proved resistant to recapture. Many of them had gained money, influence and friends. Worse yet, they turned to the Chalists, offering political and financial support in return for protection against their formal masters. Chalists took up the bargain; as a result, most freedmen are devout worshippers of Chalise. Since freedmen make up the great majority of people in larger towns, all large cities in Chalist city states welcome Spirit Warriors. Of course, this added to the resentment some nobles felt against Chalists, but there was little they could do about it.

In smaller towns and villages, where farmers often equal or even outnumber freedmen, resentful nobles can show their contempt for Spirit Warriors more openly. Even here, however, they rarely risk an open challenge. Petty insults and harassments are usually as far as a noble will go. They might be haughty and pig headed, but they are not stupid.

Corrupt agents, on the other hand, range from the very stupid to the immensely clever. Corrupt Princes are always looking for new ways to attack Chalists. Sometimes they employ intelligent spies to collect

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information about Spirit Warriors. More often, they encourage stupid thugs to travel to small villages and harass their foes. They don't care if such fools usually die; the idea is to plague their enemies with petty attacks.

The newest political players to emerge are Spirit Warriors themselves. While actively fighting accursed, they often have outlandish appearances; see their descriptions in the section on Chalise, in the religion section, below. Despite this, they enjoy popular support of freedmen, sympathetic nobles and just about anyone worried about Accursed attack in the Chalist City States. Given this support, it has become increasingly common for Spirit Warriors to gain a lot of good will during their active, fighting years. So long as they retain their good reputation (which the Chalist Temple actively encourages them to do, for political reasons), it is quite possible for a Spirit Warrior to retire with enough money and influence to become buy a shop, a tavern or even a small kingdom. In this way they have become a new class of power players in the Chalist city states

Trade and economy:

Despite Accursed attacks, War, political scheming and the rise of the Corrupted, trade has flourished over the last century. Part of this is due to the overall increase of population over the same period. It is also a result of the new goods and trades that have been developed over the course of this eventful century. Many of these were derived from treasures or knowledge that Spirit Warriors carried out of ancient ruins when they went hunting Accursed and Demons.

In previous years, trade largely took place at fairs, which occurred two to six time yearly in larger towns in villages. These fairs continue in many places, but in large town and cites they have been replaced by permanent markets, which have their own large squares near the center of town. The fairs are relatively small and informal and almost anyone is allowed to set up a tent or rent a stall so long as they are not a known criminal. In larger towns, a trader must buy a writ from a the Merchants' guild and perhaps even a license from the city to set up shop. Many merchants find the cost and annoyance worth the trouble; city markets have boomed in the last couple of decades and fortunes have been made nobles out of youngsters who were born freedmen. The wealth that Spirit Hunters carry out of ruins continues to enrich trade throughout Bensulia.

Even states controlled by the Corrupt are not off limits. Despite political tensions, traders can move between Chalist and Corrupt regions, so long as they watch their steps and bribe the correct officials.

Trade has also been spurred by the rebuilding of ancient roads. Fragments of these strange old roads--gray, flat and made of some curious material that has largely resisted the ravages of age and weather--have been used for as long as anyone could remember. Spirit Warriors found old maps that showed the course of these roads, even in regions where they were overgrown and buried. Using the maps, rulers started uncovering the old roads and patching them. Now they form a network used by pilgrims, travelers and traders all over the continent. They are regularly patrolled and relatively safe from banditry, although tolls can be steep in some regions where local nobles are greedy and local sheriffs corrupt.

The currency of the land is gold, silver and copper. Almost universally, the gold pieces have a symbol

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for Zurma (usually a sun disk with an eagle in front of it) on one side and a profile of the local city state ruler on the other. Silver pieces have a moon disk and a dragon on one side and a portrait of a local hero (often a Spirit Warrior) on the other. Coppers vary widely in theme and design. The weight of gold, silver and copper pieces is set by law and enforced by the merchant's guild, who have the right to outlaw any trader who shaves their coinage to fatten their profits. Any trader worth the name owns a good set of scales, and these are tested for accuracy before a trader is allowed to buy a writ to trade in any large town. Ten coppers equal one silver piece and ten silvers equals a gold piece. By tradition, and as a sign of status, nobles, priests and Spirit Warriors never carry or trade in copper pieces. Their purchases are always rounded down to the nearest silver.

Religion:

In Bensulia, every town has at least one temple; in Chalist regions, they usually have at least three: One for Chalise, one for Zurma and one for Fyzza. In addition, shrines to local heroes are common. Temples to one or more of the following gods may also be found, with the exception of Quegon (who is never worshipped openly, even in the Corrupt city states) and Umdarr (who is only worshipped openly in a lonely mountain top shrine, where a sect of priestesses carry out her dark rites in isolation). Some towns have made their name (and their fortunes) by building large shrines to particular gods and holding yearly festivals to attract pilgrims.

Most temples have priests, priestesses and initiates. Some restrict their highest offices to one gender (for instance, only males may be priests of Zurma). Others do not (a woman may be a priest of Fyzza, if she has the battle skills to gain and hold the position). Spirit Warriors are automatically worshippers of Chalise, but they may attend temple services of any allied god (that is, any god but Quegon, Umdarr or a Corrupt God King). A Spirit Warrior may not become a priest, priestess or initiate so long as she is actively fighting the accursed. After retirement, many spirit warriors become priests and priestesses of Chalise and some join the ranks of allied temples.

The Gods of the Celestial Pantheon keep their distance from individual mortals, granting no magical powers or supernatural intervention. It was not always this way. According to doctrine, dealing directly with individual people was something gods did when the world was young. Today, gods work their will through priests, priestesses and worshippers. To do otherwise, given their divine majesty, would be an affront to their dignity. Miracles remain central to most gods' histories, but divine intervention on a fantastic scale is a thing of the past.

The Gods:

Quegon, Invader God

Quegon is the God of the Accursed. Quegon is portrayed as a variant of a spider. Sometimes with a humanoid face, sometimes with the torso and head of a humanoid. When depicted as a man, he is always shown to be handsome and sly looking.

Quegon brought the Accursed to plague the world and create more dead for Umdarr, who is sometimes depicted as his consort. He is never worshipped openly, but is seen as a figure of evil in almost all other religions.

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Father Earth and Mother Sky

Remote, withdrawn ancient Gods. A legend persists of Hijacc trying to steal from them both. When they chased him they ran into each other, mixing Sky and Earth. The result were wild dust storms. Father Earth used some of the resulting dust to make the first mortals.

Father Earth is associated with fertility, especially plants. In many religions he is considered the earth itself, a god who is also a world. Mother Sky is a figure of mystery and power. Her cloak, blue on the inside and black on the outside, holds back the wild power of Grandmother chaos, which would otherwise overwhelm and destroy the world.

Hijacc, God of thieves and Secret Paths

Hijacc is the God of thieves and Reneez has sworn to send him to seek Umdar. Hijacc is also the God of the secret Paths. In this guise he is a friend of Takal's traveling traders and Chalise's Spirit Warriors. Chalise and Takal keep Hijacc hidden from Reneez.

Hijacc stole a secret of death from Umdar that allowed Chalise to complete the rituals to begin calling forth the Spirit Warriors.

Umdar, God of Death

Umdar is one of the Ancient Gods. Unimpressed by world of the living, she spends her time managing the kingdom of the Dead. Umdar was a god who was created rather than born. Shortly after Chalise freed humans from slavery, they began to have so many children that they covered Father Earth and began to crush him under their weight. Alarmed, Mother Sky pulled back her cloak and allowed a little of Grandmother Chaos to leak into the world. She formed this power into Umdar, an ugly, ill tempered and truly vile goddess. This creature she set upon the mortals with a command and a promise: "Humble them and gain a Kingdom."

Umdar kept her part of the promise, bringing death to mortals and lowering their numbers to a point where Father Earth could support their weight. Good to her word, Mother Sky gave Umdar the Kingdom of the dead, a vast wasted region. Here Umdar rules the unredeemed dead, commanding, punishing or rewarding them as she sees fit.

According to the priests of most religions, all mortals must visit Umdar's kingdom when they die. However, if they have loyally served a god during their lifetime, they will be redeemed by that god, who will collect their souls from Umdar and take them to their own sacred realm. Only the dead who no god thinks is worth redeeming will be left to dwell with Umdar.

It is said the Quegon, the invader God, offered Umdar many deaths in trade for a secret of the dead, and that is why so many of the Accursed's monsters are undead. Many people died in despair and terror, cursing their gods who abandoned to them terrible deaths at the hands of monsters, so many people died and were unredeemed when the Accursed came to the world.

When Chalise was preparing to confront the Accursed she needed a weapon. Hijacc came to her and offered to get her a secret from Umdar if Chalise would protect him from Reneez, who kept hunting him. Chalise, after much thought, agreed. So it was that Hijacc stole the secret from Umdar that made it possible for Chalise to bring the Spirit Warriors to the world.

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Umdar seems to be much less upset about the theft than Reneez is. Umdar thinks she will get more death from better warriors. When Accursed die they also go to her realm and she thinks they make fine subjects.

Fyzaar God of Thunder

Fyzaar is the God of Thunder and vengeance. He is also the chariot driver for Zurma as he crosses the sky.

Fyzaar was always the warrior who struck out at those who failed to observe the codes of Zurma. In this aspect his Priests and Priestesses trained the soldiers of the aristocrats. The primary bonus of this training is that such soldiers have a third action.

When Chalise and Zurma battled for supremacy Fyzaar was distracted by Takal. Takal led Fyzaar across the lands and that left Zurma to face the assaults of Chalise alone. This is why Chalise is said to have given her consort Takal the secret of the Light Rod she took from Zurma.

Fyzaar still provides soldiers to the Aristocrats, but they are no longer the premier warriors of the land. The Spirit Warriors now hold this honor. There is a friction between the Spirit Warriors and Soldiers of Fyzaar. It seldom devolves into combat, because the Accursed present a constant threat to both..

The Five

The five are sons and daughters of Zurma. They traveled the land, helping people to build, patch, farm and learn. Today, their actions are repeated priests and initiates of the temple, who travel in groups of five. They go from one village to another, moving in with devout families. They ask for room, board and modest donations in return for as their labor and training. When they complete their tasks they are given gifts from those they helped and move on to find others who need help.

Trakal and Renzee Gods of Commerce

Trakal and Renzee are the gods of trade and travel. Brother and Sister.

Trakal is the God of travel and was a consort of Chalise.

Trakal has an area called the rendezvous in each village. It is a sanctuary with a shrine where traveling merchants and others stay. There are small rendezvous marked out along trails that scattered locals watch for traders that provide campsites across the lands.

Priests of Trakal manufacture the light rods of Trakal. These rods are engraved metallic shafts that send out a beam of light 60 feet from themselves. Trakal learned to make these rods from Chalise, who had stolen the secret from Zurma in their early battles. The rods must be handled with care as they fail if mistreated. (Roll 2d6 when needed, on a "2", they fail.) Set the rod in the Sun for a day, mutter the correct prayers, and they will work for a week.

Light Rods sell for an average of 50 gold.

Renzee is the goddess of trade. She provides security for traders in villages who have established businesses. She is also sometimes seen as the goddess of the hearth in homes. Renzee Priestesses

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provide judges for cases of thievery. In general convicted thieves pay a penalty of double the value of the stolen articles, have a hand cut off or are killed. No budget for prisons.

Zurma, The Sun God

Until recently the God Zurma, the Sun God, was the leader of the pantheon of Gods. Priests of Zurma are not happy with the demotion of their God, but they express this by scowling and lecturing on the behavior of others.

When the accursed began to rise Zurma formed the communities into true Sun worshippers who were commanded to gather when it became dark. This formed a defensive posture to protect the villagers, but it kept the warriors away from the ancient ruins and labyrinths where the demons were making more accursed. When Chalise the Moon Goddess began attacking the monsters they quickly became the favored God, demoting Zurma to the defender God.

The Zurma temples have a large vestibule with alcoves dedicated to the many gods of the Pantheon. Beyond the Vestibule is the main temple which is dedicated to Zurma. In today's world the Zurma temple serves two main functions. First it provides access to many gods who have special aspects many people need to believe in. Secondly the temple has a special deep garden dungeon where they grow Zurma's Mushrooms. These mushrooms are taken from the dark and placed in the sunlight on the roof of the prayer rooms for two days. After that they are sold for 25 gp each to Spirit Warriors as Zurma's Gifts. Once per day a mushroom may be eaten and then they may recover one drained card of their choice.

Chalise

Chalise is goddess of the moon, Empress of the night and, depending on who you ask, chief goddess of the Celestial pantheon. She is goddess of change and Spirit Warriors. She is also sometimes called the Moon Dragon.

In addition to a alcove for public worship and rooms for priests' quarters, temples of Chalise also have a special section for the revival and lodging of Spirit Warriors. Outsiders are rarely allowed into this section of the temple and it is always guarded against intruders. Spirit Warriors quarters are large, roomy and comfortable. Each room has a locker--a very large chest, made of sacred wood and bound with metal, that can only be opened with an artifact called a ticket--a small flattened metal tablet with the Goddesses most holy writing inscribed on it. Tickets appear in a Chalice with a Spirit Warrior when they are revived; when a warrior dies, the ticket rapidly turns to dust and reappears in the Chalice when the warrior is brought back.

A Chalice is a long, oval tub with a heavy lid made of secret clays and metals known only to Chalist priests and built by exacting rituals recorded in sacred writ. The secret of their making is a well guarded secret. When a Chalice is completed, it can be used by priests to recruit the spirits of dead who have been killed by Accursed. If they are willing, they can come into the Chalice and be reborn as a Spirit Warrior: That is, a warrior sworn to fight Accursed in the name of Chalice. In addition to their first rebirth, Chalise grants each of her warriors an additional eight lives while fighting in her service. They also have strength, wit and speed far greater than normal mortals. Many have strange appearances--looking like tigers, or dwarves, or orcs or showing by some other strange feature that they have been marked by the goddess. Being the Goddess of Change, Chalise shows her favor in unusual ways. Stranger still, when a Spirit Warrior dies and uses a life to be reborn, they may return with a completely

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different appearance. They are sacred creatures and their appearance shows it.

A Spirit Warrior serves Chalise loyally. They fight accursed where ever they find them. They venture into ruins to hunt down demons in their lairs. They grow increasingly powerful and skilled, until they are strong enough to kill even the most terrible demons. However, even a Spirit Warrior cannot live forever. When a warrior has one life left, they may choose to retire. At this point, they return to the company of human and live out their lives as devout worshippers of Chalise.

The Appearances of Spirit Warriors are as follows:

The Fey: Generally humanoid appearance with relatively small variations: Humans, elves, dwarves.

The Beasts: Animal people: Foxes, Tigers, Wolves.

The Fallen: People who look somewhat like Cursed two leggers: Trolls, orcs, demoni. *

*Demoni are dark elves with light blue to dark blue skin, very long, pointed ears and blood red, gold or white hair.

There have been spirit warriors of even stranger appearance; some have been giants, some have looked like fairies, a few have even shown Chalise's special favor by looking like humanoid dragons. These variations are rare. Most Spirit Warriors have one of the appearances listed above.

Spirit Warriors do quite a bit of looting when they hunt demons in ancient ruins. They are allowed to keep almost everything they find (although priests do like to encourage donations). There are two exceptions: Relics and Demon Gems. Relics are strange bits of old magical artifacts that are sometimes found in the ruins. Chalists treasure these finds and use them to promote the interests of themselves and their allies. The maps of the ancient road system is an example of a relic. Demon Gems are solid, gem like growths that can be found in, or on, the body of a demon after it has been killed. Chalist priests learned, from their sacred writs, how to use these gems to help power the chalices and other miracles, but this is a secret that is kept even from Spirit Warriors, at least for now.