



DEITIES AND DEMIGODS

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RESOURCES: This book includes material that was originally published in the following D&D® books and accessories: *Sword and Fist* by Jason Carl; *Tome and Blood* by Bruce R. Cordell and Skip Williams; *Defenders of the Faith* by Rich Redman and James Wyatt; *Song and Silence* by David Noonan and John D. Rateliff; *Masters of the Wild* by David Eckelberry and Mike Selinker; *Oriental Adventures* by James Wyatt; and the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting* by Ed Greenwood, Sean K Reynolds, Skip Williams, and Rob Heinsoo.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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ASIA, PACIFIC, & LATIN AMERICA
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Renton WA 98057-0707
QUESTIONS? 1-800-324-6496



620-88165-001-EN
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First Printing: April 2002

EUROPEAN HEADQUARTERS
Wizards of the Coast, Belgium
P.B. 2031
1600 Berchem
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+32-70-23-32-77

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Introduction

Deities: spiritual beings embodying the loftiest (and basest) principles of morality, ethics, and every aspect of mortal existence . . . or just some *really* powerful monsters?

The answer to that basic question, like so many other questions in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, is up to you, and the answer you decide on will have a lot to do with how you use this book. There is no right answer beyond what's right for your campaign, your players, and your game. If you're really interested in whether Heironeous can defeat Thor in battle, we've given you a set of rules and statistics in this book that can help you answer that question. (Early playtest reports say: not bloody likely.) On the other hand, if you want help creating a vibrant, realistic pantheon for your campaign, a set of deities that helps shape the course of events in adventures of epic scope, deities who inspire the clerics, druids, paladins, and other characters in your game to the greatest heights of heroism and the lowest depths of villainy . . . well, we've given you the tools for that as well.

DEITIES AND DEMIGODS

This book can help you decide what role deities can play in your campaign, from their philosophies to their Armor Class.

Chapter 1: Deities in Your Game addresses the role of deities, as well as religions, in the D&D game. It discusses different models of religions, from the traditional D&D "loose pantheon" epitomized by the deities described in the *Player's Handbook* to alternative models such as monotheism, dualism, and animism. You'll find some discussion of mystery cults, as well as a different look at the pantheon. This chapter goes on to talk about what influence the deities have on your campaign world, what deities are like, and where they live. It closes with some concrete advice on how to build your own pantheon of deities for your campaign.

Chapter 2: Deities Defined delves into the rules that help quantify deities. It introduces the concept of divine rank as a measure of godly power, and spells out what a deity of a certain rank can do—in the same terms as any other character's abilities are defined. Hercules may have a Strength score of 55 (as does Kord), but it's still a Strength score that works like any character's or monster's Strength score.

In an extensive discussion of divine characteristics, you'll read about all the abilities and powers that deities have in common. Next, the concept of portfolios is defined. Following that are descriptions of nearly one hundred salient divine abilities—special powers available only to deities. The chapter also presents thirty feats that deities can acquire, over and above the feats described in the *Player's Handbook*.

Chapter 2 continues with suggestions for the Dungeon Master on how to roleplay a god. It describes two types of divine minions, the proxy and the petitioner, and it concludes with information on how to read the deity descriptions that make up the bulk of the four chapters that follow.

Chapter 3: The D&D Pantheon describes a group of deities specifically created for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Most of these deities were introduced in the *Player's Handbook* (see the

cleric class description in Chapter 3 and the discussion of religion in Chapter 6 of that book) and are also briefly discussed in Chapter 6 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*. Four of the members of the D&D pantheon are presented here for the first time—the dragon deities Bahamut and Tiamat, plus Kurtulmak and Lolth. If you want the cosmology and the deities of your campaign to conform with the information in the D&D core rulebooks, then the D&D pantheon is designed just for you.

Chapter 4: The Olympian Pantheon is the first of three chapters dedicated to mythological pantheons loosely based on historical religions. The deities of the Olympian pantheon were worshiped in ancient Greece, and many of them are well-known names that are found in contemporary literature as well as the classical tales and sagas where they first appeared. The chapter begins with a short discussion of Olympian theology and Olympian cosmology before presenting detailed statistics and general information about each of the nineteen deities that make up the pantheon. Following the deity descriptions is a brief treatment of the religious philosophy known as the Academy, as well as a section on Olympian monsters that includes game information for two types of cyclopes and the race of fey known as fauns.

Chapter 5: The Pharaonic Pantheon is structured the same as Chapter 4. The text begins by summarizing the basic precepts of the religion of ancient Egypt, and then gives extensive descriptions for each of the pantheon's fourteen deities. At the end of the chapter are descriptions of two new weapons, game statistics for the minion of Set (a new monster), and details about a new template, the greater mummy.

Chapter 6: The Asgardian Pantheon deals with the deities of the ancient Norse religion. Following the descriptions of the twenty deities in this pantheon is a section on Asgardian monsters, including three types of einherjar, two types of giants, and the valkyries. At the end of the chapter is a new prestige class, the berserk, which is especially suited for use with the Asgardian pantheon.

Chapter 7: Other Religions provides examples of three alternative religious models: a monotheistic religion (the Faith of the Sun), a dualistic religion (Following the Light), and a mystery cult that is not connected to a pantheon (Dennari). These are all-new fantasy religions, not derived from historical faiths. The chapter also includes two new prestige classes: the justiciar of Taiia and the soldier of light.

Appendix 1: Domains and Spells details all the domains mentioned in this book, including thirteen new domains that do not appear in the *Player's Handbook*. It also contains twelve new spells, each of which is associated with one of the new domains.

Appendix 2: Divine Ascension describes the process of divine ascension—the means by which a player character can become a deity (if you choose to allow this option in your campaign).

Deities and Demigods takes D&D adventuring to a whole new level, in more ways than one. Whether you're a Dungeon Master who wants deities to play a more significant role in your campaign or a player who wants to know how your character stacks up against the divine entities that oversee the universe, this book holds all the answers you could want.

Illus. by A. Svetket



Sample file

Deities and the religions they inspire typically play an important role in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaigns. Whether it's a cleric of Fharlanghn who chants "Hail Fharlanghn, mighty Fharlanghn!" every time he casts a *cure* spell or the evil cult that lurks in the Temple of Elemental Evil, the mortal servants of these deities are everywhere in the game, and the powers they serve hold an equally important, if somewhat more distant, place.

This chapter examines the role of these forces in your campaign in two distinct sections. First, it discusses various models of religion: pantheons, monotheism, dualism, animism, mystery cults, and nondeist beliefs (forces and philosophies). You need to decide which of these models your campaign will use before you can populate your world with deities. Second, this chapter walks you through various decisions about the nature of the gods in your campaign. Are they actively involved in the world, or are they remote and uncaring? Do they depend on worshippers or some other external source for their power, or are they worshiped because of their power? Can they be killed?

Once you've made some decisions about the basic nature of religions in your campaign and the deities those religions revere, you are ready to start building your pantheon in earnest, and the final section of this chapter offers guidance in that process.

THE NATURE OF RELIGIONS

Deities do not exist in a vacuum in their planar homes. Almost by definition, deities in the D&D game interact with mortals, usually expecting or demanding worship from mortal followers and expecting a certain standard of behavior from their worshippers. In other words, deities are parts of religions, the centers of cults

and churches, the objects of worship and ritual, and the receivers of prayer and sacrifice.

In a fantasy setting, as in the real world, religion can take many forms. The standard assumption, as described in the *Player's Handbook*, is that multiple deities loosely grouped together form a pantheon, a collection of gods not united by a single doctrine or philosophy. *Deities and Demigods* refers to this model as a loose pantheon. Other groups of deities, such as the Pharaonic deities, also form a pantheon, but their worship is more closely interrelated. All the deities show at least some respect for a particular philosophical principle or overdeity. In the case of the Pharaonic pantheon, for example, the deities are keenly interested in Ma'at, the principle of divine order in the universe. These pantheons are called tight pantheons.

Not all religions in a fantasy world need to revolve around a pantheon of deities. In your campaign, you can create monotheistic religions (worship of a single deity), dualistic systems (centered around two deities or forces), mystery cults (involving personal devotion to a single deity, usually as part of a pantheon system), animistic religions (revering the spirits inherent in nature), or even forces and philosophies that do not center on deities. This section discusses how religion works in each of these types of systems: how people worship, how clerics function, and other implications for your campaign.

LOOSE PANTHEONS

The basics of religion in a loose pantheon are described in the *Player's Handbook*. A multitude of

deities rule the various aspects of mortal existence, variously cooperating with and competing with each other in administering the affairs of the universe. People gather in temples to worship gods such as Pelor, or meet in hidden places to venerate Erythnul.

Each deity in a loose pantheon has a portfolio and is responsible for advancing that portfolio in the mortal world and in the divine. Heironeous, god of valor, calls clerics and paladins to his service and encourages them to spread the ideals of honorable warfare in society. His followers propagate notions of chivalry and justice through their societies. Even in his never-ending war with Hextor, Heironeous promotes his own portfolio—war fought nobly and in the cause of justice.

Hextor, similarly, promotes his portfolio of war and tyranny through his actions and those of his worshipers. His clerics preach military readiness and quick, harsh action in response to any wrong. In the divine realm, he fights his war with Heironeous on his terms—as brutally, destructively, and underhandedly as he can.

Individuals—both clerics and laity—generally follow one deity of a loose pantheon above all others, choosing one as a patron deity. Because each deity is the undisputed master of all things related to his or her portfolio, however, lay believers often devote prayers and sacrifices to other gods than their patrons, as long as those other gods are not enemies of their patrons. Even a devout follower of Heironeous would do well to make an offering to Fharlanghn before setting out on a journey, for example, and might offer prayers to Wee Jas at a funeral. No self-respecting devotee of Heironeous would consider making a sacrifice to Hextor, however, since Heironeous and Hextor are mortal enemies.

Not everybody has a patron deity, though most people show at least some degree of devotion to some of the gods. In most loose pantheons, not choosing a patron deity has no penalty. Most people are assured of finding a home on the Outer Planes after death. Their souls simply go to the plane corresponding to their alignment. Though the rewards of serving a deity might be great in this life and in the next, there is no punishment for those who do not make a commitment to a single god, or even for those who neglect the expected sacrifices.

There are some exceptions. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, for example, the souls of those with no patron deity are consigned to wander the Fugue Plain until they are either taken in by a merciful deity or captured by demon or devil raiders and drafted into service in their infernal war. The souls of the “faithless,” those who actively oppose worship of the gods, are bound into the living wall around the City of Judgment, from which they can never return. In the world of Toril, nearly everyone has a patron deity.

In some ways, a loose pantheon is like a number of small, distinct religions, one devoted to each deity. Each religion teaches a

distinct code of ethics, practices certain unique rites, and retells certain myths about its deity, usually without reference to any other deity (except for specific cases of enmity between two deities, such as Heironeous and Hextor or Corellon Larethian and Gruumsh). Of course, even devoted followers of a single deity recognize the existence and power of other deities and occasionally sacrifice to them as well, but they worship only one god at a time.

In terms of game-mechanic implications, the loose pantheon is the simplest model to adopt in your campaign, since it is the baseline for the D&D game. Simply substitute your pantheon for the default pantheon in the *Player's Handbook*. Most of the guidelines in this chapter apply directly to a loose pantheon model, and you need to decide such issues as how many gods there can be, what gods are, and where their power comes from (see *The Nature of Divinity*, below).

TIGHT PANTHEONS

If the deities of a loose pantheon are the multitudinous centers of many distinct religions, a tight pantheon, by contrast, is the focus of a single religion. Practitioners of that religion may revere all the deities, a select number of them, or even just one, but whichever deity or deities they worship, they share a certain body of myths, rituals, and ethics.

The Olympian, Pharaonic, and Asgardian pantheons described in Chapter 4, 5, and 6 are examples of tight pantheons. The gods of the Olympian pantheon are united under the rulership (and, in many cases, the paternity) of Zeus, as the Asgardian gods are united under Odin. The Pharaonic pantheon is unified by the politics of the mortal kingdom, the idea of a divine ruler (pharaoh), and the concept of a divine order in the universe (Ma'at).

Like the gods of a loose pantheon, the deities of a tight pantheon each have their own areas of control (portfolio). Within their own pantheons, Ares and Odin are gods of war much like Hextor and Heironeous, and they have similar agendas. Aphrodite and Freya are responsible for all affairs of the heart, while Athena and Thoth oversee matters of learning and knowledge.

Some individuals, more often clerics than laity, devote themselves to individual gods of a tight pantheon—often as members of a mystery cult (see below). Most people, including many clerics, are devoted to the entire pantheon. As with a loose pantheon, a follower of the Olympian pantheon makes offerings to Demeter to ensure a good harvest, to Poseidon before traveling by boat, to Aphrodite when seeking assistance in romance, and to Apollo for healing. The sacrifices each god expects are part of the shared doctrine of the pantheon, and sometimes the gods even share temples.

Most tight pantheons have one or more aberrant gods, deities whose worship is not sanctioned by the clerics of the pantheon as a whole. These are usually evil deities and enemies of the pantheon

THE DIVINE GLOSSARY

The following terms are used frequently in *Deities and Demigods*.

Animism: Belief in a multitude of spirits that influence the natural world.

Deity: A god. Deities have from 0 to 20 divine ranks.

Divine Rank: A measure of how powerful a deity is. More powerful deities have more divine ranks.

Dualism: Belief in two deities. The deities are often opposites in conflict with one another.

Lay Member: A worshiper who doesn't receive spells from a deity. Within a religion, the nonclerics are sometimes referred to as the laity.

Monotheism: Belief in a single deity. Many modern religions in the real world are monotheistic.

Mortal: A creature with no divine ranks. Mortals include humanoids, outsiders, and the other creatures in the *Monster Manual*.

Mystery Cult: A secret society, usually devoted to the worship of a single deity.

Pantheon: A group of deities. Each D&D campaign has its own pantheon, and some have more than one.

Patron Deity: The primary deity worshiped by an individual. Jozan's patron deity is Pelor, for example.

Polytheism: Belief in many deities. Most D&D campaigns, including the one described in the *Player's Handbook*, are polytheistic.

Portfolio: One or more aspects of the world that a deity has responsibility for. For example, Thor's portfolio includes storms.

such as the Titans (Olympian pantheon), Set (Pharaonic), and Loki (Asgardian). These deities certainly have cults of their own, attracting social outcasts and perverse villains to their worship. These cults resemble mystery cults, their members strictly devoted to their single god, though even members of aberrant cults often pay lip service in the temples of the pantheon.

A tight pantheon requires only a few modifications to the standard D&D rules. Clerics may choose a specific patron deity, in which case they choose their domains from among those offered by the deity. Clerics also have the option of serving the entire pantheon, in which case they can choose their two domains from among all the domains offered by all the deities of the pantheon, except aberrant gods. A cleric of the Pharaonic pantheon could choose Sun (offered by Re-Horakhty) and Luck (offered by Bes) as his two domains, for example. A cleric can only select an alignment domain if his alignment matches that domain. The cleric's alignment must match the alignment of some deity in the pantheon (excluding aberrant gods).

A tight pantheon is more likely than a loose one to limit the possible number of gods and the means to divine ascension. Divinity may be imparted, but can rarely be simply earned (see *The Nature of Divinity*, below).

MYSTERY CULTS

A mystery cult is a secretive religious organization based on a ritual of initiation, in which the initiate is mystically identified with the god being worshiped. Mystery cults are generally devoted to single deities, or at most a small handful of related deities (see the entries for Demeter and Dionysus in Chapter 4 and Thoth in Chapter 5 for sample mystery cults). Mystery cults are intensely personal, concerned with the initiate's individual relationship with the deity and experience of salvation.

A mystery cult is actually a specific type of worship within the context of a tight or loose pantheon, rather than a distinct religious system itself. Even if the god at the center of a mystery cult is part of a tight pantheon, however, the mystery cult itself is more like the worship of a deity in a loose pantheon. It stands as a religion unto itself, related to the myths and rituals of the pantheon's cult but presenting its own myths and rites as primary.

The myths of a mystery cult are its essential element. The history of the god is the foundation of the cult and is reenacted (symbolically) in the cult's initiation ritual. The foundation myth of a mystery cult is usually simple and often involves a god's death and rising, or a journey to the underworld and a return. Sun and moon deities and agricultural deities—gods whose portfolios reflect the cycles of nature—are often the centers of mystery cults.

The cult's ritual of initiation follows the pattern of its foundation myth. Neophytes retrace the god's footsteps in order to share the god's ultimate fate. In the case of dying and rising gods, the (symbolic) death of the initiate often represents the idea of death to the old life and rebirth into a transformed existence. Initiates live a new life, partly remaining on the plane of human affairs, partly elevated to a matter of divine concern. The initiate is guaranteed a place in the god's realm after death, but also experiences new depth and meaning in his or her life.

As a subset of a pantheon religious system, a mystery cult needs no special modifications to the standard rules for clerics and patron deities.

MONOTHEISM

Monotheistic religions revere only one deity—and, in some cases, deny the existence of any other deity. If you introduce a monotheistic religion into your campaign, you need to decide whether other gods exist or not. Even if they don't, other religions can exist side by side with the monotheistic religion. If these religions have clerics with spellcasting ability, their divine spells may be powered by the one true deity, by lesser spirits who are not true deities

(possibly including powerful demons and devils), or simply by their faith, however misguided.

Unlike the gods of a pantheon, the deity of a monotheistic religion demands exclusive worship. Usually, such a deity has a very large portfolio and is portrayed as the creator of everything, in control of everything, and concerned with every aspect of existence. Thus, a worshiper of this god offers prayers and sacrifices to the same god regardless of what aspect of life is in need of divine assistance. Whether marching into war, setting off on a journey, or hoping to win someone's affections, the worshiper prays to the same god.

Monotheistic religions often promise dire consequences to those who do not adopt their deity as a patron, whether they follow a different, "false" god or no god at all. Such religions border on dualism (see below), with an outer-planar paradise reserved for the souls of the faithful, and another plane of torment for the souls of those who did not revere the deity in life. Other monotheistic religions are more universal, teaching that only one Outer Plane exists (to correspond to the one deity), in which all souls, sooner or later, come to rest.

Monotheistic religion is perhaps the most divergent system from the core D&D rules, and requires some adjustments to the rules for clerics. In some cases, the deity of a monotheistic religion may grant access to every cleric domain, while in other cases such a deity grants access only to a large subset of the available domains. The god of a monotheistic religion receives bonus salient divine abilities sufficient to give the deity access to fifteen domains. However, the deity does not gain the spell-like abilities or domain powers of these extra domains. For example, Taiia, the monotheistic deity described in Chapter 1, grants access to twenty domains. She has the Extra Domain salient divine ability for five domains (in addition to the three domains she originally had), so she can use the domain powers and spells from eight of these domains, but not the other twelve.

Different clerics of the same deity may possess very different abilities. One cleric of Taiia may venerate her Destroyer aspect and choose access to the Strength and War domains, while another might worship her Creator aspect and choose access to the Knowledge and Magic domains. In some religions, clerics may group themselves into different religious orders in order to better differentiate between clerics who choose different domains. For example, the church of Taiia includes an order called the Purifying Flame, whose members typically choose from the domains of Death, Destruction, Law, and War. The same church also includes a devotional order, the Sun's Path, whose members usually choose from the domains of Good, Healing, and Protection.

Instead of a church with different orders, some monotheistic religions describe different aspects of their deity. A single god appears in different aspects as the Creator and the Destroyer, and the clerics of that god may focus on one aspect or the other, determining their domain access and possibly even their alignment on that basis.

The most universal deities offer access to all the alignment domains (Law, Chaos, Good, and Evil). As with a tight pantheon, however, no cleric can choose alignment domains that do not match his alignment. While the mind of an infinite god may be able to contain diametrical opposites such as conflicting alignment domains, mortal minds are much more limited.

In a monotheistic religion, the alignment of the deity is particularly important. The most universal deities are neutral and actually allow clerics of any alignment, including neutral. Other deities have other alignments (usually good), and may or may not allow clerics to violate the general rule that a cleric's alignment must be within one step of his deity's. Some good deities are served by evil clerics, though it is also possible that these clerics actually gain their spells from another source, such as a powerful demon, devil, or celestial, or simply from the power of their faith. You should carefully consider whether you want to outlaw clerics of a certain alignment; in general, it is best to allow clerics of any alignment.

Different orders within a church, or different aspects of a single deity, may have different alignments as well. In this case, the general