

# CULT OF SEKHMET

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Mystery Cults series of PDFs for the Amazons Vs Valkyries adventure setting. The religious cults presented here are just a few of the hundreds that exist in this setting. Some are dedicated to chthonic gods that are almost forgotten, while others worship new deities, such as Alexander the Great. These cults are most common in Greece and the Greek colonies, but also exist in Egypt, Persia, Rome, and Carthage. Even in less civilized lands druids, witch doctors, and other religious leaders join together, keep secrets, pursue common goals, and organize themselves in a hierarchy.



## MYSTERY CULTS

Mystery cults are secret societies that exist within religious institutions. Like other secret societies, their existence is well known, but their rituals, lore, and objectives are concealed. Only the initiated are allowed access to these secrets.

**Levels of Initiation.** Cult membership is divided into a hierarchy of at least twenty degrees or ranks. Some cults have more than sixty ranks. Only the high priestess (or priest) is privy to all the cult's secrets.

**Exclusivity.** None of these cults require their members to disavow or deny other deities and cults. In fact, many people are simultaneously members of multiple cults.

**Cult Secrets.** Only the initiated know the true name of the cult's deity, and they are forbidden to speak it to anyone outside the cult. At each level of initiation, a different true name is revealed to the member with only the high priestess knowing the actual true name of the deity. Mystery cults also harbor many other secrets and esoteric lore. Some examples are listed on the table below.

D20	Secret Lore
1	Facts about mythical events
2	Location of an entrance to the Underworld
3	Location of a gate to another dimension
4	Location of a prison holding a demon or deity
5	Formula for creating magical items
6	Rare spells
7	Facts about other planes in the multiverse
8	Facts about a mythical beast
9	Facts about distant lands
10	The true ambitions of a major political figure
11	Archaic or extinct language(s)
12	Secret of navigating the tunnels of Europa
13	Lore of a lost or forgotten civilization
14	Location of a legendary magic item
15	Clues or answer to a puzzle or riddle
16	Location of a sacred site
17	Lore about a humanoid or monstrous race
18	Lore of a lost, magic-like technology
19	Location of a magical island
20	Lore about the Amazons Vs Valkyries conflict

**Initiation Fees.** Although membership in most cults is open to everyone, initiation rites have fees. These fees offset the cost of the ritual and help support the temple and its ambitions. The amount of the fee increases with each degree and depends on many factors, including how much the applicant can afford and how much the cult leaders desire the new member.



**Initiation Times.** Most cults conduct initiations once per year. Common dates include the first full Moon after the Winter Solstice, the Spring Equinox, and the Summer Solstice. The initiation process usually involves preliminary ritual purification, eating sacred foods, and confessing of wrong doing. This takes at least three days and sometimes up to two weeks. The actual ceremony begins at sundown and continues until sunrise. During the ritual, the initiates consume psychoactive substances and venture into a deep cavern where they have unnerving encounters with deities and demons.

**Membership Advantage.** Besides access to secret lore and powerful associates, being a cult member has other perks. Membership can mean that your business wins a lucrative contract from a trade guild or local magistrate. It could mean that your child is educated by an expensive Greek tutor, or your competitor suffers a tragic setback.

**Leadership and Members.** Cult hierarchies are separate from temple priesthods. While most leadership positions within the cults are occupied by priestesses (or priests), not all temple priestesses are members of the mystery cult. Likewise, most cult members are not priestesses or employed by the temple; they are private citizens, lawyers, merchants, stage actors, lords, scribes, and princesses.



## THE CULT OF SEKHMET

**Domains:** Life, Sun, War

**Location:** Egypt

**Cult Secrets:** Strategy and tactics, war machines, solar magic, healing

Sekhmet is Egypt's ferocious leonine war goddess, known for her insatiable bloodlust. She is the daughter of Ra and Hathor, the wife of Ptah, and the mother of Nefertum and Maahes. She is Ra's enforcer and bodyguard, unleashing her wrath upon any who threaten or oppose him. A champion of order, justice, and truth, she battles manifestations of chaos and evil. Her epithets include "The Mighty One," "She who makes evil tremble," "The Mistress of Dread," "The Red Lady," "The Protector of Justice," and "The Lady of Slaughter."

She is known for her bloodthirsty wrath, but she also has powers of healing and disease, as they are aspects of war. As the daughter of the Sun, she also wields solar magic.

The cult of Sekhmet works closely with Egypt's armed forces. The high priestess is a member of the pharaoh's court and a senior military advisor. Beyond Egypt's borders, Sekhmet is recognized in Kush, Phoenicia, and Lybia, although her presence in these lands is small.

## THE TEMPLES

The main temple of Sekhmet is in the city of Taremu, known to the Greeks as Leontopolis, (Lion City). The main temple to her leonine son, Maahes, is also here. Another large temple to Sekhmet stands in the city of Yamu, on the shores of Lake Mareotis. There is also a large sanctuary to Sekhmet at the temple complex in Heliopolis (Sun City). Smaller shrines exist in towns and cities throughout Egypt.

Tame lions freely roam these temples, frolicking with the priestesses and guarding against intruders. First year acolytes feed and care for these big cats, following the direction and oversight of the temple administration.

**Guardian Statues.** Enchanted statues of Sekhmet protect all Egyptian temples, burial sites, and important government buildings. These statues summon lions that attack intruders who do not speak the password. Looters and thieves often smash these statues to save themselves.

**Initiation.** Initiation rites are held on the eve of the Day of Destruction (see below) at the temple in Leontopolis. However, the goddess may intervene and allow a particularly worthy applicant to be initiated immediately, rather than waiting for the annual ceremony.

### FESTIVALS

The major festivals that honor Sekhmet are outlined below.

**Feasts of Sekhmet.** At the beginning of the Egyptian month of Koiak, (Oct. 17, Julian calendar) a great feast is held honoring Sekhmet. Fourteen days later, a larger feast is held in honor of Sekhmet, her sister Bast, and their father Ra. A third feast honoring Sekhmet and her mother, Hathor, is held in late November. A fourth feast honoring Sekhmet is held shortly after the Winter Solstice.

**Day of Purifying Flame.** Held in early November, this day honors the purifying power of Sekhmet's solar aspects. Her followers spend this day ritually cleansing their bodies, souls, and material possessions.

**Day of Destruction.** Held in mid-spring, this celebration marks the day that Sekhmet nearly destroyed the entire world in an insatiable bloodlust. She stopped when Ra tricked her into drinking beer, instead of blood, and she became drunk and fell unconscious. Most Egyptians participate in this large celebration, where they and the priestesses drink heavily until they pass out. Reenactments of the goddess's slaughter are portrayed in theaters and mimicked in gladiatorial bouts. Music and poetry also entertain the revelers and symbolically sooth goddess's wrath.

**War's End.** Festivals honoring Sekhmet are held at the conclusion of wars and major battles. These may be small, impromptu affairs conducted for soldier's involved in a climactic battle, or large, state-sponsored events commemorating the end of a major war.



### OATH OF BLOOD AND FIRE

Sekhmet's devoted warriors drink the hot blood of their enemies and swear an oath of loyalty to the pharaoh and Ra. They offer themselves to the goddess as an earthly vessel for her unbridled ferocity. With her blessing, they gain the following features.

### TENETS OF SEKHMET

After enduring long and rigorous training at one of the large temples, all champions of Sekhmet embrace these tenets.

**Plan your Attack.** Study your enemy and wait for the moment to strike.

**Fight like a Lion.** Achieve victory through sudden, overwhelming assault.

**Destroy Evil.** Hunt and kill all who would bring chaos and disorder to the world.

**Seek Justice.** Wrongs must be put right, innocent victims must be avenged.

### CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3<sup>rd</sup> level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options:

**Aura of Justice.** You can use your Channel Divinity to radiate an aura of burning justice that terrifies evil doers. As an action, you force each creature of your choice within 30 feet of you to make a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of you for 1 minute. A frightened creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself if successful.

**Bloodlust.** When you kill a creature, you can expend one use of your Channel Divinity as a bonus action and enter a ferocious bloodlust. While in this state, you gain the following advantages.

- When you make a melee weapon attack, you gain a bonus to the damage that is equal to your Charisma modifier
- You gain 4 temporary hit points per paladin level.
- When you use the Attack action you can use your bonus action to make another attack with your weapon, as long as you haven't already used your bonus action this turn.

You cannot cast spells or concentrate on them while engrossed in a bloodlust.

Your bloodlust lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if you consume alcohol or are knocked unconscious. It otherwise cannot be ended and you are compelled to attack any creature or object of your choice that you can see until the duration expires.

**OATH SPELLS**

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

**OATH OF BLOOD SPELLS**

Paladin Level	Spells
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<a href="#">Expeditious retreat</a> , <a href="#">jump</a>
5 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">Conjure animals</a> <sup>1</sup> , <a href="#">prayer of healing</a>
9 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">Sun ray</a> , <a href="#">haste</a>
13 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">Polymorph</a> <sup>2</sup> , <a href="#">stoneskin</a>
17 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">Flamestrike</a> , <a href="#">contagion</a>

<sup>1</sup> Felines only

<sup>2</sup> Lion only

**BURNING AURA**

Beginning at 7<sup>th</sup> level, you can use a bonus action to begin radiating a glowing, sun-like aura while you're not incapacitated. The aura extends 10 feet from you in every direction, but not through total cover. It continues until you end it with a bonus action or become incapacitated.

Any creature that is frightened of you has its speed reduced to 0 while in this aura. It also takes radiant damage equal to half your paladin level if it starts its turn there.

At 18<sup>th</sup> level, the range of this aura extends to 30 feet.

**WARLORD'S RESILIENCE**

At 15<sup>th</sup> level, you gain resistance to all damage from nonmagical slashing, piercing, and bludgeoning weapons.

**AVATAR OF WAR**

At 20<sup>th</sup> level, you can become an avatar of Sekhmet, imbued with superhuman prowess. Using your action, you transform into a leonine humanoid with keen sense, long fangs, and sharp claws. You gain the following benefits for 1 minute.

**Pounce.** If you move at least 15 feet straight toward a creature and then hit it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, you can make a bite attack against it as a bonus action.

**Senses.** You have advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Natural Weapons.** You gain claws and fangs which you can use as simple melee weapons.

**Bite.** Your bite inflicts 1d10 + your Strength modifier in piercing damage.

**Claws.** Your claws inflict 1d8 + your Strength modifier in slashing damage.

**Extra Attack.** When you take the Attack action, you can attack three times.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

**SUN RAY**

*3<sup>rd</sup>-level evocation*

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Self (60-foot line)

**Components:** V, S, M (a crystal or lens)

**Duration:** Instantaneous

A beam of golden sunlight shines from your hand in a 5-foot-wide, 60-foot-long line. Each creature in the line must make a Constitution saving throw or take 6d6 radiant damage and be blinded until your next turn. On a successful save, it takes half as much damage and isn't blinded by this spell. Undead and oozes have disadvantage on this saving throw.

**At Higher Levels:** When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4<sup>th</sup> level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 3<sup>rd</sup>.



## CREDITS

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**Writing.** L.J. Ogre

**Editing.** Heather Clift

**Art.** Jeff Dahl, Edward Poynter, and Adolphe Weisz

**Some Graphic Elements.** Lord Zsezse Works

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