

LOST GODS

LIBRAM OF THE NUSHÉNIC PANTHEON



BY N. ROBIN CROSSBY





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NTRODUCTION

When I wrote this document in the years preceding 1979, it was for use in my private role-playing game. I sold copies to my players. I think I sold about forty copies. Although I was not keeping records, and not all my players felt the need to buy them. Clearly, a well-defined pantheon (or polytheon) is highly desirable (if not essential) if one is going to have a worthwhile role-playing experience. The biggest task for any gamemaster is defining his world, and the Gods, or at least the beliefs surrounding the Gods, are an integral part of any human world-view.

The Nûsha Campaign was my first role-playing game of the nineteen seventies. It was set on a large peninsula on the world known as Sherém. Columbia Games did not publish the extensive material I built for my players' (and my own) edification during those years. Instead, I used the lessons I learned from Nûsha to create an entirely new world: Kéthira.

This present document is the Original Libram of the Pantheon; it is the multi-theistic "bible" of Sherém, and most specifically of Nûsha. It is the document on which "Gods of Hârn" was later based.

There are several reasons why I am publishing this Libram now. One of them is because it is something of an historical document. 2003 marks the 20th anniversary of the very first Hârn module. There are people out there who are quite interested in Hârn, and some of them may like to catch a glimpse of where it came from.

While typing out this publication (for the first time, it was originally written in my own hand and sold as photocopies¹) I was tempted to correct and polish my original words. I have resisted this temptation as best I could. Had I succumbed, we might have ended up with a document barely distinguishable from "Gods of Hârn"... and to that, there would have been no point at all. As it is, dear reader, you can now tell how much, and how little, my text changed from the Original Libram to Gods of Hârn, and subsequently to HârnMaster Religion.

Because I have resolved Sherém into the Kestelia Universe, and because Sherém and Kéthira are supposed to be "familial" worlds, this particular treatise on things sacred, may actually be of some use to those of you who like to visit places other than Kéthira.

N. Robin Crossby

Maple Ridge BC. 2002-July-18

¹ I have chosen a font as similar as possible to my original handmade calligraphy.



herefore, know ye daughters and sons of man that as long as thy forebears have known aught of their own souls and bodies so have they known of the existence of the Pantheon. And know ye, o seeker after truth, that for so long as thy forebears have walked upon the world, so have the gods also walked with them. And so shall they walk with thee also.



now ye, O thirster after enlightenment, that in other times the world was less free from woes and violence. Know ye that, in a time that is now forgotten by mortal man and but dimly remembered e'en by the Gods themselves, came a tyme of cataclysm. In that age was knowledge sought after and obtained voraciously by the sentient creatures. Indeed man and God knew a myriad of myriads and, although some foresaw danger in this, the sentient of the universe took and gave freely of whatsoever they knew.



now ye that knowledge brings neither wisdom nor consensus. There arose in that Age of the world dissent, and from dissent grew mistrust and from mistrust arose fear, and from fear came violence. And mortals called upon their gods and the Pantheon answered, and was divided and so came the great fall, and the world was torn and man and beast perished, and the Universe quaked with the Awe of the cataclysm.



And of mortal creatures barely one in ten thousand lived, and some, even of the Gods perished, so terrible was that struggle. And came the time that was dreadful, and it became clear that the Universe itself must surely fail.

And so was made by the sundered Pantheon and enforced by them also, the “Kélha-hý-Vâr-hyvvrák”. And it did declare that knowledge should become the burden of the Gods. And so they hid in divers ways their burden, saying that only such mortals as were able by their own cunning to discover thereof were fit to know of it.

And the Gods chose One from among their number to maintain and guard the Illimitable Tome, the Vâr hyvvrák wherein should be written all the knowledge of Gods and mortalkind. for it was foreseen that at some time in the distant future, the childhood of the lesser creatures should end and once again might they be worthy to share in the divine burden. And the Vâr hyvvrák was well-guarded and kept from sight, for it was foreseen that the ungoverned spread of knowledge could but lengthen the age of ignorance, misery and distrust and that inevitably to follow, And in that age dost thou now dwell...

And the Division of mortals one against another, and that of the Pantheon also, exists yet. And the struggle betwixt good and evil continueth. But the ever-present threat of the Age of Chaos, afore so narrowly averted, causeth all to keep the Kélha-hý-Vâr-hyvvrák, the Concordat whose contents no man may know entire. And the Gods keep it, and so chose from among mortals vessels fit to hold their power, and e'en so to wield a shadow thereof. And these mortals are revered and men call them priests.

And so endures the division of the Pantheon. There are many deities, but in this land six times three prevail. There is the Laerlathon, the hexad of they who do good. There is also the Húlthon, the six dreaded ones, who ever garb themselves and their followers about in dark, evil thoughts and deeds. There are also the Baélathos, the balancing ones who fight no fixed cause but serve only to prevent supremacy in either ethic.

As no man may understand the minds of Gods, so may they neither comprehend the workings of the Great Concordat. Mayhap it suffices that the Kélha-Hý-Vár-Hyvrák doth hold chaos at bay.

To they, their due, Praise Be...

THE

DAÉRLATHON





Lorthéa

Ever Living Guardian of the Principal of Perfection, Lord of the Worthy Dead and Master of Paradise, Judge of Heaven, Lord of the White Thóronhrim and of the White Heart, Divine Dispenser of Justice and Retribution, Scourge of the Gúlmôrvrin and of all Dark, Unworthy Things.

In Núsha, Lorthéa is numbered among the Hexad of the Laérlathon of which he is often said to be King, although many, even of his adherents fear Lorthéa as much as the evil deities. It is seldom forgotten that Lorthéa is a jealous master, quick to anger and exact, often terrible, retribution. Of his adherents, Lorthéa demands unquestioning obedience, unimpeachable morals and great strength of character. His symbols include the white Eagles (the Thóronhrim) and the Sun at noon where, in some fanciful legends, he is said to dwell. Lorthéa often displays great power in his relatively rare interventions. He most commonly appears to mortals as an old, and frequently frail, man, often with a long white beard.

The most common church of Lorthéa in Núsha is the Order of the Divine and Ever-Present Light. The order's temples are usually shaped somewhat like stylised boats, symbolic of the function of the religion: to safely bear the faithful over the troubled waters of life to a just reward in paradise (or elsewhere). The clerics of the order are celibate and moderately ascetic. They wear simple, and rather dull raiment, usually brown robes, on most occasions, although the formal robes of the Order are more visually stimulating being of black and white with silver, and occasionally golden trimmings. The Eternalists (as they are sometimes known) are probably Enôr's most powerful Order; they are often involved in the affairs of the Tarpélanor's court and over the past few centuries, the majority of Tarpélanors have embraced Lorthéanism.



Larání

Shieldmaiden of the Worthy Cause, Guardian of Dól Ithor, Protector of the Brave, Mistress of the Land of the Mighty, The Hero's Lady.

In Núsha, Larání is most commonly reckoned the second of the Laérlathòn, of which many hold, she is the most fearsome. Larání, although a fell warrior, is unwilling to take up the sword and only does battle when circumstanced force it. This reluctance to inflict suffering, or to use force other than as a last resort, is also required of her adherents. Those who would follow Larání must display courage, respect for the weak and innocent and unimpeachable honour. Larání is said to dwell in the "fortress of the Mighty" called Dólithôr, although she often walks abroad, leaving the guardianship of her divine realm to Mëndiz the Mighty, her bannerbearer. Larání is the patron of warriors who serve noble causes. On some occasions, she loses her patience, becomes wrathful and appears to men as the "Terrible Lady of Flowing Red". In this guise, she bears her awesome, ancient symbols: Avârkiel, Herald of the End of Life, her sword; Hybrik, her impenetrable red and white chequered shield; and Angcâradüo, her blood red mail.

In Núsha, the most common church of the goddess is the Order of Hyvrák. The temples of the Order often take the shape of a shield, and are one of the few types of temple that nearly always possess a guard "legion", even in the most peaceful regions of law-abiding Enôr. Laránianism is popular among the warriors and nobility of Enôr and, therefore, the Order of Hyvrák exerts considerable influence. The formal attire of the Order of Hyvrák varies greatly, but the colours red and silver (or white) predominate. Clerics of the Order often wear armour and bear weapons. The Order sometimes permits arms to be carried even within the inner temple by lay adherents of exceptional piety.



The Restorer, Lady of forgiveness and Recovery, Bringer of the Life Renewed, the Maker of Balms, The Joy of Heaven, She Who Brings Peace of Knowledge.

In Nûsha, Deóni is usually reckoned the third of the Laérlathòn, and often deemed the kindest of all the Gods. She is usually portrayed as a fair young girl with gentle hands and innocent grace. She is the “Knower of Many Things”, the most wise and learned of the Laérlathòn. She loves the scholarly who put their wisdom to good and moral use. Thus she is a prominent patron of the Enàrè, the semi-clerical order of healers, as well as of teachers, although she too is bound by the Ke’lhá-hy-Vâr-hyvrák, and is unable to aid her adherents as much as she would like. Deóni is protector of the innocent and the weak, of those less able to care for themselves, a responsibility she shares with Vakár-s’kúr. Deóni, however, is less demanding of her followers, less quick to anger and quick to forgive. She appears to mortals seldom, sometimes assuming the form of a capricious woodland animal. She is symbolised by any of the early-blooming spring flowers, but is said to prefer the humble daisy.

Her colours are yellow, white and jade green, and these are worn formally by her most prevalent Church in Nûsha, the Order of the Lady of the Waters. This Order is celibate, and tends to be comprised mainly of women. The Order is loosely, some would say poorly, organised, and the temples contain too few clerics. Most Deónian clerics spend their time in the wide world healing and proselytising.



Vakár's'kúr

The Lord of Truth, Protector of the Meek, The Ever Living Son of White Virtue, Lord of Honourable Deeds, Self Sacrifice, Magnanimity and Dedication.

In Nûsha, Vakár's'kúr is reckoned the fourth of the Laérlathòn, and by most the most virtuous of them. Vakár's'kúr, however, lacks the forgiving nature of Peóni, and is more demanding of his adherents. Vakár's'kúr is strict with his followers: they must be unimpeachably honourable, honest to a fault, and kind to the meek and helpless. Vakár's'kúr is the God of Peace. He deplores violence, but will tolerate it when there is no other alternative, condoning combat in defence of the innocent, and sometimes accepting the notion of self-defence.

Vakár's'kúr most often appears as a slight young man in snow white robes. He is symbolised by a square, a tetrahedron, or a silver birch. Vakár's'kúr's church in Nûsha is called simply "the Irreproachable Order". It is strongly dedicated to the service of the poor.

This church is highly evangelistic and almost needless to say, its clerics are celibate. The formal robes of the order show rank by their degree of whiteness; the robes of an acolyte are predominantly grey. The Order also preaches asceticism.



The Lady of Industrious Labours, the Goddess of fertility and of the Lands in Service to Men, of the Ripe Harvest and the Just Reward, the Confident of Lovers, the Lady of Honest Love.

In Nûsha, h'vêr is reckoned the fifth of the Laérlathòn. She is much loved among the honest peasants and farmers of Enôr and elsewhere, those who labour long and hard, often for scant reward. More than any other deity, h'vêr is the god of agriculture and the settled life. Although her adherents are generally poor, her shrines abound throughout the countryside of peaceful areas. h'vêr is also the protector, and confidant of true lovers, and is forgiving of those who might allow their love for each other to overcome their respect for the social proprieties. h'vêr often intervenes to help smooth over the obstacles that may separate true lovers from the happiness they deserve. She also intervenes to bring progeny to barren marriages, or to provide richer harvests in harsh times. When she (rarely) appears to men, it is most often as a young maiden with sad eyes and flushed cheeks. Her hands are said to be red and rough from her endless labours. Her symbols are the workhorse and the ear of wheat. Her colours are green and gold (yellow). h'vêr and tevel-ar are bitter rivals, although this rivalry is nothing compared to the enmity between them and Ilvîr.

The adherents of h'vêr are loosely organised in Nûsha. The churches are poor, and few of the clerics bother with hierarchy above that of a single temple. There is, in effect, a separate order for each temple. h'vêr's clergy spend most of their time wandering among the peasantry, working. Nevertheless, h'vêr is extremely popular. Her (unstaffed) shrines are well cared for by her lay adherents, and a cleric who seeks shelter in one will be pampered by the local farmers. The formal robes of the h'vêrian priesthood vary from order to order, but the predominant colours are wheaten (beige), gold and green. The harvest festivals which are sacred to h'vêr are always well-attended both by the faithful and by non-adherents.



Siém

Master of the Lords of Dream, Bringer of Meritorious Dreams and Blessed forgetfulness, Lord of the Starlit and Thrice Blessed Realm, King of the Uttermost West, Lord of the Sundered Ones in Exile, Spirit of the Mist, The Neverchanging Lord of the Azure Bowl.

In Núsha, Siém is reckoned the sixth (and last) of the Laérlathòn, the benign god of mystery and shadow. Siém is a lord of magic and dreams, a wielder of mystery and a knower of secrets. At one time, it is said, Siém was foremost of the Gods; he was the "One". In that age, before men came to the world, an era of enchantment and peace, Siém's rule was absolute in all the world, but those days ended with the coming of men and Siém, in his wisdom, laid down his sceptre and gently gave up his supremacy in all but the "Blessed Realm" beyond the Sundered Seas. Those of his children who would follow him did so, and now dwell there with him. Those who would not, the "Sundered Ones" became exiles of a sort and yet dwell in Núsha. Siém did not, however, entirely abandon the Síndârin, Khûzudrîm and others of his folk who would not follow him. He still wields power on Sherém, although it is, in this age, more subtle. Siém now rarely intervenes directly, but many of his semi-divine servants dwell here, notably the "lords of craft", Fýnor and Durýn. Siém also intervenes by sending pleasant, sometimes oracular dreams, and also one of the greatest balms for the sorrowful, forgetfulness.

Siém's priesthood in Núsha is small. They are wielders of illusion and keepers of ancient secrets. There is little known of the various orders that worship Siém; even their names are not known. They are employers of much symbolism and magic, and attach great significance to the stars and twilight, the day's waning.

THE

DAÉLÀTHOS





Halea

The Empress of Opulence, the Queen of Self-Interest, The Maker of Bargains, Mistress of Change and Enchantment, Guardian of the Treasure Hoard of the Gods, The Jealous Golden Lady.

In Nûsha, Halea is reckoned the hexad of the Baélathos of which she is the self-proclaimed queen. She is, perhaps, the most jealous, vain and impatient of all the gods. Some consider Halea to be empty headed and shallow, but she is in fact a shrewd schemer and is renowned for her ability to “seduce the reason” of mortals, at which art she is second only to Hedóni. Halea does not require any particular morality of her adherents by she does demand unswerving devotion. She is conceited and enjoys flattery, particularly lavish temples, complex ceremony, rich endowments, and sacrifices. Many of her adherents pay fifty, or even ninety percent of their wealth to her temples, and if they deem this wise, who could argue? While one of Halea’s titles is “the Maker of Bargains” it is often said of her that she “gives nought while demanding all”. Nevertheless, she usually keeps the bargains she makes, although not always in the way she is expected to. Halea usually does her bargaining with those who must accept what she offers, with those in great need of her. Any who would seal a bargain with her had best hasten to fulfil their part. Her symbol is the chameleon. Halea’s voice can be pitched so as to wound those who hear it... or kill them.

The clerical orders that worship Halea are numerous, but fairly friendly toward each other. Nevertheless, hostility and even bloodshed between the factions is not unheard of. In Nûsha, the prominent Orders include: The Order of the Strident Bell, the most evangelistic Order, sometimes even promoting holy war; The Society of the Chameleon, a conservative and meditative group and; the Order of the Silken Voice, a group no less fanatical than the “Bell” by who practice political intrigue to achieve their goals. Halea is apparently amused by this rivalry.



rajin

King of the Icy Wind, Lord of the Perilous Quest and of the Blooded Axe, The Master of Frosty Climes, the Mad Lord of Battles.

Srajin is the God of Battleslust, and the special God of the Ivinians. He requires of his adherents that they be fearless and filled with bravado. He loves those who love the "sport" of war, taking great pleasure in watching and sometimes participating in large battles. He, and many of his adherents value the virtue of duty, although backstabbing is frequently ignored. Srajin most appears as a giant yellow-haired warrior dressed in leather armour and furs, bearing fakang his great battleaxe. Srajin has many symbols including the White Bear (Usnarl) the Great King of the White Wolves (Jarlak), the crossed handaxes, his sled Shaska (Northern Light) N'jeyru (The Great Grey Whale King) and of course fakang which is also called Vakypri. He is said to dwell in an ice castle (or house?) in the "Land of the Midnight Sun".

The worship of Srajin is not common in Nusha, but is almost universal among the Ivinians, including those who raid, wander and settle in Nusha. It is sometimes said that "they who follow the King of the Icy Wind worship Death" and this may account for Srajin's unpopularity outside his "chosen people". The largest body of Srajinians in Nusha is probably in Sitrua in Eastern Enôr where there is a fairly large Ivinian colony. In Nusha, the Ivinian customs of worship are maintained and the community's religious needs are in the care of a single clerical clan. Srajinianism, wherever practiced, tends by all accounts to be a loosely organised religion, little interested in ritual or frills. There are, nevertheless, several orders differing somewhat in their interpretations of where the emphasis should be placed in the warrior's code (the B'jarnara). All agree, however, that courage, strength and skill at arms are the cardinal virtues.



Lord of Puzzles, Conundrums and Mazes, Sage of the Gods, Lord of Jesters, Mixer of Potions, Knower of Many Things, Keeper of the Vâr Hyvrák, the Lost Guide.

In Nûsha, Sávè-K'nôr is reckoned the third of the Baélathos. He is often portrayed as a jester, and although this well describes one aspect of his personality, it neglects the fact that he is a “knower of many things” and a true sage. Sávè-K'nôr is an intellectual snob and will not accept adherents of low intelligence or wit. He has a voracious appetite for knowledge and will go to great lengths to obtain mysterious scrolls or books; his adherents make frequent sacrifices of such esoteria. He most commonly appears to men as an old sage, a beggar in rags, or a minstrel, bard or jester. Although it is not known for certain, Sávè-K'nôr is affirmed by his adherents to be the keeper of the Illimitable Tome, the Vâr Hyvrák in which “all things are writ”. Sávè-K'nôr has many symbols; among them the most widely used are the scroll (most often blank in portrayal) the book (usually shown open, but in such a way that the words within cannot be read) the quill and ink bottle, and Uhsa the black lantern.

Very little is known of the clerical followers of Sávè-K'nôr in Nûsha, although they are not few in number; the churches of Sávè-K'nôr are perhaps the most secretive and detached. The God's followers are very loosely organised, seeming to care little for their internal politics. Despite this, the church wields some power; many clerics and lay adherents of Sávè-K'nôr can be found in high administrative offices. The supreme council of the churches is popularly called the Aëla-Sávè-K'nôr; it meets seldom. Generally, each temple is left to itself. Several orders, or perhaps schools of thought can be identified. These are: the Xýdiquin (the Order of the Fool); the Hýn-aëlori (Order of the Sage of Heaven) and; the Shea-al-aëcor (the Order of the Lost Guide). Of these three, the Xýdiquin is the most widely known, although they are the second largest; this is probably because they stress the jester aspect of their god, and commit public acts of “esoteric comedy” by way of worship. The largest and most conservative of the three, is the Hýn-aëlori The shea-al-Aecor is the smallest, being an elite group of cleric-sages. All three orders favour the colour grey in their formal attire.

edóní

Lady of the Stolen Moment forever Lost, the Enslaver of Hearts and Loins, Mistress of Sins, Lady of the Ten forgotten Acts and the Ten Times Ten Secret Pleasures, Temptress of the Red Chamber.

In Nûsha, Hedóní is usually reckoned the fourth of the Baélathos. She is known also as the "Queen of Vice" and is considered by many to be the most beautiful creature in the universe, she is certainly the most erotically seductive. It is said that no mortal may look upon her without losing their wits to insatiable desire. For this reason, Hedóní is usually portrayed with her irresistible face turned away. She is also variously known as the "seducer of men's' souls" and the "Assassin of Reason". Hedóní is the deity of those who would live for the moment, or for pleasure, for the "stolen moment forever lost". Her symbols include stylised genitalia. When she appears among men it is most often in the shape of beautiful women. Her favourite colours are red, orange and deep violet. She is said, by some, to dwell in Melálar-Ulûru, the Palace of the Red Chamber.

In Nûsha, the clerics of Hedóní seem to care little for strict organisation or internal politics. Nevertheless, her followers are divided into many orders, each stressing one or more of the pleasures of living. The best known of these orders is that which stresses the pleasures of the flesh (particularly sex) the "Héladar", or "Order of the Root of All". In Nûsha and especially in Enôr, Hedóní's church is conservative. Her temples are few and the bulk of her organised followers keep their practices clandestine. Nevertheless, the adherents of the mistress of sins are not few. The rituals of the Héladar appear to consist of riotous sexual orgies, and may be held at locations other than Hedónian temples. At these ceremonies, numerous sacrifices, often of virgins in a non-fatal manner, are made. Hedónianism is not entirely harmless, however. Rumours abound of ceremonies involving depraved and cruel acts practiced on non-adherent victims. The usual prey are hapless maidens. Hence it is hardly surprising that in areas where the church is strong, young girls take great pains to dispose of their virginity at as early an age as possible. The formal attire of the clerics of Hedóní, though seldom seen are known to be colourful and extravagant diaphanous and provocative.



Tével-âr

Lord of the Unsullied Lands, Master of the free Beasts, the Cruel Lord of Dryah, Gentle Spirit of the falling Rain, the Divine Woodsman, Eater of the Weak, Master of Earth, Sea and Air, He Who Dies Ten-Thousand Times Each Day, father of Illimitable Progeny.

In Nûsha, Tével-âr is reckoned the fifth of the Baélathos, a master of great extremes. He is the divinity of untamed frontiers, and of they that dwell there. He embodies both the cruelty and beauty of nature and is, therefore, amoral. Despite his extremes, Tével-âr's domain is one of subtle and delicate balance. His domain does not usually extend into farmland, or into the wasted landscapes of Ilvîr. When he walks among men, Tével-âr commonly assumes the appearance of a woodsman or forest animal, often a large carnivore. He is most often symbolised by a lion. Tével-âr demands of his adherents that they love and respect the natural environment, and to one degree or another, serve the ecological balance and protect it from the disruptive influences of such as man. His colours are those of nature.

Understandably, little is known of the temples of Tével-âr in Nûsha, if indeed there are any. Of all the churches that of Tével-âr seems least dependent of permanent structures for the conduct of their rituals. Three principal Orders have been identified: the Order of the Lord of Dryah stresses the cruelty of nature and employs the methods of predators in the defence of nature. Clerics of this order have been known to organise and lead raids on isolated settlements; the Order of Kefir stresses the gentle beauty of the natural environment attempting, often through negotiation and compromise, to win allies among the settled land-dwellers for their battle to preserve a maximum of the natural environment; the Unsullied Order of Free Lands seeks only to understand the natural environment, shunning the works of men, they usually dwell alone or in small groups in the wilderness. Living nomadic lives, they revere only nature and keep very much to themselves.



Shii

Master of the Divine Paradox, Lord of the Twilight Shadows, and of the Willow in the Gale, He Who Yields and Yet Overcomes, The Grey Lord of Dream and Mist, Blender of the Myriad Ways.

In Nûsha, Shii is usually numbered the sixth of the Baélathos. He is known best as the “Blender of the Ways” for he is able to blend the principles of law and chaos, good and evil, without apparent strain or conflict. His adherents must be highly disciplined, and their actions must be economical, striving to preserve the “oneness of the all”. When, on rare occasions, Shii has been seen, he has appeared as a “grey monk”, insubstantial in both form and purpose. Many of Shii’s followers are of the Lia-Kaváir, although assassins rarely seek, or receive his blessing. The majority of Shii’s followers are, however, his priests. For the worship of such an esoteric master seems to have small appeal for the layman. The true form of Shii is never portrayed. Instead he is symbolised by the “sha’oula”, one form of which is a half black, half white circle.

Although the followers of Shii are divided into a myriad of sects, possibly at least one per temple, Shii’s church is possessed of a unique unity of organisation. This universal scheme seems to revolve around twelve (or possibly more) circles. The outermost circle is comprised of lowly initiates and is the most populous. As one works inward, the mysteries become more esoteric and shared with fewer priests. The system is highly secretive; the identity of a member of one circle can be known only by those of the same (or more inner) circle, or by certain few members of the next outward circle. Hence the supreme leader is known only by his closest associates. The clerics of Shii are often practitioners of various martial arts. The temples of Shii in Nûsha are heavily fortified and self-sufficient. They are, in many cases, highly ascetic and are known to be places of serene contemplation. The robes of the clerics are usually grey; nothing is known of any formal or ceremonial garb.

THE DÚLTHON





Tormenter of the Unlamented Dead, Master of the Principle of Evil, Lord of the Gûlmôrvrin of the Black Pits, Wielder of the Shadow of Incarnate Evil, Wrecker of Chaos.

Môrghath is the self-appointed ruler of chaos and evil and, in Nûsha, is reckoned the first of the Hûlthon, the dreaded “thirteenth god”. He is, in many ways the antithesis of Lorthéa. Of all the Gods, Môrghath is the quickest to anger, and the most prone to violence and insanity. Like Lorthéa, he is a lord of retribution, but unlike him he cares little for justice. Môrghath it is said is filled with an abiding hatred for all things fair and noble. When Môrghath appears to men it is usually in some kind of ethereal form; his true form is unendurable. Few can even approach him. He is symbolised, rather than portrayed by the “Durangâsh”, a black circle on a field of brown surrounded by an irregular black border. Môrghath is best known as the overlord of the gûlmôrvrin, the most dreaded, undead Demons of Klyss. Môrghath has many other names, and throughout Nûsha it is deemed the sheerest folly to speak any of them aloud.

In Nûsha, the worship of Môrghath is almost entirely confined to the realm of Itikîr (Itikiria) where it enjoys an unclear, although special relation to the Crown, and may almost be considered a state religion. Even in Itikîr, however, the church of the Lord of Chaos attracts a relatively small number of adherents, probably because it is simply not an “attractive” faith. The whole philosophy of the clerics of Môrghath seems to be centred on the acquisition and exercise of merciless power. Although there is, in effect, a faction for each cleric, rigid and ruthless discipline maintains at least the appearance of one, unified order. Clerics of Môrghath inspire fear wherever they go, if for no other reason than that they practice frequent ritual sacrifice of, among other things, hapless passers-by. Generally, the religion of Môrghath is sour and morbid; the costumes of the clerics reflect this, being mostly of black and brown.



Agrik-tsi

Master of the V'hîr, Keeper of the Everlasting flame,
Razer of Cities, Immortal Warlord of Barad-Bangashang,
Lord of Pillage.

In Nûsha, Agrik-tsi is reckoned the Second of the Hûlthon, the fearsome, evil god of war. Agrik-tsi is the deity of the atrocities of war, and of those who commit them. His followers are those who love war and violence for their own sakes. His attributes are fiery; savage and cruel combat, great feats of arms, and lust for proving one's martial prowess are the favourite activities of Agrik-tsi's adherents. When the deity appears to men, it is usually in the form of one of his V'hîr, his dread fire-demons. Shrouded in flame, and oft belching oily smoke rumoured to reek of burning flesh, he carries Agnisul the great whip and Gashanis the sacred flaming mace. Agrik-tsi is said to dwell at the centre of the world, or sometimes in his volcano fortress Barad-Bangashang. He is most often symbolised by a stylised flame. His colours are orange, black and, to a lesser degree, yellow, red and blue.

In Nûsha, the overt worship of Agrik-tsi is concentrated in the North. Being the war-god of the Hûlthon, Agrik-tsi is popular among Itikîrian warriors/nobles. Followers of Agrik-tsi tend to lust after power; finding the road to power paved with violent, oft gory distractions will bring them pleasure.

The church of Agrik-tsi is divided into at least fourteen roughly equal clerical orders, each sponsoring its own fighting-order. These separate orders recognise the same central authority; the relationships between the various Orders can be characterised as "friendly" rivalry. Armed conflict between groups is a way of life, but this continued temple war is rarely allowed to escalate into an attempt to eradicate an order. The temples often dispose of captured warriors by means of human sacrifice, usually in elaborate ritual combat with a champion of the Order. Followers of Agrik-tsi are often treacherous, but generally display a degree of fearlessness in battle and elsewhere. They are often boastful, arrogant and abusive; they also tend to possess considerable martial prowess.



Breeder of Plague, Squalor and Decay, of Worms and insects, Eater of Infants, The Reaper Indiscriminate, Lord of Entropy, Lord-Perverter of Knowledge, Wielder of Sagúnis the Silent Scythe.

Ký=sírvris is reckoned third of the Húlfhon, and is often considered, more than any other, the god of entropy, the god of decay. He is said to be present and/or responsible whenever anyone dies of, or suffers from disease, old age, or a plethora of maladies. Ký=sírvris is deemed by many to be the one who makes dead flesh (and other things living and dead) rot; for this, he is accorded the title "the Ever-Living Putrescent One". Ký=sírvris is said to be unable to assume any form that is not repugnant to human beings. It is said that "they who gaze upon the face of the Reaper-Indiscriminate are not long for the world"; it is Ký=sírvris that conveys souls to Ak-Syt. Ký=sírvris is usually portrayed as a worm or as a half rotted corpse bearing Sagúnis, his green scythe with which he is said to cut the life threads of his victims in the Great Loom (?). His colours (and odours) are those of putrification; mainly green, brown and black.

In Nusha, the worship of Ký=sírvris is generally practiced in secret, and mainly in the North. The church's exact organisation is not widely known, but at least three distinct orders have been identified, most notably the Vēda which is not a purely clerical order and does not seem to be solely dedicated to any single deity. All followers of Ký=sírvris seem to recognise the same, semi-mythical, central authority: the Kuglānu-al-Lūnash (Oracle of Evil. The exact translation is uncertain), although whether such an entity still exists in the real world is a matter of conjecture. Since the founding of Enôr, the worship of Ký=sírvris has undergone a gradual decline, and today there are probably less than five thousand adherents in Nusha. The clerics of Ký=sírvris are greatly feared, not least for their practice of human sacrifice in rituals reported to be second to none in their unpleasantness. The dress of the deity's clerical orders seems to vary to a large degree and from one ritual to another. Many Demons figure in sírvrisian mythology, not least: Vēsha the Worm, and Gekhrish Whose touch rots stone.



âvè-k'viér

Atrocious Master of the Cruel Arts, the Cracker of Bones, the Smelter of flesh, He Who Knows the Ten Thousand Ways, Cruel Lord of Ak-Syt – Tyrant of the foul chamber.

Tâvè-k'viér is reckoned the fourth of the Húlthon, the diametric deity of Vakár-s'kúr, the Lord of Cruelty and Depravity. It is said that he is the “shadow of evil in all men's hearts” that lead them to wrongdoing and evil. His adherents, both lay and clerical are feared wherever they go; this is no doubt due to their frequent practice of human sacrifice and ritual torture. Perhaps the most evil of all deities, Tâvè-k'viér is said to dwell at the “Black Pole” with Mòrgath, where he administers Ak-Syt, the Torture Chamber of the Gods. Tâvè-k'viér is usually portrayed in the form of a masked human bearing Utérin (the Whip of the Underworld, and of ultimate Pain), or as a black panther with glowing black eyes. Tâvè-k'viér's common symbols include the colours black and red, the panther's head, any instrument of torture, and, of course, Utérin.

The worship of Tâvè-k'viér in Nûsha is surrounded with complex and dread ritual. Clerics and lay adherents are fond of intrigue, and practice complex plots both within and without the church. The church itself seems to be undivided by orders, its clerics apparently acknowledging either a single pontiff or some kind of high council. An order seems to exist for each temple, and competition between clerics is keen and deadly, but rigid discipline is maintained. In the less “pleasant” parts of Nûsha, the temple of Tâvè-k'viér operates arenas in which the goriest spectacles are staged. Despite these public activities, the temple of Tâvè-k'viér jealously guards its secrets; death is one of the least punishments inflicted. The clerics and lay adherents of Tâvè-k'viér have been known to practice every conceivable vice; they are universally feared. The clerics of Tâvè-k'viér dress outlandishly: some wear the mask and carry the claw-rod of the panther. Many also carry whips.



Isvir

Master of Aráka Kalái, Bucher of fair Lands, Brooder in the Blasted Plains, the Serpent that Dwells Below, Accursed Lord of the Barren Cycle, Prince of the Fatherless Multitude, Craven Lord of the Sterile Lands.

Isvir, in Núsha reckoned the fifth of the Húlthon, is best known as the Lord of the O'Vashú, the accursed beasts of the Barren Cycle; it is claimed by some that he is their creator. Fancy has it that none of the O'Vashú breed, but rather that they go through an endless cycle of reincarnation, their "souls" returning after seventeen days to Aráka Kalái (Isvir's pits) for installation in new physical bodies. This sterility and sexlessness is said to be the price paid by the O'Vashú for their magical powers. Isvir is called the "Craven One" because he rarely leaves his stronghold Aráka Kalái; his clerics also display extreme "caution". When he does appear to men it is rarely in the same form twice. Isvir has a bent for "designing" strange life forms and often assumes their unlikely shapes. He is symbolised by the sundered claw, and by the colours pink, yellow and brown.

In Núsha, the worship of Isvir, compared with that of most of the rest of the Húlthon, is fairly common, especially in the central and northern parts of the continent. In the South, Isvir's church is covert. Despite its comparative popularity, the religion is poorly organised, and divided into numerous separate orders; some estimates claim that there are in excess of 400 separate Orders. There does not seem to be any (mortal) central authority. As a general rule, the various temples do not involve themselves in politics any more than necessary. Several attempts have, in the past been made to unite the various factions into a politically aware and active group; these efforts have generally been defeated by indifference. Isvir makes few demands on his adherents. This may account for their lack of uniformity or cohesion. Isviran ritual seems to involve a great deal of mysticism; some have called it "confused". These ceremonies have been known to include human sacrifice and torture.



Lord of the Pitch Shadows, Master of Deceit and Evil Dreams, Lord of the Last Illusion, the Merchant of Death, Wealth's Worry, the Lifter of Lives, Trancer the Cat, the Unseen One.

In Núsha, Návè is reckoned the sixth of the Húltthon, the dreaded eighteenth god. Best known as the bringer of evil dreams, he is a principal deity of assassins and of many thieves. Návè is a "Lord of Chaos"; he encourages disruptive activity such as assassination. It is claimed by some that Návè and his semi-divine minions the Gytévsha, are powerless in daylight, but there is evidence that they have at least some power in the day. Návè is a "Lord of Secrets" and a "doer of the impossible". His main symbols are Navashákra the ebony blade, D'kejis the black cat, and Shinkra'áka the non-corporeal skull. Návè's principal colour is black, often with a trace of blood red.

Unsurprisingly, little is known of the church of Návè in Núsha. It does appear to have a degree of discipline second to none; temple master shave been known to order their underlings to commit ritual suicide for minor infractions, and even for demonstrations. There is a highly visible distinction between laity and clergy, the latter having little or no interest in the former who tend to keep a respectful distance. Rumour has it that the temples kidnap infants to be raised as clerics and servants (?). These children are usually of noble birth, and are seldom recovered. Each temple is self-sufficient; it is not known whether they acknowledge a single central authority. Ritual murders and suicides play a major role in Návèism. The temples raise large revenues by undertaking activities too difficult or dangerous for the Lia-kaváir (which in some regions pays tribute to the Church). Temple rituals involve trance states, sometimes induced by drugs. The clerical dress tends to be of black and red. Some wear the dreaded skull-mask of Shinkra'áka, and all carry razor-sharp black daggers. Clerical garb generally consists of a loose ceremonial robe over tight, utilitarian costume. Assassins don a ceremonial belt of cloth.

Notes

It should be obvious that the present document is much “thinner” than its successors. This original Libram was designed exclusively as a player handout and, as such, the amount of material it contains is strictly limited to the kind of information that just about anyone should have. There is very little about church organisation, customs or practices. Much of the text, nearly all of it in fact, is written from the point of view of an outsider. In theory, a member of a church should obtain additional information, and clergy should receive even more. Hence, the actual content is minimal and it is more concerned with public perception than factual information. Since the material was written for use in one campaign only, my own, there was no need to write down masses of hierarchical “insider information” because it was already where it needed to be, in the GM’s head.

When it came time to convert this material for use on Hârn, it became necessary to write down all the extra information. Gods of Hârn was primarily aimed at GameMasters. This changed the nature of the work: it was no longer quite as credible as a “player handout” since it then contained lots of information that the average outsider simply would not have. This demanded a compromise. Ideally, there should be one version of the Libram for outsider, laity, and cleric in each religion. In other words, if there are eighteen gods, there should be at least 37 different versions. This is, by no means practical, so we designated Gods of Hârn as a “Player-Accessible module and accepted the fact that players who bought it would have more information that they should theoretically have.

Those of you who are familiar with “Gods of Hârn” and/or its successor “HârnMaster Religion” will recognise the similarities and differences between those works and the present publication.

My first act when I was adapting the Nushénic Pantheon to Hârn was to expand the general mythology to include interactive tales of the gods.

My second was to cull eight of the deities, thereby allowing more information for each one:

Lorthéa was dropped entirely, his functions being assumed, mostly by Laráni. This left the Laérlathôn without a king, but they seem to manage.

Laráni was retained virtually without change, although her article was expanded and she more or less took over the “most active”, “supreme leader” role from Lorthéa.

Peóni also survived the cull and she assumed some of the functions of Vakár-s’kúr and most of the functions of H’vêr.

Vakár-s’kúr perished from the face of the pantheon, although Peóni did assume many of his duties.

H’vêr also vanished, although it could be argued that Peóni is more like the original H’vêr than the original Peóni.

Siém survived almost intact although some of his demigods were renamed to protect the innocent.

Haléa survived the cull. She absorbed Hedóni but lost some of her mysticism.

Srajin is still around, and almost indistinguishable from the original. I did make his name a bit easier to pronounce.

Sávè-K’nôr didn’t change much either.

Hedóni was absorbed by the always acquisitive Haléa.

Tével-âr did not survive the cull. In fact there is really no trace of the “father nature” wilderness god in the Hârníc pantheon.

Shii Always one of my favourites, did not survive either. I always saw his followers as a kind of amoral Shaolin.

Môrgath survived almost intact. He even absorbed some attributes from some of the other evil ones.

Agrik-tsi survived more or less intact. He also absorbed some of the nastiness of the evil lost gods. I did shorten his name to Ágrik.

Ký-Sirvis got bought out by the others

Tâvè-k’viér also did not make the transition, although I believe he was revived as a demon.

Ilvir survived the cull, although he mended his ways somewhat and joined the Baélàthos.

Návè also survived more or less intact, although I did simplify (?) the spelling. In those days it was not technically possible to include accents, so adding an “h” was meant to help people pronounce it.

Of course, there was more to it than simply killing off eight Gods². You will notice that the original eighteen were quite nicely balanced:

2 Although killing deities can be quite gratifying. ☺

NUSHÉNIC PANTHEON

Principle	Laérlathòn	Baélàthos	Húlthon
Retribution, Justice, Kingship	Lorthéa (Justice)	Haléa (Bargains)	Môrgath (Retribution)
War	Laráni (Martial Honour)	Srajín (Joy of Battle)	Agrik-tsi (Pillage & Destruction)
Knowledge	Peóni (Knowledge in service to man, Healing)	Sávè-K'nôr (Knowledge for its own sake)	Ký-sîrvris (Knowledge in the service of evil)
Virtue/Morality	Vakár-s'kúr (Purity and Virtue)	Hedóni (Pleasures of Life, Lust, self-interest)	Tâvè-k'viér (Evil, Torture, Vice)
Land/Nature	H'vêr (Agriculture and Fertility)	Tével-âr (Wilderness)	Ilvîr (Desolation and Infertility)
Shadows/Mystery	Siém (Magic and Dreams)	Shîi (Magic and Dreams)	Návè (Nightmares and Shadows)

HÂRNIC PANTHEON

Principle	Laérlathòn	Baélàthos	Húlthon
War	Laráni (Martial Honour)	Sárajín (Joy of Battle)	Ágrik (Pillage & Destruction)
Knowledge, Healing, Virtue, Fertility	Peóni (Knowledge, Healing, self-sacrifice, virtue, fertility).	Haléa (Self Interest, Pleasures of Life, Lust) Sávè-K'nôr (knowledge) Ilvîr (Sterility, Desolation, Life... etc.)	
Shadows/Mystery	Siém (Magic and Dreams)		Návèh (Nightmares and Shadows)
			Môrgath (Retribution, Insanity, Chaos, Disorder)

HOW MANY GODS CAN DANCE ON THE HEAD OF A PIN?

While the principles on which the original pantheon was founded were admittedly a bit shaky in places, having six principles and three hexads did make it easy to balance the pantheon. Having culled the total number down to ten, it was a bit trickier to balance out the principles.

The first thing one might notice from the tables is that the principles/deities no longer balance out. Three doesn't go into ten. This is mainly because I decided that it really didn't matter all that much, and had I decided to carefully re-balance the pantheon into four principles (because there are four "neutral" gods in the Hârníc pantheon) their personalities would be too restricted. Therefore, I largely abandoned the idea of balancing the principles. There were numerous other considerations.

All three of the original war gods survived the cull. Since "warrior" is the most common player-vocation, I sort of felt the need to include natural homes for warriors of whatever moral bent. Also, since Ivínia made it from Sherém to Kêthîra, it seemed reasonable that they should bring their god along for the ride. I never even considered leaving Sárājîn out... after all, Everyone loves Srajîn/Sárājîn, he's a cross between Odin, Thor and Santa Claus...

Clearly, with three basic moral stands, the only way to balance ten deities is to put four in the middle, and this brings us to Ilvîr...

In Núsha/Sherém, Ilvîr is one of the evil gods. On Hârn he is only amoral. This is simply because I did not feel it was appropriate to have four evil deities when there were only three good ones.³



³ Although, having four evil gods and only three good ones might have been even more interesting for the Laránians, especially since Peóni is a pacifist and Siém never shows up at Laérlathón meetings...

ORIGINS: A LONG, LONG TIME AGO...

In the first paragraph of the introduction, I say that a well-defined pantheon is essential to good role-playing. I am not entirely sure this is true, although it does sound right.

When I started the "Núsha Campaign" in 1973 (?) there were no clearly defined gods. Their introduction came in three phases:

- (1) I introduced Lorthéa, Haléa and Môrgath to satisfy the needs of good, amoral, and evil characters.
- (2) I introduced Shîi, Srajîn, and a few other deities to satisfy the specific desires of my players. Several of my players were martial artists (karate mostly) with considerable interest in the Shaolin. They wanted a deity with whom they could identify...
- (3) I introduced the remaining deities to balance out the pantheon.

In other words, the original pantheon evolved out of role-playing practice. I did not impose it as part of the original framework, and then make my players fit into it. This is true of many of my rules and much of my environment: it is not created from whole cloth, but rather evolved in response to players' needs. This method could not be used for Hârn: in that case I had to use what I had learned from Sherém-Prime and apply the lessons to a much more complete work.

The introduction of religion to roleplaying involves significant hazard. Roleplaying is about self-improvement: the accumulation of experience, the improvement of skills or the acquisition of knowledge about the world. It is about meeting and overcoming challenges. In a world where the gods exist and take an active, serious and benign interest in the activities of mortals, those mortals might easily become dependent. Where is the drive self-development if each time an adventurer faces a new challenge, s/he is able to call upon the great deity for the perfect solution? If God (any god) really is on your side, how can you loose?⁴

Religion in roleplaying offers us a paradox. Religion is necessary to a credible experience, but real and active deities can completely defeat the purpose of the game.

⁴ I read a book like this once. It was well-conceived and well-written, but you knew from the first chapter that the goddess was, eventually going to win. It was boring.

The obvious solution is to have religion without gods. The worldly institutions, priests and temples can provide atmosphere, morality, mythology and metaphysics whether or not the objects of their devotions show up for the rituals.

This is the solution that some GMs adopt. Yes there are churches, but no gods. Everyone is deluded. The non-existence of divine beings does not even preclude the occasional miracle, for such things can be explained as manifestations of mortal psychology. Perhaps faith, and faith alone, can move mountains.

The existence of the gods is not as important as whether or not they take active roles in mortal affairs. A remote and disinterested god will not spoil the game, only one who shows up, helps His devotees and smites His enemies.

An interesting sidebar which suggests itself is that in a world where there are no gods, the objects of devotion are wholly the products of human invention, and would wholly reflect the human character. Of course, this may be true even if the gods *do* exist. Unless the gods show up at tea-parties, their adherents must, to some degree, invent their personalities, and the inspiration for that invention must surely be personal experience. The conclusion is that any god worshipped by mortals must embody aspects of mortal nature whether or not this is appropriate.

If the gods really do exist, and even if they do not, the world needs some kind of balance to preserve the object of the game.⁵ The only approach is to establish rules to govern the intervention of supernatural beings, to prevent them from being the whole story. This seems necessary not because a story revolving around the gods is unnatural or difficult to devise, but simply because such an environment is quite dull for the humble little critters who actually play the game.



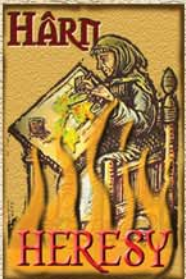
So there it is: the Original Pantheon from which the others have evolved. I hope you find it interesting, and if you ever visit Sherém-Prime, look me up...

⁵ This is the subject of my essay: *On Divinity*.

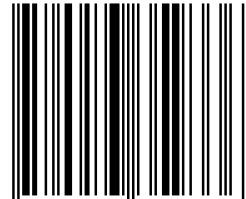
Lost Gods



LIBRAM OF THE PUSHÉNIC PANTHEON
CONCERNING THE SIX TIMES THREE DEITIES
OF PUSHA ON SHÉREM-PRIME,
AND HOW THE GODS OF HÂRÎ CAME TO BE.



ISBN 0-9733593-3-1



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