

# YEAR OF THE GODS

AN ANCIENT GREEK SETTING

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ANDERS SANDBERG

Will the goddesses sing your praises, hero?





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## ON THE COVER

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# INTRODUCTION



*The glow of the volcano was visible from the horizon all over Argeleia. Wise people in the countryside who knew the date and year in the cycle whispered prayers for protection.*

*Above the ash slope at the summit a curtain of glowing rock erupted, sending deadly bombs of lava falling. A handsome man walked out of the flames, pausing to survey the landscape below. Despite the night and billowing ash clouds he saw clearly where he wanted to go. He began to stroll downwards, wreathing himself in traveller's robes he pulled from the air.*

*He paused when he noticed someone sheltering from the falling rocks under an outcropping. The man fell to his knees. The god laughed mildly. "Are you so desperate, Asasthenes? Is it not enough to be a prince?"*

*The prince dared to look up in the face of the God of Rebellion, his answer strangled in his throat but visible in his eyes. The god nodded. "So be it. Serve me this year, and I will make your play possible." Together they continued the descent.*

Sing, o goddesses of skill and beauty, who thread the golden slopes of the divine city with dainty steps and melodious voices, of the lands of Hesperia. Sing, o artful ones who knit word and melody together, of the gods ruling above them. Sing, o wondrous ones who delight and surprise, about the mortals toiling below. Sing, o moving and wise ones, about the Year of the Gods.

Year of the Gods is a setting for D&D 5e I made. I ran a campaign titled "The Three Princes of Mesia" in the setting 2021-2022, and this helped flesh out many details, regions and characters. The setting is independent of the campaign, but in relevant spots I will mention how things worked out.

# SETTING

The world is **heroic/archaic Greek**: many small kingdoms, heroes travelling by ship among the thousand islands in the dangerous ocean, gods getting involved in mortal affairs. The level is somewhere between the Bronze Age Trojan war and before the "modern" states of Sparta, Athens and Thebes.

It is a **gritty world**, with hardscrabble farmers and slaves tending the land, bandits and pirates threatening everyone, warriors aiming for glory but likely to meet a bloody end while still young. Outside civilization monsters lurk. In the rare city firm duties to family, city and honour force people to behave – or be exiled to near-certain death.

**Gods are very real**: there is no reason to doubt their existence when you may have met one, or know somebody descended from them. Worshipping them is a matter of survival besides an important tradition. Humans get involved with divine politics but it often ends badly for them. Even the nicer gods tend to accidentally break their toys. On the upside, you may end up a myth yourself.

The 12 main gods range from the civic gods that represent civilized society – kingly Agêtôr, wise Korphasias, mild Zêrunthia, sensible Rharias – over the wild gods that cannot be ignored yet bring chaos – competitive Pitanatis, wild Mainalios, warrior Laossoos – to the dark gods that threaten everything – rebellious Anaireus, lethal Aîdôneus, mysterious Ar, devastating Typhaon, and strife-sowing Echthria. There are lesser gods, demigods and mortals who have excelled enough to join their ranks but The Twelve hold sovereign power over all, except fate.

**Each year one of the gods descends/ascends to the world** to live in a human form. They retain their divine power but their domain is no longer as accessible to prayer – instead one would have to requisition it in person.

Knowing your afterlife is a great source of comfort or trouble. Many people regularly pay priests to scry their fate, hoping it has changed if it was bad previously. This gives the temples great power and influence, as well as massive revenue. However, pure theocracies are rare due to the dislike of Agêtôr for this – even his own priesthood knows they need figurehead kings.

Rulers who can afford good magical protection can rule for a long time. That makes succession messy, and has often led to assassination (preceded by suborning the priests or wizards ensuring the protection). The same is true for many of the wizards, who form small coteries for mutual protection. Agêtôr generally dislikes such perversions of the natural order, and may intervene (ironically, as Anaireus notes, by causing rebellion).

**People generally fear wizards since they deal with dark powers**. In many places magic is outlawed, although what is outlawed varies. Holy miracles are tied to the divine, but telling that apart from witchcraft is sometimes hard.



Charles Meynier, Clio (1800)



# THEOLOGY

*I drip the oil and wine on Koruphasia's altar while intoning the proper prayer for the day. Then I go – sunwise! – to the altar of her sons and daughters, giving them their dues while intoning their names: bright Exousia and fierce Dynami, strong Bia, and Chersis the Righteous. Then the altar of the arts in the lower court. This recitation takes the longest. Then it is time to give the remainder to the altar of the servants – Tarana may be my favourite, but all of them get their libation. Finished, I check with the statue of the goddess. She seems content, and I sigh with relief.*

*Just as I turn to leave, I hear a voice behind me: “Panope, I wish for your assistance.” It is a lovely voice. A voice I cannot but obey.*

The pantheon consists of the Twelve main gods (plus some of their children, lovers and relatives).

These are typically divided into the Civil Gods and Other Gods (sometimes called the Dark Gods). The civil gods form the pantheon worshipped by normal people, plus the marginal or wild ones that need appeasing. The other gods are not directly worshipped and are seen as enemies of all good things. However, leaving them out would be a mistake. Many stories tell of what happens when they are not properly respected.

## THE DIVINE WORLD

*The priest pointed his staff at the unruly satyr: “Grovel in the dust, for I am a servant of the great mother, whose commands all mortals must obey!” The satyr laughed loudly, a laughter that echoed in a deep rumbling in the ground.*

*“I obey whoever I want, for I swore myself to Mainalios of the wild. Do you truly think you can tell your goddess what to do, let alone me?! She is disappointed in you, childish man.” He began to play a fierce melody on his flute.*

*Augustinos Chrysodactylos, The Three Princes of Mesia*

According to some myths the gods are descended from Father Ocean (who is sometimes identified with Typhaon) and Mother Sky, the original couple. As they became old and infirm, they were supplanted by their children the 12 gods. This is disputed by many priests, claiming the gods have always existed in perfect immortality and will always exist.

The gods are bound by the laws of fate that dictate the structure of the world. This is why the Year of the Gods exist, this is why even the most powerful god cannot always get what they want.

The world undergoes great cycles, as the relative power of the gods shift. Once there was an Arcadian golden age, then a wise silver age, and now it is the selfish iron age descending towards a dark age of war and conflict... which will eventually, after untold disasters lead to the rekindling of a new world infinitely far ahead.

If a god intervenes directly in the world in a domain of another god (or one of their active worshippers) the other god can respond in kind. This makes most gods cautious about direct attacks, since typically that allows a balancing counterattack. A full divine war would be very bad news. Clerics of one god hence should not directly affect clerics or spells of another god.

Ironically non-divine magic is largely exempt from this, despite having ties to the Dark Gods. Being gods of chaos and destruction, they let anybody, even their enemies, use their power – gaining subtle strength from every spell and magical battle.

Each god has many titles and names, often used interchangeably or to avoid using the most sacred name<sup>1</sup>. It is common to use circumlocutions to refer to the gods without addressing them: taking their names in vain means they will pay attention to you. Sometimes the names represent particular aspects of the divinity: Ar Panoptes is the all-seeing god of oracular answers, while Ar Kóros is the god of pure unknowing, and Ar Aion the god of eternity.

Gods usually communicate by omens: unusual occurrences hinting at their pleasure or displeasure with what people do, or what should be done. Sometimes they send dreams. Rarely they send direct messages to their priests and oracles.

## WORSHIP



*If any man obeys the gods, they listen to him also.*

Homer, The Illiad, Book I, l. 218, tr. Richmond Lattimore

Faith is irrelevant: the existence of the gods is an obvious fact, just like the existence of lions and the sea. People need to keep the gods on their side through rituals. While some people have particular interest in the domain of some gods, nobody is foolish enough not to propitiate the other gods. Pious people go out of their way to ensure a good relationship with all of the gods.

<sup>1</sup> Since the names of the gods are based on titles from Greek mythology, feel free to use the names of Greek mythology as alternative titles for the gods too.

Worship involves performing rituals such as sacrifices to the gods, festivals, and many special small rituals like reciting the names of Agêtôr whenever news of a new king arrives. It is fundamentally an exchange: worship to get the gods to give you good things and avert bad, worship to thank them for what they have given you.

*It is a general belief that without a certain form of prayer it would be useless to immolate a victim, and that, with such an informality, the gods would be consulted to little purpose. And then besides, there are different forms of address to the deities, one form for entreating, another form for averting their ire, and another for commendation.*

–Pliny the Elder, The Natural History 28.3

Sacrifices can be a small libation where wine, honey or olive oil is poured into the fire or on the ground (a common beginning of a meal, as well as in the morning and evening) with a prayer to the gods. In temples there are altars where small sacrifices of money, food and other precious things are given to the gods and temple. However, for the major ceremonies animal sacrifice is essential. Usually, domestic animals are led to the temple, hymns and prayers sung as it is killed outside at an altar, and then the animal butchered – the edible meat going for a communal meal, while bones and fat are burned as the offering to the gods.

Note that the rituals have to be performed exactly right. While the gods sometimes make allowances, they do reject improperly performed rites. This is why clerics are important.

Many festivals are performed locally or across Hesperos for particular gods with specific rituals. Some may involve driving out scapegoat people to remove impurity from the community, some involve elaborate processions, some gift-giving or changing social roles. Communities being slack in their rituals risk the disfavour of the gods.

The temples are the homes of the gods, not just a place where they are worshipped. Their statues are sometimes inhabited by them. What is done in a temple is hence done in front of the gods, so one better behave. The priesthoods are their servant staff and own land, slaves and even business in their name.



*'On Hecate's Island,' says Semus in Deliad II, 'the Delians sacrifice what they call basyniai to Iris, goddess of the dawn. It is wheat dough, boiled, with honey and the so-called kokkora (which are a dried fig and three walnuts).'*

– Athenaeus 645.





# THE 12 GODS

## AGÊTÔR, THE HIGH GOD OF THE SKIES

*Make the world your memorial.*



God of kings, cities, trade, weather, air, the sun, hospitality, and rulership.

Agêtôr is seen as a fair and just ruler, but one who expects obedience and respect. He is also known for his generosity, especially to those who show him proper respect. He is somewhat authoritarian: “my way or the highway”. This is

tempered by his wife Koruphasia who famously interceded to save mankind when he wanted to destroy it last time.

When he is around hierarchy is reinforced: leaders lead, followers follow.

There are many temples to his honour where festivals of tribal and civic community are held. Rulers frequently sacrifice to him, hoping to get their rule reinforced and to become wise and prosperous.

**Symbols:** the spear that turns into lightening, his animals the sacred winged bull and eagle. He is often associated with the colour red and silver metal.

**Omens:** lightning strikes, beams of sunlight or eclipses, unusual weather phenomena, the arrival of strangers, clouds forming unusual shapes.

**Associated creatures:** celestials, giant eagles, bulls (winged bulls, aurochs etc but not minotaurs). Air elementals. Citizens, strangers, and kings.

Similar to Zeus, Apollo and Hermes in Greek mythology.

## KORUPHASIA, THE WISE WIFE

*Nothing in excess, everything that is necessary.*

Goddess of queens, loyalty, wisdom, and virtue. The embodiment of clarity. Wife of Agêtôr.

She is quiet, serious, and a mediator among the other gods: it is said that she can make even Typhaon listen.

When she is around people grow calm and determined. They focus on what they have to do, reflecting on why they are doing it and for whom.

Her temples are often places of learning, whether fully fledged academies (like the main temple in Noria) or just shrines where the priest teach the local villagers. It is common to sacrifice to her when undertaking new



projects, beginning or finishing study, getting married, or just to get insight.

**Symbols:** Koruphasia carries a compass by which she measures virtue. Her animal is the horse, usually depicted crowned or as a unicorn, although herons and geese are also associated with her.

**Omens:** flights of geese or herons, sudden insights, smoke forming shapes, patterns like writing on surfaces, normal noises forming music.

**Associated creatures:** horses, pegasus, hippogriffs, unicorns. Decent people, scholars.

Similar to Athena and Hera in Greek mythology.

## ZÊRUNTHIA, THE GODDESS OF LOVE

*You cannot escape that which you desire.*



Goddess of love, beauty, dreams, health, fishing, and the healing arts. The embodiment of achieving what you want. Married to Mainalios, although their relationship is very open – none of them are gods of fidelity.

While mild and usually well-meaning, she is not to be spurned and her wrath is legendary: love is serious business, and like in war all means are fair.

When she is around people and animals become social. Emotions matter, every glance is significant – and might win you your true love, or forever break your heart. Drama is as

natural as breathing in her vicinity.

She is known to be particularly vengeful to those who she feels have wronged her or her worshippers, and has been known to drive people insane with love.

Her temples are places of healing, weddings, sex, and popular pilgrimage. People sacrifice to her for health, fertility and romantic success but also for insights into careers and family matters.

**Symbols:** the mirror, jewels. Her animal is the dog. She loves perfumes and incenses, flowers, and pleasant-smelling food. Fish, pearls and other products of the sea appeals to her.

**Omens:** dreams, smells, flowers, dog behaviour, mirrors and reflections behaving strangely, jewellery shining, unexpected catches while fishing.

**Associated creatures:** dogs of all kinds, from domestic dogs to blink dogs, Amidor the Dandelion. At her court there are (apparently) reformed succubae and incubi. All sorts of lovers.

Similar to Aphrodite and Asclepius in Greek mythology.

## RHARIAS, THE MOTHER OF HOME AND HARVEST

*Milk the cows that is nearby, why chase the one that runs away?*

Goddess of fertility, harvests, the hearth, mercy, language, fire, and everyday protection. Married to Laossoos. The embodiment of doing good for others, expecting nothing in return.



She is conservative and supports Agêtôr firmly; however, tradition trumps politics... but passion overrules anything.

When she is around affiliation dominates. You are who you are because you are embedded in your family, phratry, nation or circle of friends. Caring for others trumps your own glory.

She has many temples, with the grand temple in Avon. Here her servants the halflings live, tending to the religious duties. People sacrifice food and drink to her, often in the hope for good harvests and fertile cattle, but sometimes for protection (hiding in one of her temples is a way for a fugitive to stay briefly safe, and the temples often take in the poor and needy to help them).

**Symbols:** Her animals are the lion and sheep, and she carries a lamp that banishes evil. Her favourite foods are honey and lamb, and her colours are orange and yellow. Wheat, barley and cornflowers are her plants.

**Omens:** the behaviour of fire in hearths and lamps, food spoiling or cooking well, grain overflowing its containers, sickles moving on their own, gecko lizards performing a dance.

**Associated creatures:** halflings, lions of all types (including liondrakes), some domestic fey, domestic animals and plants of all kinds. Servants and domestics.

Similar to Hestia and Demeter in Greek mythology.



## MAINALIOS, THE WILD ONE

*No regrets!*



God of nature, ecstasy, lawlessness, and intoxication. The embodiment of nature as minded. Married to Zêrunthia but sleeps around.

He can show many sides, from a god of secretive fecund nature itself to a god of merriment and madness to a god of pure chaos, switching depending on season, mood or chance.

When Mainalios is around the forces of

nature grow in power, both externally – plants thrive, animals grow bold and smart – and internally – urges become impossible to repress, civilized manners are swept aside and rude truths belched out.

While popular, he rarely has organized temples and cults (indeed, many places regard the chaos and lawlessness of Mainalios so dangerous that the cults are proscribed and act in secret). Sacrificing to Mainalios is often done outside in nature at natural altar rocks or sacred springs. People pray to him for protection from the dark side of nature and for help from the positive

side... or mad insights and pleasures not spoken of in polite society.

**Symbols:** His symbol is a branch (with wines, flowers or lightening), his animal is a wolf crowned with flowers. He loves wine, poppies, fruits and raw meat.

**Omens:** behaviour of wild animals, plants and nature changes, the talk of madmen, hallucinations.

**Associated creatures:** all sorts of fey, animals and beasts, but especially Satyrs, Centaurs, Awakened plants, and Unicorns. Druids, rangers and rustic people.

Similar to Bacchus and Pan in Greek mythology.

## ANAIREUS, THE REBEL

*Disobedience is virtue.*

God of volcanos, revolutions, stone, and changes of fortune. He is sometimes called the Lord of Gold. Sometimes said to be son of Aïdôneus and Ar.

He is arrogant, ambitious, and seductive.

When he is around things change. He might play deus ex machina, but often he just shows up as the tide of history shifts, somebody has a dangerous inspiration, or trouble will erupt at any point.

Rarely worshipped, although sometimes prayed to by gamblers (together with his son, the god of luck). He is the patron of miners, smiths, and those who work with stone, something that makes them suspect in the eyes of decent people.

**Symbols:** His symbol is a golden needle or other tool, his animal is the snake. His metal is gold and the favoured colour is black.

**Omens:** snakes, wild fires, the appearance or disappearance of gold, strange stone formations or burning stones falling from the sky.

**Associated creatures:** snakes of all kinds, from normal ones to flying snakes and firesnakes, all sorts of stone, fire and volcano-associated creatures. Miners.

Like Prometheus in Greek mythology.

## AÏDÔNEUS, THE DARK ONE

*Your light is just a flash between two eternities of darkness.*

God of death, magic, secrets, unseen things, drugs, and the underworld.

The embodiment of not getting what you want by getting your dark wishes fulfilled. He is behind everything addictive and self-destructive. Married to Ar.

When he is around shadows and darkness spread. He is the embodiment of dark things, and dark things follow him.

Worshipped by a few secretive cults of necromancers and sorcerers, and by necessity honoured at cemeteries. There the death priests maintain the proper ceremonies and help grieving families perform the required sacrifices at funerals. They also help against spirits and undead, putting them back where they belong.

**Symbols:** His symbol is a black bowl, his animal is the lynx.

**Omens:** sounds from unseen sources, creatures associated with night and darkness like bats, owls, and moths. All sorts of death-related visions, spirits or





objects like bones, obols, vultures, or grave ashes. Shadows that move or do not fit that which casts them. Small animals dropping dead.

**Associated creatures:** undead of all kinds. Invisible stalkers, spirits.

Like Hades and Hecate in Greek mythology.

## AR, THE INESCAPABLE ONE

*I reveal all things in the end.*

God of time, night, fate, silence, decay, immortality, and oracles. The embodiment of mystery. Married to Aïdôneus.

When he is around strange things happen. People will experience eerie feelings or weird coincidences.

While not popular, temples to Aïdôneus and Ar (they are often worshipped together) exist in some places to give auguries. One of the greatest is the temple to Ar Panoptos in Marvia, where the oracle gives crucial hints of the past and future. Smaller chapels are common near graveyards.

**Symbols:** His symbol is the dagger, his animal is a black frog, and his flower is the rhododendron.

**Omens:** Strange silences when there should be sound, things decaying before their time or staying unchanged. Echos repeating different words.

**Associated creatures:** undead, nothics, sphinxes, frogs (normal, poisonous, giant), oracles.

Like Chronos and Hecate in Greek mythology.



## TYPHAON, THE LORD OF DESTRUCTION

*ROAAAAR!!!*



God of catastrophes, destruction, pain, oceans, and madness. He has no fixed form, always shifting from one horrible form to another: a dragon, a thousand-armed brute, a storm of black fire or a mountain of scorpions. Resides

with the other dark gods in Tartarus, where he is one of the major threats.

When he is around disaster follows. Sometimes it is the quiet devastation of plague, sometimes the direct earthquake. He can be quiescent or enraged, but rarely anything in between.

He is the one god with no official temples or worship; rites to appease or distract him are traditionally done outside towns and sacred ground (sometimes by

throwing sacrifices into the sea or killing it in the crudest way possible).

**Symbols:** His animal is an alligator or dragon, and his symbol is a black tree or whirlpool.

**Omens:** all sorts of disasters, from things breaking to earthquakes. Attacking animals.

**Associated creatures:** any kind of monstrous, violent or weird creature. Ogres, dragons, minotaurs, fiends and demons.

## ECHTHRIA, THE HATEFUL ONE

*Enough blabbering! I heard your story: "revenge!" Good story.*



Also known as Ákheia, The Evil One:

Goddess of malice, strife, intrigue, sabotage, famine, misfortune, and infidelity. She is the personification of the physical and emotional pain caused by illness, death, and accidents, and she likes to spread her misery.

She deals with poison, curses and monsters. She is the creator of countless monsters, filling the world with danger.

Married to Pitanatis in a famously unhappy relationship (she is often said to be the lover of Anaireus, and has countless monstrous offspring with various fathers).

When she is around evil ideas and paranoid delusions will pop into your mind.

Rarely spoken of, since everybody fears invoking her. Usually, small altars dedicated to her are placed inside other temples for appeasing her. People actually sacrificing directly to her nearly always ask for curses against their enemies. She has some cults of people seeking to spread chaos and misfortune, often aligned with hags and other monsters.

**Symbols:** Her symbol is a black cup or lead sandal, and her animal is the vulture, a rabid wild dog or hyena.

**Omens:** misfortunes happening. Shapes forming in mists. Monsters and beasts.

**Associated creatures:** almost anything evil and chaotic, but the hags and harpies are her favourites. She is the main creator of aberrations.

Like Eris in Greek mythology.

## LAOSSOOS, THE LORD OF DISASTERS

*Seek heaven through violence!*

God of war, oceans, courage, wildfire, and birds. The embodiment of survival of the fittest and evolution. Married to Rharias.

Resides on the Warriors' Islands somewhere in the ocean.

He has a vast number of offspring with various mortals and deities (willing or otherwise).

When he is around fear is banished by rage, the blood burns and every insult need to be met with a fight. Honour is nice, but surviving at any cost is better.

Various martial cults worship him, and there exist some temples acting as military colleges and training grounds. While sacrifices for military success are common it is known that he regards dying on the battlefield as the finest sacrifice anybody can give him: anybody dying with his name on their lips will be brought to his Islands, and he might choose to turn the tide of battle a bit.

**Symbols:** His animal is a raven (or any other bird), and his symbol is a shield or sword. He loves bronze, fire and the colour red. He is also associated with marine objects like waves, seashells and sharks.

**Omens:** weapons suddenly breaking, or finding an old weapon in the soil, a wall or some other unexpected place. Birds flying in formation. Meat – or fruit – bleeding. Water turning into blood. Sounds of trumpets and fighting.

**Associated creatures:** birds and bird-monsters (griffons, rocs), mites, berserkers and warriors.

Like Ares and Poseidon in Greek mythology.



**Omens:** Moonlight, wild animal behaviour changing, spider webs glowing and containing unexpected patterns. A sudden invisible arrow whirring by, pointing in a particular direction.

**Associated monsters:** animals and beasts. Hunters and athletes.

Like Artemis and Selene in Greek mythology.



## PITANATIS, THE LADY OF CONTESTS

*Ever to excel.*



Goddess of competition, hunting, ambition, adventures, and the moon. Married to Echthria.

She is also known as the goddess of the hunt, and is often depicted carrying a bow and arrows.

Whenever she is around people, animals and forces compete. The winner takes it all, there is no prize for second place in her world. Yet there is

also glory: even if you do not win, you were part of the glorious struggle and might win next time.

While there are a few sacred groves and temples, most worshippers form informal cults not unlike hunting or sports teams. She refuses all sacrifices that are bought: she demands sacrifices people have caught or gathered themselves.

**Symbols:** her animal is the fox, her symbol the moon. She likes fresh meat and berries.



## MINOR GODS



*Ah how shameless—the way these mortals blame the gods.  
From us alone, they say, come all their miseries, yes,  
but they themselves, with their own reckless ways,  
compound their pains beyond their proper share.*

Homer, The Odyssey, Book 1–2

There are numerous minor deities. Most are not worshipped directly but only in association with the major gods.

## GODS OF THE CELESTIAL CITY

**Exousia**, Authority, and **Dýnami**, Force: twin sons of Agêtôr and Koruphasia, gods of the sun. Loyal, fierce defenders of civilization and the Civic Gods against Typhaon and Echtria. Usually worshipped together with their father. Their symbols are a crown and a flame, often combined into the symbol of the crowned flame above the winged bull. Exousia wields the hot fire of the sun, while Dýnami wields the cold fire of the sun. Their sister **Bia** is the goddess of brute strength.

**Chersis the Righteous**: daughter of Agêtôr and Koruphasia, goddess of Law. Married to Alethos. Their daughter **Aex** is a goddess of light and safety. Usually has minor altars in courts and next to the main temples. Her symbol is ash and moths. Their other daughter **Adrasteia** is the much feared “inescapable one”, goddess of punishment, retribution and restoring of balance.

**The Arts**: the adopted sons and daughters of Agêtôr and Koruphasia. As new arts – singing, ironworking, fishing, mathematics – are invented their inventors are adopted and deified as thanks. **Grapheas**, the inventor of writing, is the scribe of the gods and holds the scrolls of divine decisions, and the wax tablet of human prayers. **Rhapso**, the inventor of sewing, makes divine clothes. **Matton** is the divine cook and baker. **Ourá**, one of the rarely mentioned gods of order, is the god of proper queuing. And so on.

**Linus the Flute Player**: god of music, the son of Oeagrus and Chlôris. Linus taught music to mankind.

**Lelantos the Invisible One**: God of the air, wind, and invisibility. He is a shy god who prefers to stay out of the spotlight. He is married to Perdita, and they reside on an

island in the Eastern Sea. His animal is a dove, and his symbol is a feather.

**Aegaia the Victorious**: the daughter of Laossoos and Rharias, goddess of Victory (success, fertility, new projects, military success, etc.). A popular divinity with many extra attributes and cults. Her symbol is the myrtle flower. She is married to **Elas**, the meek god of mercy.

**Alethos**: God of Truth, son of Aïdôneus and Ar but rebelled against his fathers and now resides with the civic gods and his wife Chersis. Appears as a young man clad in white with fire for hair. Unusual in that he has no titles, no symbols, no attributes. His twin **Pseudos** (Falsehood) resides in Tartarus as a vast spider, sending illusions, rumours and misunderstandings via his messenger spiders to the world.

## GODS OF THE COUNTRY



**Kaena the Lifegiver**: the daughter of Laossoos and Rharias, goddess of Childbirth. Said to have a fierce sibling rivalry with Aegaia. Her symbol is the apple. Sometimes visiting with her mother in Avon, sometimes visiting Zêrunthia in Dymesos.

**Moria the Green**, the daughter of Kaena, is the goddess of olives, gardening and all things made of wood. She was kidnapped by Mainalios and bore him the dryads, Kydoimos and Laula.

**Kydoimos the Shouter**: God of panic. He is a satyr with long and untamed hair, and is always yelling. A popular joke character in some stories, but amulets with his name is used to quieten babies.

**Laula the Shepherdess**: Goddess of sheep, farmers, and shepherds. She is a kind, wise, and helpful goddess who helps anyone in need.

**Brison the Trustworthy**: god of Luck, son of Anaireus. Said to be a dissolute nomad. Very popular among gamblers. His symbol is a pair of dice, carried by mice – one for luck, one for misfortune. Mentioning his name without carefully positive epithets is to invite trouble. There are amusing stories about his outwitting of the Fates themselves.

His mother is one of the three sisters **Auryos** (Ambition), **Brysios** (Vanity) and **Khrysios** (Desire). The Three Sisters are called the False Fates, fooling mortals (and sometimes gods, and often themselves) into hubris



and disaster. The sisters are the offspring of Laossoos and Zêrunthia.

Other offspring of Zêrunthia are love gods like **Himeros** (attraction), **Ossa** (fame and rumour) and **Peitho** (persuasion), and **Akratos**, the god of wine.

**Ichnaea** the tracker is a daughter of Mainalios and Pitanatis, the great hunter. She can always find her prey, and is worshiped by hunters and investigators. People place sacrifices in her sacred springs with the hope that she will track down loved ones or stolen possessions – she leads the spirits of vengeance and justice to evil-doers. Her twin sister **Empusa** is the goddess of shape-shifting, hiding and escape. There are many amusing stories about their sisters playfully tricking each other or competing.

River gods, the **Potamoi**, are the minor offspring of Typhon. Often more nature gods than gods of destruction. His greater offspring are the Kraken and other major monsters. The Kraken are sometimes sea gods.

## GODS OF DARKNESS



**The Shadows:** sons of Aïdôneus and Ar. Demonic forces of death, mystery and punishment. Said to be exceedingly beautiful or ugly, so much that their very appearance can harm. One of them, **Xerion**, is the goddess of poison and potions. She works with Echtria to destroy everything.

**Suidas the Traitor** is the god of betrayal and underhanded stratagems but also proper discipline, a son of Laossoos and the demigoddess Auryos. He is the ancestor of the kings of Noria.

## DEIFIED HEROES

*Witness!!!*

Common last word of Eurypylos-worshippers

Various deified heroes exist. The most famous is **Tenedos the Sailor**, the son of Laossoos via queen Hemithea of Pteia. Involved in a myriad adventures as he avenged his mother and eventually became king of Pteia.

He is the god of sea, sailing and naval justice: he laid down the code of the sea, and anybody breaking it may face his wrath. His symbol is a ship, and his animal is

the fish. His wife **Leucothea** is the goddess of waves, salt and sea foam. His advisor **Coes** is the god of mundane advice and planning.

Another important hero is **Eurypylos**, the founder of the hordes of Cythosia. A fierce warrior (and illegitimate son of Laossoos) he found favour with the gods, but when they offered to deify him he instead asked for his people to never vanish. The wish was granted and Eurypylos died – but being indomitable, he escaped from The Warriors' Islands by fighting through Tartarus, approaching the Celestial city. The gods decided to deify him in exchange for him not upsetting the world too much: he gets to be reborn into the Cythosians from time to time. This usually means that he rises to be Khan over them, leads them on great conquests, and then meets a sticky end when he overestimates his abilities. He is venerated by Cythosians, although direct worship and prayer is rare – he grants wishes for adventure, challenges, and doom (somewhat like Crom in the Conan novels).

There are many Cythosian stories about his adventures. In one he ends up challenging Ar himself to gain the power of rune magic. First Ar tricks him, but Eurypylos comes back and threatens him until he gives up a few runes.



*L'ala nera o Il tocco dell'angelo* by Roberto Ferri

**Philonikos** was a lover of Zêrunthia who broke her heart when he died from a poison arrow shot by an envious brother. She restored him to life as dog. In this capacity he is the messenger and sender of omens from the gods, warning people of danger or scaring away evil beings. Philonikos is the god of domestic dogs; he holds a fierce hatred for Echthria's wild dogs and Mainalios' wolves.





## THE FATES

Beyond the world sits the **Shadow Judges, Infinite Ones, or Fates**. They are abstract, never worshiped entities representing necessity or the laws of creation. Swearing an oath invoking them (rather than the gods) is a profoundly serious thing, rarely done except by gods themselves. It is said that gods can forgive and release an unwise vow to them, but a vow to the Fates cannot be broken even by the gods.

## BLOODLINES

*“Quick, hide here!” The goddess opened a passage.*

*“I don’t see why being loved by the god of desire is bad.”*

*“My brother is insanely jealous, horny, never gets tired, and thinks love should include pain. Think about it, mortal.”*

*The god behind them turned into a tornado of fluttering, blood-red butterflies and advanced.*

People descended from liaisons with Laossoos, Mainalios, Aïdôneus and Zêrunthia have some god-blood and are generally mildly blessed. Sorcerers are said to somehow descend from Aïdôneus and Ar.

The kings of Bybra are descended from Agêtôt: when wandering the world, he met the barren queen Phia, who helped him overthrow the corrupt rulers of the country and restore order. In exchange she asked for a royal child, and this liaison is how the Bybrian lineage started.

The Tieflings are descendants of Typhon and his brood.

Halfings are the slaves of Rharias: she bought them in ancient times, and they are bound to her. In exchange they are all under her protection and gain boons of luck and domestic bliss.

## THE VISITS



*A person with bad breath continually, looking up to heaven prayed a great deal. Agêtôr looking askance, said, "Do me one favour; you have a god down there too."*

Jests of Hieroceles

Each year one of the gods descends/ascends to the world to live in a human form. They retain their divine power but their domain is no longer as accessible to prayer – instead one would have to requisition it in person. This simultaneously makes it far weaker and far stronger.

(This ordering is somewhat arbitrary, and DMs may want to reorganise it to fit their campaign.)

- The High God of the Skies usually hides his nature and goes adventuring. Sometimes he helps worthy people, sometimes he just watches. He often advises kings and leaders. During his year it is wise to be polite and kind to wandering strangers.
- The Rebel wanders the world just like the High God, but causing revolutions and change. Sometimes he tries to undo what the High God did but usually his schemes are more subtle.
- The Lord of Disasters sometimes participates in a good war – or tries to cause it. Because of the Rebel the previous year there is often plenty to do. It is not uncommon for him to organise an army or horde just for the fun of it – potentially an amazing opportunity for mercenaries and adventurers, but as the year is up they better had secured their winnings.
- The Mother of Home and Harvest stays home in her grand temple in Avon. This is a year-long festival to her honour. It is sometimes called the Year of Mercy since it happens between two dark years. However, many healing spells and farming blessings become weaker: one has to toil for sustenance.
- The Lord of Destruction wanders the world causing disasters. This is the most feared year. Anything can happen, there is no safe place anywhere. His entourage of great monstrosities rampage far and wide.
- The Wise Wife goes somewhere secret, incognito. Nobody knows where. After the previous year this is often a year of relief and rebuilding. Sometimes her

trusted servants quietly help behind the scenes, as she has counselled.

- The Dark One is out enjoying life. Stories tell of decadent revels that ruin entire towns to wholesome meditation over a particular flower: strange, erratic and private. It is said that this is the best time to perform healing. Necromancers on the other hand find their powers diminished, the spirits unruly and magic generally erratic. Dying this year means having to wait as a shade for months.
- The Lady of Contests is out with her entourage hunting. Sports contests are held in her honour, and sometimes she attends in person. Her favoured demigods parade with her, showing mortals how to excel.
- The Wild One revels, and wanders the land gathering followers for partying and hijinks. Chaos and miracles follow in his footsteps. Nature becomes notably more unruly, and hunters and rangers have to rely on their instincts much more.
- The Hateful One spreads deceit, conflict and other maliciousness. This is sometimes called the Year of Strife. She unleashes many new monsters. On the positive side, many curses lose their effectiveness.
- The Goddess of Love is fickle, but often settles down with someone for a year before the relationship ends tragically. She is sometimes incognito, but sometimes resides in full pomp in her temple and blesses people – unless she feels slighted. This is a year many abstain from marriage, unless they can make a pilgrimage to her court. Healing is weaker, emotions grow stronger, and drama is in the air.
- The Inescapable One wanders, seeking wisdom and power. Of all the gods he is the most deliberate and secretive. The civic gods do their outmost to keep track of him. This is a year where oracular and far-seeing magic does not work. Things get lost, forgotten, or are successfully hidden.

Lesser gods often accompany the greater gods on their visit. When Zêrunthia, Typhon, Pitanatis and Mainalios visits large entourages of beings associated with love, destruction, contest and wild nature accompany them (other gods are more of loners, or have a few trusted companions). Usually, the lesser gods cannot physically manifest in the world without their patron's presence, although there are gods like Suidas the Traitor and the river gods who are permanent residents. The exact rules are subtle and not known to mortals.

Some people seek out the gods to petition them, or hoping to be made companions. This is more popular with some gods than others, but there are many stories about how even the darker gods can be gracious guests or perform surprising acts of charity. Still, anybody trying to charm the Hateful One will likely regret it.

The priesthoods of different gods handle the visit in different ways. Some, like the priests of Koruphasia and Agêtôr perform their duties as always. The priests of Zêrunthia and Rharias perform their duodecennial pilgrimages to their courts. Mainalios does not have an organised priesthood in the normal sense but followers often wander, searching for him. Pitanatis causes the most problems for her priests since she wanders as she will and they try to find and celebrate her at great contests. The war-priests of Laossoos have the peculiar situation that while wars often break out, their own power is diminished: they perform their duties, but it is acknowledged that the fate of battle is entirely up to the warriors for the year.



Sorcerers generally lie low when the gods of magic wander the world: their powers are not reduced, but control over magic is weaker. Strange and dangerous things can happen. However, were one to meet one of the gods and gain a boon tremendous power could be gained...

Mortal authorities tend to bend to the gods. It takes a bold king or lawyer to go up against a god, but Agêtôr is known to obey all just laws and decrees. Zêrunthia and Rharias usually keep to their own enclaves where they are the law. Trying to ban Mainalios or Laossoos from intruding is futile.

Being in the world makes the gods somewhat vulnerable since they do not have the protection of their home dimension and all their servants, but often they are far beyond any threat mortals and monsters could pose. If you meet a god on the road, trying to kill him is very ill-advised.

## AFTERLIFE

*Two shrewd fellows were complaining to one another with regard to putting their fathers out of the way. One said to the other, "In order that we may not be called parricides by any,*

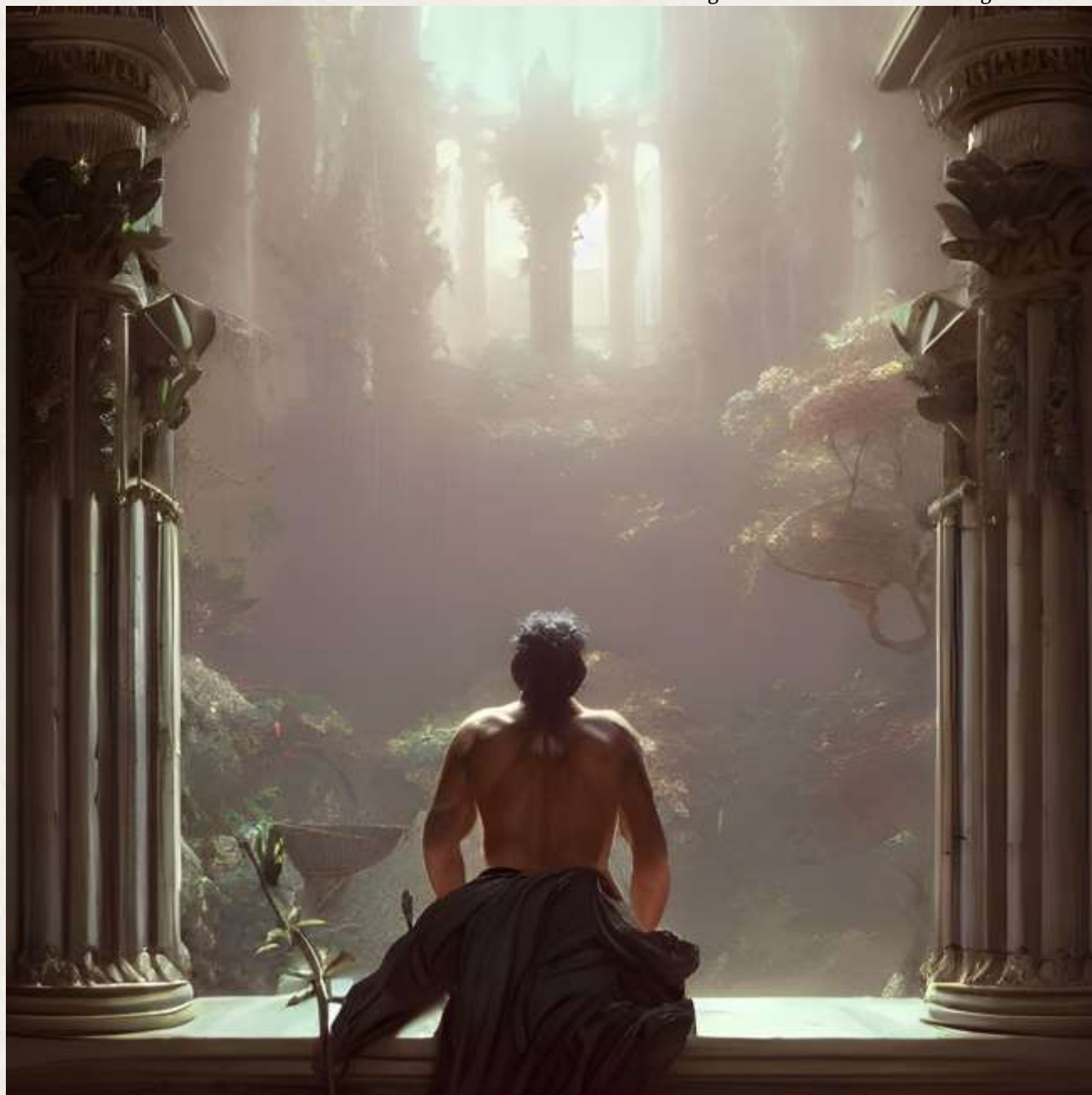
*you kill my father, and I will do away with yours, and we shall escape an evil report."*

*So they did. When they died, they were brought in front of the judge of the underworld as patricides. "The accusation is erroneous" they complained, "none of us has killed our father."*

*"True. But he who does not avenge his father's killing is no better."*

Souls go to the place determined by what they did in life – the prosocial heaven of the civic gods, the wild Elysium, the hellish Tartarus, and the relentless warrior fields. The latter two are generally unpleasant, but some people seem to seek them out.

- The Heavenly City: this is the afterlife of the virtuous, living in the splendour of the Pearl City in the clouds. It is close to the court of the Lord of the Skies. Beyond the City lies endless gardens of rest, bordering the Elysian Fields.
- Elysium: a wilderness, ranging from the peaceful Arcadian fields where true martyrs reside over the wild forest where more animalistic people go, to the foreboding volcanic mountains at the edge of Tartarus



inhabited by barbarous shades.

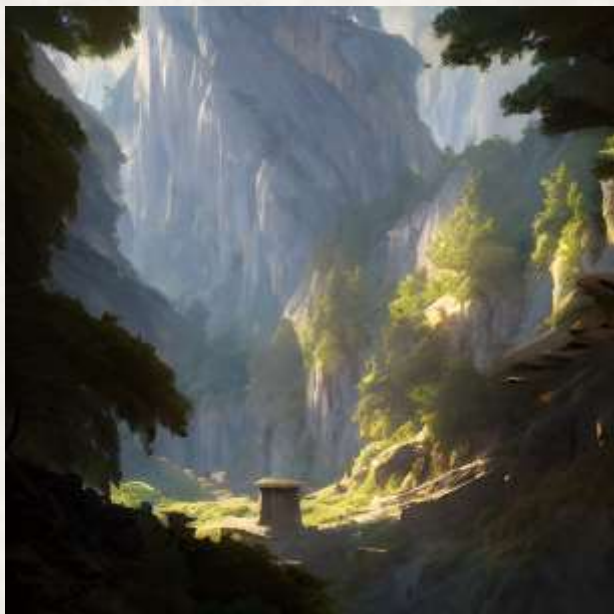
- Tartarus is a hellish underground place of self- and other-annihilation, ranging from endless crowds of despairing people to pits where demonic forces punish people endlessly to chaotic maelstroms that grind everything into nothing. Some parts of the Underworld are like endless labyrinthine caves inhabited by monsters, undead or other horrors rather than the dead themselves. There are secret labyrinths and places of hiding of ancient powers that not even the gods know much about.
- The Warrior's Islands: a land of conflict, said to be both a punishment and reward for fighting. The more pleasant parts are an endless cheerful contest, the worse parts neighbour Tartarus and punish violence with more violence.

There are ways from the world of the living to the other places. A few are well known, like the volcano in Argeleia that leads straight to Tartarus. It is said that some of the Namnetes know the secret of how to sail to the Warrior's Islands.

Clerics can check a soul's current destination, giving useful advice for changing it.

Kings and nobles can use resurrection or reincarnation magic to stay alive – of course, the bad ones are more motivated, producing some undead rulers. Agêtôr frowns on this, and often tries to encourage their downfall – but indirectly, since direct interventions would allow Aïdôneus to counterattack. A bit of magical life extension is fine.

Resurrection magic has a dark price since it involves trading with Aïdôneus: even without other divine disfavour overdoing it tends to bring the shades of the underworld into the land, gradually corrupting it. Plus, the sacrifices involved are often excessive.



## MELAM



The gods have primal power (“melam” in ancient terminology), making them invulnerable to mortal weapons and magic. They can harm each other with enough effort, but no mortal can unless they allow it.

Humans encountering melam experience it (unless it is hidden) as a terrifying feeling (“ni” in the ancient language). Divine things, like their nectar and ambrosia, or spilt ichor, are filled with melam and can perform wonders. Sorcerers are greatly interested in acquiring them.

## DIVINELY EMPOWERED MAGIC

The most powerful magic involves seeking out divine melam and using it. This is exceedingly dangerous – the gods tend to dislike it, yet some of the more plotting ones sometimes allow humans to steal some of their power to act as deniable catspaws.

Spells powered by melam can penetrate normal spells. In the rare cases where gods are wounded their ichor is filled with melam, and where it is spilt wonders happen.

Sorcerers trying to steal power from the gods also have a tendency to get warped by their misuse of it. Over time they become less human and more monstrous. It is said that some sorcerers have become immortal by being so corrupted the Underworld does not want anything to do with them.

However, gods can sometimes empower the magic of loyal mortals. This is most common for clerics, but has happened with mortal sorcerers. Usually this comes in the form of a divine gift of an object containing melam, or sometimes a divine artefact.



# MAGIC (MAGEIA)

*The woman was visibly nervous when she tried her rambling explanation of how she needed a philtre to “strengthen her marriage”. The figure in the shadows nodded, then leered. “My dear, I can certainly give you the philtre you ask for... but the price will include truth between us. I can see you heart flaming from here. You do not truly want the philtre; you want revenge on your rival.” The shocked silence, the immediate move to leave that was interrupted by a chilling thought, and the slow resigned turning back told the entire story of the affair. “I command Agos, Ara, and Euche. I can make figurines to bathe in blood or lead tablets to drown in certain springs. Pharmaka for more permanent solutions... I can make her pay. For a price.” The leering sharpened.*

**M**agic and magicians are held in low esteem – a mix of it being linked to dark forces, used for bad purposes, and often being fraudulent. There is however no neat distinction from priestly magic and religious practices: they also often sell amulets and curses.

Much magic involves special tools like wands, amulets (periapta), figurines (including kolossoi voodoo-dolls), herbs, and songs. Curse-prayers (epoidai) are important parts of verbal magic. Many magic-users make money by fashioning curse tablets (katadesmoi), enhancing drugs and deadly poisons (pharmaka), or love potions (philtre). Protective amulets and objects are known as phylacteries, while talismans bring good luck. While most people would never reveal possession of the earlier mentioned kinds of objects, these are fairly acceptable although typically hidden under symbols for some suitable civic god.

Using sorcery is criminal in most poleis, and can easily lead to a witch-hunt in rural areas. What constitutes illegal, destructive sorcery and mere everyday superstition or religious observance varies.

## DIVINE INTERESTS

*A Chiosian astrologer cast a sick boy's horoscope. After promising the mother that the child had many years ahead of him, he demanded payment. When she said, "Come tomorrow and I'll pay you," he objected: "But what if the boy dies during the night and I lose my fee?"*

*A man, just back from a trip abroad, went to a Chiosian fortune-teller. He asked about his family, and the fortune-teller replied: "Everyone is fine, especially your father." When the man objected that his father had been dead for ten years, the reply came: "You have no clue who your real father is."*

Clerical magic draws directly on the power of the gods. Most gods have their own domains and users of magic often acknowledge them in arcane spells (e.g., Zêrunthia in healing and Mainalios in nature-related spells).

However, independent arcane magic is under the influence of Aïdôneus, oracular magic under Ar, and luck under Anaireus. Non-clerical magic is *always* drawing on the powers of the dark gods even if used for good purposes. Sorcerers hence tend to be drawn towards the side of Tartarus, and proper people shun them.

The power of real magic is significant, but overdoing it is risky since the gods may become involved. A sorcerer trying to conquer the world might run into Agêtôr or Laossoos – subtlety often wins in the end. Many of the most powerful mages instead seek to quietly work in the shadows, leaving the drama for the naïve or their catspaws.

Aïdôneus is the lord of death, but is not entirely averse to undeath. The more death is present in the world of the living, the stronger he becomes. This is why most clerics try to push back the undead to their right place. As Aïdôneus Polydegmon (“He who receives many”) he is the god of an orderly transition from life to death and is invoked to prevent departed ones from haunting the living. As Aïdôneus Chthonios (lord of the underworld) he decides who gets to leave the underworld. This includes resurrection: even divine magic resurrecting somebody has to pay a price to him, which is why the gods are cautious about it: he always comes to collect in the end.

Nature magic is tied to Mainalios. While not necessarily dependent on the truly dark gods, to most people the difference is minor – Mainalios is not a civic god after all. There is also a deep link between life magic and death.





## MAGICAL THINGS AND SUBSTANCES



The tavern keeper Demetrios and his wife were busy serving food to the side table while the men were gambling at the main table; they had a feeling that the quiet stranger sitting aside was important, and he certainly had money to spare.

"Dog's ears again!" one of the men shouted in anguish. "Apuleios, why are you so lucky?" Apuleios shrugged with a smile.

The stranger quietly rose, walked over to him and took something from his clothing before he could respond. "Hmm... isn't this a lyngurium stone?" Apuleios rose in anger to strike him, but the other gamblers recognized the thing and began shouting angrily. The stranger quietened them with a gesture, oddly compelling. "Apuleios, as a dedicated gambler this trick disgusts me. Why don't we play a game just the two of us? No tricks, no tools, just luck." Apuleios looked in horror at the god and silently nodded. He knew he had no choice.

### SUBSTANCES

These substances are often hard to find: witches, sorcerers and other seekers of the occult have to search far and wide for them.

**Adamant:** the hardest of all metals, said to be the only kind that can harm or bind gods.

**Aglaophotis:** A herb from the peony family said to be able to drive out demons from bodies. Comes in jars as a crimson powder of dried petals, which when ingested or blown at someone possessed by anything acts a dismissal caused by [Protection from Evil and Good](#).

**Alexipharmaka:** anti-dotes, various substances to stop poisons or other misfortunes.

**Asphodel:** a plant beloved by the dead, who desire it. If shown to them, they must succeed at a DC 15 Wisdom save to ignore it. If failed, they will approach it and if

offered a taste try to fulfil a command. If they do not get it afterwards, they will attack.

**Batrachite:** Toadstone, a gem-like stone formed within the head of certain toads. When worn it protects against poisoning, giving advantage on saving rolls against poison. This causes the stone to heat up, sweat and change colour, losing its power.

**Helleboros:** A cure for madness. When ingested it acts as a lesser restoration against mind magic, madness or mental conditions.

**Ichor:** the blood of the gods. In demigods it still looks like blood, but full divinities have ichor that is golden light. A very powerful spell ingredient. If spilt it will usually soon transform what it is spilt on, creating new kinds of plants, precious stones, or sacred sites depending on what it hits.

**Lotus Tree fruit:** a fruit that makes people pleasantly drowsy and fulfilled.

**Lykoktonon:** a poison particularly deadly for wolves, werewolves and other shapeshifters. If made into a weak tea it gives advantage to controlling lycanthropy, but if ingested a full dose does 3d6 damage (half if make a CON save) and gives the poisoned condition for 24 hours for anybody, and 6d6 damage to lychanthropes.

**Lyngurium stones:** attracts objects. Said to be the solidified urine of a lynx, and hence associated with Aïdôneus. When used as part of magical rituals, gives a +1 bonus to success.

**Mad Honey:** honey from beehives that have collected nectar and pollen from rhododendron plants. It is poisonous, but taken in small doses it causes visions suitable for divination. Sacred to Ar.

**Miasma:** magical pollution, material (such as wrongly spilt or menstrual blood) or just the past presence of impure magic (e.g. necrotic) that must be purified away.

**Moly:** A rare plant with a black root and white flower that blocks magic. By ingesting it one gains advantage on saving rolls against magical effects.





**Nectar and ambrosia:** the drink and food of the gods.

Infused with melam. Mortals who eat and drink it will be healed and healthy, as well as finding mortal food and drink tasteless or crude afterwards.

**Orichalcos:** red-golden metal mined in the high mountains of Sardowia said to be able to block or amplify magic.

**Thêriaka:** name for poisons that can be ingested in small doses, building immunity. By performing a long, risky and expensive (1000 gp) sequence of theriaka treatments a person can gain resistance to poison, or (it is said) by performing even more extreme rituals and blood sacrifices to Aidioneus, full immunity.

## MAGICAL ITEMS

*Queen Theraephone divorced her husband king Oeceus of Noria and moved to her father, king Agelaus of Marvia. They demanded her dowry back, and Oeceus refused. Agelaus began a war against Noria. Facing increasing trouble and having used the dowry for other purposes, king Oeceus offered another treasure: a magical golden sword. Oeceus accepted, and henceforth became known as Oeceus Chrysaor.*

### AGALMATA

*Wondrous item, common*

Statues of the gods with open eyes and moveable limbs, often of clay. While mostly used as elaborate poseable statues in temples they can be animated like golems or possessed by divine spirits.

- The agalmaton acts as a [Sacred Statue](#) that can be animated by a divine [Eidolon](#) (larger ones may have stats as clay, stone or iron golem).
- A cleric of the temple can cast [Animate Object](#) on the agalmaton even if it is not on their spell list.

### CURSE TABLET (KATADESMOS)



*Wondrous item, common to legendary*

A curse tablet, katadesmos, is a small lead tablet with a curse written on it. When a victim's name is written on it and it is buried or dropped in a body of water, the curse activates.

- The tablet acts as the spell [Bestow Curse](#).
- Depending on the level of the tablet the duration increases: common tablets trigger next time the victim and the curser meet, uncommon for a minute when certain conditions are met (e.g. when the victim is trying to fight), rare for 8 hours, very rare a day, and legendary are permanent.
- The curse becomes one level stronger if the curser signs it with his own name.

### INCENSE OF MEMORY WARPING

*Wondrous item, rare*

When lit with the right incantations the poppy incense fills the room with dreamlike haze that allows the user to manipulate the memories of one or more people who are breathing it.

- Acts as a [Modify Memory](#) spell.

### CANDLE OF HEXING

*Wondrous item, rare*

A dark candle made from wax from bee-hives grown in corpses, inscribed with dire invocations. When lit while watching a creature, a [hex](#) spell begins and runs until the candle burns out. If the candle is blown out it stops, but will restart if lit again.

### BAG OF THE WINDS

*Wondrous item, rare*

An ox-hide bag tied together with an elaborate knot. When loosened, it releases a wind.

- For the next 12 hours the wind will come from the direction opposite of the one it was opened. If it was opened briefly and with a small opening it will be a sail-friendly breeze, if open wide it will be a storm and act as the [Gust of Wind](#) spell.
- If opened and turned inside out all winds escape, triggering a hurricane.
- The weather only lasts 24 hours.
- The bag has 4 charges, after which it becomes a normal bag.

### SOULTRAP BREASTPLATE

*Armour, rare. Requires attunement (achieved by wearing it in battle)*

A large breastplate. On the inside a pattern of lead spells out ψάλα. It always feels cool to the touch, and listening closely to it hints at someone mumbling. Faces reflected in the plate appear as a different, anguished face.

- There is a ghost bound inside the breastplate; any mind- or soul-affecting spells will first affect the ghost rather than the wearer. Attempts to possess or control will affect the ghost. It can absorb 45 points of psychic damage before the ghost goes temporarily dormant.
- The ghost will also provide darkvision if the wearer does not have it.
- If the wearer is incapacitated or killed, their body/corpse will be possessed by the ghost. Were the armour to be destroyed, the ghost will be set free.
- Works as normal breastplate armour, AC 14 + Dex modifier (max 2)

### BAG OF SKELETONS

*Wondrous Item, uncommon*

A simple cloth bag containing teeth. When thrown on the ground they grow up into skeletons, acting as if you had created them with the [Animate Dead](#) spell. Once all the teeth are used up the item is no more. When found it contains 1d6 teeth.

## THE JAR OF LAUGHTER



*Wondrous Item, uncommon*

A jar of laughter. Each creature that opens the jar hears cacophonous voices laughing maniacally and must resist its magic (WIS save, DC 15) or have their own laugh stolen. For 1d6+1 days, a creature with a stolen laugh is morose and depressed, unable to laugh, emotionally and mentally fatigued. A restoration spell can return them to normal early.

If the jar is broken, all the laughter escapes and acts as an area-effect version of Tasha's Hideous Laughter on all creatures within 30 feet. The spell save DC is 8 + number of stolen laughs.

## BREASTPLATE OF KALAX

*Wondrous Item, unique (Requires attunement by wearing it in battle) [This is currently in the Valley of the Birds]*

A filigreed bronze breastplate sacred to Laossoos – it once belonged to a great hero Kalax near the dawn of history, now remembered only in the celestial city.

The breastplate can whisper warnings against cowardice and support for bravery. +2 to WIS rolls for resisting doing the less brave choice, and gives advantage on saving throws against becoming frightened.

## CIRCLET OF ZAMAMA

*Wondrous Item, very rare (requires attunement by performing a sacrifice to Laossoos)*

A bronze circlet with garnets. It holds a **Harm** spell that heals undead: once a day it can heal 14d6 HP – if the wearer is undead: a living wearer instead takes it as damage.

It can also be placed on the head of a willing person to turn them one of the guardian undead of Laossoos. The type depends on their own class, level and divine will.

## RING OF AXIOCERCUS

*Wondrous item (ring), rare, requires attunement by eating flesh. [This item is currently in the Valley of the Birds]*

You have resistance to fire damage while wearing this bronze ring set with garnet stones. However, each use

requires recharging by eating flesh of an intelligent humanoid: each meal gives one more use.

## HELMET OF AMYNTOR



*Armor (helmet), unique [This item is currently in the Valley of the Birds]*

*Meriones caught him quickly, running him down hard and speared him low in the right buttock – the point pounding under the pelvis. Jabbed and pierced the bladder – he dropped to his knees, screaming, death swirling round him.*

–Homer, The Iliad, Book 5, lines 72–75 (Tr. Fagles)

An ancient bronze helmet. The Helmet of Amyntor was touched by the Erinyes when Amyntor cursed his own son Phoenix, and was later stolen by Autolycus and worn by Meriones. It is a helmet of bad omen that makes attacks more deadly at the price of gore and embarrassment. The wearer scores a critical hit with weapons on a 19 besides 20.

When a critical hit is made, the wound occurs in an embarrassing, horrifying, or disgusting way, making the victim and wearer lose honour. This temporarily increases the DC of friendly Charisma checks in social interactions with witnesses by +5 for each horrible wound, as they recall the grisly sight. Once the check has been made the DC returns to normal for those witnesses.

A warrior regularly using the helmet may however find themselves acquiring an unsavoury reputation as stories and jokes about their fights spread.

## GOLDEN APPLE

*Wondrous item, legendary*



Far, far away there grows a wonderful tree with golden fruit. It is guarded by a dragon and minor goddesses, for the fruit is most troublesome.

- Anybody seeing a golden apple needs to succeed with a DC 20 WIS save or madly desire to have it. They can reroll each time it is out of sight.
- The apples will keep fresh forever, but are utterly delicious to eat and are potent magical components.

## THE OUROBOROS RING



Ring, legendary artefact

Fashioned by Ar, it is a dark metal ring shaped like a snake biting its own tail. Wearing it gives a strange sense of déjà-vu and fleeting visions. Wearers are moving through the world guided by destiny. It is said that the ring will tend to guide wearers to exactly the place Ar wants them to be.

- Each dawn the wearer rolls a d20, noting the result: this roll will come up as the result of a PC roll during the day *either* when the player decides to use it, or when the DM decides. If the DM decrees a use, the next day the roll is now a result that will apply to a DM roll. The effect passes back and forth between the player and DM whenever one forces the other to roll. As long as they use their own rolls it remains under their control.
- It can only be destroyed by surprise: something needs to happen to it that no man nor god had foreseen.

## THE KIBISIS

*Wonderous item, legendary artefact [This item is currently in the Ark of Aex]*

The Kibisis is a sack with two carrying straps, closed by a golden rope. It can hold any kind of force or monster. It was made by Aex as a unique tool handy for monster-hunting and disaster-averting for the gods or their agents. It might not be empty when found...

Unlike the Bag of Holding it superficially looks similar to, this bag has an interior space indefinitely larger than its outside dimensions. When closed no time passes on the inside. By pulling the rope in the right way the opening can also be made larger (about one foot wider per action for mortals). When extended enough, it can capture dragons or hurricanes.

The bag weighs 15 pounds, regardless of its contents. Retrieving an item from the bag requires an action. It can be closed as a reaction if the user knows what to expect.

The bag cannot be destroyed by non-divine force. It is still fairly worthless as armour against weapons since it moves with impacts, but it makes a good barrier against things like a dragon's fire breath or an incoming spell as long as the opening points towards the source (and anybody so foolish so as to try to strike somebody hiding behind an extended Kibisis might well find that it closes around them). The divine nature of the Kibisis means it ignores all the restrictions on bag of holding, portable holes and similar items: they can be stored perfectly fine inside, while if the Kibisis is inserted into them they will be destroyed with no harm to the Kibisis.

Only Aex knows the secret of how to destroy the Kibisis.

## NECKLACE OF HARMONIA

*Wonderous item, legendary artefact (requires attunement by wearing it at a formal function, such as at court or a religious ceremony) [This is currently in the Ark of Aex]*

This is an exquisite necklace, golden and with sparkling gems. It is shaped as an amphisbaena with the two snake heads set with emeralds and rubies holding a four-winged eagle made of semiprecious stones. There is a distinct air of beauty and perfection surrounding it, making the wearer stand out.

- It bestows health and longevity. Wearing it prevents ageing, and it provides a [Lesser Restoration](#) each day. It also prevents the wearer from getting dirty.
- It also gives +1 CHA. Wearers do stand out as more regal, charming or interesting.
- Cursed: it is also designed to give great misfortune. Tragedy will befall anybody attuned to the necklace, whether by family deaths, betrayal, or madness. The exact way is unpredictable, but fate *will* bring disaster once attuned.

The necklace was made by the god of crafts as a wedding gift to Harmonia, the offspring of his wife's infidelity. She, being of divine blood, merely was eventually polymorphed into the first Yuan-ti. Later wearers have been much less fortunate. Some, like Semele, were tricked into seeing a god's true form and were annihilated. Some, like Jocasta, unknowingly married her own son and committed suicide when she found out. Eriphyle succeeded in persuading her husband to go to war, only for it to lead to the death of him, her, and their sons. The mistress of Phayllus went mad and set fire to herself and her house.

It can only be destroyed by the god of crafts if he has forgiven his wife.

## THE ADAMANTINE SICKLE

*Weapon, legendary artefact, requires attunement (raising the sickle to the sky and declaring one's intention to use it)*

An exceedingly sharp sickle made of dark flint-like metal. It is a divine weapon intended to harm gods and the greatest monsters. In legends it has forced major gods to retreat, slain dragons and performed many other feats. Wielded by Agêtôr during the battles at the dawn of myth it has also been temporarily lent to great and trustworthy heroes on worthy quests, but always returned to the goddess Aex for safekeeping. This is an artefact even the gods fear.

- This weapon ignores *all* damage immunities and resistances, including divine immunity.

- Being divine, it also ignores *all* non-divine armour, protective spells and similar.
- Conversely, non-divine magic cannot affect or locate it.
- It can also cut through magic, acting as a divinely cast level 10 **dispel magic** (always wins over mortal magic).
- It can hit creatures on the Ethereal Plane as well as the material plane.
- Acts otherwise as a **normal +3 magical weapon**.
- It can only be destroyed by the forge that created it aeons ago, a forge that has long since been destroyed.

The sickle itself is totally inert, but so powerful that a mortal wielder will be permanently affected in some way (roll for one minor – or major if the contact was long – beneficial and one detrimental **property**). This effect can be removed by a god casting **Greater Restoration**.

## THE CLAY OF HUMANITY

*Wonderous item, legendary artefact [This is currently in the Ark of Aex]*

A pithos (ceramic jar) about as high as a man, richly ornamented with carvings showing the creation of humanity by the gods. Inside is red clay that replenishes itself when used.

This is the clay used by the gods to create humanity and other races. If sculpted into something the sculptor can breathe life into it, and it becomes a real living being. The being will eat, grow and behave according to the nature the creator has given it. It is not a construct but actual life.

There is in principle no limit to what can be done with the clay, except for two problems. First, to make the life truly permanent and ensouled a small amount of actual divine power needs to be breathed into the creation or otherwise added to the clay. Otherwise, it will not last, and after a few generations the clay beings will start to degenerate and die out.

The second problem is that to create a quality being the creator needs to have a detailed vision that is sculpted properly. The creator rolls an Intelligence check

(proficiency with pottery helps!) and the result divided by three gives the typical ability score for the beings. Rolling a 1 means there is some subtle flaw in the creation that will come out later. A natural 20 gives them extra blessings or powers in line with the intentions of the creator.







*The Arcadian or Pastoral State, 1836, by Thomas Cole*

## COSMOS: THE WORLD

*“Do you see the Peacock, boy?” The old man pointed to a colourful group of stars near the horizon. The young man was less interested in them than thoughts of the upcoming festival and a chance to spot the beautiful Elpinice. Still, remembering the earlier beating he dutifully acknowledged.*

*“When the Peacock rises fully, it hails the new year. Then we only need to wait for a full moon and it is Enarxia. Remember that. This is how we know the right time to celebrate in our polis.”*

*“Reios said the Dymesians use the Bat Warrior.” The old man turned, equally annoyed and impressed by the impertinence. “Yes. Over there the Peacock rises much later and is less colourful. And in Canoria, I have been told, it is not even present. We see it because princess Sora died here, on Enarxia even. So be careful when hunting princesses at the festival, boy. Now, list the signs for Thesmophoria!”*

## LAWS OF NATURE

*What was was ever, and ever shall be. For, if it had come into being, it needs must have been nothing before it came into being. Now, if it were nothing, in no wise could anything have arisen out of nothing.*

Melissus of Samos, Fragment 1

The world floats in the infinite sea Panthalassa. Scholars believe that there are other lands out beyond the furthest horizon, but explorers rarely return. Some have amazing

stories about monsters, sunken lands seen through the sea, and mysterious places, others just warn of madness and thirst.

In the sky the sun and the moon, giant balls of hot and cold fire that hurtle ahead as ordained by the gods. During the night, stars form constellations that travellers report change shape as one travels in any direction. Astrologers interpret their shapes and where the moving planets appear.

Below the surface lie the cave systems leading into the labyrinthine underworld. Some parts are the dark reaches of the dead, while others are the frightening chaos of Tartaros where Typhon and monsters live.

Above the world is the celestial city, perhaps built on a mountaintop somewhere or literally floating on the clouds. Beyond the normal reaches are realms like the Warrior Islands, Arcadia and other hidden places. They are vast and uncharted, and the normal world is far larger than any human knows.

Elements are alive. This is most noticeable for fire: since domesticated fire is well-behaved in the hearth. Newly made fire is wild, and burns far less reliably. Taking fire from disastrous fires like volcanos, blazes or funeral pyres produces dangerous fire eager to harm. The same is true for water: water from some rivers is far more wild or nutritious than from others, depending on who the local river god is. Air in some regions heal, while in other places it spreads illness.

Simple life spontaneously generates. Dust turns into fleas, dead meat into maggots, warm muddy water into fish, warm moist air into plant seeds.

The weather is caused by the churning of Panthalassa, and the movement of the sun and moon. It is said that some places on the world are so far from the churning that the weather is always the same, but this is just a rumour.



## HISTORY

The world has always existed and will always exist, but knowledge about the remote past is extremely limited.

There are stories about a remote era of darkness and death that was overcome. While many ascribe it to the rise of the civic gods, some ancient poems also hint that Anaireus the Rebel helped them bring back fire into the world, rekindling the sun with volcanic eruptions.

Other stories tell of an archaic era when the world was wild and uncivilized. There were no kings except the river gods, animals would talk, strange races roamed the forested continents and the seas were filled with marine spirits. Mainalios and Laossoos playfully pitted species against each other, and Rharias (or in some versions Zêrunthia) won an upset by creating humanity out of sacred clay.

In ancient times the Rhomaioi ruled much of the world. It was a golden age when wisdom and magic were strong. But the herb/crop silphion that sustained the Rhomaioi stopped growing; famines set in. The great republic became riven by demagogues and mob rule,

disintegrating into kingdoms. Other people than the Rhomaioi took over, beginning the era of recorded time.

For a long time, the sea nations were the glimmers of civilization, sailing between the outlying islands around Hesperos and Notus while forests grew over the ruins.

Modern history starts with the Code of Tenedos, laid down by Tenedos of Pteia when he ascended as king and later was deified as god of the sea. Hesperos was gradually civilized as the sea nations brought the wild interior under control, although Cythosia and the mountains are still barbaric and much of the land ravaged by monsters.

The ancient nation of Norarvia ruled the north but was riven by intrigue and family feuds, splintering into Noria and Marvia. In recent years the kingdom of Mesia has risen in the west, unifying many disparate poleis under the kings of Cannoria.







## GEOGRAPHY

*And now, tell me and tell me true. Where have you been wandering, and in what countries have you travelled? Tell us of the peoples themselves, and of their cities--who were hostile, savage and uncivilised, and who, on the other hand, hospitable and humane.*

—Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book VIII (tr. Samuel Butler)

The main continent is **Hesperos**, with the smaller continent **Notus** to the south of the South Sea and **Bidia** to the east, beyond the East Sea. Notus, the East Sea islands and Bidia are wet and humid, covered with jungles and swamps. Hesperos is dryer, with forests and plains around the periphery and a dry interior with mountains surrounding the steppes of Cythosia.

The three great powers are the Mesian, Norian and

Chiosian kingdoms. Their claim to greatness is largely based on each containing one of the Grand Temples: Avon in Mesia, the Temple of Koruphasia in Ambona (Noria), and the Spire of Zêrunthia in Dymesos (Chiosian). These temples are not just ancient, said to have been built by the gods after the collapse of the Rhomaioi, but also places where they commonly visit.

Hence the saying “Mesians are always at home, Norians always wise, and Chiosians always in love”. Less charitable views are that the Mesians think everything belongs to them, the Norians think they know everything, and the Chiosians think everybody loves them. Together the kingdoms and their spheres of influence is known as the Hesperian Oecumene.

## MESIA

*Agésilas asked for the hand of Anaxarete, but was rebuffed by her family. He got into a fight with her brother Chionis, killing him. This made the rest of the family set after him. He*



*grabbed Anaxarete and rode away on his chariot, pursued by the others. As they were gaining on him, he threw Anaxarete off the chariot, hoping it would slow them down. But Atheradas continued the pursuit, and eventually Agesilaus miscalculated and his chariot went over the shore cliffs and he plunged to his death. It is said that Canoria was founded at the spot: Atheradas became its first king.*

Mes, or Mesia is the western of the major powers. It came about a long time ago as various city-states formed the Mesian League and gradually submitted to the rule of the king of Canoria. Local poleis still have a fair bit of independence, although during the current period they may want to be careful about how independent they are.

Mesia is ruled from the port city Canoria. It is a bustling, fortified city with a well-kept temple to Agêtôr headed by the respected high priest Dio Chrysostom. King **Churii Agélastos** is infamous for his seriousness and lack of humour. He is an authoritarian warrior-king bent on expanding the kingdom with his oldest son Demetrius Monophthalmos at his side. The Mesian fleet is centred on the feared warship Machomai, the pride of the citizens of Canoria.

The “free” city of **Vindiga** is a vassal, a staging point for attempts at outflanking and out-trading Cebreia. This only came about because of support from Norian traders, but has been sealed by the marriage of Queen Philomena from Mesia to King Agosoos. Her son Samarion is a promising young athlete she is grooming for a political career.

Politically Mesia is allied with the Norian kingdom, mainly against their mutual enemy of the hordes of Cythosia and Aphia. Chiosia, Athia and Nasia are long-running trade rivals. Mesia is attempting to conquer

Tremia, which in turn has hired Cythosian mercenaries.

Embedded inside Mesia is the holy city-state of **Avon**. This is where Rharias spends the Year of Mercy, bringing in pilgrims from far and wide. Mesia officially protects the city-state, and this is one of the few rules even the Cythosians respect. Avon in return keeps out of politics, content to be its own little theocracy.

### OTHER POLEIS OF NOTE IN MESIA

**Verigacum** in the south benefits from an ancient fortress on a large plateau, some miles north of the harbour city below and connected by walled thoroughfare safe from pirate attacks. The ancient Rhomaoi name is less used than the nickname Verion.

**Aemonoria** and **Duloverno** are other southern harbour poleis, lacking the same defences and often raided by pirates. Duloverno is also a border polis abutting the Kingdom of Hia.

East of Cannoria and south of Avon is **Etonacia Mat**, guarding against Cythosian intrusions and center for agricultural trade in the eastern central plains.

**Bracum** and **Cemeba** are minor fishing and trading towns along the coast northeast of Cannoria. The joke about Bracum is that if the world ended it would not get the news until a month later.

**Lincum** lies along the main road through Mesia amidst three hills (said to have been erected by Agêtôr as a bet against Mainalios) in the large forests of middle Mesia.

Further north lies minor towns like **Ibruae**, **Boduraber**, **Vijodunodu**, and **Paleli**. This is a poor land, in the past suffering much from Cythosian incursions. North lies the fertile, richer, and important **Calbium** valley, site of a fortified city and defences against the hordes in the key mountain pass. The minor poleis **Inverdenver** is the ancestral home of the rulers of Inverdenveria far to the south; to this day they claim it.

West of the Calbium valley is the coastal polis





**Selorum**, near the independent city-state Tremia.

Northwestern Mesia has a notably different dialect, influenced by ancient Rhomaioi and its inhabitants often seeming more Moconian than Mesian. The poleis **Lauterolum**, **Rigarorum** and **Laugusa** lie along the coast and have traders daring the passage across the sea west to Arkitia, a large island. In the interior **Covioborum** abuts the Tremian mountains and is an important source of metals, while small agricultural poleis **Belu Re**, **Sirsagus**, **Adriara**, **Gegulbium**, **Aberurum** lie on the swampy Sirs plain. The border towns towards Getia, **Tretonimb** and **Inve**, have a peculiar local culture due to settled Cythosians mixing with the locals.

## NORIA

*The Norian king was touring the kingdom, when he noticed a man in the crowd who bore a striking resemblance to himself. Intrigued he asked: "Was your mother at one time in service at the Palace?" "No, your Highness," he replied, "but my father was."*

Noria is the northernmost nation of Hesperos, often claiming to be the rightful heirs of the Rhomaioi (whose mythical capital is said to have been located somewhere in Noria).

Noria used to dominate the North and central Hesperos far more; over the years it has lost many provinces to rebellions. Unlike expansionist Mesia it has accepted defeat gracefully: even when Marvia split off due to the disastrous Duumvirate of the sons of Anthromeus the ill-will was forgotten within a generation, even though diplomats have never succeeded in healing the rift or reunite the royal families.

The Norian royal family is somewhat infamous for its vast web of marriage alliances... and indiscretions. They trace their ancestry back to Laossoos via his son Suidas (do not call him Suidas the Traitor inside the kingdom!)

Noria is allied with Marvia and Nasia, as well as Mesia. At least for the moment: its politics is fickle.

The main enemy is the Aphian horde, constantly threatening the southern borders. There is also an ancient quarrel with Sardowia from the era when Noria held it.

The ruins of the Rhomaioi city of Methymna in northwestern Noria mark the site of a great battle between the Rhomaioi and the Cythosians. The city was sacked and destroyed, and the Rhomaioi were forced to retreat. The Cythosians did not pursue, and the Rhomaioi were able to regroup and eventually drive the Cythosians out of Noria. Today the ruins remain an ancient monument, symbolic of the battle against barbarism. In the east lies the infamous Desmoterium, a vast prison where the empire used to keep people locked up for some reason: it is haunted by the worst kind of spirits and undead. There are also many other ancient ruins scattered around the land, some inhabited by troublesome monsters.

The capital is Ambona, site of the Temple of Koruphasia. While its reputation as a home of wisdom may be exaggerated it is a city of learning, polite arts, and skilled lawyers. There are also many mystery cults present, supported by the aristocracy.

*If you are fond of learning, you will soon be full of learning.*

Isocrates, *To Demonicus* 18



Thomas Cole, *The Consummation of Empire* (1836)

## MARVIA

Marvia is culturally similar to Noria (they once were a single kingdom Nomarvia). It is ruled by a splintered aristocracy and suffers from frequent coups and intrigue.

Marvia holds a temple to Ar Panoptes (“the all-seeing”), famous for its oracles. There are many other famous temples in the region, some mere ruins, others active centres of pilgrimage.

## THE CHIOSIAN TYRANNY

*A Chiosian is dreaming that he is selling a pig and he is asking 100 denarii for it. Someone is offering 50 but he won't take it. At that point, he wakes up. Then keeping his eyes shut, he holds out his hands and says “Oh well, give me the 50”.*

Chiosia is trade oriented, as interested in gold and luxury as in maintaining trade power around the Southern Sea. It lies on the south-eastern coast of Hesperos, surrounding a vast bay.

Chiosia is ruled by the Tyrant. Upon ascension to the throne ages past he had all inscriptions of his name erased. Since then, he has ruled, kept immortal by magic and (so it is said) exotic herbs imported from the world. Or maybe he is not human. Or alive. While potentially terrifying – people still talk about the example he made of Thurestias a century ago – he mostly keeps things running by gifts, and the fear that without him Chiosia would collapse into anarchy.

The capital Dymesos is a bustling harbour city, dominated by the Spire of Zêrunthia. Every 12 years she visits – sometimes briefly, sometimes holding court for the entire year – drawing massive pilgrimages. Even in off-years the priesthood has a bustling business healing and advising people. Dymesos is likely the most populous city on the continent. It is cross-roads for people from the entire world and trade in every kind of goods – non-human slaves, metals, stories, magical jewels, and eastern pigments.

Chiosian laws are strict but fair. Literacy is banned for

slaves and the lowest level of citizens, theft and fraud dealt with harshly, violence suppressed by the fearsome guards. Cases of rape and other “crimes against love” are handed over to the guards of the Spire (“the dogs of splendor”) for clerical judgement and punishment; while sometimes understanding of victims of circumstances, they also have punishments that make the Tyrant look mild.

Chiosia maintains friendly relations to most nations, preferring to trade rather than conquer. The Principality of Hercy is a close ally. The Mesian and Norian empires would love to break its trade power in the southern seas. Moconia is a competitor, but the Sea King has made a holy pledge to leave the Southern Sea to Chiosia if Chiosia leaves the Eastern Sea to him. So far the pledge has been upheld. However, various pirates may be secretly sponsored by Chiosia.

## OTHER NATIONS AND PLACES

### CYTHOSIA

*It is true that the Cythosians are the bravest of men, for any man of his senses would rather die a thousand times over than live as miserably as they do.*

– Atheneaus of Noria

The hordes of Cythosia and Aphia are widely feared. Living in the desert and steppes in central Hesperia they are tough, warlike, and eager to plunder the surrounding kingdoms – but also to hire themselves out as mercenaries. Cythosia claims to be united behind their High Chieftain, but Aphia staunchly refuses his decrees and claims their Khan is the true High Chieftain.

Outside Cythosia they are known as a race of monstrous, warlike creatures dwelling in the coldest, most inhospitable parts of the world, and their only ambition is to conquer and destroy. Their god Eurypylos encourages this reputation. There are stories that they are secret in thrall to the dread sorcerer-tyrant Thoros (the evil mastermind in many stories). Actual Cythosians laugh at this, and then usually fight whoever said this calumny.





## INVERDENIA

*And the barbarians towards the west smooth their bodies by rubbing them with pitch, and by shaving them.*

Travel report from Arximenes of Dymesos

A mountainous region on the south side of Hesperos. Inverdenians are sometimes known as dollmakers since people have a little doll resembling them on their person, on their bedside table, or at their work place to house their soul if they die until it can be properly sent off at the funeral.

The nobles have long had a complicated feud with Mesian nobility, stemming back to the unhappy marriage of Anaxarete to one of their kings and the resulting dispute over a dowry. Due to geography neither region can seriously threaten each other, but raids sometimes happen.

## HIA

*King Euneus of Hia became so old and feeble that he decided to hold his own funeral. He had a pyre built and was placed on top of it. But he was so loved by people that nobody wanted to set fire to it. Finally Phlegyas relented, and as thanks Euneus handed him his magical shield. The shield had a centre fashioned from crystal, allowing the wearer to see through it. Henceforth it became the symbol of kingship in Hia.*

A forested and hilly peninsula south of Mesia. The shores are marshy and unsuitable for harbours. While calling itself the Kingdom of Hia in practice it is little more than jockeying towns and small cities run by local nobility claiming descent from King Euneus.

The largest polis is Epideia, home to a temple to Agêtôr that houses the Shield of Euneus. The king of Mesia is said to strongly desire the Shield, but would need to acquire it honestly.

## ARGELEIA

*The Argeleians, who live in the regions south of the Great Mountains of Thaos, opened the veins of the forehead and mixed the blood with their wine, believing that tasting each other's blood mixed with the wine, was the highest proof of friendship.*

East of Inverdenia is a very mountainous region with some of the tallest mountains in Hesperos. Many are volcanic and produce devastating eruptions from time to time, sending down landslides, ash and lava towards the coastal plains. As they erode, they produce fertile soils, but the locals know they need to stay on the good side of Anaireus not to be devastated.

There is a great river valley leading north from their lands into Cythosia, and for a long time Cythosians have intermixed with the often warlike Argeleians. They sometimes worship Eurypolos Laossou, and it is a tradition that no man may marry until they bring the severed head of an enemy to their king.

It is said that strange ruins dot the most inaccessible peaks of the mountains, built by long lost kings.

## SARDOWIA

*In Sardowia whilst they were paying the last rites to a distinguished person, a certain one arriving asked the spectators, "Who is the departed?" One of the Sardowians having turned about pointed saying, "He who is lying upon the bier."*

A mountainous, impassable region rich in valuable ores. The capital Vargahtesi abuts the sheer cliffs of the mountains but the Swaford River allows transport down to the sea.

It used to be a vassal of Noria and will never forget the oppression; hence it often helps the enemies of Noria with shipments of metal. It is often allied with the Cythosian hordes and the Argeleians.



The inhabitants are strange, clannish and are said to worship underworld gods. They speak their own unusual language said to have been whispered to them by the rocks themselves, and are matter-of-factly earnest.

## THE KINGDOM OF MOCONIA

*Once the polis of Cordureia, most prosperous of the northern isles, began to fear for its future. They sent a delegation to the temple of Ar Panoptes. The Oracle told them:*

*“You shall be happy, Cordureia, very happy,  
And all your time in entertainments pass,  
While you continue to the immortal gods  
The worship due: but when you come, at length,  
To honour moral man beyond the gods,  
Then foreign war and intestine sedition  
Shall come upon you, and shall crush your city.”*

*The Cordureians were overjoyed by the prophecy, since they knew they would never honour a man more than the gods. But as the oracle had foretold, there was a change of fortune. One day a man was flogging his slave, and continued to flog him when he sought asylum in the temple; but when he fled to the tomb of his father the man at last felt shame and let him go. From that day the polis began to decline, and today it is just a part of the Moconian trade routes.*

Moconia is both a region in northeastern Hesperos and a vast archipelago in the East Sea, trading between the lightly inhabited islands and Bidia further East. While the capital Isusus is on Hesperos, the Sea King rules

from his fleet circulating the East Sea, making it a true thalassocracy.

Moconians are not so much an ethnicity as a sailor culture, with secret tricks for navigating the wide ocean said to have been learned from Tenedos himself. Linked to this are old traditions said to date back to Rhomaioi culture.

The Confederation of **Sero** is under the kingdom's control. The kingdom of **Arkitia** in the furthest west is also an ally, united by daring sailorship and Rhomaioi culture.

## BIDIA

*The mystery of the Bidians is not their barbarous language (caused by their deformed teeth), strange skin colours (caused by eating fruits of a land rich in pigments), or violent rages (caused by the cannibalism of their ancestors). It is why they have not yet driven away the Moconians from their coast.*

Travel report from Arximenos of Dymesos

Beyond the East Sea lies the Kingdom of **Bidia**, dominating that part of the world. The landmass also take name from Bidia, although sometimes it is called the Dawn Lands. The inhabitants are half-orcs, the descendants of the androphagi that once ruled the land.

The splendour of the capital Pasishahr is famous, its inhabitants total sybarites. It is said that even the sea is sweet there, making the seafood fantastically delicious. It is also said that the rulers of Bidia have so exquisitely sensitive skin that they need to sleep on beds made of rose petals.

Its satrapies Rugus, Ralard, Tahte and Dastia support it together with the Yasian Free City. However, the





Satrapy of Qamia recently rebelled. The kingdom of Goran is claimed by Tahte: Bidia is content for the moment to let the satrapy try to conquer the kingdom but regards it as a lost part of the kingdom itself and calmly plans to annex it when Tahte has done the dirty work. In the north lies the kingdom of Jan, yet not subsumed in Bidia but arming itself against its dangerous neighbour. Along the south coast lie regions controlled by Moconia.

The region is a famed source of pigments: vermillion, verdigris, Bidian purple, ultramarine... expensive and worth trading across the seas for.

## THE SOUTH

*It is said that the pirate-queen of Phais, beloved of Pitanasis, swore that she would never marry a man who couldn't defeat her in naval battle. A friend asked: "But my queen, you have sworn that you will never be taken alive in battle." She responded: "Exactly."*

**Bybra** and the other nations south of the South Sea are not just known for their spices, but also for various textiles and leathers. Many have strange not-quite human inhabitants. **Kos**, **Phais** and **Troeia** have fierce female warriors and ruling queens, equally marvellous and terrifying to Hesperians. Bybra is ruled by an ancient lineage of god-kings, said to be wise, just and near-immortal. When the next king is old enough, they duel to the death.

It is said that south of these nations lie further chains of islands, even stranger and more magical.

## BELLONIA

*He could just as well be in Bellonia.*

Traditional saying in Mesia about lazy people.

The Cursed City of Bellonia lies... somewhere. The king of Bellonia challenged the gods, and the gods cursed him and his kingdom to be forever unknown. Their names, location and nature were stricken from the world and the place cannot be found using any deliberate means.



## OTHER GROUPS

Traditional greeting formula in the Cult

### MEMINII

The Meminii are cultured outcasts, at the moment scattered to the four winds. They are recognizable by their pointed ears and beauty. According to their myths they lived on the great island Meminos (sometimes called Omphalos) in the Western Ocean until Typhaon one day sank the island, forcing them to become nomads. They maintain their peculiar culture and live as a minority across the world. Most people see them as pitiable and subtly cursed: if Typhaon wanted them gone, maybe he will return for them?

### TULLINGI

The Tulingi are monstrous savants, at present rotting from within. They worship Aïdôneus and gather secrets. Once they were a grand order of wizards, plying their dark arts around the South and East seas. As their leadership attained immortality, they began elaborate schemes to maintain their power using curses and selling amulets to the rich and mighty. The problem is that their internal intrigue and decadence is growing, making them ever less effective as a collective force, yet individually they are becoming far more deadly and disturbing.

### NAMNETES

Unpredictable messengers, sailors specializing in bringing news, official delegates and other important things from point A to point B – including goods and people not supposed to pass that way. Unlike smugglers and regular sailors Namnetes form a mystery cult teaching the secrets of the Ways. They claim to be worshipping Tenedos the Sailor but there are rumours they deal with the other gods. Some stories say they know how to sail to the hidden islands and otherworlds.

### CULT OF METER

*"The race is on."*

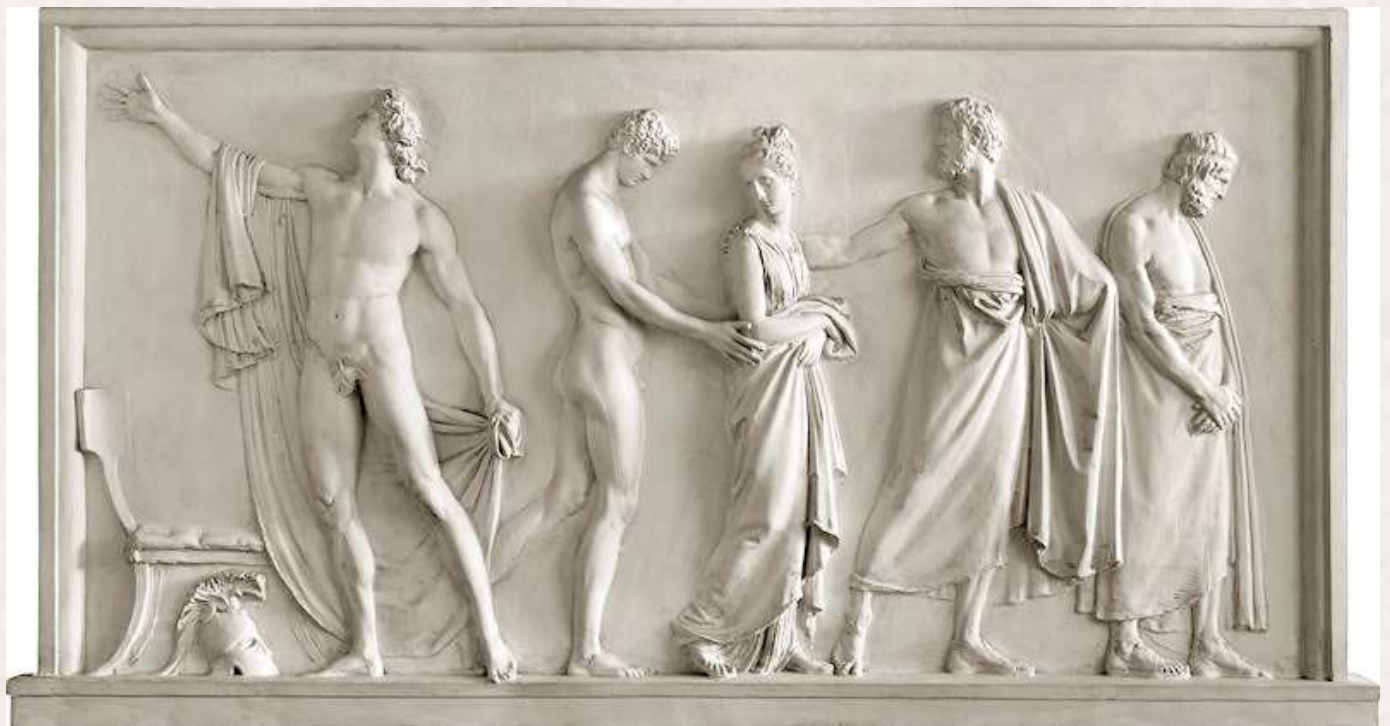
*"May the best win."*

A secretive mystery cult. They worship Pitanatis as the Great Mother, the true parent and protector of mankind, and regard many of the domains of Rharias, Koruphasia, and Zêrunthia as being originally hers. Being greatminded she handed them over to goddesses that later unfairly claimed credit for them. While outwardly performing all proper rites they secretly cultivate the rebellious idea that one day Pitanatis will become the Queen of Heaven after defeating Agêtôr in a fair competition.

### CULT OF MELINOË

*"You know how the priesthood of Zêrunthia can heal with their kisses? There is another cult that can do it too, but the price is high. Down in Lagosia, near the swamp, there is a temple to Melinoë. If you suffer from something incurable, or the love-priests will not deal with you, you can go there and sleep in the temple. The priestesses come to you in your dreams and offer a cure... in exchange for your firstborn. But that is not the worst part. Their... ahem... healing will be the most pleasant experience you ever will experience. Nothing else will compare: no wife, no courtesan will ever come close. How do I know this? My uncle went there and told me. Eventually he went back to them with my cousin and stayed. I heard that he mutilated himself to be healed once again... but neither he nor my cousin was ever seen from that day."*

A shadowy cult worshipping the goddess of nightmares. They perform strange rites to bring people to uneasy sleep in their caves or temples. It is said that the goddess can perform miracles in these dreams – but there is always a high price.





# CULTURE

*A scholar got a slave pregnant. At the birth, his father suggested that the child be killed. The scholar replied: "First murder your own children and then tell me to kill mine."*

Norian joke

## THE POLIS

*It is clear then that a polis is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange. These are conditions without which a polis cannot exist; but all of them together do not constitute a polis, which is a community of families and aggregations of families in well-being, for the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing life. Such a community can only be established among those who live in the same place and intermarry. Hence arise in cities family connections, brotherhoods, common sacrifices, amusements which draw men together. But these are created by friendship, for the will to live together is friendship. The end of the polis is the good life, and these are the means towards it. And the polis is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honourable*

life.

Aristotle, Politics III 9

Hesperos has a roughly Hellenic culture: small kingdoms and city-states. The larger ones usually have a simple democratic government led by the king or other member of the aristocracy; the balance differs between Mesia (a strong, autocratic king), Noria (a weak, bickering aristocracy allowing the citizen assembly to hold most power), and Chiosia (the tyrant rules through manipulation and his deadly army). Each state tends to honour one god in particular, although smaller temples to the others can be found or they are grouped into a pantheon across from the main temples.

Life in the city states is punctuated by the numerous annual festivals honouring the gods. These range from lavish multi-day events with processions, games, bestowing honours on citizens and general merry-making to solemn and mysterious rites for members of particular bloodlines. Sacrifices to the gods are a common part of the rituals, often handled by special religious fraternities.

The temples and religious fraternities are often civic centres of activity, acting as arbitrators, educators and banks. Mystery cults handle more personal spirituality, or the less civic gods. Membership is sometimes proscribed, depending on the polis.

However, most public life happens in and around the agora at the centre of the town. Here trade, athletic training, public debate, official announcements and many ceremonies occur side by side. Often the shrines





and temples are located next to the agora. Larger poleis have elaborate colonnades (stoae) surrounding the agora for meetings protected from sun and weather, while smaller ones merely have an open space for merchants to set up their stalls and youths to train.

People with wealth tend to spread it around in the community, throwing banquets, liturgies or sponsoring festivals, public buildings or warships, gaining recognition and respect. Adding an impressive sundial to the agora can be the start of becoming a respected noble.

Extended families, phratries, and subdivisions, demes, of large cities act as poleis in a polis. Phratries are usually headed by a leading family or tribal father, while demes are led by a demachos who acts as an elected chief magistrate. They manage the shared affairs of the subdivision, arbitrate, perform census etc.

Note that citizens have rights and representation in law: slaves and foreigners do not. Visitors best present themselves to the rulers or find a sponsoring noble or phratry, or they will lack protection. Citizenship is not just a practical issue but a point of immense pride: many festivals commemorate the founding of the polis and the ancestors doing it, with phratries reciting their unbroken ancestry.

## PALATIAL STATES

In some regions an earlier form of government and society remain. The kings performed religious feasts and offerings, and oversaw the distribution of goods. People deliver goods and services to the palace centre, and then it is distributed by the king. Instead of buying goods one negotiates with the king to get what is needed. In Hesperos the most well-known case is Avon.

## TYRANTS AND DESPOTS

*All despots move everywhere as in an enemy's country; at any rate they think they are bound to wear arms continually themselves, and to take an armed escort about with them at all times.*

Xenophon, Hiero

Some places are ruled by people who have come into power by force rather than consent from the citizens. While some are successful in convincing people they provide stability and safety, many just rely on fear and often meet a bad ending. They all look up to the great Tyrant of Chiosia as an example, but his way of rule is far more sophisticated than what the despots can manage.

## COLONIES

Some poleis are overcrowded, want trading posts, or have needs to timber, stone, crops or ores from afar. They have begun to found colonies overseas to supply them. This is especially true for Chiosia that has started colonies in the Eastern and Southern Sea.

Colonies are often seen by citizens as a chance to advance one's position by becoming one of the founders, but the risks are high. Many colonies have been destroyed by pirates, pestilence, monsters or infighting.

Colonies can also be a place of exile or refuge, a way for former citizen to still remain connected to their polis.

When a colony is to be founded an *oikistes* is chosen to lead. This person is invested with the power of selecting a settling place, directing the initial labours of the colonists and guiding the fledgling colony through its

hard early years. Often oracles are consulted in choosing the *oikistes*, or his first duty is to seek them out for advice. Some *oikistes* later become venerated with cults in the poleis they founded.

## LAW



*And Draco himself, they say, being asked why he made the death the penalty for most offences, replied that in his opinion the lesser ones deserved it, and for the greater ones no heavier penalty could be found.*

Plutarch, Life of Solon

Outside the polis, justice is usually meted out by the families of aggrieved parties, often leading to deadly feuds.

Laws in poleis are harsh, but judged in terms of what the court thinks is right rather than a fixed code. The laws (often oral traditions rather than written) set down how to **organize the court** and official powers, how torts and criminal cases are supposed to be judged, family law (adoption, inheritance, marriage etc.) and how to organize communal events (temples, festivals etc.).

In larger places there might be specialized functionaries like magistrates (general crime, usually at a popular court “dikasterai” dealing with crimes below killing and wounding), thesmothetai (determiners of customs), archons (dealing with family matters), polemarchos (the general judging over resident aliens) and officials of maritime courts. In smaller towns there might just be a magistrate.

Typical punishments are fines (determined by the difference in social status), exile, *atimia*, slavery or death. Imprisonment is not used as a punishment, merely as a way of holding people before trial (although bail was often used: the loss of citizenship for skipping bail was a strong deterrent).

*Atimia* (literally “loss of time or honour”) means outlawry, a total deprivation of all rights. Any citizen can kill an *atimos* without committing an offence or incurring blood-guilt. In some cases, partial *atimia* can be decided, causing loss of some or all of a man's active rights as a citizen: they might not appear in certain public places or public life, could not appear in court or hold offices but would still retain property and killing him would be a crime.

In most places homicide is a matter for private prosecution by relatives of the dead person (sometimes with official court sanction making the killer *atimos*, sometimes without). Rarely they might grant *aidesis*, a pardon, to the killer. Once this was done the killer was immune from further prosecution for the killing.



## BANDITRY AND PIRACY

*We boldly landed on the hostile place,  
And sack'd the city, and destroy'd the race,  
Their wives made captive, their possessions shared,  
And every soldier found a like reward*

The Odyssey, Pope tr. Book IX

Banditry and piracy are unfortunately common and a serious problem. The border between trade and robbery is often blurred.

Many islands and shorelines are rocky and hard to cultivate, and when fishing is not enough or the harvests fail turning to highway robbery or raids on nearby villages may be the only option. In many places the sea is easier to traverse and has richer pickings, leading to piracy – especially since trade vessels hug the coasts, and locals know where to ambush and where to hide.

Over time some pirate outfits developed in size and strength, supplying themselves also by raiding coastal towns and inland. Many cities have a well defended harbour city and the main city further inland to deal with this. Some harbours make deals with pirates for “protection” or to look the other way. Indeed, legit sailors, pirates and desperate fishermen often shifted side depending on opportunity. Pirates also capture many slaves for cities with slave markets, becoming essential for their trade. A recent development has been that some of the stronger kingdoms have begun sponsoring pirates striking merchants from other kingdoms – at least that is what the cynical rumour says.

Inland banditry has far less glamour or potential for wealth and intrigue. The risks are greater and the rewards smaller, making bandits a more desperate bunch. Capturing people to enslave or ransom mostly works when they are high-value people and the deal can be done from a safe distance.

## ECONOMY



*Our love of what is beautiful does not lead to extravagance;  
our love of the things of the mind does not make us soft. We  
regard wealth as something to be properly used, rather than  
as something to boast about. As for poverty, no one need be*

*ashamed to admit it, the real shame is in not taking practical  
measures to escape from it.*

Pericles, History of the Peloponnesian War. Book 2.40

Most people outside cities do not use money but instead barter. Most value resides in barterable goods.

Even in cities a normal person may only see gold coins every few years: they are rare. Instead, silver coinage is usually used. The value is by weight, and each polis has its own standards. A Mesian (a “turtle” after the symbolic turtle on the back) or a Moconian drachma (an “octopus”) is lighter than a Chiosian drachma (a “dragon”) and hence worth less than it.

A common coin system is based on the drachma. Here is the Chiosian drachma:

Denomination	Value	Weight in silver	D&D value
Talent	60 minae	25.8 kg	300 gp
Mina	100 drachmae	430 g	5 gp
Decadrachm	10 drachmae	43 g	½ gp
Tetradrachm	4 drachmae	17.2 g	2 sp
Didrachm	2 drachmae	8.6 g	1 sp (1 gp = 10 sp)
Drachma	6 obols	4.3 g	½ sp
Tetrobol	4 obols	2.85 g	1/3 sp
Tribol / hemidrachm	3 obols	2.15 g	¼ sp
Diobol	2 obols	1.43 g	1/6 sp
Obol	4 tetartemorions	0.73 g	1 cp (1 sp = 12 cp)
Tritartmorian	3 tetartemorions	0.54 g	0.7 cp
Hemiobol	2 tetartemorions	0.36 g	½ cp
Trihemitetartemorian	1 ½ tetartemorions	0.27 g	2/5 cp
Tetartemorian	¼ obol	0.18 g	¼ cp
Hemitetartemorian	½ tetartemorian	0.09 g	1/8 cp

A drachma per day is a typical wage for skilled or dangerous work like soldiering, being a rower, or crafts. Farmers make much less, and rarely have any coins.<sup>2</sup>

In Mesia and many other places it is seen as unmanly to concern oneself with trade and craft: a true man does not have to do anything “slavish” for anybody else. Actually, caring for the family business is often left to women or servants. Work that isn’t agricultural – manufacturing, business, and trade – is held in low esteem and regarded as incompatible with being an active member of the polis. Working the land (or at least overseeing it) may be hard, but it is proper. In contrast,

<sup>2</sup> 157 - 159 in the PHB claims skilled workers earn 2 gp per day. This is however in the unimaginably rich early modern standard D&D setting. In this setting a rough conversion would be that they earn 2 sp per day and that the social status levels are far cheaper... but also more spartan than the standard setting ones. A crude trick is to shift D&D prices/treasures in gp to sp (and sp to cp) in this setting.



in Chiosia being a good businessman is the height of excellence, and even an excellence women can partake of. However, everybody – including the strange half-orcs – agree that the main point is not to make money but to provide prosperity for one's family, friends, deme and polis.

Many things like decent swords and longbows are not available outside population centres where there is enough people to allow specialised blacksmiths and bowyers.

## SLAVERY



Grandfather was enslaved after the Battle of Thelena, and the family could not pay ransom. So he toiled away in remote Pelos, a stain on the honour of our family. My father did his utmost to get sent as a citizen soldier, even as a mere *toxotai*, to get him back in the next war. He did, at the price of his eye and leg, and restoring the citizenship of grandfather propelled him to honour. So now it is Pelosians tilling our fields.

Slavery is fairly common, with slaves taken in wars with neighbouring states or sold into slavery as children. Most slaves are bound to the land and serve as farmers. In poleis, privately owned slaves are the most common but some states have state-owned slaves in addition serving the polis. Many temples have significant number of slaves working for them. The Halfings of Avon are an unusual case of slaves owned by a goddess directly.

Wealthy households may have 10–20 slaves, but most have far fewer if any.

Generally, the domestic slave conditions are fairly tolerable, while the farming and mining slaves forced to work much harder with meagre rations.

Slave revolts are rare. Slaves are typically from many different places, lack family, and are a minority in society making them weak as a social force (some poleis even arm their slaves when needed for defence and have them fight alongside the citizens). However, in truly rich places the slaves can outnumber the citizens, and the majority of slaves are not chattel slaves working as servants in the polis but serfs bound to the land working in agriculture or mining outside. In cases of war or political upheaval they might desert the polis rather than rebel.

## SLAVE MARKETS

*A slave seeing a sheep with feet bound together and being sheared, said, "I am thankful to my master that he has never tied me up and sheared me."*

Most slaves are field slaves bound to the land and not traded. The rest are usually war captives or criminals, and again not traded. However, in a few places like Dymesos there are actual slave markets because enough traders pass by to make it sustainable (and the government chooses to ignore the fact that many of the slaves are victims of piracy).

In Dymesos literate slaves must be sold to non-chiosians since literate slaves are not allowed in the kingdom. Most slaves are human, but *meminii*, *Ichthyophagoi*, *kynokephaloi* and other exotic races are found. The price tends to be higher for the exotic ones.

Type of slave	Typical price
Unskilled slave	150 gp (3d4 x 20)
Skilled slave	1500 gp (3d4 x 200)
Level 1 slave	3000 gp (3d4 x 800)

## GENDER, MARRIAGE AND SEX



*I hope I die when I no longer care  
for secret closeness, tender raptures, bed,  
which are the rapturous flowers that grace youth's prime  
for men and women. But when painful age*



comes on, that makes a man loathsome and vile,  
 malignant troubles ever vex his heart;  
 seeing the sunlight gives him joy no more.  
 He is abhorred by boys, by women scorned...

Mimnermos, Fragment 1 (tr. Martin West)

Gender roles are rigid. Men are men and women women (and monsters monsters).

Men have nearly all the rights, women need a male relative or husband (kurios) to conduct legal activities and are often mostly confined to their homes in the polis.

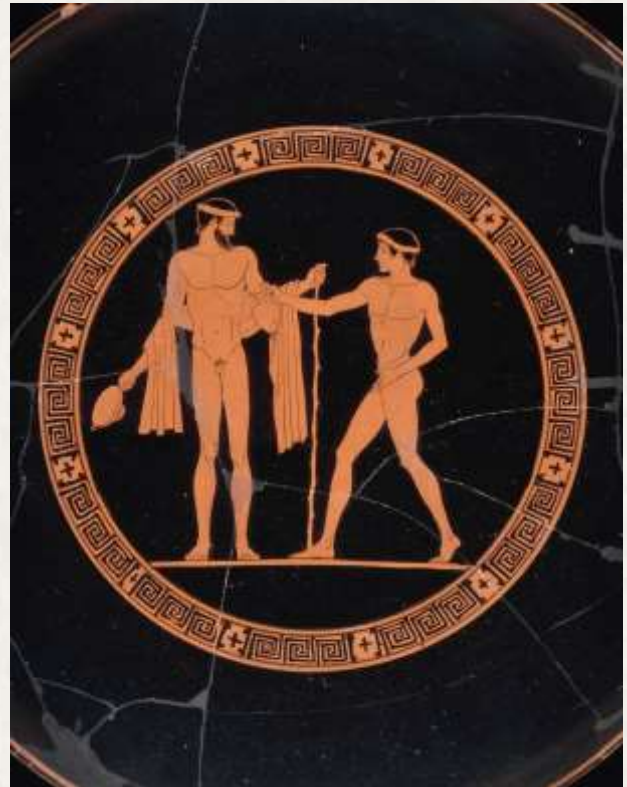
While women have circumscribed lives, in the home they have more control and in the south, this goes even further, allowing them some trades. Indeed, in the far south there are even legendary Amazon kingdoms where women are warriors and rulers, to the amazement of Hesperians.

Marriages are arranged, and the wife brings a dowry – but if things go wrong, she can return to her family with the dowry, a significant threat if it is large. Adultery is ground for divorce, and if the husband encounters the wife in flagrante delicto he had a right to kill the interloper (or drag him to court); the adulteress would be excluded from civic events henceforth.

Sex is not taboo, and explicit jokes and pictures abound. Serious people may still complain about indecency, but it has more to do with when, where and what people do than that they have sex.

Homosexuality, or rather bisexuality, follows classic Greek norms. Men having sex with each other is seen as normal. Consensual pederastic relationships are common. Some men teach their young eromenos until they grow their beard and become adults. There is no real stigma attached to same-sex lovemaking except for the receiving party being lower in status and seen as effeminate: who is on top matters.

Adult same-sex relationships are OK, but male ones have a slightly eerie resonance because of Aïdôneus and Ar (plus, not getting a wife and having family will upset one's phratry – men *will* get a wife for political and economic reasons and are expected to have children). Female relations recall Pitanatis and Echtria, usually triggering rude jokes about who is who.



## FAMILY

*May heaven grant you in all things your heart's desire -- husband, house, and a happy, peaceful home; for there is nothing better in this world than that man and wife should be of one mind in a house. It discomfits their enemies, makes the hearts of their friends glad, and they themselves know more about it than any one.*

Homer, The Odyssey, Book VI

Family is extremely important. People are embedded in families, clans, and tribes: they cannot break free from this fact. To break with one's family is tantamount to breaking a sacred oath, and being disowned by one's family is like being ostracized from the polis.

They might hate or fear some relatives, but they are expected to protect or avenge them. Killing family is one of the most heinous crimes (that is, unlawful killing: fathers have the right to decide on their children's lives long after birth).

*If the script is full of errors, with its dark blots,  
 The letter will have been stained by a woman's blood.  
 My right hand holds a pen, my left a naked sword  
 And the paper's lying loosely in my lap.  
 This is the image of Aeolus daughter writing to her brother:  
 It seems in this way I can appease our harsh father.*

Ovid, The Heroides, XI: Canace to Macareus (tr. A.S. Kline)

Child mortality before adolescence is about 45%: most people have a dead sibling. The typical parents have 2-3 surviving children. However, a typical household (an oikos) also includes grandparents and unmarried female relatives, such as aunts, sisters, and nieces, plus slaves.



## NAMES



Children get formally named by their father in an amphidromia ceremony at 7 or 10 days of age and become part of the family (unwanted children are killed before by exposure). Boys were often named for relatives, starting with their paternal grandfather.

People generally have one given name. This is sometimes extended with an extra nickname for famous people (Ilias the Stormsailer). When specifying somebody a patronymic (Ilias, son of Danon), a place name (Ilias of Lochesis) or their deme (Ilias of the Skambodai) are used, sometimes together.

Male name onomasticon

Female name onomasticon.

## CALENDARS

There are many different calendars, different from different places and rarely compatible. Determining when a historical event happened relative to another one in another location requires erudite scholarship and guesswork.

## FESTIVALS

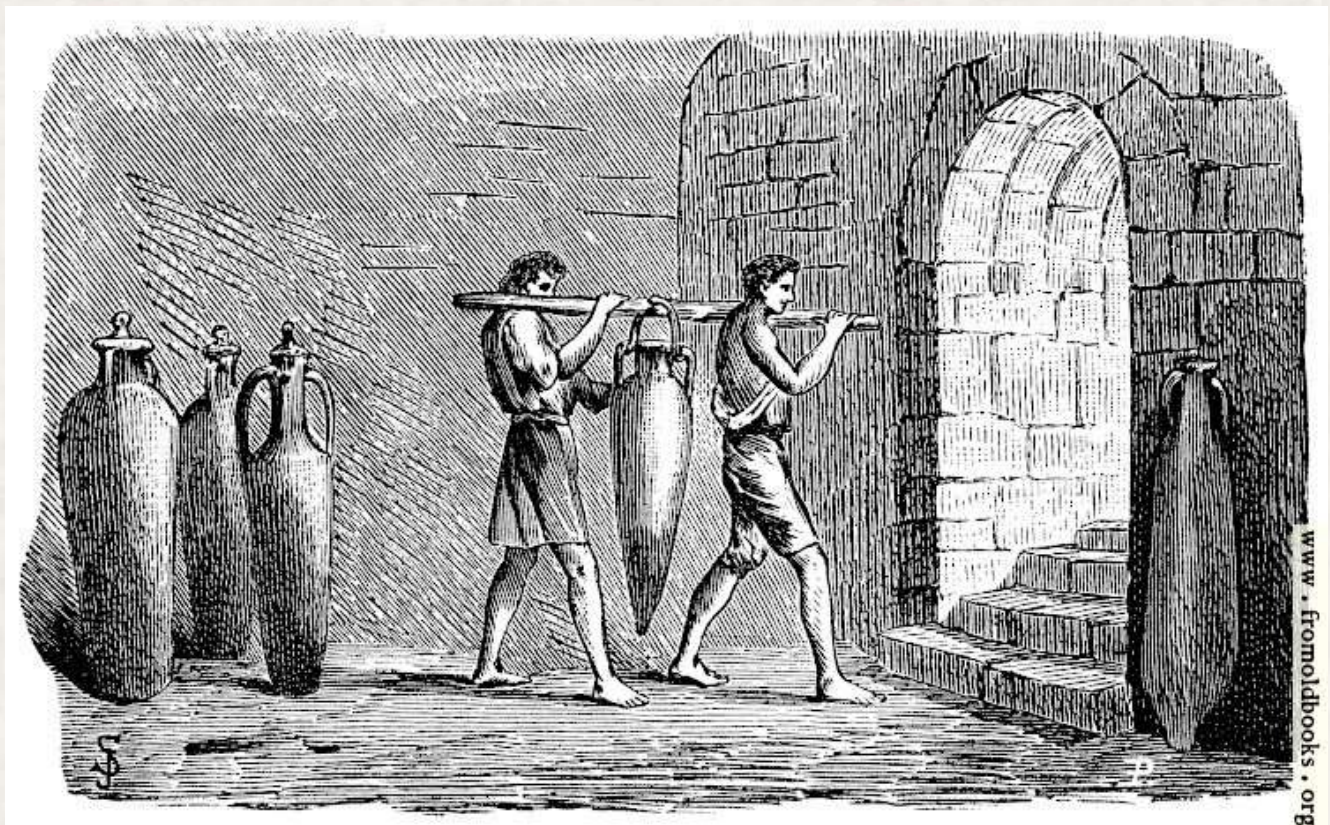
There are many festivals with interesting game effects or plot possibilities. Here are a few:

Anthesteria occurs at the beginning of spring, sacred to the gods of life and death. On the first day, Pithoigia, jars of wine that has matured since last year are opened and ceremonially tasted and libations to the gods performed. Houses and people are decorated with spring flowers, slaves are equal to the citizens, and there is general merry-making... but the spirits of the dead are also free to move about, and many appease them with wine. The second day, Choëis, continues the celebration with the ritual marriage of Manalios and Zêrunthia performed at certain temples under complex secrecy. The third day, Chytroi, involved the ceremonial cooking of a meal for the dead and the gods of death that nobody in the household ate, bidding the spirits to return to the underworld safely. During this festival any magic involving the dead or life-giving power is enhanced.

Thargelia is a late spring festival, sacred to Koruphasia and intended to purify the community to ensure a successful harvest. On the first day sacrifices are made to the gods, and this sometimes involves human sacrifices. In some poleis the two ugliest men are selected, in others a criminal, or even a poor man who has spent the year being fed on public expense; they are stoned to death, burned and their ashes scattered. In some places the rite is less lethal, with banishment or mere beatings used. On the second day there is thanksgiving, and musical contests.

Enarxi: the summer solstice. This is the start of the divine year, and the time when the deity present in the world leaves to give place to the next one. On its own not a festival, since most calendars are lunar based and hence tend to count the start of the new year on the first new moon after the actual solstice. During that day the official year of the god begins, but in practice they have already been present for days or weeks. This is a minor festival of renewal, where the old god is thanked for the visit and the new one greeted.

Thesmophoria occurs in late autumn when the harvest





is done or the seeds sown. It is women only, and celebrates Rharias and her daughters. The rites are done to ensure human and agricultural fertility and are performed by the high-born ladies of the polis. They go to shrines, stay in ritual tents, slaughter pig sacrifices, fast themselves, tell dirty jokes and insults, and finally scatter the sacrificial meat and bread in the fields. Were any male to get involved famine is sure to follow.

**Arrehphoria** is a festival to Koruphasia's honor in Noria.

Girls (usually of noble birth) are selected to live in the high temple of the goddess for a year, weaving the new robes for her statue. On Arrhphoria they are given mysterious packets in baskets that they carry through the secret tunnels to the temple of Zêrunthia in the city below. Neither the priestesses or the girls know what the contents are, and they are forbidden to investigate. At the temple they are given new packages they bring back up, and are then discharged (often to other acolyte or priestly duties).

**Lykaia** is celebrated every ninth year by a tribe in the mountains of Hesperia. The adolescent males gather atop a sacred mountain and perform a sacrifice of animals and one human. They then mix human entrails with the animal entrails, and eat the entrails as part of an enormous feast. People who eat the human entrails would transform into a lycanthrope and would remain a shapeshifter for nine years. If they can manage to not consume any human flesh during that time at the end, they become fully human again (and are regarded with great renown, seeing as anointed by Manalios). However, if they do eat human flesh they will eventually permanently be transformed into wolves.

**Daedala** is a festival held every few years in northern Hesperia, celebrating the wooden statues of the gods that are used in the temples (beside the permanent stone or metal statues). On the first day of the festival, the statues are cleaned and anointed. On the second day, they are paraded through the streets. On the third day, they are burned in a great bonfire. New statues

are then carved and anointed on the fourth day. In particular, in Noria the priesthood of Koruphasia go to an ancient oak grove and sacrifice meat to ravens. The tree the ravens choose to sit on is used to carve the new statue.

**The Tomian Games** are a series of athletic and musical competitions held every two years in honour of Agêtôr Tomios. The games are open to all comers, regardless of social status or citizenship. The events include footraces, boxing, wrestling, chariot races, and Pankration. There is also a musical competition, with the winner receiving a wreath of wild celery.



## LANGUAGE

While different kingdoms speak different languages, **Koine** (“Common”) is the lingua franca around ports, trade routes, and among educated people. The latter may prefer more poetic, local or classical languages like Rhomaoi but it is well understood outside insular rural areas or barbarian inland tribes.<sup>3</sup>

On Hesperos, Mesian, Norian and Chiosian are separate languages each with their own Koine but some mutual understandability.

Among sea-farers in the south and east **Orc** is a common trade language.

- Abyssal – language of Tartaros. Used by monsters and dark spells.
- Aquan – the language of sea-creatures and the ichthyophagoi.
- Auran – the language of the birds. Used as military calls by the initiates of Laossos.
- Celestial – the language of the Shining City and Elysian fields, used in many high rituals.
- Common/Koine
- Dwarvish – Cabirian, spoken by the Cabiri... if they exist. Found in Sardowia.
- Elvish – Old Macrobian, mainly known by the Meminii.
- Halfling language – Avonian, spoken by the priest-slaves of Rharias.
- Ignan – the language of fire. Said to be used by spirits and the agents of Agêtôr.
- Infernal – A dialect of Abyssal.
- Orc language – Bidian, trade language around Eastern Sea and Bidia.
- Primordial – The ancient Rhomaoi language, used in ancient rituals and spells.
- Sylvan – Elysian, the language of the fey, druids, and servants of Mainalios.
- Terran – the language of earth. Said to be used by adepts of metal in Sardowia.

Deep speech, Draconic, Giant, Gnomish, Goblin, Gnoll and many other languages are used by the strange people living in the South. Undercommon might exist if there is an underground civilization that is not part of Tartaros.

## WORDS AND TERMS

Most of the time these terms, especially the colloquial ones, will be rendered in English which is assumed to be equivalent to koine.

<sup>3</sup> When making up words and names, I used Greek for Koine, Latin for Rhomaoi, and Sumerian for ancient words. Byzantine names are a form of old-fashioned Rhomaoi-inflected Koine.

Word	Meaning
Agora, pl. agorai	The outdoor market/public space where shopping and meetings are held in a polis.
Agoranomos, agoranomoi	“Agora-regulator(s)”: public officials supervising the commercial aspects of the agora.
Aischrougòs	Perverter, a common insult.
Amathés	Fool, a common insult.
Amphidromia	Ceremony where a child is named
Androkàpraina	Whore, a common insult.
Apragmon, pl. apragmones (adj.);	Lit. “one who does not conduct business”: a person who refrains from taking part in public affairs in a polis. Sometimes used approvingly for a philosophical or contemplative man, sometimes disparagingly for a politically irresponsible man.
Arete	Excellence, greatness. This is often physical strength, courage, daring, and above all success in battle.
Aristos	“The best”, often used as an honorific for nobility or general excellence.
Arkhon, pl. arkhontes	Archon, lit. “one who is in authority.” Used in different senses: loosely, to refer to any public official in a polis, more specifically to particular officials such as the archon basileus acting as governor in a city and the archon strategos acting as military commander.
Asebia	Impiety. To mock the gods or worship improperly is a crime, since they may take out their revenge on the entire community.
Aspis	The heavy wooden shield used by infantry.
Atimia	Outlawry, being declared lacking in legal rights. Usually total, meaning anybody can kill the atimos, but partial atimia of some rights is sometimes practiced.
Barbaros	A somebody not belonging to normal Hesperian culture like the Cythosians, Sardowians and other exotic cultures.
Chiliarch	“Commander of a thousand, thousandman” Military rank.
Chiton	A form of tunic that fastens at the shoulder, worn by men and women. Usually linen or wool. Often worn under the himation cloak.
Chlamys	A short cloak.
Deme	Subdivisions of a polis, similar to neighbourhoods. They have their own internal governance, sometimes represented by a demarch.
Dory	The chief spear of hoplites.
Ephebos, pl. epheboi	An ephebe, an adolescent boy of the age of military training.
Epistates	Overseer, superintendent. Usually, the local taxman in a deme or village.
Erastes	“Lover”: a grown man with a young eromenos.
Eromenos	“Beloved”: An adolescent who is being wooed and tutored by an older man, the erastes.



Word	Meaning
Balle Eis korakas!	“Go to the crow!” Essentially, “go to hell!”
Himation	Long cloak
Hipparchus	Hipparch, a cavalry officer typically commanding a hipparchia (about 500 horsemen).
Hoplite	Citizen-soldiers of the polis, typically armed with spears and shields. They use phalanx formations to fight together.
Kai sy!	You too (essentially “up yours!”)
Kapeleion, pl. kapeleia	Tavern, a place where wine and food are served.
Katabasis	To descend in the underworld (while alive).
Kestros, kestrophendone	A special sling for throwing heavy darts
Kleios	“Glory” or “Renown”, what others hear about you. All heroes seek to gain kleios. It is inherited from father to son. Opposite aidos, shame.
Koine	“Common”: the common trade language among Hesperians.
Kriðmyxos	“Stupid like a ram”, insult.
Kurios	Lit. “master,” “lord,” or in certain contexts “sovereign.” A woman has to be represented in legal transactions by a male relative who was described as her kurios. Normally this would be the father of unmarried girls or widows, or her brother or paternal uncle if the father was dead; sometimes even an adult son could be her kurios. A married woman’s kurios is her husband. The term is also used to denote the owner of a property or master of a household.
Linothorax	“Breastplate of linen”: Upper body armour.
Ma ton dia	“By the God!” (e.g., swearing by Agêtôr). Variants include all the other gods. A powerful exclamation or oath.
Ma ton kuna	“By the dog!” A very mild curse, like the English “darn”. Instead of swearing by a god, it is just a dog. Still, Chiosians, knowing the Father of the Dogs, tend to avoid it. Similar minced oaths by other animals are widely used, and carry no penalty for being broken (usually).
Malakos	“soft”, but when used to describe a man it implies weakness, cowardice and effeminacy. A close analogy is the modern British “wanker”.
Melas	(Ancient) Raw divine power. Modern (unrelated) koine meaning: “dark”.

Word	Meaning
Metrokoites	Motherfucker, insult.
Nekiya	Ritual to speak with the dead.
Ni	(Ancient) The dread experienced when encountering something divine.
Nothos, pl. nothoi	Lit. “a bastard.” Citizenship is only for people born of citizen parents on both sides. The child of an unmarried union between citizen and non-citizen is illegitimate, and neither rights of inheritance nor of citizenship. Whether nothoi of unmarried citizen parents have these rights varies between poleis; in Chiosia this was determined by the council, while in Mesia nothoi lacked rights.
Oikistes	A colony founder, a leader selected to seek out the site for a new city and ensure that it prospers.
Oikos	A household, a family.
Paedagogos	Family slave acting as guardian of the children and educating them.
Pankration	Violent, no-holds barred combination of wrestling and boxing.
Petasos	Wide brimmed felt hat
Peplos	A body-length garment worn by women, draped and open on one side of the body.
Phratries	Extended families or clans
Pilos	Conical felt cap worn as a hat, but the term also applies to bronze helmets (that sometimes have a horsehair crest).
Polis	The city-state
Politarch	In some places, an elected official representing the citizens of a polis.
Polupragmon, pl. polupragmones (adj.)	Lit. “one who conducts much business,” i.e. “too much.” A pejorative term for officious busybodies involved in the politics of the polis.
Rhomaioi	The ancient civilization that once ruled Hesperos during the golden age.
Stoa	A roofed colonnade at the agora for discussions in the shade.
Sophistês	A sophist, a tutor/scribe/lawyer for hire.
Sunegoros, pl. sunegoroi	Lit “speaker together with,” a person who appears in court to speak on behalf of a litigant. Also used to describe a speaker appointed to represent the state, normally as prosecutor.
Symposium	Dinner party for men. Usually a place for convivial discussions, boasts, business, and drunken games.
Timé	Honour or recognition for accomplishment. Often in the form of material possessions and worldly recognition: it can be gained or lost. Enough Timé gains one Kleios.

Word	Meaning
Toxotai	Archers, usually armed with a short bow, short sword and a shield. Hippotoxotai were mounted archers riding ahead of cavalry. Generally looked down at, compared to the brave hoplites.
Xenia	“Guest-friendship”, the concept of hospitality. Generosity and courtesy shown to travellers, following the rituals of hospitality. Involves mutual giving of gifts, protection, shelter and certain rights. Visitors to a polis often seek out the ruler or a powerful person to ask for hospitality, without which they lack rights.
Xiphos	The typical double-edged straight shortsword.
Zoster	A fabric belt worn over a chiton, either high under the breasts or low around the waist.

## SWEARING, OATHS AND INSULTS

This list could easily have been twice the length by including more insults and swear words; for pungent material, see <https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-most-piquant-ancient-Greek-insults-swear-words> <https://karavansara.live/2018/05/30/ancient-greek-insults-a-primer/> and <https://www.textkit.com/greek-latin-forum/viewtopic.php?t=60300>

Generally, references to sex and excretions are mild swears. Casual racism is not even insulting since racism is not recognized as a bad thing. Bringing in family ups the stakes. Mentioning the gods is serious business. Calling someone an effeminate whore rolling in shit is far milder than saying “by Anaireus, you are a fool!”

Insulting the gods is beyond swearing; it directly invites their judgment.

## OATHS

*This is a sworn treaty made between us, Eudamidas and Periander the Pteian, in the presence of all the gods who possess Lagania and the rest of Hesperos. We swear that we will defend this land from the pirates and foreigners together, and not raise our swords against each other. Were we to break this oath, may the gods curse us and our children with relentless disasters until the land lies empty.*

Swearing oaths matters: swearing to do something by one’s honour or one’s family is an oath that people of a polis expect to be fulfilled (and if broken might lead to a lawsuit risking loss of honour or that the family will be forced to pay). Swearing to the gods is more fundamental: they will listen and judge. Swearing to all gods is a grandiose and potentially devastating action since now it is virtually certain that they will hold you responsible for upholding it. Beyond that there is swearing by the Fates... of which nobody dares speak.

A proper oath contains a declaration (either about the past: “I swear I have not stolen the sword” or the future “I swear I will defend this polis”), an invocation of a superhuman power, and calls down a conditional curse on themselves if the oath is broken. These curses are real, although how Horkos (god of punishing false oaths) enforces them varies. He especially dislikes people trying to game oaths by clever wording or “curse” in beneficial ways. They usually meet a bad and ironic end.





## TRAVEL



Travel is hard: most people rarely leave their home region in their entire life. A pilgrimage or trade expedition is a once-in-a-lifetime experience retold to family and friends forever. Foreigners are exotic, dangerous people. Nomads are just dangerous barbarians and best kept away.

On Hesperos land travel is harder and riskier than sea travel (which is still risky). The largest roads between major poleis are smooth enough that a wagon can roll there, but most roads are impassable for vehicles and traversed on foot or (rarely) on horse.

Sea travel is somewhat safer but requires braving the sea. Ships hug the coasts and are hence potential victims of local pirates and monsters. Storms, running aground, and mysterious maladies are common. Typically, they anchor at night and every few weeks need to be dragged ashore for drying and repairing.

## TRAVEL SPEED



**Walking:** 15 to 20 miles a day on good roads. The Mesian Royal Roads are about 18 miles a day.

**Carriage:** 23 to 35 miles a day.

**Horseback:** about 3 times faster than walking. Caravans will be slowed by pack animals, typically 4 to 6 per traveller. The best couriers (on horseback) are 5 times faster than walking.

**Sailing:** depends on the winds. 80 miles a day is average, but there are cases where 120 have been achieved.

## HOSPITALITY: YOU ALL MEET AT A TAVERN

*I want you*

*To tell me all the hosts with whom you stayed*

*That time you went to fetch up Cerberus :*

*Tell me your hosts, your harbours, bakers' shops.*

*Inns, taverns—reputable and otherwise—*

*Springs, roads, towns, posts, and landladies that keep*

*The fewest fleas.*

—Aristophanes, *The Frogs* (tr. Murray Gilbert)

There are very few inns (pandokeia) serving both food and housing between towns. There is not enough travel to motivate such facilities.

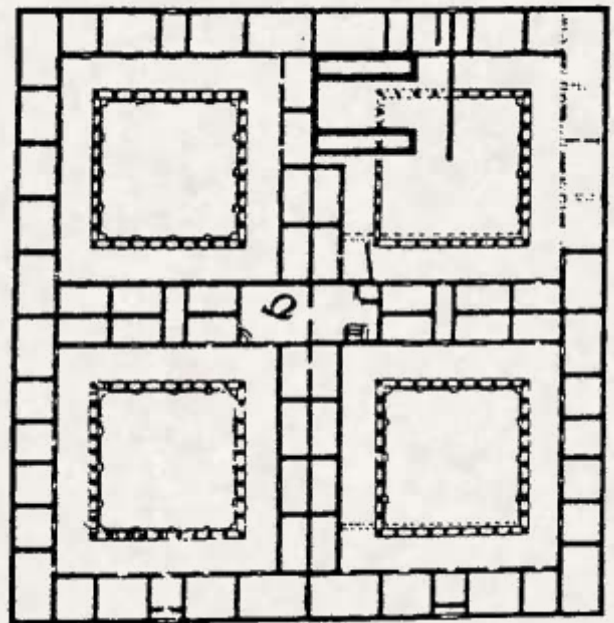
During travel most travellers have to sleep rough when away from civilization, which is much of the countryside. This is unfortunately perfect for preying bandits and monsters. Keeping guard at night is essential.

Xenia, the law of hospitality, means that one is required to treat guests well – and they conversely need to behave themselves, leave gifts or other tokens of appreciation. In towns visitors typically stay (for a small fee) in a room at a private house and are supposed to bring their own food.

In towns there are also lesches, public shelters with little more than a roof over one's head. This can be the covered stoas around the agora.

In the largest cities like Cannoria and Dymesos there may be a proxenos, a citizen hosting foreign ambassadors from a particular city-state at his own expense. This might be a naturalised citizen with ties to the old country, or more commonly a diplomat fostering good relations.

In places of pilgrimage like temples there are places where visitors can lodge, katagogion. In popular locations they can be two-story buildings with over a hundred rooms, housing several hundred guests at capacity.



*The Katagogion in Epidauros.*

While inns are rare, taverns ([kapeleia](#)) are common. Most of the time they are a farmer brewing and selling the excess, acting as the watering hole of the town. Wine can be bought for a few obols per pint (it is stored in large amphorae jugs, watered down in a mixing bowl and drunk from a kylix cup).

In town, the taverns are popular – also for thieves, prostitutes and ne'er-do-wells. As a rule, [if there is entertainment and enticements to come and stay](#), this is not a place run by proper xenia but for making money.

# GAME SYSTEM USING 5E D&D

*Our life is like to dice, which ever fall*

*In varying combinations; no one form*

*Has man's existence, but 'tis full of change.*

– Alexis, in Stobaeus, Florilegium, CV., 4.



## TIPS

*Timidity creates nothing.*

Madeline Miller, Circe

Some specific things to consider when playing a Greek-style hero in D&D 5e:

- Embrace your inner god. Greek heroes are often half-god, and as such they have access to power that mortal beings could only dream of. Make the most of your abilities, and don't be afraid to show off a bit.
- Be prepared for tragedy. Greek heroes often have tragic flaws that lead to their downfall, so be prepared for things to go wrong.
- Don't be afraid to die. Greek heroes are often willing to die for their cause, and their deaths are often as heroic as their lives. If you're going to die, make sure it's for something worth dying for.

## RACES

Nearly everyone is human. Descendants of gods are variant human (see below). Various other human races like Ichthyophagoi or Kynocephaloi exist and may be available to PCs.

Dwarfs (Cabiri), elves (Macrobians), and orcs (Androphagi) may exist, but only half-elves and half-orcs are known and playable. The Meminii are half-elves, cursed to exile from their sunken homeland and suspected to be the target of Typhaon's wrath. The inhabitants of Bidia east of the East Sea are half-orcs known for their fierce temper and colourful skins.

Halflings (Pygmaioi) are the servants of Rarias, tending the temples and pilgrimage sites of Avon. According to myth their starving ancestors sold their children as slaves to a passing noblewoman and she promised that they would never starve and that she would protect them: she turned out to be Rarias in disguise. Treating them badly is seen as treating Rarias badly, a foolish move.

Tieflings (Typhaoi) are the offspring of Typhaon or the Shadows, and generally shunned. They and the Meminii are enemies: the Typhaoi think they better

finish the job their ancestor started, and the Meminii will often pre-emptively protect themselves.

Centaurs and Satyrs are known to live in the wilds, often following Mainalios. Some have been enticed by Laossoos to join his bands, sometimes aiding in his wars.

Travellers speak of exotic creatures such as dragonborn, bird-men, tritons and other strange races of remote lands. In the heavenly city and other realms beyond many wondrous beings life. Some of them also manage to crawl into the world, causing terrible risks. Needless to say, Echthria is also producing monsters and horrors that infest the wilderness and uncharted lands.

Generally, non-humans will be subject to curiosity, prejudice and never regarded as citizens.



## DIVINE BLOOD OR BLESSING

Divine blood is handled as variant humans. The most common godlings are related to Mainalios, Aïdôneus and Zêrunthia. The influence of Aïdôneus, Ar, and Typhaon is often felt as sorcery rather than feats. Still, all the gods have influenced some humans at a time.

Having divine blood gives the character a feat, usually linked to their ancestor. Sometimes gods bless mortals for more or less clear reasons. The downside of this is that such people stand out to the gods: opposing gods (or the spouses of their ancestor!) tend to have it in for the character, and most will meddle with their lives.

Note that gaining these feats later is possible, and may or may not have a divine link – in many cases people will assume a connection to the god. A truly good chef must have the blessing of Rharias, after all.

(Italic feats are described below)



God	Example feats
Agêtôr, The High God of the Skies	Inspiring Leader, Mage Slayer
Koruphasia, The Wise Wife	Dungeon Delver, Skilled, Skill Expert, Observant, Keen Mind, Prodigy, <i>Animal Speech</i>
Zêrunthia, The Goddess of Love	Healer, Resilient, <i>Beautiful</i>
Rharias, the Mother of Home and Harvest	Skilled, Tough, Chef
Mainalios, The Wild One	Tavern Brawler, Resilient, Fey Touched, Tracker, <i>Animal Speech</i>
Anaireus, The Rebel	Actor, Skulker, <i>Hubris</i>
Aïdôneus, The Dark One	Elemental Adept, Magic Initiate, Ritual Caster, Eldritch Adept, Shadow Touched
Ar, The Inescapable One	Skulker, Poisoner, Shadow Touched
Typhaon, The Lord of Destruction	Infernal Constitution, Flames of Phlegethos, Crusher
Echthria, The Hateful One	Orcish Fury, Tough, Crusher, Piercer, Poisoner, <i>Beautiful</i>
Laossoos, The Lord of Disasters	Crusher, Dual Wielder, Durable, Great Weapon Master, Shield Master, Weapon Master, <i>Hubris</i>
Pitanatis, The Lady of Contests	Alert, Athlete, Grappler, Lightly Armored, Mobile, Sharpshooter, <i>Hubris, Beautiful</i>
Aegaia the Victorious	Charger, Martial Adept, Polearm Master
Chersis the Righteous	Linguist, Skill Expert
Brison the Trustworthy	Lucky, Second Chance
Kaena the Lifegiver	Healer
Alethos the Truthful	Advantage to detecting truth or lies.
Tenedos the Sailor	Skilled, Practiced Expert
Eurypylos the Badass	Durable, Savage Attacker, Tough, <i>Hubris</i>



Albert Caasman, 1920

## AVAILABLE CLASSES

*As I entered the palaestra the boys were doing the pyrrhichios dance, or at least trying to. They were mostly giggling and mock-hitting each other with their wooden swords. The sôphronistai were clearly exasperated. The kosmetes Cleonbrotus silenced the aulos-player (to my great relief, his flute was shrill) and tried to instil some order. “If you want your real sword and shield, then you must learn to do this dance! It contains the basics of evasion and fighting together. If you can’t dance it, you can certainly not fight together as a phalanx... Creon, stop that!”*

**Fighters** are common (and the default assumption for heroic PCs). Martial archetypes: champion and battle master are the main ones. Banneret, cavalier, samurai



etc. are possible but need cultural re-skinning. Eldritch knights, psi warriors, arcane archers, echo knights are not suitable for PCs (too magical). For rune knights, see below.

**Bards** are renowned, ranging from the old-fashioned *aoidoi* courtly singers of epic poems and the rhapsode epic poets to the everyday low-class storytellers and musicians. Suitable colleges are Eloquence (the epic/poetic tradition) and Lore (corresponding to wandering wise men).

**Druids and Rangers:** these are servants of wild Mainalios. They form mystery cults in the wilderness.

**Rogues:** As normal.

**Barbarians:** As normal.

**Clerics** abound, but may not be ideal for PCs since they are usually tied to a temple rather than travelling.

**Monks** are rare to absent. However, see the mystai below.

**Paladins** do not exist except for a few exceptions (in theory a great warrior swearing fealty to a divinity might become paladin, but this needs to be roleplayed to happen.)

**Artificers** do not exist, except for rare NPC magical smiths.

*Spellcasters are also rare*, at least overtly: being known as a magic user brings disrepute, and likely being dragged to court (in a polis) or subject to a witch-hunt (in rural areas). The punishment is usually death or exile. Wizards are very secretive, warlocks and sorcerers somewhat more accessible. Bardic and Ranger magic is seen as more acceptable but creepy. Uneducated people may condemn it as witchcraft anyway: PCs should know there may be consequences if they use any spell publicly.

**Sorcerers:** Possible origins are divine soul (evil, chaos, or neutrality), shadow magic, storm sorcery, and wild magic.

**Warlocks:** Possible patrons are archfey (the court of Mainalios), celestial (one of the civic gods), the fiend (one of the dark gods like Anaireus), the great old one (the dark gods, especially Typhaon), hexblade (Aïdôneus and Ar), lurker in the deep (Typhaon, his krakens or river gods), the undead (Aïdôneus), the undying (Ar).

## MONKS = ALEXON MYSTAI



*Those things which are sacred, are to be imparted only to sacred persons; and it is not lawful to import them to the profane until they have been initiated in the mysteries of the science.*

Hippocrates

The mystery schools and cults do not compete with the civil religion but complement them. Some deal with esoteric aspects of the gods, while others are more like academies.

The monks are mystai, initiates of a particular mystery school, the Alexon Mysteries. Undergoing initiation at a *Telesterion* ("initiation hall") they learn of the secrets of unifying the mind and body. Fasting, ritual purification, deep vows and training under the hierophants make them skilled fighters. They know the *aporrheta* ("unrepeatables"); the penalty for divulging them is death.

The key teachings deal with channeling one's spirit, *pneuma*, to perform fantastic feats. It is often represented by the letter *chi*. Initiates eventually undergo *epopteia* ("the seeing"), a higher level of the mysteries and become *epóptēs* when reaching level 3. At level 7 they gain the title *sôtēr*, and at level 15 *athanasi*.

## RUNE KNIGHTS = CYTHOSIAN WARRIORS

The only people who can become rune knights are members of the Cythosian hordes. As part of the divine boon given to Eurypylos to make his people never vanish, they gained the secret of the runes. This allows them to channel some of the power of Eurypylos in battle and life in general... at the price of making it obvious that they are Cythosians. Other people regard the runes as invoking dark gods and witchcraft, and hold their users in contempt.

## WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

*Like a star moving with others through the night, Hesperus, the loveliest star set in the skies – such was the gleam from his spear's sharp point as he weighed it in his right hand with murder in his heart for godlike Hector, searching that handsome body for its most vulnerable spot.*

Homer, The Iliad, Book 22 (tr. E. V. Rieu)

Standard D&D 5E assumes an early modern society where steel is relatively cheap, armour powerful, advanced ranged weapons possible and with numerous technological innovations that are far in the future of this setting. Hence many things are not available.

**Crossbows do not exist**, or are very rare unique inventions. Replaced with bows.

**Heavy armour is nearly absent:** ring mail exists, but not chain mail, splint or plate mail. Normally only light and medium armour are available.

Manufactured goods, anything requiring parts of multiple materials or special materials like glass, have their **prices doubled or tripled**: this is a world of mostly simple crafts.

Books are scrolls written on papyrus.

## FEATS

*Her gifts were mixed with good and evil both.*

Homer, The Odyssey, Book VIII

## HUBRIS

You are overly ambitious, reaching for things that are not meant for your mortal station. Once per game



session you can invoke your ambition to give yourself a critical success on an already successful dice roll.

However, the DM will keep count of the number of “hubris points” you have used, and will spend them to increase the CR of monsters or traps you encounter beyond the normal difficulty. At low levels this may be a fairly immediate response, but at higher levels the points can be stored to make a challenging encounter truly deadly.

## BEAUTIFUL

*And catching sight of Helen moving along the ramparts,  
They murmured one to another, gentle, winged words:*

*"Who on earth could blame them? Ah, no wonder  
The men of Troy and Argives under arms have suffered  
Years of agony all for her, for such a woman.*

*Beauty, terrible beauty!*

*A deathless goddess – so she strikes our eyes!*

Homer, The Iliad Book 3.185–190, (tr. Robert  
Fagles)

You are truly beautiful. Your appearance inspires love, and men and gods will want to possess you.

- Increase your Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You gain Advantage during Persuasion checks where your appearance may impact the target's decision (seduction, diplomacy, etc.). Creatures that have advantage against being charmed no longer have advantage, and you get advantage on charming for normal creatures.

## ANIMAL SPEECH

Your ears have been licked by the vipers you reared after their mother had been crushed, or you ate from the heart of a slain dragon, or your family had some interesting in-laws.

- Increase your Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You gain the ability to understand the speech of animals once per day as if you had cast the spell speak with animals.

## ALIGNMENT



While the alignment system remains for easy reference, it does not strongly correspond to the gods. The civic gods tend towards good, the dark gods towards evil, and the intermediate ones' chaos. However, the morality is not so much about not harming others as following the rules of society: Agêtôr is fine with slavery and killing infants by exposure since it is a tradition bound in law. Aidioneus

## MAGIC

### SACRIFICE INSTEAD OF SPELL COMPONENTS

Since magic comes from the dark gods, instead of standard spell components sacrifice can be substituted. This is usually minor things, and can even be ritual promises (swearing to be silent for a day to power a Silence spell, or to perform chores at the next temple for a lightening effect).

Resurrection, revivify, undeath spells etc. *always* requires sacrificing enough blood sacrifices to appease the underworld – cattle or slaves worth 1000 gp for resurrection, for example. (Replace the spell component costs with equivalent blood sacrifices).



## CLERICAL MAGIC

God	Domains	Alignment
Agêtôr, The High God of the Skies	Light, Unity, Tempest, Order	Lawful good
Koruphasia, The Wise Wife	Arcana, Knowledge, Forge	Lawful good
Zêrunthia, The Goddess of Love	Life, Unity, Peace	Neutral good
Rharias, the Mother of Home and Harvest	Life, Peace	Neutral good
Mainalios, The Wild One	Life, Nature	Chaotic neutral
Anaireus, The Rebel	Trickery	Chaotic neutral
Aîdôneus, The Dark One	Arcana, Death	Lawful neutral
Ar, The Inescapable One	Grave, Twilight, Knowledge, Fate	Lawful neutral
Typhaon, The Lord of Destruction	Tempest	Chaotic evil
Echthria, The Hateful One	Trickery	Chaotic evil
Laossoos, The Lord of Disasters	Tempest, War	Chaotic neutral
Pitanatis, The Lady of Contests	War, Nature	Neutral
Aegaia the Victorious	War	Lawful neutral
Chersis the Righteous	Knowledge	Lawful neutral
Brison the Trustworthy	Trickery	Chaotic neutral
Kaena the Lifegiver	Life	Chaotic good
Moria the Green	Life, Nature	Chaotic good
Laula the Shepherdess	Life, Nature	Chaotic good
Ichnaea the Hunter	Life, Nature, Twilight	Neutral good
Aex the Protector	Arcana, Order, <a href="#">Protection</a>	Lawful good
Alethos the Truthful	Knowledge	Lawful neutral
Tenedos the Sailor	Forge	Lawful neutral
Eurypylos the Badass	War	Chaotic neutral

*For the years when the god wanders the world clerics lose easy access to spells.* In practice, magic happens at a disadvantage or not at all. Still, since the god is present in the world, minor miracles and other effects may happen spontaneously and if the god is personally present great wonders are possible. Exploiting the weakness of clerics of a god during this year is dangerous: yes, they have less power in their prayers, but harming them may lead to the *personal* attention of a god.

## REALMS

*And there, all in their order, are the sources and ends of gloomy earth and misty Tartarus and the unfruitful sea and starry heaven, loathsome and dank, which even the gods*

*abhor. It is a great gulf, and if once a man were within the gates, he would not reach the floor until a whole year had reached its end, but cruel blast upon blast would carry him this way and that. And this marvel is awful even to the deathless gods.*

Heisod, Theogony

In terms of worlds beyond the mundane there are a few choices:

The netherworld stretches from various mysterious caves (similar to the Underdark) down to the labyrinths of death (Darkfell) to the pits of Tartarus (like the Abyss and Hells).

There is a nature-oriented Arcadian world with some parts corresponding to the Feywild overseen by Mainalios and his band.

The ethereal plane is the infinite cloudscapes surrounding the Celestial City and other divine dwellings. This is the same as the astral plane: there is no separation of soul and body.

Many demiplanes are simply located somewhere in the world, like the Warrior's Islands or the Monster Islands. They are in principle possible to visit by going to the right place, although often there are challenges and tests on the way. Indeed, most planes have permanent links in some places. There is a high mountain in Sardowia where one can climb to the Celestial City if one is brave, foolhardy and pure of heart. Jump into the right volcanic caldera and you will find yourself in the fiery palace of Anaireus and/or burned to ash.

In most cases spells like Plane Shift requires that the divinities controlling the plane lets the sorcerer in: usually a good sacrifice and prayer is needed, or they will not work. Or worse, work and make the visitor unwelcome.

## DIVINE CONFLICT

The gods usually do not wish to directly test their powers against each other. Hence as a rule, clerics go out of their way not to affect clerics of other gods, or their spells. If they do, bad things tend to happen as they force their gods into conflict.

The basic effect when a cleric interferes with a cleric of another god is that the *other* cleric gains advantage on all rolls against them for their first round, and they themselves gain disadvantage on their clerical magic.

Were the other cleric to use this advantage to interfere back the conflict gets more serious: now the gods will be fully aware that their followers are in conflict. Depending on the relationship between the gods this either means that they both gain disadvantage (if the gods are friendly to each other) or advantage (if the gods are enemies). In the friendly case (and sometimes also in the enemy case) the clerics may lose favour with their gods; if they are not careful, they may lose power or be cursed.

This is even more important for requests for divine intervention.

Note that this kind of conflict mainly matters for active spells. Healing a disease or curse laid previously is OK, as is turning an undead summoned by somebody else. Still, wearing amulets and symbols bearing the signs of gods is a common precaution – many clerics and sorcerers are wary of attacking a protected person.



## PIETY

The Piety system from Theros is useful. However, while some people dedicate themselves to particular gods most merely worship in general or go to the temple for specific purposes – the form of piety suggested by the system is more modern monotheistic than most historical polytheistic religion.

Rather, piety exists for each god and denotes their favour. After each session the DM summarizes (in secret) how PCs have gained and lost favour among the gods by their actions. Many forms of overt piety – temple sacrifices, prayer, swearing oaths to do certain things (and doing them) – work the same. But general behaviour also matters. PCs that rob and kill because they can will find favour with Laossoos even if they never give him a thought. The careful planner will impress Koruphasia. They might also be actually devoted to her and make plans in her name, earning higher piety.

However, rather than giving predefined spells the piety level indicates the kinds of minor gifts and miracles the god may send their devotee. Koruphasia may give an insight into what somebody says in a foreign language (similar to Ephara's devotee), but it might also be other kinds of minor insights. Someone with strong favour with Koruphasia may get helpful dreams, and at higher levels find other devotees of Koruphasia being sent to support.

The exception is during the year the god wanders the world: then these effects become simultaneously less reliable, but also potentially more powerful. If Koruphasia hears the need, she can directly send a spell-based miracle or a messenger creature. But she may also be entirely unavailable.

## SPELLS

Some spells can be renamed/reskinned to fit the setting:

**Nekiya:** speak with dead. Rituals (always involving blood sacrifice) to call up ghosts to get information.

**Iambos:** vicious mockery. A form of insulting and rude poetry.

Augury and similar divination spells are named for the means used: hydromancy (hydromanteia) for water, geomancy (geomanteia) for earth, pyromancy (pyromanteia) for fire, belomancy (belomanteia) using arrows, rabdomancy (rabdomanteia) using a rod, hepatoscopy/haruspicy (epatoscopia) using the liver of a sacrifice, ornitomancy (oionistice) using the flight of birds, etc.

Katadesis: binding spells such as planar binding or web. Potions are philtres and pharmakoi – usually best hidden since they are a sign of sorcery.

## OPTIONAL RULES

*It is a disgrace to grow old through sheer carelessness before seeing what manner of man you may become by developing your bodily strength and beauty to their highest limit. But you cannot see that, if you are careless; for it will not come of its own accord.*

Xenophon, Memorabilia III.7.8

## NEARING DEATH AND LAST STAND

An optional rule for cinematic death (due to u/Raccoomph, slightly altered):

When you fall to 0 hp, you fall prone and incapacitated, remaining somewhat conscious and aware of your surroundings. You are considered stunned, but can still move faintly, with a fixed 5ft crawling speed. You roll death saves as usual and fall unconscious if stabilized.

In this state you have limited vision of the Ethereal Plane, seeing spirits and shades, but may also hallucinate: the visions and knowledge gained in this state are highly unreliable.

## LAST STAND

Before rolling a death save you can instead make a Last Stand, drawing from your lifeforce to ignore all negative effects and take a final turn.

Additionally, you can either:

- Regain one expended spell slot.
- Grant yourself advantage for a full action.
- Regain one expended use of a class feature.

*You inevitably die after your Last Stand.*

You keep a permanent failed death save if you are ever revived. It cannot be removed, and a creature who has three cannot be revived, except through Wish. Such people have a strong bond to the underworld, which is always calling to them. Their psychopomp is following them, waiting for the time when they will be finally caught.

## CRITICAL FUMBLES

While rolling an 1 should not always be a fumble, having the option of disaster fits the somewhat gory style of fighting in the Iliad and the influence of fate in general.

This optional rule comes into play for PCs and opponents when the battle is serious – numerous participants, under adverse conditions, one or more gods disapprove, participants are desperate, etc. It does not apply to “simple” or ordered fights.

It only applies to the first attack of their round.

The following tables are adapted from the excellent system in <https://www.hipstersanddragons.com/critical-misses-5e-dnd/> that also covers thrown and natural weapons.



## CRITICAL MISSES (MELEE WEAPONS)

### 1d20 Effect

- 1-2 Weapon breaks. The force of your blow of parrying that of your opponent causes your weapon to snap in two.
- 3-4 Loss of weapon. Roll a Strength Athletics DC 15 check to prevent the weapon from flying 1d12 feet in a random direction. It can be picked up if you have movement and a bonus action left, but this provokes opportunity attacks.
- 5-6 Wild swing. You overextend yourself, giving your opponent advantage on the next attack roll.
- 7 Stuck weapon. Your weapon gets stuck in your opponent's shield, armour, hide, or in a tree, wall or the ground. Roll a DC 8 + Strength modifier Strength check to free it as a bonus action.
- 8 Hit an unintended target. Randomize all combatants within 5 feet and roll a second attack roll as if they were the intended target.
- 9 Self-inflicted wound. Roll for normal damage and halve it.
- 10-14 Slip. You lose your footing. Roll Dexterity Acrobatics DC 15 or fall prone, ending your turn and giving melee attackers advantage.
- 15 Pulled muscle (arms). Roll a Constitution DC 15 saving throw to avoid pulling a muscle. If it fails you have disadvantage to attack rolls and ability checks requiring upper body strength until you have completed a long rest or received healing.
- 16 Pulled muscle (legs). Roll a Constitution DC 15 saving throw to avoid pulling a muscle. If it fails your movement is halved, and you lose your Dexterity modifier to AC and initiative, plus disadvantage to attack rolls and ability checks requiring lower body strength until you have completed a long rest or received healing.
- 17-18 Loss of nerve. The opponent looks tough and dangerous. You have disadvantage to hit on the next attack roll.
- 19 Broken item. Something fragile breaks in your equipment. After the combat is over, randomize breakable items in your possession and roll to determine which.
- 20 Embarrassment. Loss of clothing, soiling oneself, amusing sound. Cause disadvantage on next social roll with anybody who was present.

## CRITICAL MISSES (RANGED WEAPONS)

### 1d20 Effect

- 1-2 Weapon breaks. Your bow shaft snaps in two.
- 3-5 String breaks. If there is a spare string, it can be replaced in one minute.
- 6-8 Loose string. The bowstring comes loose, and this attack is lost. A Dexterity Sleight of Hand DC 15 roll can fix it, but each attempt takes one turn.
- 9-16 Hit an unintended target. Randomize all combatants within 10 feet (for a short-range attack) or 30 feet (long range) and roll a second attack roll as if they were the intended target.
- 17-18 Ammunition accident. Your quiver spills, and the remainder of your arrows/bolts/stones fall to the floor. If you do not move you can use a bonus action to pick up one a round and still fire using your action. Otherwise, can use an action to pick up 2d8 and return them to the quiver.
- 19 Pulled muscle (arms). Roll a Constitution DC 15 saving throw to avoid pulling a muscle. If it fails you have disadvantage to attack rolls and ability checks requiring upper body strength until you have completed a long rest or received healing.
- 20 Slip. You lose your footing. Roll Dexterity Acrobatics DC 15 or fall prone, ending your turn and giving melee attackers advantage.



# CREATURES AND OTHER BEINGS

## GODS

*Think not to match yourself against gods, for men that walk the earth cannot hold their own with the immortals.*

Homer, The Illiad, Book V. 440–442 (tr. Samuel Butler)

True gods have abilities that *always* trump mortal abilities. Even the mild Alethos will deflect any blow, even from the mightiest warrior or greatest sorcerer – assuming he defends himself.

This system is based on the classic Primal Order module of Wizards of the Coast. The term here for primal energy is melam. Melam can bypass *all* normal magical, physical and mental defences as if they were not there, and none of these forces can bypass a melam-empowered defence. The only way of stopping melam is with melam.

As long as they have any touch of melam, a being is truly immortal and immune to exhaustion, starvation, suffocation, toxins and the environment (as long as these factors are natural and not divinely empowered). It gains Immutable Form.

Gods generally tend to be aware of melam around them, noticing beings touched by it. Even mortals tend to notice the charge of melam as an uncanny feeling, “ni”.

This means gods have damage immunity against all non-divine damage unless they deliberately turn off any shield spell, armour or other protection they might be carrying. Conversely, by expending melam they can overcome resistance, immunities or spells. For simplicity, one point of melam “wins” over any counteracting influence no matter what level or difficulty it is.

When gods directly push against each other the one spending the most melam wins. Hence minor gods rarely challenge the major gods unless it is in a matter they know the major god doesn’t care about.

**Demigod:** demigods have some melam and are immortal, awesome and generally not to be trifled with. However, most of the time they do not use their melam points actively; they might have between half a dozen and a dozen. They rely on their own fairly high attributes, skills and magic.

**Minor god:** minor gods have far more melam than the demigods, and are typically nearly untouchable by mortals. They also have domains they care for, often keeping busy overseeing them. They have access to most spells and spell-like powers. Typically spells, attacks and actions they do will always be linked to their domain: even a slap from a solar deity makes radiant damage. (Immune to all non-divine damage, can choose to make their effects divine up to 12 times a day)

**Major god:** the 12 major gods have far more melam than the minor gods and have frankly ridiculous amounts of power. Most of the time, just assume that they will succeed with whatever they try to do unless another major god interferes.

## INFUSING



*It is said that in the temple to Rharias in Avon there is a hidden chamber where the priests keep a bowl of fruits blessed by the goddess. The fruits will never rot or lose their loveliness. These figs, pomegranates and grapes will cure any illness, old age, and can make the eater immortal.*

Augustinos Chrysodactylos, History of Mesia

Spend a melam point when casting a spell or making an attack. This makes it pass through any defence and hit with maximum (or less, if desired) effect. Defensive spells like shield or divine armour always block non-divine attacks.

It is possible to infuse melam into an object or being, giving it some divine nature. This is usually temporary but tends to have lasting effects anyway. There is a family in Aphia who can turn invisible occasionally since Ar helped an ancestor hide from a monster. When Alethos used a cup at a feast it permanently gained the power to force anyone drinking from it to speak the truth in their next sentence.



## EXOUSIA (AUTHORITY) AND DÝNAMI (FORCE)



The man was shielding his eyes from the brilliant light above him. A voice boomed: “Mortal, you are not getting past here. Return to your world. Now.” The man pleaded. Another voice boomed “If you do not return now, you will die.” The man kept pleading. Then he was instantly incinerated into fine dust that drifted away on the wind.

“Why do they never listen, brother? What a waste.” The other just nodded, his eyes scanning the horizon for other intruders. “Why do they persist?”

The twin sons of Agêtôr. They are minor gods of solar light and power: rarely subtle, always impressive. Normally they are leading the guards of the celestial city, occasionally flying around with the sun to survey all there is. Whenever there is a threat or their father orders, they will fly to deal with it.

Dynami is cold and efficient, Exousia emotional. In fact, when Exousia is not “on the job” as the god of authority he can be warm and affectionate (as a fair number of inhabitants of the celestial city can attest). Dynami often appear as tactless since he always speaks his mind with no interest in diplomacy – he has long fruitlessly tried to woo Pitánatis, usually causing fights.

Both are perfectionists who hate seeing things out of order: they demand that everybody excel, they are disgusted by dirt (and hence most of the natural world), and the best way to annoy them is to be a slob. The only being who can play jokes on them is their indomitable sister Bia.

Use Solar, but add the minor god package. Exousia has Persuasion +15, Dynami Intimidation +15. CR 26.

## BIA

*Bia, O goddess whose might is well known,  
whose calling it is to stand guard at the throne  
of thundering Agêtôr, I offer you my praise.  
O able daughter of battle-wise Koruphasia*

*and Pitánatis in whose name great oaths are sworn,  
sister of Chersis, granter of victory,  
with whom you share your holy station,  
broad-winged one whose will is unmatched,  
whose power compels the strongest to bend,  
yours is the strength to stand against any,  
yours is the irresistible force. Bia,  
unyielding one, grant me your gift of fortitude.*

Prayer to Bia

Daughter of Agêtôr, goddess of strength and violence. Unlike her brothers, she is not officially taking part in the defence of the celestial city. Instead, she follows in the entourage of Pitánatis and sometimes help mortals defeat monsters.

Laossoos is assiduously trying to woo her, feelings that are apparently not unreciprocated but fiercely resisted by her parents who try to keep them apart.

She has a massive rivalry with Peitho, the goddess of persuasion. She also finds her sister Chersis tiresome with her insistence of proper procedure and justice. She is much fonder of her niece Adrasteia and her estate of vengeance.

Use Solar, but add the minor god package, Athletics +15, CR 26 and boost STR by +35: she is the physically strongest being in the universe.

## OSSA

*“Did you hear about Didymios? He is so strong that he slapped a giant on both cheeks so hard that it became a cyclops!”*

Daughter of Zêrunthia, Ossa is the goddess of fame and rumour. She can find out anything, make anybody revered or reviled, and is the unreliable gossip of the pantheon.

Ossa’s father was the king of Lamyra, who during his own wedding feast made the drunken boast that he would woo Zêrunthia and she would give him a divine child. Zêrunthia heard about it, and made the king pregnant. After nine months Ossa burst out of his stomach to the horror of the court. To this day there is a temple in Lamyra to Ossa where she is venerated.

She has spectral wings and can fly very fast, and holds a trumpet that can alert or inform anybody. She can hand out the laurel crown of fame. While normally looking like a beautiful woman she can shift to her true form, a mass of tongues, eyes, ears and feathers. There is a story that she got into a quarrel with Echtria, who created the Gibbering Moulder as a caricature of her. She appreciated the gesture.

Her own house has a thousand windows allowing her to see everything. When Zêrunthia is on the earth she follows, spreading rumours and generally enjoying herself. Once people have talked to her, she never disappears: she can reappear at their side instantly. Some people begin to worship her for fame and magnificence, which usually works well... until she tires of them and dumps them and their reputations.

Her role among the gods is as an (unreliable) news service: whenever something important happens she will tell everybody. She sometimes works together with her stepfather Philonikos. Being naturally mischievous she has similarities with Hermes.





Use a Deva with the minor god package. CR 15. Investigation +30. She knows anything that has been retold by anybody.

Favourite spells: crown of madness (she whispers to the victim a nasty rumour everybody else have been spreading about them), Mass Suggestion (everybody has heard the rumour), Modify Memory ("I heard that this is what happened..."), Sending (any length of message, anywhere), Skywrite (for when subtlety is out of the window).

### TRUMPET OF FAME

Artefact, Unique

The trumpet of Ossa acts as a mass suggestion/mass modify memory. When used by the goddess she can use her power to increase the range nearly endlessly. A mere mortal might just affect the nearest people.

### LAUREL WREATH

Artefact, Rare

A semi-intangible halo of fame and glory, giving +5 to suitable charisma rolls. However, the goddess can also make it disappear with a thought. Even among her favoured people it tends to disappear randomly after a while. The exception is if she crowns someone at death: at that point the fame will be everlasting.

### PEITHO

*The sorcerer was busy examining the bone flute he had just acquired as the lady entered his hovel. She looked like a plain matron, but to his eyes the disguise was transparent – she was far more than a human. He immediately fell to his knees and began to babble greetings. "Tyros, you have something I would like to have." She glanced at the flute with her deep eyes. "Of course, great Lady. It is an infinite honour to have you visiting a simple mortal like me..." She let him talk. Occasionally she gave small encouragements.*

*"...I am forever your servant. Thank you so much!" he said as she left with the flute. That one was unusually easy, the goddess thought.*

Peitho is the goddess of persuasion, whether seduction, political speech or just nagging.

She is a daughter of Zêrunthia with Philonikos and often hanging out with her half-sister Ossa. Because of her father's transformation into a dog, she is sometimes called the dog-daughter (although she was fathered before his transformation). She appears as a beautiful woman with tender eyes<sup>4</sup>, wearing sumptuous necklaces.

While her half-sister is outgoing and loud, Peitho is demure and quiet... but she always gets what she wants.

Peitho has a massive rivalry with Bia, the goddess of force. They represent fundamentally different approaches to things and are often goaded into ill-advised bets or contests by other gods (a bit ironic given Peitho's own nature, but she is the great persuader, not the goddess of resisting persuasion). She also dislikes Aidioneus, since he is the one entity in the entire cosmos, she is absolutely powerless against.

Peitho (like her mother and father) *really* hates brothers fighting brothers, and will often go the extra mile to ensure they have a suitably untimely end.

Use Deva with the minor god package, Persuasion +30, Performance +15. CR 15.

### NECKLACES OF PERSUASION

Wonderous Item, Unique

Peitho wears extravagant necklaces that enhance her attractiveness. She can lend mortals necklaces that give advantage on social interactions. However, wearing it also makes them unconsciously bound to her will.

<sup>4</sup> Apparently "puppy eyes" in classical Greek is *aganoblepharos* (Ibycus).

## HIMEROS

*(Spare us from loveliness!)*

*And I fell prostrate,*

*Crying,*

*Thou has played us with thy blossoms;*

*Spare us the beauty*

*Of fruit-trees!*

H.D., Priapus Keeper - of - Orchards

God of sex, desire, and insects, son of Zêrunthia and Manalios. While the oldest son of the goddess, he is the least responsible of any of her children. Normally looking like a slim, winged youth he can also turn into all sorts of insects. His sting causes people to fall in love, although he is also a great archer and javelinist.

Himeros leads his posse of other erotes (love godlings), causing mischief, tragedy, or perfect happiness as they want. Sometimes they transform into a swarm of butterflies to sneak up on mortals, sometimes they come as wasps.

The other gods often underestimate Himeros. He is able to ply his powers in subtle ways they often miss, making them fall in love. The major gods tend to be resistant, but he has caused much trouble among the lesser gods or even by making mortals fall in love with them.

Use Empyrean with minor god package, CHA +15, CR 26. He can shapeshift freely, including into insect swarms. He can cast Charm person and Suggestion freely, subtly and as an area effect.

### HIMEROS'S BOW

*Artefact, Unique*

Most of the time Himeros causes love with his sting, but sometimes he manifests his bow. It is a divine shortbow, and anybody and anything hit by its ethereal arrow will either fall into love with the next creature they see, or another creature decided by the shooter.

In the hands of Himeros this is reliable: the kind of love can be fine-tuned and is potentially permanent. In the hands of mortals, the effects are like a Charm or Geas spell and often not very exact. Himeros likes to "lose" the bow to see the hilarious chaos that ensues.

## AEX THE SAFEKEEPER



Aex is the daughter of Chesis the Righteous and Alethos the True, making her the granddaughter of Aidoneus, Ar, Koruphasia and Agêtôr. Unique among the gods she can walk the underworld and celestial city unmolested, being the personification of safety,

balance and light. Her symbol is a shield with a helmet on. Her animal is the turtle.

Appearance-wise she is a plain woman wearing unadorned armour, with eyes filled with light. She never lies, disobeys or misbehaves.

Aex is a serious goddess that cares about protection – she does not care about politics, what people do with the protection or what is being protected. The other young goddesses find her terribly boring. She is fine with this since it keeps them away from her work. She likes being

the goddess of stolid boredom. Her job is to ensure it continues.

Her Aegis is just a tool that she is proud of: something that ensures safety. She is much more concerned about the other things in her Ark – they are generally not what mortals should play with.

## POTAMOI



*Never cross the sweet-flowing water of ever-rolling rivers (potamoi) afoot until you have prayed, gazing into the soft flood, and washed your hands in the clear, lovely water.*

*Whoever crosses a river with hands unwashed of wickedness, the gods are angry with him and bring trouble upon him afterwards.*

*Never make water [i.e. urinate] in the mouths of rivers which flow to the sea, nor yet in springs; but be careful to avoid this. And do not ease yourself in them : it is not well to do this.*

Hesiod, Works and Days 737 ff (trans. Evelyn-White)

The river gods, sons of Typhoon. Typically, they are shapeshifters, but their most common forms are man-headed bulls, bull-headed men with a serpent/fish body from the waist down, as bearded humans, or any other combination.

Unlike his more monstrous offspring many river gods are fine with living their divine lives in peace and quiet, although some are wild or prone to flooding. They often have naiad, water weird, rusalka, and elemental families residing with them, frolicking in the water. They often have more dealings with the satyrs, nymphs, centaurs and the followers of Mainalios than with civilized people.

There are however stories about an ancient age when the river gods were the actual kings of the land. In agricultural regions locals carefully worship their local river gods.

Their power and status vary depending on the size of the river. Their symbol of office is a pitcher or amphora from which they can pour water – everything from quenching thirst to flooding the countryside. In mortal hands it is merely a decanter of endless water.

Stats: as water elemental, but (usually) with normal intelligence, wisdom and charisma. They can perform shape water and control water as innate spells, and generally cast any water-related spells (like breathe water for guests) at will and with extended range. CR 10-15 depending on strength.



## DEMIGODS

Demigods have some part of divine power, but it is usually merely a reflected fragment rather than actual ability to shape the world.

### SUIDAS THE TRAITOR



*Your pride has been too much for the pride of your admirers; they were numerous and high-spirited, but they have all run away, overpowered by your superior force of character; not one of them remains. And I want you to understand the reason why you have been too much for them. You think that you have no need of them or of any other man, for you have great possessions and lack nothing, beginning with the body, and ending with the soul.*

Plato, Alcibiades I

Suidas was the son of Laossoos with Auryos. When Rharias found out about him she demanded to meet him, ready to strike him down. But he gave her hospitality, politely answered her questions, and demonstrated that despite his ancestry he was trustworthy. He became a go-between the celestial city, the warrior islands, and the underworld. His offspring with Tarana was the origin of the kings of Noria, where he is still venerated.

However, he was secretly ambitious and sought to replace his father. Anaireus gave him help: a sleeping potion that would incapacitate the war god and allow Suidas to usurp him. But the deal was observed by an owl and jackal, who raced to warn Laossoos. The god did not believe them, so they drank the wine revealing the potion (and this is why owls to this day are sleepy and why jackalweres can make people sleep). Enraged Laossoos struck at Suidas, and a wild fight erupted.

Suidas was outmatched and soon retreated to the domain of Rharias, counting on her to protect him. This she did, and his father could not reach him.

But she did not want him around her house, so she sent him to guard Avon in the mortal world. There he confined within the temple-state, afraid of leaving yet bored by his confinement. He commits minor mischief, but most of the time stays hidden. His true plan is to wait for the right moment to strike against his father.

As a demigod he is immortal, can perform very powerful magic and is a superhuman fighter. He is the reason no deity messes with Avon. His presence is not generally known to mortals. Usually, he takes the form of a halfling guard, standing around in the background watching the proceedings. He is infallibly polite and charming, while always keeping an eye on hidden weaknesses.

His own weakness is his burning ambition. He can be inhumanely patient, yet everything he does is aimed at eventually usurping his father – even though it blinds him to other opportunities.

Stats: treat as a level 15 Battlemaster Fighter and level 5 Rogue, but with demigod immunities and various spells (including [Charm Person](#), [Misty Step](#), [Suggestion](#), [Tasha's Mind Whip](#), [Blindness/Deafness](#), [Sunburst](#)). He carries a shield with Rharias' lion, that allows him to cast [Shield](#) 3 times per day (and he can empower with melam to become truly invulnerable).

### CYCLOPES

*I sacrifice to no god save myself — And to my belly, greatest of deities.*

Euripides, *The Cyclops*

The cyclopes are the craftsmen of the gods. They are notoriously stupid and venal but also hard workers. They are uninterested in politics and ideals, but happy to work for whoever gives them (plentiful) food and salary.

The first three are said to be the sons of Anaireus and Echtria: Arges, Brontes and Sterope. They are the master craftsmen of the celestial realm, fashioning divine weapons – they are in a sense full (if minor) gods. In turn, their demigod offspring were the builders of great divine buildings and even some ancient walls or fortresses in the mortal realm. The next generation of quarter-gods were less skilful and ambitious, and are mostly known as uncivilized shepherds and farmers. These (and their dire wolf shepherding dogs) are the ones adventurers in the mortal world are likely to encounter.

**Third generation**, “lesser cyclopes”: [as standard 5e Cyclops](#).

**Second generation**, “builder cyclopes”: As above, but STR 24 (+7), CON 22 (+6), Proficiency bonus +4, 160 HP. They have innate magic allowing them to cast [Mold Earth](#), [Stone Shape](#) and [Bones of the Earth](#) at will. They are proficient with mason's tools. Their greatclubs have +10 to hit, do 3d8+8 bludgeoning damage. CR 7.

**First generation**, “lightening cyclopes”. As second generation, but with [Heat Metal](#) and [Metal Shape](#) (as [Stone Shape](#) but for metals) in addition to the stone powers. They can cast [Lightning Bolt](#) 3 times/day. Being gods they have damage immunity against all non-divine sources of damage. Proficient with smith tools. CR 14.

### COES THE WISE

*I sacrificed a coin at the small altar, and as I was walking out of the temple, I realized that I needed to buy dried horse-meat to appease the griffins. I thanked Coes yet again.*

Augustinos Chrysodactylos, *History of Mesia*

Coes was the wisest man ever born. A brilliant seer he foresaw the weather and tides, instructing the people for great benefit. He was made king of his island. He also foresaw that he would be the cause of great tragedy, and banished himself from the island since if he were to return it would cause disaster. He wandered the world, performing many good deeds. But one day he was captured by pirates and enslaved. They sailed to raid an island – the home of Coes. So his return caused disaster.

Remorseful he sought to atone for what he had indirectly caused. Eventually he found king Tenedos the Sailor and began to advise him – especially about the laws of the sea and how to fight piracy. When Coes died he was deified by Koruphasia and made the god of planning and practical law. He is often depicted together with the deified Tenedos, and always gets a small sacrifice in Tenedos temples.

Coes and Ar have a strained relationship. Ar represents fate and oracles reached by mystical means, while Coes represents planning and prediction reached by rational means. Both constantly seek to undermine each other's work. Coes is wise enough to know he can never beat the full god, but he is also wise enough to know he can thwart him in a myriad small ways.

Coes rarely leaves the celestial city. However, if needed he travels the world incognito as an old sage.

## CERCOPES

*Passalus and Acmon, having bought some stolen garments, in order that they might not be recognized, daubed them with pitch.*

The **cercopes** (“tailed ones”) are two brothers, mischievous monkey-like forest creatures who grew up in Noria’s forests but roam the world and might turn up anywhere mischief is afoot. Their names are Passalus and Acmon, or perhaps Olus and Eurybatus, or Sillus or Triballus... in fact, they seem to switch names regularly. They often need to, as their latest scheme goes hilariously wrong.

They are the offspring of Mainalios and one of Laossos daughters. They are liars, cheats, and accomplished knaves. They steal from man and gods, they make satyrs blush and once, memorably, they successfully cheated Brison the Trustworthy himself on a dice game (he turned them to stone, but they got better).

While not too physically threatening and merely mischievous, the slapstick chaos they bring is tricky to get rid of. Imagine Bugs Bunny harassing the characters.

## CERCOPE

*Medium Humanoid, Chaotic Neutral*

**Armor Class** 13 (fur)

**Hit Points** 9 (2d6+2)

**Speed** 30 ft. walk, 20 ft. climbing

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)

**Skills** Deception +8, Performance +3, Persuasion +8, Stealth +4

**Senses** passive Perception 16

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

**The Rule of Funny [3 times per day].** Cercopes will have whatever ability or spell needed, or make saving rolls, for maximum funny effect. This does not mean they will always succeed, since hilarious disaster is also a fun outcome - the Cercope does not control this power themselves, and if a failure or incompetence is funnier, that is what will happen.

**Oops.** The Cercope has a critical failure on rolls of 1 or 2, producing a slapstick mishap.

**I got better.** No matter what happens to them, they will turn up again. Even when it is perfectly implausible.

**Drollery.** The Cercope makes jokes that are actually quite funny. This requires the ability to talk, mime or fart, and replaces the need for any spell components.

**Innate spellcasting.** The Cercope is a 1-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The Cercope has following spells prepared: Cantrips (at will): Druidcraft, Friends, Vicious Mockery  
1st level (3 slots): Charm Person, Distort Value

## ACTIONS

**Improvised weapon.** Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4) bludgeoning damage

**Throw stuff.** Ranged Attack: +2 to hit, reach 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.



One of the Cercopes

British Museum, London



## TARANA

One of the servants of Koruphasia, wife of Suidas and ancestor of the line of Noria. She still loves her wayward husband despite his exile, and meets with him in secret in Avon every 12<sup>th</sup> year.

She is not a goddess of anything in particular, instead acting as factotum in the goddess court. In many ways she is the embodiment of practical jack-of-all-trades that make civilization work, and this is why Koruphasia trusts and likes her. She often acts as the goddess agent when more subtle approaches are needed.

## HECATONCHEIRES

The hecatonchires are hundred-armed, fifty-headed, violent giants. These are the underworld counterpart of krakens, immensely powerful beings of violence and rage. They are some of the oldest children of Father Ocean (or Typhaon) and Mother Sky. Not quite gods, but strong enough that even gods think twice about fighting them.

They love picking up rocks and bombarding targets with them in an unending barrage. When fighting, they often shove enemies prone (or shake the ground), grapple them, and then pummel them with rocks, fists and swords until they are dead or just permanently buried.

Still, having a hundred eyes, they see much. A few beings in the abyss know how to ask them questions right, gaining oracular answers said to surprise even Ar.

## HECATONCHERIRE

*Gargantuan Monstrosity, Chaotic Evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (crude leather armor)

**Hit Points** 310 (20d20+100)

**Speed** 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29 (+9)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** STR +16, CON +12

**Skills** Athletics +7, Perception +29

**Damage Immunities** Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

**Condition Immunities** Blinded, Frightened, Grappled, Prone, Unconscious

**Senses** Truesight 160 ft.: the fifty heads of the monster can see through illusions, invisibility and across worlds, passive Perception 29

**Languages** Abyssal

**Challenge** 24 (62,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +7

**Legendary Resistance (3/day).** If the Hecatoncherie fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

**Siege Monster.** It deals double damage to objects and structures.

**Magic Resistance.** The Hecatoncheire has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Regeneration.** The Hecatoncheire regains 30 hit points at the start of its turn.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** can make 100 (!) melee attacks per action (plus the Frightful Presence). It does not suffer an attack or damage penalty for attacking with one hundred weapons. However, the press of limbs prevents the creature from making iterative attacks with any of its arms, nor can it make more than ten attacks against a Small or smaller



creature, fifteen attacks against a Medium-size creature, or twenty attacks against a Large creature in the same action (it can make all its attacks against a Huge or larger creature in one action).

**Sword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (6d6 + 9) slashing damage

**Rock.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 35 (4d12 + 9) bludgeoning damage.

**Grapple.** Unarmed Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. If target fails a Strength/Athletics or Dexterity/Acrobatics contest it is grappled.

**Shove.** Unarmed Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. If target fails a Strength/Athletics or Dexterity/Acrobatics contest it is either prone or thrown 10 ft away.

**Frightful Presence.** Each creature of the hecatoncheire's choice that is within 120 feet and aware of it must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become **frightened** for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The hecatoncheires can take one of the actions below at the end of another creature's turn. Only one can be used at the time, and they are regained at the start of their turn.

**Rearm.** The hecatoncheires picks up boulders from the surroundings (from the ground or breaking buildings), rearming for another set of rock attacks.

**Bellow.** The hecatoncheires shouts a thunderous roar. Each creature in a 200-foot cone must make a Constitution DC 20 saving throw. A creature takes 4d8 thunder damage and is pushed 15 feet away and is knocked prone on a failed save, or half as much damage and is not pushed on a success.

**Move.** The hecatoncheires moves up to half its speed.

**Earthquake.** The hecatoncheires jumps up and stomps, triggering an earthquake. Effects as the 8th level evocation spell Earthquake.

# MONSTERS



There is a large number of D&D monsters that are proper Greek monsters already. They are listed with CR below. Asterisks denote monsters where the lore is significantly changed by me (see next pages).

- Amphisbaena (3)
- Basilisk (3)
- Blights \*
- Centaur (2) \*
- Chimera (6)
- Cockatrice (1/2)
- Dragon (varies)
- Dryad (1)
- Eidolon (12) \*
- Empyrean (23)
- Erinyes (12) \*
- Giants (5, 7, 8, 9, 13)
- Gorgon (5)
- Griffon (2)
- Hag (2, 3, 5)
- Harpy (1)
- Hell Hound (3)
- Hippogriff (1)
- Hydra (8)
- Kraken (23)
- Lamia (4) \*
- Lizardfolk (1/2)
- Manticore (3)
- Medusa (6)
- Merfolk (1/8)
- Minotaur (3) \*
- Nereid (2)
- Pegasus (2)
- Roc (11)
- Salamander (5)
- Satyr (1/2)
- Skeleton (1/2, 2)
- Sphinx (11, 17) \*
- Succubus (4) \*
- Unicorn (5)
- Werewolf (3)

Many kinds of undead also fit, from crawling claws over ghosts to demiliches. Generally, devils and demons are rare and belong in the underworld; use demons for the more chaotic regions of Thypaon and Echtria, and devils and undead for the more ordered regions of Aidoneus

and Ar. Aberrations and fungi are rare in the normal world but may thrive on the Monster Islands and in places warped by Echtria.



## BLIGHTS

The maiden nymph Hypsipyle was beautiful, loved flowers and often wandered the forests of Hesperia. One day she came across Mainalios and his wild, drunk and amorous entourage. She fled and they pursued. The running made her feet bleed, and they easily tracked her down. Rather than letting herself be ravished she jumped from a cliff. Her blood became cursed, making plants grow into blood-thirsty blights seeking to avenge her.

It is said that blights sometimes protect enemies or victims of Mainalios (especially if they are virgins). Druids feel a sad duty to clean up blights whenever they find them – to deliberately create one will incur the anger of their god.





## CENTAURS

*Wine is many a man's undoing, when he gulps his draught and will never drink discreetly. Wine it was that darkened the wits of Eurytion the Centaur in the palace of bold Pirithous. The Centaur had come to the Lapiths' country, and now with wine he clouded his understanding and in his frenzy did monstrous things in the very hall of Pirithous.*

Homer, *Odyssey*, 21. 293 ff (trans. Shewring)

Centaurs are worshippers of Manalios and Laossoos, who they regard as their ancestors. According to the myth Laossoos was pursuing the goddess Moria (yes, his own granddaughter), the lover of Manalios. When he approached, Manalios transformed Moira and her entourage of nymphs into mares, and the herd ran away. Undeterred Laossoos transformed into a stallion and pursued. He decided that a particularly impressive and strong horse must be the goddess and managed to catch up and mate with her... but it turned out to be Manalios instead. In due time Manalios bore the centaurs.

The centaurs share their dubious parentage's dual nature: they can be exceedingly wise, or wild and unruly. In many places they are very unwelcome for past exploits.



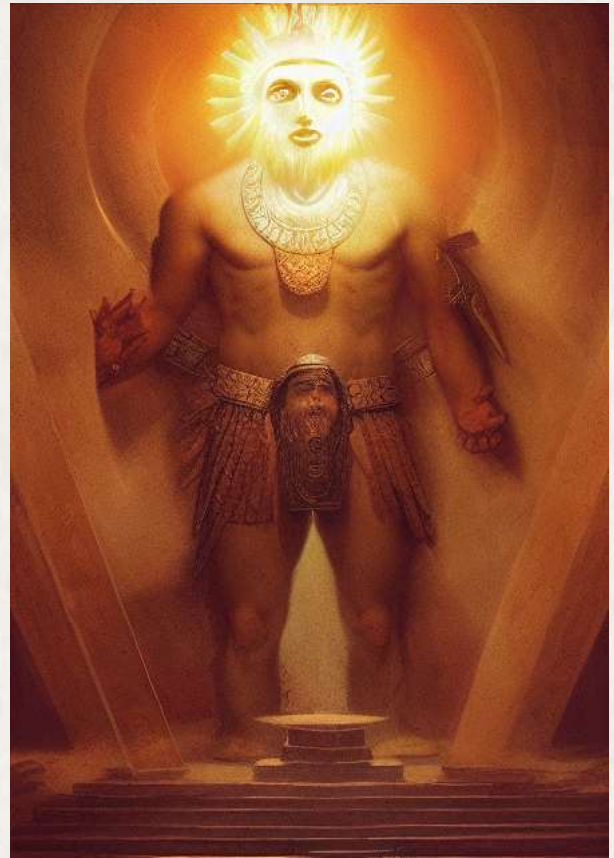
## SPHINX

*"Hello, little mice. Do you want to play a game? You will play the game, but I wonder if you want to?"*

Sphinxes are the secretive servants of Ar, which explains their link to riddles and time. In traditional cat fashion they do not hold any particular allegiance to the dark or civic gods, but unlike cats they strictly uphold the rules set by the gods charging them to guard something... which they then take patient delight in figuring out how to circumvent. Whether they actually circumvent them depends to a large extent on if they like the situation or not. Once free they enjoy some time relaxing and "holidaying", before returning into the timestream at some other suitable point to guard something else.

Sphinxes hate nothics and vice versa.

## EIDOLON (UNDEAD) AND SACRED STATUES



The undead divine temple guardians are present in some of the major temples. In Avon, Dymesos and Noria the high temples have eidolons protecting the space belonging to their goddess when she is absent. It is more rare for the other gods to have eidolons, but sacred statues may still become inhabited.

**Statues of gods**, when dedicated in a proper kathiérosis ceremony, become vessels for the gods, their messengers, or eidolons. What this means in practice is that there is awareness of what happens next to them, and this can trigger a reaction. In many cases this is merely that the divinities are aware if worshippers perform the correct rites, give them their annual theoxenia banquet feast, sing hymns, carry them in proper processions, and otherwise behave properly. If not, the divinities favour will turn elsewhere. For more serious transgressions an eidolon will be sent to deal with the situation. The link between a sacred statue of a god is direct, and it happens that people fall in love with them (at least the statues of Zêrunthia), or that their touch can heal or harm. Dishonouring or attacking one can be a major mistake.

## HAGS

*"So, dearest, let me tell you how it is done. I turned into a maidservant for the little would-be sorceress and helped her. Her pharmaka became the talk of the town! Healing salves, abortifacants, untraceable poisons... she swelled with pride, lay with the brother of an orator, counted her gold... until I informed on her to the archons. Haha! A trial for impiety and planning murder. She and her children were thrown over the cliff. Half of the jury had used her services.*

*Ah, the delicious guilt... and I can blackmail all of them now!"*

Hags are the daughters or sometimes transformed worshippers of Echtria, spreading her evil in the world.

The border between witches as sorcerers, warlocks, and hags is sometimes blurred, but hags work solely for Echtria while some witches are their own people. Hags sometimes take exception to this and sabotage their lives.

The Cult of Melinoë is a front for one or more-night hags that heal or solve problems for supplicants, but always for a terrible price.

## DOPPELGANGER (EIDOLON)

*Who I am? I am you, of course.*

Eidolons are shapeshifters that take the appearance of people. They can be a race of their own, or created whole cloth when somebody is just *too* beautiful, heroic, cruel or otherwise remarkable. In the latter case they try to take over their life or to sabotage it. In practice they work as 5e Doppelgangers.

Eidolons are untrustworthy, amoral and self-interested. The one rule they obey is that they do not rat out other shapeshifters: they will keep quiet about them, although they might well blackmail them or otherwise make use of their knowledge.

Eidolons are perhaps related to mimics, although either refuse to countenance the idea.

## NOTHICS (MYSTIKA)

*I know your secret, that you carry a secret. One that harasses you so much that you cannot bear not telling it. Let me help you: go and dig a hole in the Earth and whisper it there, and then fill up the hole. Your heart will be released. Nobody will hear it...*

Mystika are servants of Aïdôneus and Ar, endlessly seeking secrets.

A mystikos emerges when wizards learn too much, degenerating with the necrotic energies of the underworld. They are not undead, but neither quite alive. Warped and mad they seek more secrets – big and small, personal and sacred, magical and mundane. They can get obsessed with prophecies, trailing the involved people to understand the ramifications.

They are addicted to hidden knowledge and repelled by freely shared confessions. If somebody voluntarily reveals something hidden at a cost to themselves (e.g. telling other party members that they had pilfered some extra loot) in their presence they are driven away for a while. They also cannot resist mumbling and spilling secrets they glean from other people... especially if they are hurtful or will cause trouble.

## ERINYES (ALIAS FURIES AND THE EUMENIDES)



Charles Gleyre, *Pentheus Pursued by the Maenads* 1864

*There was a shout from the top of the ladder leaning against the temple roof: "Milos, I need more red!"*

*"Here is some red ochre, master."*

*"That will not do. I am painting the wings of the Eumenides. Only the bloodiest realgar will do."*

*"We could mix the ochre with cinnabar?"*

*"Do you want me dead?! I wouldn't dare to fake realgar on these ladies. Last painter who did a shoddy job lost his skin. Zêrunthia may forgive you for using ochre, but not the Eumenides."*

The Erinyes are the avenging "angels" of Echtria, Adrasteia and the gods in general. Normally residing in the underworld, they harass and punish souls for their misdeeds, but they truly awaken when they get the scent of a true wrongdoing – murder in the family, a dire breach of the rules of hospitality, oathbreaking, blasphemy or some other hubris. If the gods assent, they become the Eumenides and can pursue the wrongdoers across all of creation. Sometimes they are given constraints such as not killing the wrongdoer or innocent bystanders, something they hate but obey. Adrasteia, the goddess of retribution, keeps a tight leash on them.

They are aided by Horkos, the god of punishing wrongful oaths to the gods (one of Echtria's sons). He keeps track of what has been promised, and on the fifth of every month he has the power to intervene in the mortal world to deal with oathbreakers. He might curse them, or simply show up and push them off a cliff.

## LAMIA

*What I most remember about her was her touch. Sensual, but with a hidden strength belonging to the lion.*

Augustinos Chrysodactylos, *The Wedding Journey of Prince Hippias*

It is said that the first Lamia was a sorceress lover of Mainalios, but in a fit of jealousy Zêrunthia made her go mad and kill her children. Maddened by the experience she began to kidnap the children of others to replace hers, and to hide them she transformed them into jackals. For her crimes she transformed into a bestial creature, and in return she began to pursue wickedness.



The kidnapped children became the jackalweres, forever loyal to their “mother”.

There might hence be just one Lamia, or she has found a way of having daughters by mating with suitable men. Today they do not compulsively kidnap children (although they are delicious snacks) but instead aim for enslaving people wholesale (holding children hostage is incidentally an excellent way of ensuring cooperation...)

One myth says that Zêrunthia deprived the Lamia the ability to sleep (and this may be why she went mad and killed her noisy children). But Mainalios, saddened by her descent but still with feelings for her, gave her the ability to remove her eyes and store them in a jar to get peace.

## MINOTAUR

*When we returned to the beach, we found a minotaur grilling the body of Theages on a spit. When he saw us, he laughed: “More tender meat coming willingly! Welcome! Have a taste of your friend!” He threw the severed head of Aniketos to us like a jug. As we readied our weapons other minotaurs charged out of the forest behind us.*

Augustinos of Mesia, *The Wedding Journey of Prince Hippias*

The minotaurs are the descendants from Typhaon via his Goristo sons. They are violent, brutish and short-sighted. While rare, minotaur pirates and bandits have been encountered among the southern islands. There are stories that they come from an island even further south where their fearsome father resides.

## SUCCUBUS (LAMIA)



*Pleasure, a most mighty lure to evil.*

Plato, *Timaeus*, Section 69d (W. R. M. Lamb's translation)

Monsters that prey on the love and life-force of men abound; they are usually called Lamiai (confusing things with the other monster). They overlap with the more physically oriented Empusai. The succubus type of

monster mainly acts during sleep, but as their hold over somebody grows, they may start haunting their days too.

Stats: as standard Succubus. The dream succubae also have the ability to cast the Dream spell once per night.

## NEW MONSTERS

### AEACUS, UNDERWORLD JUDGE



*We were brought by the shadows into a vast chamber, filled with shades and skeletons. The only light came from the burning skulls floating above. A horrifying shadow, darker than the surrounding darkness and crowned with a seal of office presided on an onyx throne. It raised a skeletal hand and the murmuring of the dead ceased. “You have been brought here accused of the crime of Trespassing in the Underworld While Alive.”*

Augustinos Chrysodactylos, *The Three Princes of Mesia*

One of the servants of Aidioneus handling arrivals in the underworld. It looks like a skeleton crowned with a filigreed silver circlet, surrounded by black robes and mist – it is impossible to tell where one begins or ends – and carrying a sealed lead scrollcase with the Hidden Law of the underworld. It speaks with a chilling, authoritative voice and is able to enforce the rules of the underworld with curses. It usually presides over a court filled with shadows, spirits and undead.

Aeacus is a stickler for rules and justice. It enforces what is right pitilessly, and does not take frivolity well. The only thing that will rattle it is if rules and justice actually conflict. In that case he will come to a considered conclusion (he has the power to decide and will use it).

For stats, use a Lich. It can use its Frightening Gaze to compel a creature to speak the truth.

The Judge can bestow curses if somebody is unruly during proceedings. These automatically succeed if done in court and for a proper reason (although the proportionality to the misbehaviour may be strange).

- “I bestow the curse of politeness” (The cursed must get proper permission before entering any domicile and must always present themselves with their proper name).
- “I bestow the curse of stillness” (The cursed is near-paralyzed; to move they must succeed with a DC 15 wisdom saving throw to be able to perform each action.)
- “I bestow the curse of untying” (If the cursed sees a knot, they are compelled to untie it.)
- “I bestow the curse of spending” (Any money that the cursed doesn’t spend the same day they get it, disappears.)
- “I bestow the curse of death’s shadow” (A living cursed can be turned by clerics as though they were undead. If a friendly cleric turns undead, they are not able to exempt the cursed. They will detect as undead).
- “I bestow the curse of the proper face” (The cursed’s face turns into a ceramic mask, fitted over exposed muscle and bone.)
- “I bestow the curse of anonymity” (Nobody remembers the cursed between meetings. Each time they encounter someone, that person believes it is the very first time.)
- “I bestow the curse of hungry tears” (Instead of food, the cursed subsists off of making people cry.)
- “I bestow the curse of daily death” (When killed for the first time each day, the wounds heal and they return to perfect health. If they are not killed once a day, they are permanently slain. If they are killed twice in a day... they are dead.)





## ALASTŌR

*Grievous for mortals is the stain of kindred blood. For the murderers are dogged by woes harmonious with their deeds, sent by the gods upon their houses.*

Euripides, Medea. L 1268–1270; David Kovacs' translation

Sometimes a crime causes a sentient curse: there is an act so sinful that it causes a moral pollution that persists possibly for generations. The alastōr is a personified family curse that exacts punishment for murder by causing new bloodshed and ensuring the continuity of guilt in the family. Alastors are created by and answer to Adrasteia, but once they exist, they single-mindedly pursue their vendettas.

The alastōr has the appearance of a ghostly shade, but mostly exist on the ethereal plane. From there it can whisper into the dreams and thoughts of people involved in the guilt. Like a Succubus it can charm a guilty or wrathful person, making them more likely to commit acts of vengeance. Then the cycle continues. It can also influence oracles and scrying to provide the messages it wants.

There exist rites to banish alastōrs, typically by performing a ritual feast where the alastōr is invited as a guest, offered water, a meal and salt. A piglet is sacrificed to Agêtōr. Then the person performing the rite walks away without looking back, followed by ritual

### ALASTŌR

*Medium undead, any evil alignment*

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 45 (10d8)

**Speed** 0 ft. (never walks, just stands ominously), fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

**Damage Resistances** Acid, Fire, Lightning, Thunder; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

**Damage Immunities** Cold, Necrotic, Poison

**Condition Immunities** Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Any languages known by family members

**Proficiency bonus** +2

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Ethereal Sight.** The alastōr can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

**Incorporeal Movement.** The alastōr can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

**Telepathic Bond.** The alastōr can communicate telepathically with anybody involved in the guilt. This ignores the range restriction on its telepathy when communicating with a creature. The two don't even need to be on the same plane of existence. The bond also allows it to intrude into dreams and manipulate them.

purifications in a spring. If performed properly so that Adrasteia regards the share of the guilt the person carries is smaller than the atonement, this might erase the trail the alastōr is following, ensuring the safety of that person (basically it has the effect of turn undead on the alastōr for that person). The rest of the family involved may need to perform their own banishings, unless they find a great enough purification or atonement to outweigh the gathered guilt.

## DRACONES OF AINAIREUS

Anaireus usually travels incognito, but sometimes he likes making a grand entrance by showing up with his golden chariot. The chariot is drawn by two giant snakes. Giant snakes made out of lava and jewels, with vicious fangs dripping fire.

The dracones start out as mere **fire snakes** but as the god needs a steed, he blesses them. Afterwards they often remain big and the god doesn't care too much what they do or who they eat. Some might have escaped from his underground lair to cause trouble in the mortal world.

Sufficiently strong spellcasters can entreat the god to send the chariot by pouring the right libations of expensive drugs into a fire. However, Ainaireus is not a coach service: he will only use it to move mortals for very good reasons that further his plans.

If killed, the snakes provide 1d6 x 1,000 gp worth of cursed jewels – that will bring bad luck or chaos to the life of anybody owning them.

### ACTIONS

**Withering Touch.** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic damage.

**Etherealness.** The alastōr enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

**Charm.** One humanoid the alastōr can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys the alastōr's verbal or telepathic commands. If the target suffers any harm or receives a suicidal command, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to this alastōr's Charm for the next 24 hours.

The alastōr can have only one target charmed at a time. If it charms another, the effect on the previous target ends. **Legendary Actions**

**Possession** (recharge 6): One humanoid that the alastōr can see within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the alastōr; the alastōr then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The alastōr now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The alastōr can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn undead, and it retains its alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the alastōr ends it as a bonus action, or the alastōr is turned or forced out by an effect like the dispel evil and good spell. When the possession ends, the alastōr reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body. The target is immune to this alastōr's Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

## DRAONE

Large elemental, Neutral Evil

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 119 (14d10+42)

**Speed** 40 ft. slithering, 120 ft. flying

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws** DEX +5, CON +3

**Damage vulnerabilities** Cold

**Damage Resistances** Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

**Damage Immunities** Fire, Acid, Poison

**Condition Immunities** Poisoned, Prone

**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Ignan

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Heated Body.** A creature that touches the snake or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 10 (2d10) fire damage.

**Water Susceptibility.** For every 5 ft. the snake moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 1 cold damage.

**Universal travel.** When Anaireus allows it, the snakes can fly to any part of the world.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The snake makes three attacks: one with its bite, one constrict attack, and one with its tail.

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 9) piercing damage plus 10 (2d10) fire damage.

**Tail.** Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (2d10) fire damage.

**Constrict.** Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage, and the target is Grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the creature is Restrained, and the snake can't constrict another target.



## EALE

Large beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 12 (hide)

**Hit Points** 59 (7d10+12)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** DEX +4, CON +5

**Condition Immunities** Petrified

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** None

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** the eale makes three attacks – two horn attacks, and one hoof or tusk attack

**Horn:** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8+4) piercing damage

**Hooves.** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6+4) bludgeoning damage

**Tusk:** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6+3) slashing damage.



The Eale (sometimes called a Yale or centicore) is an antelope-like animal the size of a hippo, with an elephant tail, black body, lion's mane, boar tusks, and two long horns that can swivel and move. Eales are natural enemies with basilisks, and both species tend to attack each other on sight.

According to myth, Echtria created the basilisk as a revenge on prince Thalamon of Leros, who had killed her dragon son Kappanos Deioneus (the Ravager). The basilisk began to decimate the Lerosians, who prayed for help. Mainalios responded and created the Eale.



## EMPUSA

### EMPUSA

Medium Fiend (Shapechanger), Neutral Evil

**Armor Class** 12 (hide)

**Hit Points** 59 (7d10+12)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

**Skills** Deception +9, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +9, Stealth +7

**Damage Resistances** Cold, Fire, Lightning, Poison; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

**Senses** Darkvision 60, passive Perception 15

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Telepathy 60ft.

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Shapechanger.** The empusa can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into its true form. Without wings, the fiend loses its flying speed. Other than its size and speed, its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

### ACTIONS

**Claw (Fiend Form Only).** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft.. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) psychic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken, and the empusa regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a Long Rest. The target dies if this Effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

**Charm.** One humanoid the empusa can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys the fiend's verbal or telepathic commands. If the target suffers any harm or receives a suicidal command, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to this fiend's Charm for the next 24 hours.

The fiend can have only one target charmed at a time. If it charms another, the effect on the previous target ends.

**Draining Kiss.** The fiend kisses a creature charmed by it or a willing creature. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 32 (5d10 + 5) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

**Etherealness.** The fiend magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

### REACTIONS

**Vulnerability to cursing:** being somewhat insecure and cowardly, they react badly to disparaging words or even loud curses: they have disadvantage against resisting Intimidation, spells like Vicious Mockery, bardic insults and the like, usually escaping to the Ethereal plane immediately if they fail.

Empousai (not to be confused with the goddess Empusa of shapeshifting, who they revere and might be their mother or ancestor) is a succubus-like shapeshifter. In their true form they have wings, a leg of brass, a leg of a donkey and flaming red hair. They have an insatiable hunger for the blood of young men. An empusa prefers to shapeshift into a beautiful form, seduce young men, suck their blood when they are asleep – or just devour them.

Being somewhat insecure and cowardly, they react badly to disparaging words or even loud curses: they have disadvantage against resisting Intimidation, spells like Vicious Mockery, bardic insults and the like, usually escaping to the Ethereal plane.

They are usually doing the work of Echtria, although a few seem to be on missions from Aidioneus.

## HIPPAELEKTRYON

A hybrid creature that is half-horse (front), half-rooster (hind). It has wings, and is yellow-golden with a golden aura that deters undead.



One of Laossoos' monster-steeds, used by his demigods or favoured heroes. According to the myth, Aidoneus had kidnapped Tarana, one of Koruphasia's favourites. Koruphasia went to Laossoos to ask for help, mating his sacred rooster with her own steed to make the original hippaelektryon. Laossoos sent his son Suidas with the hippaelektryon down to the underworld where its bright light drove away the shades. Suidas found Tarana and returned her to the celestial city, falling in love with her during the trip. From their union, it is said, sprang the kings of Noria. Koruphasia let Laossoos keep the hippaelektryon, from which an entire race of golden steeds emerged.

**Stats:** As hippogriff CR 1. Replace attacks with bludgeoning attack from warhorse, add trample and turn undead as actions.

## HĒLIOKÁNTHAROS

### HĒLIOKÁNTHAROS

*Large Beast, Neutral*

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 68 (8d10+24)

**Speed** 20 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

**Senses** Blindsight 50', Passive Perception 10

**Languages** none

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

### ACTIONS

**Gore** (Horn). *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 13 (2d6+6) piercing damage.

**Ram** (No horn). *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 11 (2d4+6) bludgeoning damage.

**Stomp**. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one prone creature. Hit: 11 (2d4+6) bludgeoning damage.



A giant black dung beetle; males have horns. A voracious (for dung) insect living in some remote regions. Normally it spends time collecting dung from animals and often seeks out big monsters that leave great piles: finding one may require going where there is great danger. While not too fast on the ground and only able to fly clumsily, it can fly anywhere – including to the celestial realm. They can also dig, and are equally able to dig into the netherworld. In principle they can be tamed (DC 25 Animal Handling over a month) and used as steeds.

One of the stories about the beetle is that it came about following the trail of the revelries of Manalios. Eating the sacred dung, it grew bigger, forever inebriated and forever keeping nature clean. When Manalios left for the higher world, it just followed, not knowing it was impossible. The god found the creature amusing and blessed it. But when it tried to eat the sun out of mistake it was burned black, and fell down back to earth.

**Another story** explains the enmity between beetles and eagles.

(Stats based on the one in "Aigyptos: A Gazetteer for 5th Edition" copyright 2021, Skirmisher Publishing LLC.)

## LAELAPS AND THE TEUMESSIAN FOX



A dog (presumably an offspring of Philonikos) that belongs to Ichnaea the hunter. He is the perfect hunting dog that can catch any prey with no fail – with one exception. Echtria created the Teumessian fox, a giant, man-eating fox that had the power to never be caught by anything. Since then, Laelaps and the fox have had an endless and paradoxical feud.

Stats: Laelaps as a **Yeth Hound** but good-aligned, is not banished by sunlight, and with demigod powers: once a day it can start tracking a target and *cannot* fail unless the target has direct divine protection.

The Fox also as a Yeth Hound, but able to teleport arbitrarily far as an action, even from grapples or other immobilization. Instead of Baleful Baying it can cast Pass Without a Trace.

### MORMO

A mormo is an underworld spirit of fear. Owl-shaped, with a skull wreathed in long locks, and deep piercing eyes it frightens people or invisibly manipulates them into harming themselves.

Generally, they come about when young people kill themselves, becoming vengeful about all their lost opportunities in the underworld. They feed on negative emotions they trigger in other people or among family members after they drive people to suicide or cause lethal accidents.

Mormos are semi-intangible and often scout around invisibly for targets. Some haunt the spots where they died, others fly widely to find interesting targets.



## MORMO

*Small Undead, Chaotic Evil*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 58 (13d8)

**Speed** 40 ft. flying

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

**Saving Throws** WIS +2, CHA +5

**Skills** Intimidation +5

**Damage Resistances** Acid, Fire, Lightning, Thunder; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

**Damage Immunities** Cold, Necrotic, Poison

**Condition Immunities** Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained

**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Only languages it knew in life

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Incorporeal Movement.** The Mormo can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

**Light sensitivity.** While in bright light, the Mormo has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The Mormo's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). The Mormo can innately cast the following spells, requiring no verbal or material components:

- At will: detect thoughts, fear, invisibility (self)
- 2/day each: charm person, command, confusion

## ACTIONS

**Corrupting Touch.** Melee Spell Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (3d6 + 2) necrotic damage.

**Horrifying Visage.** Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the Mormo that can see her must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if the Mormo is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the Mormo's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours.



(Image from [Theia Mania](#) by Li Österberg)



## MYRMEKES

*The first thing we noticed was the glittering at the far end of the tunnel. Dilos rushed ahead, hungry for gold. Suddenly the tunnel floor below him disappeared and he vanished with a scream. I ran up to it to hand him a rope, but when looking over the edge I came face to face with chopping golden mandibles and a weird, metallic yeasty smell. Behind me Aelas screamed as the ceiling caved in, cutting us off from the exit. The myrmekes swarmed up through the hole.*

Anaireus was once robbed while travelling the world. He transformed his robbers and their family into ants, cursed to always hunger for gold. These became the first myrmekes, giant ants guarding gold deposits.

A myrmekos looks like a pony-sized ant with golden carapace. They hunt for animals, but also for gold. They live in nests containing a few dozen individuals guarding a queen laying the eggs of the next generation.

Their nests contain treasure they have gathered from travellers or dug up from the ground. When encountered, the myrmekes smell gold and will attack the person carrying the most gold first.



## MYRMEKOS

*Large Beast, Unaligned*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 52 (7d10+14)

**Speed** 40 ft. walking or climbing

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	1 (-5)	9 (-1)	2 (-4)

**Senses** Blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** None

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Keen Smell.** The myrmekos has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell. This includes smelling gold...

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The myrmekos makes one bite attack and one sting attack.

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8+2) slashing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and the myrmekos can't bite a different target.

**Sting.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage plus 22 (4d10) poison damage, or half as much poison damage with a successful DC 12 Constitution saving throw.

### LAIR AND LAIR ACTIONS

Myrmekes nests are underground labyrinths in gold-bearing hills. Unlit tunnels are dug out of the soil, linking chambers containing the ants and the treasures they have collected. They will defend their nests to the death. Inside the nest the ants can run on walls and roofs too.

#### Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the myrmekes nest takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the nest can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Cause a cave-in blocking tunnels or a chamber. Anybody inside a chamber takes 2d10 damage, unless they make a DEX save at DC 15 to either jump out of the way (in tunnel) or take half damage (in chamber).
- Reflections from gold or other bright surfaces (the myrmekes like those too) cause disadvantage on perception checks for intruders, and advantage to myrmekes stealth.
- Workers quickly dig an extra tunnel allowing an ambush from behind, or acting as a pit trap (DC 10 to notice, 2d6 fall damage if not avoided) under intruders.

#### Regional Effects

The region containing a myrmekes nest is often scoured of mid-sized animals, and often kept clean from wandering lone humans too. Locals will warn about the fierce creatures, or boast about treasures bravely stolen from them.

## PSYCHOPOMPS

*The man looked surprised when he saw himself incinerated and scattered to the winds. "Hegetoridas of Numa, I greet you." He turned and saw a beautiful youth holding a staff*



entwined by snakes. “You lived a virtuous life and died with honour trying to help others. Killed by divine fire, even.”

“Thank you, kind spirit. But I fear I have nothing to give you, and my burial will not take place.” He gestured sadly towards the vastness of the mountain landscape where his literal dust was now spread.

“Ah, true. But sometimes seeing true bravery is a richer reward than any silver. You stood up to Force and Authority, something I have never seen anybody else do. As for your burial, you were incinerated in sacred fire. Even now your timid travel companions are rushing down the mountain with the story of your demise: your name will live on for ages. You will enter the Celestial City as an honoured soul.”

“I assume the gods will laugh at my story: died trying to enter the city, immediately invited afterward. Nevertheless, I will be able to make the entreaty I came for.”

“So it shall be. Now, first we need to handle some administration. If you would come this way...”



Psychopomps are beings guiding the newly dead to the afterlife.

Depending on who died and under what circumstances this may be a mere shade for a common farmer, one of the Lampadi (underworld nymphs) for a good person, or a semi-divine being like the Agathos daimons (noble spirits) or Macaria

(goddess of the blessed death) for great heroes or people who had the honour of being personally killed by a god. Less lucky people may meet the Keres (winged harpy-like ladies with gnashing teeth handling violent deaths on the battlefield) or the Erinyes (if they died with great dishonour). All can be recognized by the emblem of their office which gives them free passage through all the realms as messengers of Aidioneus.

Normally the psychopomp will show up at the moment of death (or visible just before, as a character is on their last death save) and keep the soul out of trouble. They may comfort them, berate them, or just keep around until the burial rites are properly done and they can move to their final destination. They do expect payment to make the transition easy, which is why coins are placed on the eyes or under the tongue of the dead. If burial does not happen properly the soul may wander as an unhappy ghost, followed by an equally unhappy psychopomp (more powerful psychopomps may decide to bring souls in anyway after a fixed time: they do have a bit of leeway).

Psychopomps also report back seeing undead to the Underworld Judges. While most seem to be lost in the administration or ignored, if there is a “unlawful” undead about (that is, one Aidioneus does not approve of) the Underworld may send psychopomps to catch it – or tell mortals to deal with it.

Stats: as a shadow, ghost, lantern archon, Erinyes or other suitable being, but only existing on the Ethereal

Plane. They can always find a path to travel to the realms of the dead.

## SIREN



The sirens are bird-women singing the most beautiful song imaginable, entrancing sailors to throw themselves into the sea to reach them and invariably drowning.

Once they were handmaidens to Koruphasia, singing for her. But when Tarana was kidnapped, she gave them wings and sent them out to search. But they tired of the task and settled on an island. When the whereabouts of Tarana was found by some centaurs they realized that their laziness would be punished if they returned, so they remained on the island, becoming beautiful monsters.

Sirens hate Centaurs and do their best to kill them. They also despair when they encounter someone unmoved by their song, or worse, better at music than they are. There are stories about bards and Ichtyophagoi entering high-stakes singing contests with them, usually with tragic endings.

Stats-wise, use a [Harpy](#). Add Performance +5.



# RACES

## ICHTHYOPHAGOI



*These Fish-eaters live on fish; and hence their name. They all live on boats and have great skill in the art of catching fish by hand, crook, arrow or net. Some have made nets also for this kind of fishing; most of them about two stades in length. They make the nets from the bark of the date-palm, twisting the bark like twine. They eat the fish raw, just as they take them from the water, that is, the more tender kinds; the larger ones, which are tougher, they dry in the sun till they are quite sere and then pound them and make a flour and bread of them; others even make cakes of this flour. They collect also in many places crabs and oysters and shell-fish. There are natural salts on the islands; from these they make oil. The richest among them have built huts on their raft; they collect the bones of any large fish which the sea casts up, and use them in place of beams.*

Augustinos Chrysodactylos, History of the Eastern Lands

Ichthyophagoi live on rafts or boats in the shallow regions of the Eastern Sea, or on piling houses in lagoons. They dive for fish and other trade goods – pearls, shells suitable for monster deterrence trumpets, pickled sea cucumbers, exotic spell ingredients, etc. They may also be involved in trade, piracy, smuggling, and other shady activities depending on need and opportunity.

### SINGING MARINE NOMADS

Each boat houses a family, and related and friendly families form flotillas sailing together. Flotillas meet at certain mooring points at particular times of the year, performing trade, weddings, festivals and other ceremonies. They have a unique language (Aquan) and many songs for different occasions.

According to their stories, they are descended from the escort of the princess of Okenia as she travelled to marry the king of Noria. But her beauty enthralled Mainalios, who took her. The escort could not return home, so instead they followed the signs given by a giant

stingray (seen as the messenger of the good sea gods) to their current dwellings.

While looked down on by the land-dwellers as primitive and rustic, the Ichthyophagoi are highly adapted to their life and know many secrets of the sea. Some of their songs are especially good for repelling (or calling) sea-monsters. They have bard-oracles that ingest a sacred sea-bream that gives them visions and new songs from the deep.

They are adapted for diving. They can hold their breath far longer than other humans, and see better underwater. They also tend to have ruptured eardrums due to the diving, often making them hard of hearing.

### ICHTHYOPHAGOI TRAITS

**Ability Score Increase.** Two different ability scores of your choice increase by 1.

**Skills.** You gain proficiency in one skill of your choice.

**Feats.** You gain on feat of your choice.

**Age.** They live about as long as humans, typically 50–70 years.

**Size.** Ichthyophagoi tend to be short and slender. Their size is Medium.

**Speed.** Walk 30'', swim 20''. (This also avoids disadvantage when fighting underwater, (PHB 198))

**Languages.** They typically speak their own native language, or trade languages like Koine or Orc.

**Diving adaptations.** Unlike normal humanoids (who have multiplier x1: PHB 183), Ichthyophagoi can hold their breath 1+(CON bonus)x2 minutes, and if given time to prepare this can be extended to 1+(CON bonus)x4 minutes.

**Underwater sight.** They have double the visibility range underwater (DMG 117).

**Native to water.** They have advantage on athletics checks to avoid damage when falling into water (TCOE 170) and other swimming-related athletics checks.

## KYNOKEPHALOI

*The slave trader continued "And now for someone exotic! A fierce warrior from beyond the sea! Able to fight like three men but more loyal than your own dog!" His helpers brought a chained being onto the wooden stage. It was covered in black fur, yet stood upright. The face was like a dog's, snarling menacingly with bloodshot eyes. "How can I be sure that is not just a lycanthrope you are trying to foist on me?" Clemenēs of Decamar asked sceptically. The slave trader pulled out a small silver dagger.*

Eanos of Aureta, Report to the Tyrant about the recent disturbance in the Rose Agora

The Kynocephaloi are dog-headed people living in the far Eastern Sea. Primitive and little understood, they communicate through barking, wear the skins of wild





animals and live by hunting on their islands. They are also known as Hemicynes (half-dogs) or Cynamolgi (dog-milkers).

Anatomically they are similar to humans except their canine heads with sharp teeth, and (sometimes) tails. They do not have claws but instead entirely human hands.

### PRIMITIVE HUNTERS

The Kynocephaloi usually live in caves in the high mountains. They do not practice any trade but live by hunting. They do not use fire: when they have killed an animal they roast it in the sun into some kind of jerky, or eat it raw. They also rear sheep, goats, and asses, drinking the milk of the sheep and whey made from it. While more carnivorous than herbivorous they eat certain exotic fruits that they also collect and dry. They rarely travel voluntarily, but are sometimes grabbed by slavers around the East Sea.

Kynocephaloi are clannish, parochial and down to earth - not too dissimilar to any other humans. A few are violent or have wanderlust, and they might travel elsewhere or have to flee their home mountains.

### KYNOCEPHALOI NAMES

Their own names are bark-like sounds very hard for humans to imitate. Outside their own culture, usually as slaves, they are typically given dog names in Koine: Horme (Eager), Aura (Breeze), Hormenos (Impulse), Methapon (Pursuer), Egertes (Vigilant), Korax (Raven), Marpsas, Labros (Fierce), Eubolous (Shooter), Tigris, Laelaps (Storm), Aello (Whirlwind), and Arcas (Bear).



### KYNOCEPHALOI TRAITS

**Ability Score Increase.** Two different ability scores of your choice increase by 1.

**Skills.** You gain proficiency in one skill of your choice.

**Feats.** You gain on feat of your choice.

**Age.** They live longer than humans, typically 170-200 years.

**Size.** Kynocephaloi tend to be somewhat taller than humans, but not by much. Their size is Medium.

**Speed.** Base walking speed is 30 feet.

**Languages.** They typically only speak their own native language, but kynocephaloi with outside contact have learned to speak in broken Koine or Orc.

**Keen Senses.** Kynocephaloi have advantage of Perception rolls involving smell and hearing. They are however color-blind.

**Bite.** Kynocephaloi can bite like a dog. **Bite:** Melee Weapon Attack: +DEX modifier to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: (1d4 + STR modifier) piercing damage.



## GM TIPS

### GENERAL NOTES: BLOOD, SEX, DRACHMAS, AND RENOWN

*Praxagora: I want all to have a share of everything and all property to be in common; there will no longer be either rich or poor; [...] I shall begin by making land, money, everything that is private property, common to all. [...]*

*Blepyrus: But who will till the soil?*

*Praxagora: The slaves.*

*Aristophanes, Ecclesiazusae, line 590-591 & 597-598 &*

*651*

This setting is intended to be a mix of the mythical heroic age and the Greek archaic period (800-480 BC). It is pre-classical: there are not yet any philosophers or philosophical systems (although individual thinkers similar to the pre-Socratics might exist); while there are international trade networks there are no world maps or visions of empires; the penteconter is the height of shipbuilding.

This setting is not intended to be historically accurate but it aims at making something related to the actual stories<sup>5</sup>. It is intended to be simultaneously gritty and high fantasy. While settings like *Mythical odysseys of Theros* borrow imagery from this era, they leave out much of the everyday – how most people live hard lives as farmers, the widespread (and unremarked) use of slaves, how even the kings were living lives we today would regard as very poor, the low place of women. This is a culture that is simultaneously somewhat familiar, being the remote ancestor of the modern western world, and very alien. Animal and human sacrifice. Very different nudity, sexual and gender mores. There was no real word for religion, yet the affairs of the gods were everywhere. This is a world with customs and ways of thinking that *should* feel somewhat uncomfortable to modern players.

D&D 5e is pretty ideal for playing as a Greek-style hero. You are larger than life, stronger, better and more awesome than most. However, this comes at the price of becoming involved in myth: once the eyes of the gods are on you will have an exciting life until it ends – likely tragically. That is the price of greatness, and heroes treasure their future renown far more than life itself.

### METAPLOT: PANTA REI

*Truly indeed, when the end of this age has elapsed and been passed by,*

*straightaway dying is much better than staying alive.*

*Plenty of horrible things will arise in the spirit and soon the*

*home will be ruined and sad poverty's toils await.*

Mimnermos Fragment Two

**The world is cyclic:** lots of ancient ruins from the golden age... and from long before. There is no beginning or end of the world. The balance of power is also gradually shifting: the High Sky God is slowly losing his grip, and the more destructive ones are gaining in power.

These cycles are slow, but since **the world has existed for infinite time** and will remain infinitely long it does not matter. There is **no actual progress**: the idea that future societies could work in ways never seen in the past is simply alien. Everything that happens have happened before and will happen again, in slightly different permutations. Still, inventions and heroic deeds happen and will be remembered for centuries even if they eventually will be forgotten.

**Worship and belief are not necessary for the gods**, they gain the strength from *how* people live their lives. Were the gods to deluge the world (which already has happened in the past) they would still be in charge, although the disaster would doubtlessly change the balance of power. They desire worship because of egos and the ability to influence the world around their believers, not because of any need.

While the gods are immortal, immortality can change. There will always be the 12 roles, but new individuals can ascend to the throne with enough luck and deviousness. There might be traces here and there of past, different versions of the 12.



<sup>5</sup> Making a direct facsimile of the Greek world is entirely possible, it also limits the creativity of the DM – while there is endless source material and a fair bit of leeway, players will know what to expect. Given that the D&D system forces some changes or retcons I felt it was better to create something different yet strongly Greek-inspired. Not all my choices turned out to be fortuitous, but it was interesting.





Thomas Cole, *Desolation* 1836

**Anaireus is trying to break the cycle** and change the world from a cyclic world to *anything* else – a linear world of progress, a branching mythical multiverse, or even cause it to end permanently. Unseating the High God and the current pantheon in favour of the dark gods is just a hobby. But this plot is a vast rebellion against the Grey Judges not even he dares to state openly.

**Echthria is working hard to undermine the social order**, creating a more competitive and gender-equal era ruled by her hated/beloved wife. While Agêtôr focuses on Anaireus it is Echthria he needs to watch. She is unleashing monsters that force more fighting and competition, especially since she has found the adventurers fighting against the monsters often become usurpers and underminers of social order themselves. She is also pitting the gods against each other, with great effect. At worst she has fun, at best she changes the world... not necessarily to the better, but she does not care.

## MORTALS AND GODS

*That fate the Gods prepared; they spin the thread*

*Of man's destruction, that in after days*

*The bard may make the sad event his theme.*

The Odyssey, translated by William Cowper. Book VIII,

Lines 710–713

The setting is in a sense “god-rich”: there are gods around that interact with mortals to an even greater degree than in most D&D settings. Much of the world is “god-centred”.

Yet starting PCs are unlikely to be involved with the gods. Sure, they may have a lineage since great-grandmother is said to have been ravished by Laossoos, and they have seen oracles in the temple. Some may even have encountered a wandering god. But they are beneath

the gods notice at first. Pious characters may get favourable omens and sometimes notice the presence of divinity but it is not too different from normal life. Even clerics invoking divine powers are mostly functionaries: the gods are vaguely aware of their work, but as long as nothing unusual happens it is not too personal.

Eventually the unusual happens, heroic or tragic deeds are done, and the PCs begin to come to the attention of the gods. At this point the omens become more salient. Strangers may offer cryptic advice. The world turns more mythic – which can be deadly, since a god that dislikes the PCs may well cause dramatic trouble. Or at least send a monster to test them.

Basically, the level of interaction with the gods will escalate the more the PCs interact with the divine interventions. Somebody wanting a normal quiet life should back away from them. As they go up in level, they will encounter minor divinities and their servants, get embroiled in their plots, and soon find themselves vastly outclassed but with some excitingly dramatic fate. Most heroes accept that with solemn resolve.

Game-wise, having opposing and supporting gods elevates the story to mythical levels. Keep track of what the PCs do and how well they respect/disrespect the different gods. Over time they will develop positive or negative relationships to the divine realm that will drive further adventure. A PC piously sacrifices at the altar of the sea-gods? When they are shipwrecked, let a miraculous piece of wood (or a dolphin) carry them to safety. A PC makes reckless decisions despite well-meaning advice? Koruphasia may want to send some challenges their way that can only be resolved by self-control. The goddess of olives feels like she has been slighted? She may make the next meal truly painful. Plunder a sacred grove? You may find yourself being polymorphed into an animal until another god undoes it.

## VIOLENCE

*Peneleos and Lycon now met in close fight, for they had missed each other with their spears. They had both thrown without effect, so now they drew their swords. Lycon struck the plumed crest of Peneleos' helmet but his sword broke at the hilt, while Peneleos smote Lycon on the neck under the ear. The blade sank so deep that the head was held on by nothing but the skin, and there was no more life left in him. Meriones gave chase to Acamas on foot and caught him up just as he was about to mount his chariot; he drove a spear through his right shoulder so that he fell headlong from the car, and his eyes were closed in darkness. Idomeneus speared Erymas in the mouth; the bronze point of the spear went clean through it beneath the brain, crashing in among the white bones and smashing them up. His teeth were all of them knocked out and the blood came gushing in a stream from both his eyes; it also came gurgling up from his mouth and nostrils, and the darkness of death enfolded him round about.*

*Homer, The Illiad, Book XVI 335–350*

D&D is a violent game. While it is possible to focus on the non-violent aspects and bring interesting stories to life, it did evolve from fighting monsters and stealing their treasure. This rank ancestry is not always a disadvantage. The infamous “murder-hobo” is not far from many Greek heroes (consider Theseus and Pirithous and their attempt to forcibly marry daughters of Zeus...) While this setting is not intended to encourage *that* level of lawlessness, it is never far from chaotic violence. Disagreements are often settled by fights. Sometimes these are honest duels bonding warriors in mutual admiration, sometimes they are little more than bullying, robbery and murder.

While the game system of D&D 5e makes wounds relatively manageable for PCs with a few levels, commoners are still vulnerable. Do not forget to describe in gory detail what happens to bandits opposing the PCs (“You recognize that squelching sound. It is your brother the druid in wolf form eating the liver of someone...”)



Dan Diffendale: Tydeus eating Melanippus' brains  
Etruscan terracotta high relief on the central column  
plaque of Temple A Pyrgi, the port of Caere. Ca. 470–460  
BCE Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome, Italy



## LOVE



John William Godward, *The Old Old Story* 1903

*What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.*

Pericles

Sex and love are important element in Greek stories, and drive much of the plot. This can be tricky in a roleplaying game since (1) it is hard to plan for unless players are fine at being told who their characters are attracted to, and (2) it might be outside the comfort zone of many players.

The approach I took in my campaign was to have a number of romantic options all over the place in terms of suitability, agency and reciprocity (not to mention type of being) and letting things take their course. At the same time the marriage to the widow that starts the second part has nothing to do with love and everything to do with law and politics.

One way to use romance is to entice a PC to overcome challenges to be with their loved one. Another obvious one is to get a vulnerability that can be threatened. Another one is for a beloved NPC to demonstrate an agenda of their own – not necessarily anything bad or hidden, but something that adds to the complexity of the plot. If the dryad lover of a PC hates the thought of

forests being harmed their relationship may make the PC try to protect the trees regardless of their other agenda. Or relatives-in-law may now demand help against their enemies. Finally, the lover may well turn out to be resourceful and able to get the PC out of trouble when they most need it.

Another thing to consider is children. Heroes frequently leave children behind. They are important for ensuring that the family lives on, that somebody may avenge their parent if needed, and of course someone to protect – or sacrifice if it is truly necessary.

## FAMILY

*A man whose father was away from home fell under a heavy indictment and was sentenced to death. As he went away, he exhorted everyone not to tell his father, else he would beat him to death.*

Jests of Hierocles

Characters are embedded in families, clans, and tribes: they cannot break free from this fact. They might hate or fear relatives, but they are expected to protect or avenge them. To break with one's family is tantamount to breaking a sacred oath, and will reduce the person. To attack family is to raise the ire of the gods. Yet handling family is hard, and may lead to crossed allegiances. Life is also deadly: family members may be lost no matter what you do.

Sometimes tragedy comes from loving too many people.

When making PCs, make sure they have family in their backstories or give them relatives whether they want them or not. A character with no family is at a serious disadvantage in society: make sure the player understands this. People will treat them worse, since they have nobody to back them up, and there will be nobody praying at their grave when they are gone. Conversely, having a detailed family should also be an advantage – there are people to borrow horses from, who can act as go-betweens or moral support.



# HONOUR



*Pleasures are transitory, but honour is immortal.*

Periander of Corinth

Heroes care about honour foremost. They gain honour by doing honourable deeds – not necessarily nice, smart or good deeds, but deeds that resound down the ages, show their character and integrity, follow the laws of gods and men. It is not mere pride, but respect bestowed by others.

In many ways the [Greek honour concepts](#) are similar to D&D. Performing great deeds requires *Arete* – skills and excellence. These deeds gain *Timé*: loot, experience points and visible success. These in turn help achieve *Kleos* – gaining character levels and becoming a more awesome and memorable character.

Losing honour is like losing a character level – if not literally, it should *feel* as hurtful. The main way to recover is to perform new great deeds, often to undo the loss. When Heracles killed his family, he was shamed, and to restore it he undertook his 12 labours that were more than enough to clear his name. That his madness was due to a curse and not his own fault is irrelevant: only results matter. If the king takes a prize away from you, it is you who loses honour.

Of course, this only applies to aristocrats and heroes. Normal people may certainly want to have a good reputation, but they do not live and die by it. That is why they are not as remembered and do not hold great estate in the afterlife.



## RULES AND GAME BALANCE ISSUES

*The two goddesses watched the fight in the reflection pool with some interest.*

*“That mortal shows promise,” Koruphasia said. “Such bravery and skill.”*

*“He is peerless in this battle,” Pitatanis agreed with some disapproval. “It doesn’t tax him enough. We should make it a proper challenge.”*

*Koruphasia nodded and reached into the pool, stirring up a dark shadow behind the warrior.*

The basic idea is to focus on non-casters. D&D 5<sup>th</sup> edition tends to make nearly every class a bit of a caster. I choose to treat this as secret techniques and rites they know – and prefer to keep secret, since others react badly to them.

One corollary of not having many casters and making clerics rare as adventurers is the lack of healing. Using

Medicine becomes much more important. Healing potions become worth their weight in gold.

It is also worth noting that monsters that in standard D&D would relatively easily be dealt with by casters (like ones with damage resistance to nonmagical attacks) now pose a greater threat.

The smaller set of PC classes can be compensated by having more skilled companion NPCs.





## ALTERNATIVES/SURPRISES



There are many other ways of spinning the setting. Here are some based on changing the fundamental assumptions.

### AGÊTÔR THE LOVER

One of the drivers of Greek myths are the many, many, *many* dalliances of Zeus and their messy consequences. As described Agêtôr is a more of a faithful husband. What if that is not true? Unlike the open secret of Zeus indiscretions this is something Agêtôr would work hard to hide. Keeping a secret from the goddess of wisdom (or worse, from the dark god of oracles who might want to tip her off) is hard. Koruphasia may not have Hera's temper... or does she? Maybe she just uses less flashy methods.

An illegitimate son or daughter of Agêtôr would be raised in secret, perhaps unknowing about their true parentage. Yet fate has a tendency to cause revelation, and then chaos will ensue.

As I have described things Laossoos is closer to the philandering Zeus, perhaps fitting an amoral god of war and conquest. Maybe not all of his affairs are his: Agêtôr could easily shapeshift if he wanted to make it look like Laossoos was the culprit. But why would the god of war let it happen? Maybe there are deep secrets between the two apparently opposed gods.

### THE TWO DEATHS



The Greek Hades is a far more conscientious and lawful god than Aidioneus has been described as.

What if there are actually *two* gods of death, or rather a god of death and a god of undeath struggling against each other? They are two opposed faces of the same deep god, a case of metaphysical split personality. One seeks to ensure an orderly afterlife, the other the chaos of undead invasion.

In fact, many of the gods may be less cohesive than they pretend to be. Being able to be in multiple places at the same time and with somewhat conflicting aims could make them temporarily or permanently split. Mainalios

the nature god may encounter Mainalios the god of madness and not like him one iota.

Another possibility is that there is some minor god aiming at replacing Aîdôneus due to his unreliability, instituting a more proper division between life and death. This is not just something Anaireus would support on general principle, but also something quietly supported by the civic gods. But unseating one of the 12 is hard, and if they are advised by Ar himself, it is extra risky.

### THE USURPATION

There are occasional myths that the 12 gods are offspring of older gods, Father Sea and Mother Sky: what is up with that?

In Greek mythology the succession from Ouranos to Chronos to Zeus was an important theme. In this setting there is no such succession. But what is there was a succession that then got transformed into an eternal cycle? Maybe similar to Anaireus quest to break the cycle there once were gods seeking to avoid the succession, somehow succeeding and in the remote past transforming the world into a cyclic, eternal world.

Whether this was merely a transition, or a wholesale rewrite of how time itself works, is indeterminate. Anaireus is seeking clues to undo it, perhaps among the Hecatoncheres and other obscure entities stemming from the past cycle.

Another answer may be that there were never any such ancestor gods, but Anaireus is spreading the myth in the hope it will reshape the world. Maybe, just maybe, if enough people believe something it can make it real – especially if supported by a major god.

### THE TITANS

Another difference from Greek mythology is the absence of the titans, the previous generation of gods.

But there might be room for titans as the gods and powers of previous cosmological cycles. They may be the gods defeated by current pantheon, now largely forgotten and imprisoned. Yet truly killing something divine is hard, and they may show up again.

Since they come from previous cycles, they may be very alien. They have not encountered humans and human values. Maybe this is the true nature of the krakens?

### THE OTHER RACES

Where are the elves, orcs and dwarves? A simple answer is that they exist but live on other continents much further away in Panthalassa. The true Androphagoi orcs, ancestors of the Bidians, somewhere in the far east. The Macroboi elves in the far south. And maybe the Cabiri deep in the ground.

Another answer is that they existed before humans. There has been an infinite number of races in the world before, and as the divine year slowly turns new ones appear – and old ones die out or hide. Maybe the other races dominated in the far past, worshipping the titans.

### BECOMING A GOD

PCs can become gods. The easiest way is to perform so magnificent deeds or invent new useful things that the gods deify them at death. Or become such a monster that the dark gods welcome them as one of their own.

Heroes favoured by the gods may be given Boons, turning them into demigods even before dying. This is



often a test: can the mortal handle the power well? If they do, they might be made full demigods and undying. This is one reason people seek out the gods wandering the world during their year, hoping to become their companions and eventually becoming a permanent member of their entourage.

A far harder path is to gather divine power – collecting artefacts, spilt ichor, ambrosia and other divine things, and then distilling melam from them and infusing oneself with it. This requires delving into forbidden arts and almost guarantees that the civic gods will become one's enemies. The hardest part is that the would-be god needs to acquire a domain, or forever will be dependent on parasitic stealing from the full gods. It is easier to become a Lich.

The truly ambitious might aim at becoming one of the 12. This requires finding a way of usurping them: both defeating the current incumbent for the role and taking the role. It has happened before, but the gods have all worked hard to make everybody and everything forget the details. This likely requires already being somewhat divine, or having strong support from several major gods or even the Grey Judges themselves.

## DEICIDE

Gods can be killed, but it has not happened to a major or minor god in the last historical cycle – countless millennia.

For an unwilling major god to die it needs to be subject to a sufficiently deadly divine attack that it cannot deflect it: likely several other major gods ganging up on them and unleashing their full powers. The resulting cataclysmic battle would surely devastate the world. Smart gods instead aim at making a god *want* oblivion. Consider the plot of *Sandman* as a whole an example of this kind of intrigue.

Lesser gods are in principle more vulnerable, but it is usually only demigods that actually tend to end. There might have been lesser gods foolishly going up against the major gods in the unknown past, but the ones that remain are the ones that know their place (Suidas the Traitor had a very good reason to run to Rharias). Even here the most common fate is eternal imprisonment in the underworld rather than death.

## THE SURREAL

D&D often includes potentially random and whimsical things: it is fantasy, so why couldn't there be tiny rainclouds shadowing PCs or bizarre chaos magical effects? Greek myths may be strange to us, but most events make sense within their own frame even if it involves goddesses being birthed from the head of Zeus. There is far less of the totally random, and most things are very concrete (even if they are snake-headed medusas). That can make the appearance of surreal, apparently disjointed or random events stand out as supremely strange in this setting. Maybe the PCs encounter some of Manalios' madness, Ar's oracular powers, or they witness parts of the mysteries mortals are not supposed to see.

## THE OUTSIDE

What is outside the world? Most thinkers would reject the whole idea: there cannot possibly be an end to the world, what would happen if you poked something outside? The Panthalassian sea just goes on forever, just like there is no creation nor end of the world.

Yet there might be other dimensions of reality. The gods are subject to the Grey Judges of Fate. Where do they reside? What else is there? Could it be that there are things outside the purview of the gods, perhaps worlds not of their making?

While plane-hopping is not really part of the setting, there might be more to the universe than the known Cosmos. Maybe this is where countless demigods and other immortals have migrated across the aeons (after all, if there is an infinite past, the Celestial City should be far more crowded).

## OTHER RANDOM THINGS

Various snippets, encounters, adventure ideas and other odds and ends:

### THE CORPSE'S REVENGE

When looting a corpse, it suddenly speaks: "As you take from me, will be taken from you." – that character is now cursed, and will lose something of comparable value to what he got from the corpse. If he does not cleanse himself at a temple, he will find small losses accruing over time, a coin here and there, a needed tool he thought he had, and so on.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF BURIAL

If the PCs kill enemies and leave the corpses behind, they are bound to anger the spirits of the grave. The unburied dead may return as ghosts or zombies haunting them until they can arrange for a proper burial or pyre. Priests of Aidioneus may also seek them out to warn them that they are drawing dark shadows into the world.

### A FUTURE CURSE



An oracle lives alone. Locals provide her with food, but also shun her. The reason of her oracular abilities is that she is cursed by Ar – not for something she has done, but for something she *will* do.

### ANGRY OLD MAN RIVER

When crossing a river, the party finds that the river god is enraged. Wading, swimming or boats will fail (treat as whirl attack from water elemental), forcing them either to make a long detour, fight it, or appease it. The cause is either the PCs earlier behaviour (maybe they

disrespected a remote relative of the god, missed sacrificing at an overgrown shrine) or general rage (due to a monster polluting the water, someone building a bridge, etc).

## THE MILLSTONE OF EPICHARMUS



Epicarmus feels good about the upcoming battle: an oracle told him that as long as he abstained from touching grain and flour that day he would survive. Little did he know that a barbarian will throw a millstone at him, crushing his head utterly. He should have sacrificed a bit more zealously to Rharias.

## BEST STEW IN THE WORLD

Many years ago, a woman sought shelter at an isolated farmstead. The family treated the stranger well, and next morning she taught the lady of the house to make the best bean stew in the world. Then she departed, and only later did they realize they had been visited by Rharias.

The stew recipe has been a well-guarded secret of the family for generations, transmitted from mother to daughter. When prepared nearly right it will be amazingly delicious. Most of the time this is how the women of the family serve it. But sometimes they meet somebody they want to stay. So they serve the exact recipe: a stew so delightful that the taster will never want to go without it.

## ANAIREUS VS MESIA

Anaireus is always on the lookout for tinder that can be sparked. Mesia may become a perfect case: run by a staunchly Agêtôr-worshipping and warlike king it has expanded and dominates several regions, turning their citizenry into serfs and filling the polis with new slaves. Yet invasion from Cythosia is always a possibility... were this to happen the right influence might cause not just desertion but even a surprise slave revolt. The god is quietly making it possible. A slave uprising would be a most fitting symbol of the power of rebellion, and at the very least weaken the king, agent of his opposite god.

## ORIGIN OF THE CAT

Cats do not exist yet. During the early part of a campaign, do not mention cats. There are certainly felines like lions and lynxes, but never mention housecats. Then, while

the PCs interact with a major god, have a nosy person annoy them. As punishment the offended god transforms them into a tiny feline – there are now cats. Over the rest of the campaign cats will become a normal thing, just as other species of animals created by transformed transgressors are normal.

## MY COUSIN'S KEEPER



A cousin of one of the PCs has been killed. He was a bit of a ne'er-do-well, but he was family. The paterfamilias explains that it is up to the men in the family to kill the killer – especially capable people like the PC are expected to help.

This can be used both for a plot (what was the quarrel about originally? Maybe the killer had a good reason? Maybe there is more afoot?) or as a side quest that cannot be ignored: not helping your family seek justice is a major transgression. But how to avoid having this escalate into a vendetta?

The reverse also works as a story: another family seeks revenge, and now the PC needs to defend their kin. The relative may also be trying to go into exile.

## RANSOM

A relative, patron or other important NPC has been captured: during a sea voyage their ship was attacked by pirates, and now they are demanding a ransom or they will sell the NPC into slavery or kill them. The hourglass is running.

## THE MOUSE GUEST

As the PCs set up camp in the evening, they find a mouse that seeks the warmth of the fire and maybe some food. If they treat it kindly it will behave itself, and in the morning scurry away.

Later in the game they will be in some tricky situation, and the mouse will reappear. If they treated it kindly it might chew through ropes binding them or the leather bands holding together some enemy trap. Conversely, if they treated it badly (yes, even if they killed it – maybe it is a relative) it might chew off the essential rope holding them over a chasm, the strap of a backpack, or startle a sleepy guard when they are trying to sneak past.

A wilder version is to have them discover that the mouse was actually a disguised god and they noted whether the party obeyed the laws of *xenia* or not.

## CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS

A large group of birds of different species stand in a circle. Taking turns, one moves to the centre and makes



their sounds and the others answer back in a cacophonous chorus.

The PCs have encountered a council of birds in which they discuss important bird matters...Who is the fastest? Whose beak is most elegant? Who has the most beautiful plumage? Where should they flock for the change of season?

Each type of bird takes its turn standing in the center and making its case. They will attempt to persuade the PCs that they know best or are the best at the debated issue. If no PC can speak to the birds, they will grow irritated and cast Speak With Animals on all the PCs remarking: 'Honestly, what is the world coming too?'

Depending on who the PCs side with they will receive the following:

- A reduction in journey time, a shortcut
- Forewarning of an upcoming ambush or dangerous encounter
- A point of inspiration
- A small gemstone worth 10gp

(from Reddit user Worlds Await)

## THE PEACEMAKER ROCK

During a battle taking place in a rocky field, Laossoos was cheering on the bloodshed. Koruphasia was not amused: she wanted the defenders on her side to win. Unseen, she picked up a rock and threw it with full force at Laossoos and knocked him out. When he awoke the defenders had won.

This led to a story that there is a magical rock that can knock out a god... somewhere in the rocky field. If it can be found it would be a mighty if crude weapon.

The locals can lead visitors to the vast field, leaving them to find the rock. Actually, the locals picked up the rock long ago and placed it in the walls of a village building, making it forever secure. But this is something only the elders know about, and they do not want to lose the rock that protects the village.

## ANEMOUNAS

Anemounas, a friend NPC was raised by an only mother without ever knowing his father. He thought that his late mother calling his father "the wind" was a poetic figure of speech, but he's recently found that he can hear whispers carried past him on the breeze. Now he wonders how to find his father – and what his birthright is.

## THE MYSTAI HERESY

The Alexon Mystai teach how to control the spirit/pneuma, symbolized by the letter "chi". Mostly this is used to perform acrobatic and martial arts feats since "spirit is motion".

But some Mystai may wonder at the relationship between pneuma, magic and the gods. Clearly they are different. Or are they? Could it be that sufficient mastery would allow magical feats – or divine feats? Some high-ranking Mystai may quietly (since speaking it aloud will no doubt be heard by the gods) ponder the latter.

Another heretical idea not spoken is that pneuma may be a god. Maybe it is an invisible, all-powerful force that lends its power to the gods but is *above* them.

Where outsiders find out about this impious idea civilized poleis will likely retribute quickly against all mystai.

## THE CISTERN

A farmer's well has gone mysteriously dry, and there seems to be something down there. He would very much like heroes to investigate. "Please bring back the water".

The well actually went down into the cistern of an underground palace. But eventually the bottom cracked, allowed the water to flow down into an even deeper abyss, leaving the formerly water-filled palace empty for exploration. There is now a little stream running from a spring into the crack: were the crack to be filled the well would slowly refill.

But until then beings from the deep may be coming up, perhaps unhappy about the recent flood. And how come an entire palace is buried underground? Could it have suffered a divine curse? And might the victim of the curse be still around, seeing a chance for escape?



## PLAGUE!

*By far the most terrible feature in the malady was the dejection which ensued when anyone felt himself sickening, for the despair into which they instantly fell took away their power of resistance, and left them a much easier prey to the disorder; besides which, there was the awful spectacle of men dying like sheep, through having caught the infection in nursing each other.*

Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War

Plagues are a real threat to any polis. The dense living conditions, the shared wells, the animals in the house – these can all help plague spread when the conditions are right. This is why performing proper sacrifices to the gods matter: cities meeting divine approval are less likely to suffer plague... but conversely, a polis doing something a god disapproves of may be stricken. The civic gods mostly punish failing to properly adhere to law and propriety (although bad leadership may also invite it), while the wild gods may send plague if they are not venerated enough... and the dark gods just because they can. Divine plagues may also be hard to cure for clerics since they are punishments from the gods.

When plague strikes it becomes essential to find the reason: priests and oracles must be consulted, and a remedy instituted. This might range from moving the bones of a great poet fallen abroad to be buried in the



local temple to performing a great purification ceremony to build a temple for the worship of a new god. Sometimes it involves finding a Nosos, a disease spirit, hiding in disguise in the city and defeating it in the right way.

Meanwhile the polis is cast into chaos: some may give up on the civic rules, thinking that since they are already under a death sentence they can just as well act however they like. Others realize they may soon be in front of the underworld judges and try to shape up their life. Handling numerous dead bodies is hard; performing proper funeral rites even harder. Desperate pilgrims flocking to the temples may spread the plague and overwhelming healing abilities.

Some example plagues:

**The Scales:** A form of more infectious leprosy. Infected people develop scabs, skin discoloration and numb patches of skin. This can then slowly progress to disfigurement, blindness, loss of fingers, and the body getting distorted. *Game system:* people in contact with coughs or mucus from a victim must make a DC 11 Constitution Saving Throw to avoid contracting the disease. Over the next 1d4 months they develop the skin lesions, losing 1 CHA. After a further 1d6 months they need to make a saving throw to avoid progressing further, which involves blindness on one eye, a further CHA loss, loss of a small body part, bodily distortion or other disturbing changes (select randomly). This keeps repeating every 1d6 months.

**The Red Eye Plague:** Victims experience fever, sleeplessness, inflammation in the eyes, sore throats, sneezing, loss of voice or coughing, followed by vomiting, ulcers on the body, thirst, diarrhoea, bleeding and eventually death. *Game system:* anybody in contact with bodily fluids or corpses of victims during a day must make a DC 13 Constitution Saving Throw at night. On a failed save they are infected but does not experience symptoms until 7 days later (they become infectious 3 days after infection). When the illness starts as a fever they suffer 1 point of exhaustion and get no healing from a long rest. After each long rest they need to make another DC 13 Constitution Saving Throw. If they fail, they will get another point of exhaustion and get more symptoms, while a successful save restores a point. If they recover completely they are immune.

**The Plague of Chalcarnassus:** Mainalios was slighted by the king of Chalcarnassus making a joke about the origin of the centaurs, and the god cursed the polis with infectious madness. The city never recovered, and the ruins remain a cursed wasteland. *Game system:* A person touching an infected person or an object belonging to them must make a DC 11 Wisdom Saving Throw. If they succeed nothing happens. If they fail, they suffer from short term madness (DMG p. 529) At the end of the 1d10 minutes they make another saving throw. If this succeed they regain their senses. Otherwise they now develop a long term madness lasting 1d10 x 10 hours. At the end of this they get another save. If they succeed, they recover (but are not immune). Otherwise they develop indefinite madness, and also have disadvantage on saving throws for resisting new madness.

**The Dream Plague:** Victims become tired and sleepy, with nightmares plaguing their sleep. Over time they sleep longer and longer, until they are permanently asleep. Unless cared for they will wither away. *Game system:* the plague spreads in a region through the

breath of afflicted. Anybody in their vicinity needs to make a Constitution saving throw against 13 each day. If infected, they need to rest 1d4 hours more for a Long Rest (otherwise they gain one exhaustion point). This repeats each night, adding one d4 for each failure and removing one for each success. If they eventually sleep 24 hours they are permanently trapped.

## THOROS THE SORCERER



Thoros shows up in many stories as the typical evil magician and miracle-worker, a Hesperian male counterpart to Greek Circe or Medea (or more benignly, Aristeas of Proconnesus and Hermotimus of Clazomenae).

In some stories he travels the world, performing wonders or cursing people, suddenly disappearing or dying only to return – sometimes many years later – with stories about spending time with the gods or remote countries. In others he secretly rules the Cythosians through false miracles and minions from a keep somewhere far up in the icy mountains. Sometimes he imprisons heroes or force them onto dangerous quests.

One take on the story is that he is a powerful near-immortal sorcerer who carefully keeps on the good side of the gods. Another take is that he is indeed an evil lich or overlord secretly pulling the strings across the continent.

One possible version is that his real identity is Silbannacos, a sorcerer-general from the ancient Rhomaoi civilization. Sworn to protect certain secrets he performs his hidden works, amusedly listening to the distorted tales of his exploits among the modern barbarians.

## THE STONE MOTHER

In some remote place there is a ruined temple to Kaena the Lifegiver, goddess of birth. In the sanctum her statue still stands: enormously fat with huge, exposed pudenda. It still holds great power: unions in its vicinity will be fertile. But the most wonderful and disturbing thing is that despite being of stone, the statue can birth living creatures.

An ambitious man wants to get a demigod child and reasons that if he can find the temple, he will be able to sire such a child. He hires the PCs to help him find it and protect him during the journey there. It is not only far away, but the surrounding forest is full of risky creatures (possibly some birthed by the statue).

One thing the man might have forgotten is the feelings of the goddess. He might find the Stone Mother



dangerously upset or that the child is horrifically cursed if he approaches her in the wrong way. Another twist is that the stories are mistaken: this was not a temple to jolly Kaena but to hateful Echtria, mother of monsters...

## BUILD A GOD

One of the lesser gods managed to truly upset one of the major gods – maybe Empusa tried to play a prank on Agêtôr, or Kydoimos the Shouter annoyed Zêrunthia as she was making the moves on a lovely shepherd. The god simply ripped them apart and scattered their pieces for the wind.

But being a true immortal means that they cannot die from mere scattering. They are still alive, most unhappy, and want to put their life together. Fortunately, a part of them has ended up in the hands of the PCs, promising great rewards if they can be restored.

This can be a big “fetch quest”, akin to Isis seeking out the parts of Osiris. Some may have caused local miracles, empowered monsters, or exist in problematic places. Just gathering divine parts may not be enough: they need to be reunited by a friendly major god. Plus, certain sorcerers would be willing to go to any lengths to gather pieces of god for their own horrible ends. The major god responsible may largely have forgotten the event, but if reminded would like to keep the punishment going – and mortals better not try to change it.

If successful the PCs will have the gratitude of a god, with all that entails. But maybe some other god would like to bribe them with something even nicer to keep the scattered god out of the way for longer?

## HERMIONE THE MONSTER

*I had learned enough to know that a god in pain is dangerous.*

Jennifer Saint, Ariadne

When she was born, there was a prophecy that the princess Hermione would kill a thousand Norian men if she ever laid with a man. Her father the king promptly placed her in Koruphasia’s temple where the all-female priesthood ought to keep her and the kingdom safe.

Unfortunately, she caught the eye of Exousia while wistfully gardening on the temple rooftop terraces. One thing led to another, and soon they threw all caution to the winds. It was at this point Koruphasia noticed what was going on in her sanctum. She promptly cursed Hermione into becoming a monster (the exact kind depends on the campaign: the original Greek version is the origin of the Medusa, but this could be any high CR monster). Koruphasia did not punish Exousia since he was a god (and male).

Since that day the monstrous Hermione has been plaguing Noria, filled with wrath and despair over her unjust fate. Heroes have tried to defeat her, but met their demise. The PCs may be lured into trying to defeat her for honour and royal favour.

She may also have given birth to a little demigod son in her wilderness hideout. Successful slayer heroes may discover that they now have a young but potent enemy.

Exousia is not happy either: he is not a total cad like certain other gods. He would like to help Hermione, but cannot undo the curse – only Koruphasia or maybe Agêtôr can do it. But he cannot go against his father or

mother, and he has his duties. Zêrunthia is delighted with the mess: she has an ancient feud with the Norian nobility, and might have secretly nudged things along. But the most upset being is Adrasteia, goddess of retribution. Proud Exousia is morally guilty in her eyes, and she wants him to acknowledge this and atone for it. She has no legal jurisdiction, but she can plot...

The PCs may become embroiled in these divine plots when Adrasteia (perhaps using an Erinye as a disposable go-between who is “totally acting on her own”) somewhat unexpectedly gets them to not slay the monster but instead help commit emotional blackmail against a solar god. Plus, Adrasteia may want to somehow compel her grandparents to undo the curse. What could possibly go wrong for mortals caught in this drama? Oh, and poor Hermione is very, very hungry.



# INSPIRATIONS

## D&D SUPPLEMENTS AND RESOURCES

*Mythical odysseys of Theros*: lots of [gorgeous imagery](#), a useful piety system, many great omens and myths, good ideas for heroic quests and Greek-inspired monsters. Unfortunately, not very tied to the gritty hard physical world.

[Tied to the Mast](#) by JC Lira: A goldmine that I have exploited heavily.

[Agon by John Harper](#): This is a clean game design, cutting straight to the core of Greek heroic myth. Most suited for mid-level characters that have started interacting with the gods. The random island/quest system is very convenient.

[Odyssey of the Dragonlords](#): Perhaps another continent in the infinite ocean. I like the curses for breaking oaths, hospitality etc. Very suitable here too.

[Arcadia](#): I have not explored this, but it looks very promising.

[Greek Mythology in D&D 5e](#), by Arcane Eye: Another overview, quite useful.

[Mike Myler's writeups of Greek mythology](#) monsters.

[Greek NPCs](#) by Zizuco. See also the Greek weapons.

[A Study in Marble](#) by Robin Hill. A lovely little mystery adventure. An Echtria cult transforming cultists into monsters sounds very plausible.

[1d10 Weird Forest Guardians](#) has a great set of weird forest guardians that might be integrated.

<https://fastcharacter.com/> A quick way of making NPCs

## NON-FICTION

[Heisod's Theogony](#) may be the most canon attempt at making a canon of Greek mythology.

<https://www.theoi.com/> A massive repository of Greek mythology. Especially useful for less known details, terms or stories to surprise players with.

[Greek Mythology Link](#). Another repository of myth, with great [biographies](#) full of lesser known storylines to borrow and [Mythical Objects](#) with many potential magical items.

[Pausanias, Description of Greece](#). Many myths, names and details that can be inspiration.

<https://www.livius.org/> Also useful material, covers far more than Greece.

[Index Ancient Greek Life in HellenicaWorld](#). Many useful facts about the Greek world, from agriculture to table manners.

[The Jests of Hierocles and Philagrius](#). Many antique jokes, perhaps less funny than illustrating everyday life.

[The Natural History of Pliny the Elder](#) is Roman and written centuries later, but many of the bizarre ideas in the first volumes about how nature works make for good setting details. Later volumes is also full of everyday details about remedies and plants.

[Folkloric motifs](#) are excellent sources for plots, tropes or encounters. The ATU tales have a large number of directly useful pieces.

Overly Sarcastic Productions: YouTube channel with hilarious takes on the myths, sometimes like the video on [Dionysus](#) and [Aphrodite](#) going deep into history. Good both for light fun and stealing stories.

[Practical Polytheism \(part I of IV\)](#) by Brett Deveraux. A very clear explanation of how the polytheistic mindset works.

[Rethinking clerics and religion part 1](#) and [part 2](#) - this is not how I went about worldbuilding (I started with 12 gods linked to the social value orientation diagram), but it is a good way of coming up with more texture for societies here.

[Greek ship names](#)

## FICTION

*The Iliad* and *Odyssey*: the classics. Even if you find reading them hard (I am myself not a fan of the Iliad), dipping into them randomly for local colour, style and random names is valuable.

Madeleine Miller, *The Song of Achilles* (2011) Bestseller retelling of the Trojan war from the perspective of Patroclus. Very close to this setting. The sequel *Circe* is also useful, especially focused with a jaundiced eye on the life of the gods.

Jennifer Saint, *Ariadne*. Another feminist retelling of the myths, this time the story of princess Ariadne. Together with Miller this forms a good counterpoint to the standard stories one can find everywhere.

[Aeschylus](#), *The Oresteia*. Classic trilogy about revenge, guilt and family. For comedy, see [Aristophanes](#): plenty of slapstick, ribald humour and satire. I got the dung beetle from his *Peace*.

[Theia Mania Comics](#) - These comics are not just funny, but also written by somebody who cares about historical and theological details (enough to include comments when things are tweaked for a better story). While my gods and these gods are not the same, there is much material to borrow.

[Hunter Black](#) - Set in a more modern fantasy setting, but with themes of the cycle of betrayal/revenge, meddling wizards and gods, and characters that feel proper for a classic setting too.

[The Gods of Pegana](#) by Lord Dunsany - A good source for random myths not really belonging to any culture, yet feeling familiar. It is useful to learn the styles of mythology so one can DM accordingly.

<https://www.vulgarlang.com/> - For serious conlang generation.





# THE YEAR OF THE GODS SLOWLY TURNS

The cosmos follows regular rules. Each year one of the gods descends to the mortal world to enjoy it, plot, reward, destroy or investigate. Each year wonders and disasters happen as ordained by fate and the whims of the gods.

Mortal heroes rise to defend their communities and gain glory. Some become ever-lasting legends. Most bleed out in the wilderness and become nameless shades.

What will you do, hero?

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