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Introduction:

The world of Godhood has always been active with intrigue, action, adventure, betrayal, and compassion, so why is the role of Gods and Goddesses always restricted to the GM? Pantheon is a quick set of rules to allow a player to be a god, looking down (or up?) from their kingdom to the follies of humankind, and not really caring.

Why Deities Exist:

The reason deities exist are varied from culture to culture, but there are common links. Mainly, deities exist to explain the unexplainable. Why does lightning come down from the sky? Zeus throws the bolts, or maybe it is Thor's hammer, or the scepter of an ancient sky god, or thrown by Lucifer (light-bringer) at church towers, or even a phallic symbol of some unknown deity impregnating the earth goddess. All of these examples are from true mythologies.

Another reason is need for protection. Hope is a great reason to worship the unknown. There are literally thousands of deities for all forms of protection from the unknown. There are deities to protect from storms, to protect unborn children, to protect barns even.

Destructive forces were also worshipped. If a tornado were to hit a town, they would probably begin worshipping a deity of tornadoes simply to pacify that deity. That's one of the ways "evil" deities survived.

The World of Gods:

The way we envision deities as benevolent cosmic caregivers isn't exactly accurate. In fact, often deities gained more worshippers by destroying a town than by saving one. Once word got out that the deity is displeased, everyone started worshipping out of fear of retribution if they didn't. The gods often acted as extortionists.

This was not always the case, but it was common. The notion of a god that loved each individual and cared for them was unknown at the time. The gods were busy thinking of their own pleasures to care about each human. If a few died, more would be born, and deaths were inconsequential. It doesn't matter to the god if their worshippers are unhappy or not. They still keep the character points, as long as they remain worshipped.

If a human does something that displeases the deity in some way, then the gods seem to take notice. They will make that human's life miserable until they prove themselves worthy of forgiveness, through prayer, worship, and proving virtue. Sometimes deities will test their followers faith for no reason at all. Gods get bored sometimes.

Creating Character Gods:

Godhood character point rules:

The main rule difference with Godhood is that the character points fluctuate more. One adventure a deity can lose thirty or forty points, and then the next can gain one hundred. This is because they work differently than for mortal characters.

Deities have one character point for each basic worshipper they have. So, if a deity has 200 worshippers, he will be a pretty pathetic god, really. But, if a God has over 1000 worshippers, then he will be a force to be reckoned with. (See Worshippers)

Thus, if a deity succeeds in her goal, possibly in a flashy way, she may gain up to thirty or forty new worshippers, making her thirty or forty character points stronger. Conversely, if a God's people are threatened by some force, and he fails to stop that force, he may lose hundreds of worshippers, and hundreds of character points.

The characters should be warned that this can happen at any time. They should be aware that their characters will probably lose character points from time to time.

This may make things difficult on the GM. Before every game, the GM should decide how many new worshippers each character has, depending upon mortality rate, birth rate, and conversion. In the summer months, most characters will gain points, but in the winter, they may lose some points to the increased mortality rate, even if they are converting people to their worship!

When creating the deity, the player should decide places where points can be easily added or subtracted from. Very rarely would points be removed from skill levels, except when very high levels are reached. Powers are probably the best place to give and take points from. For instance: Keldmar the god of wind was 500 worshippers. He has placed 60 points in Wind Blast, giving him 10D6 wind attack. He stops a tornado caused by his adversary just before it hits a large township. Suddenly, he gains eighty new worshippers, so he puts 30 points into his wind blast, increasing it to 15D6, and 50 points into body of air. Then, due to his arrogance, he ignores the pleas of another town, and lets them be destroyed by Lupo, goddess of the wolves. He loses 110 worshippers (It was a major massacre!) and 110 character points. He sacrifices the body of air for fifty points, forty points of wind blast, taking him down to 8D6, and twenty points of strength. He thus learns a lesson about saving his own people.

Types of Gods

When deciding upon a God game, you must first decide upon what level of power the god should have.

Mortal Deities: These gods are not immortal, and do not have to take the immortality advantage, but do have to take at least three levels of extended life span. If in a future game they become Lesser Deities, the points spent on extended life span may be transferred into the immortality advantage. These deities are more powerful than the normal human, but not much. They should have around 150-400 worshippers. This allows them to be far more powerful than the normal person, but still subject to mortal concerns and threats. They would not want to wrong the more powerful gods, but still consider themselves better than normal mortals. Mortal deities rarely live within the Pantheon, but may visit it upon occasion. There may be hundreds of these types of deities. A mortal deity may take up to 40 points in disadvantages, just like a normal mortal.

Lesser Deities: These deities are immortal, and must take the immortality advantage. They have anywhere from 400-700 worshippers. Most likely, they live within their Pantheon, and freely associate with the greater deities. In a normal Pantheon, there can be anywhere from 10-100 such deities. These deities, or higher, are all allowed to take up to 100 points in disadvantages.

Greater Deities: These deities are definitely immortal. They have 700-1000

worshippers, and sometimes reaching over 1000. They are the group of main deities, of which most Pantheons will probably have 3-15 of.

Head Deity: Some religions will have one main deity, or possibly two or three. These deities will have 1000+ worshippers, and, most likely, have given birth to a great number of Greater, Lesser, and Mortal deities. These are the mothers and fathers of the gods, and to be highly respected by the other deities.

Choosing a realm for godhood is also an important choice for the characters. Depending on the level of godhood the character is at, the specific nature of the deity changes. A mortal may be the God of the Beggars, or Goddess of Wells. A lesser deity will also be very specific, like the Goddess who protects women during childbirth, or God of Fungus. Lesser deities may also be more powerful, like a Goddess of Typhoons, or God of Darkness. Greater deities have a broader range of control, like a Goddess of Magic, God of the Oceans, Goddess of the Moon, or God of the Harvest. The head deity or deities will probably have very broad range, like Mother or Father of the Gods, God of Light, Earth Goddess, and so on.

The powers chosen should be taken from GURPS Supers and Compendium I. They should all be within the realm of control for the deity. A god of rain may have weather control, possibly extinguish fire, but would probably not have body of metal or telekinesis, and would definitely not have flame jet. The head deity may have any or all powers they want, but for anything lower than the head deity, they have to stick to their specific realm.

For attributes, you can go as high as you want with them. Strength is usually extremely high, even for Mortal deities. Health, Dexterity, and IQ are also usually high, and if the god uses a lot of magic, extra fatigue is also common, with no level restrictions. Having no level restrictions on fatigue allows a deity to cast spells with incredibly large areas of effect, allowing him or her to bless a huge area of fields, ignite an entire forest, or cause a storm over an entire country.

Worshippers

The deity will have different types of worshippers, ranging from mildly interested in the deity, to pledging their entire lives towards them. They will be set up into four categories:

Low Worshippers: These are worshippers that worship other gods as well as the PC god. These worshippers are only worth 1/10th of a character point, but on the positive side, they may worship many different gods, so twenty or thirty gods may take power from these worshippers, making them worth 2 or 3 character points.

Basic Worshippers: These worshippers worship the PC deity above all other deities. They will act according to some of the rules of that deity, as long as they aren't too extreme or time consuming. They will spend up to three hours a week in worship/prayer, and may sacrifice up to 5% of their total income to that deity. They are worth 1 character point to the deity each.

Devout Worshippers: These worshippers worship the deity and none other. They will act according to most of the rules of their deity, and will feel guilty for breaking any of them. They will spend up to 1 hour a day in worship/prayer, and may sacrifice up to 15% of their total income to that deity. To retain a devout worshipper, the deity must send visions to that person at least twice within their lifetimes. They are worth 2 character points for the deity.

Priests/Priestesses: These people have devoted their entire lives to the worship of their deity. They will follow all of their deity's beliefs and rules as close as they possibly can. They may spend up to 5 hours a day in worship/prayer, and may sacrifice all of their income to that deity. To retain a Priest or Priestess, the deity must send visions yearly, and appear to that person once within their lifetime. A deity may only have one Priest/Priestess for every 100 other worshippers they have. They are worth 5 character points for the deity.

Godly Might

Gods above the level of Mortal deity will have special powers, that come with the power of being a god. If a God buys any of these powers, and then drops below the rank of Lesser deity, then the power doesn't work, but the deity still has it, and if they return to a higher rank, it will instantly begin working again.

Empower Worshippers, Permanent

Variable

This power gives various powers to Priests and Priestesses who are deemed worthy by the deity. They are gifts by the deity, and may be given to as many or as few of the Priests and Priestesses as the deity sees fit.

Magery is the main power given by the deity. The costs are more constant than that for Minions, as the cost doesn't fluctuate with the amount of worshippers you have.

To give all Priests or Priestesses Magery 1, the deity must pay 5 points.

To give all Priests or Priestesses Magery 2, the deity must pay 10 points.

To give all Priests or Priestesses Magery 3, the deity must pay 15 points.

(For single college only, subtract 33% from the cost, for two colleges only, subtract 10%. These are the only limitations allowed on the deities part.)

Although the deity pays points to give Magery to their worshipper, the worshipper also must pay the normal points to get it. A priest who gains Magery 3 still must pay their 45 points to get it, regardless of what their deity pays.

For any other powers given to a worshipper, the deity must pay for each individual person, at 10% cost of the power. The way in which the deity empowers their priests and priestesses must be within the realm of control of that deity.

For example: Aquatos, God of the ocean, wants to give all of his priests the power to breathe underwater. This is the Gills advantage, worth 10 points. For each Priest or Priestess he allows to breathe underwater, he must pay 1 character point. If he has 100 Priests and Priestesses, he would have to pay 100 character points.

If a deity chooses to revoke a worshippers power, the points are lost, which will probably displease the deity even more. But, to re-empower the worshipper the deity pays no points. They simply are withholding their favour.

Empower Worshipper, Temporary

Variable

Just as empowering worshippers permanently, a deity may decide to temporarily empower an individual, but this extends to more than just priests and priestesses of the deity, but cannot be given to anyone who isn't at least a low worshipper.

The deity must pay full points to give a human powers. If a deity found it necessary to give a worshipper flight, the deity would have to pay the full 40 points. These points may be taken from anywhere, and may be taken back at any time. Therefore, the deity may give a human the power of flight just until they cross a chasm to get away from enemy cultists, and then take away the power. The deity would lose these 40 points while the human flew, but would gain them back when they landed.

Enchantment

Varies

The deity may create talismans or amulets without having to take Magery. They may do so at any time, for a one-time cost of 1 character point. They must have the spells or powers themselves, and must be within their own realm of control. For amulets, they may never gain these points back, even if the item is destroyed. For talismans, as soon as the talisman is used, the deity gains the point back.

For any other enchantments or magic items, the deity must take Magery and the

appropriate spells to enchant the item.

Godly Communication

10 points

This power allows a deity to communicate with his or her minions, or even any human or god. The exact form of this communication is up to the player. For a god of light, it might simply be an illuminating beam of light accompanied with a form of telepathy. For a forest god, it may be an animal appearing and talking to the person. There are thousands of ways of communication possible.

Godly Sight

50 points

This is the power to watch closely their own followers from wherever they are. They can concentrate for one round, and see anything their followers see, as well as being able to see what the follower is doing.

Powerful Minions

Variable

These are bought exactly as a normal Ally group, except that since you are a god, they worship you and follow your every wish. They may be human, or not, it is up to the player.

- a small group of minions (2-5 beings) costs 20 points

- a medium group of minions (6-20 beings) costs 40 points

- a large group of minions (20-100 beings) cost 60 points

The normal rules allow all groups to be 75 point characters, adding 10 points to the base cost for raising them all to 100 point characters.

Because you are a god, you can bend the rules. For an additional 50 points, they may be raised to 150 point characters, and for another additional 50 points, they may all be 200 point characters, equal to the Mortal Gods. If you wish to have a minion stronger than 200 points, then you would have to purchase him or her (or it) individually.

The minions may take Magery/Spells/Powers within the realm of their deity's control, and will pay for those special abilities out of their own point totals.

A minion may also take 20 points in disadvantages, and five quirks.

Shapeshifting

5 points/form

Lesser, Greater, and Head deities may take shapeshifting at any time, into any form they wish. Mythology is constantly referring to gods who turn themselves into animals to give messages to their worshippers. A deity may take as many animal forms they wish. They may also wish to shapeshift into another human form, like Odin appearing as a withered old man. This too, costs only 5 points. A mortal God may also take shapeshifting, but they are limited to only one other form.

(If you think of one that I have missed, please E-Mail me at mrbannedjellygas@hotmail.com)

Creating a Pantheon:

For the GM, work is harder. They must come up with a world for the gods to be in, and one for them to rule over. You may wish to simply take a culture and add some deities to their ranks. There are hundreds of Greek gods, for all sorts of reasons and beliefs. The Norse were always incorporating new deities into their beliefs, and it is still unknown how many Egyptian deities there really were. If you want to create an entirely new Pantheon, first you have to choose a culture. You may create an entirely new culture, creating new customs, their beliefs, land size, main industries, main threats, and economic possibilities. It may be a lot of work, so you might wish to start small, and create the world along the way.

Creating the deities is more pertinent. There may be a head deity, or a few head deities, or none at all. Often deities were related, but this is not mandatory. Depending on the land types, main resources, and beliefs, there will be different groups of deities. A very warlike race would have a lot of battle-oriented deities, whereas a harvesting society would have more plant-growing deities, and a fishing society would have ocean gods. The relationships between the deities can be as simple or as complex as you want. The more complex the civilization, usually, the more complex the belief structure.

Beliefs

The GM should decide many certain beliefs that will be the backbone of the entire mythology. The GM must decide exactly when the world began, how, and when the character deities entered the world.

The structure of the world must also be decided. Is the world flat or round? Is there a centerpoint to the world? What is underneath the world, and what are the stars? Don't feel confined to modern logic, stating that the earth is round and the Sun is a very close star. The sun can be a large gold disk, or the eye of a giant eagle, or anything you can come up with. The Norse believed that the world is the dead body of Ymir of the Hrimthursar, and in their Pantheon, it was.

Also, the afterlife also has to be decided. Where do the souls/spirits go, if anywhere at all, and where did they come from? Can a PC be a god of death? Is there an underworld? Where do the spirits of the gods come from?

All of these questions do not need to be answered, but most of them should have some belief attached to them.

The Home of the Gods:

The GM should also decide different settings for the deities. There should be a main home for the gods, whether it be atop a mountain, under the sea, a castle in the clouds, or at the centre of the earth.

Along with this, other settings should be decided. If you choose to have "evil" deities, they may wish to have a home of their own, and perhaps all the gods have their own homes. The afterlife may be in a different spot from the gods, or many possible afterlives, like the difference between Valhalla and Hel's underworld.

Godhood Campaigns:

There are as many different possible adventures as there are deities. There were always arguments between them, infighting, betrayal, and deception. Sometimes they dealt with a single human, or a single group, or an entire race.

There are also gods devoted to evil. The gods of death were sometimes evil, but not always. There are gods of thieves, plagues, and all around evil. They were worshipped just the same as gods of goodness, but for different reasons. These gods often attempted to destroy the Pantheon, or kill other gods, or destroy countries. There are many storylines with good gods fighting evil ones.

Since the Pantheon exists for a single culture, it makes sense that the gods might have to fight gods from other cultures at times. That would give added depth to the game, as in mythology gods from one culture would never fight gods from another culture, to my knowledge. The gods would probably know all about the gods from their own Pantheon, but would know about others, so the mystery would be intriguing.

Gods had other forces to contend with as well. In Norse Mythology, the gods tricked a giant into building Asgard for free, and started a war between the giants and the gods. These giants were incredibly powerful, enough to be a threat to the gods.

Example Pantheon

Beginning with a world design. The country is mainly plains, and the people are mainly herders and farmers.

I'll start simply, with a single goddess. Her name is Terrina, the Goddess of the Earth. She is an Earth Goddess, which is very common in actual mythology. She has over 1500 worshippers, and is the goddess of the Earth, plants, love, life, and is the mother of everything and everyone. She is the head goddess. First she created her body, which became the earth. Then she created her lover, but instead created two. The first lover is a Cyclops named Magmori, whose blue skin is the sky, and whose single, blazing eye is the sun. He is the god of light, of fire, heat, and vision.

At the moment he opened his eye for the first time, he cast his own shadow on the cosmos, and his shadow soon took shape into his twin brother, Luoethcran, whose dark skin is the night sky and whose single eye is the moon. It takes this god a full month to blink once, and that is the waxing and waning of the moon. Luoethcran is the god of darkness, of night, death, spirits, and the undead. He is not the god of evil, rather, he is looked upon as the natural dark side to all things.

Terrina loves both Luoethcran and Magmori equally. In her first year of existence, she gave birth to 26 children, thirteen fathered by Magmori and thirteen by Luoethcran. The children were born two weeks apart, so Terrina divided up the year into twenty six months, each two weeks long, and then kept but a single day for herself.

Eight of the children all became Greater gods, and the rest became Lesser gods. Four of Magmori's and four of Luoethcran's children became the Greater gods. Magmori's children are Balton, God of the forests, Endrine, Goddess of the Ocean, Helmsar, God of Harvest, and Wilnomos, She who protects the spirits and children in the womb. Luoethcran's children are Cragnor, God of Battle, Serpius, Goddess of Death (along with Luoethcran), Darius, Genderless Deity of Illness, and Decroth, Goddess of Sea Storms, who is in constant battle with Endrine for control over the seas.

Branching out further, Decroth, Goddess of Sea Storms coupled with another of Luoethcran's children, Monstros, God of creatures of the night, and gave birth to the Creasianus, the thousand tentacled octopus with a human head, whose whirling coils produce massive waves.

Monstros then couples with one of Magmori's children, Whispcallius, Goddess of the winds, and she gives birth to the Bull-God Tartinus, who races a cosmic herd of cattle through the skies, billowing up great clouds of dust and storm. Tartinus becomes darker with anger, and his horns are bolts of lightning, which strike the earth when he is displeased.

And where do the Gods live? Most live on the Plains of Terrina, a mysterious field hidden by mystic forests which confuse mortal travelers. The gods live peacefully for the most part. Magmori and Luoethcran chase each other around, but their children are relatively peaceful. Some of Luoethcran's children were abolished from the fields, and some of Magmori's left to their own homes. Some of the children of Luoethcran who were abolished live in a great volcano to the south, while others live deep in the ocean.

From this point, hundreds of deities can be conceived of, and for many different reasons. Being as there are already forces of "good" and "evil" roaming around, it gives plenty of opportunities for plots.

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This article is a work in progress. If you wish to leave feedback, ideas, or even let me know if you decide to play a game of GURPS Pantheon, please E-Mail me at mrbanedjellygas@hotmail.com