

HILL CANTONS COSMOLOGY

by Chris Kufalik



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How Zëm the World of the Hill Cantons Came to Be

Tell us, O savant of savants, O chanter of lullabies, O chiseler of gratuities, now that we are deep into our cups, the origin of this turtle-bound world.

First there was the Void.

Void? Surely nullity could not exist before World-Matter?

It matters little. Of its nature, we can say but little. All Void is divided into three parts: the Space of Demons which the demons (naturally) inhabit; the Transitional Zone haunted by the Uquitani; and our sector, the Insufferable Void. In the beginning, tiring of the demons the Overgod floated into the Insufferable Void on his great galley.

“What is the measure of my being?” he asked no one in particular. The Overgod was a restless god, troubled by his past of toil and tribulation and overeager for evolution. After listening in vain for an answer from the ungrateful patter and never-ending, sideways stories of the Void, he became impatient. “I must begin my work again,” he said to the poorly-listening Void.

The Overgod began to toil. Great balls of burning vapor he hurled into the reaches of the Void, who paused not at all in its stories. Around these balls he spun smaller balls of rock, metal, ice and gas. Great rings he placed here and there and these too he set spinning.

Enough with the old wives tales, man.

And in all that creation the Overgod grew frustrated and weary. “This is but the same as before. My work is thankless and jejune.” In his weariness he invented Drink in order to care not.

And the Overgod drank and drank and drank.

And soon he was joyous, dancing upon his creations in defiance. “I can take all you motherfuckers!” he roared before slipping off the shoulders of a gas giant. Then he slept for a great aeon and Drink spilt and covered many of the rocks.

He slept and slept and in those wet, yeasty places grew Ocean.

When Overgod woke, his head felt smitten. “What have I done with my Drink?” he muttered piteously and his weariness came again.

“I crave sensation,” he mused to the newly-cowed Void. So he divided himself into Man and Woman and Both and he/she/they loved themselves in countless couplings. And the Overgod(s) begat other gods, the Little Gods.

Tiring of this and marveling at the wonder of his many offspring, he reformed and watched them in their dance for a great while.

But even this became stale. The staging grew too familiar and circular, the tales too predictable. So he created the Weird and the Dialectic, that things would always change and not-change and then change again anew throughout the ages. Now pleased with his great work--a complicated, terrible and beautiful thing--he invented Drink again.

And again he drank and drank and slept and slept. And the Little

Gods begat even littler gods and demons even and all fought and drank and stole and loved and lived again and again. And such is where our world in our time began.

There is something missing old man. Why do you shrug so?

Ale co se delas? (Old Pahr: “But what can you do?”)

Corelands, Borderlands, and the Weird

The **Corelands** represent pure human civilization in Zëm. Though wars, political machinations, plagues and the rest of the human drama play out here, from the perspective of Cantoners these lands are something of a movie facade. There is no whiff of the “Weird” here, magic doesn’t function. Monsters and adventure have no real place here. Like a fantasy Oakland, there is no there there.

The **Weird** is the Mythic Underworld writ large. Whole areas exist in the hills where the Veil Between the Worlds has ripped asunder filling the areas with the flotsam and jetsam of many worlds and times. Here be monsters and golden, onion-domed barges, and great cyclopean halls filling mountain-tops. Geography is exaggerated and uncoupled from the expectations of other lands.

The rising tide of such cosmic strangeness produces a startling density of these so-called sites of adventure. It’s not uncommon to walk a few hours from one only to uncover another and then another a short jaunt away.

The **Borderlands** is the contested zone between. Magic functions here, but civilization exists here too, even if sparsely and tentatively. The entirety of human settlement in the Hill Cantons (the political/regional entity, not the campaign) is found here, and it is rippled like a marble cake with pockets of the Weird. Adventure can be found here, but it involves neither the big-ticket risks nor the rewards of exploring the otherworldly regions.

Life here for humanity is tainted by contact with the Weird. Indeed many who return to the core after a time in the Borderlands die in the night a short time after of strange maladies. Though a rough frontier, fashion is extravagant and quick to change. Doctrines of the mind are extravagant and over-elaborate, with their adherents quick to engage in heated dispute. While desperate, life here also carries with it the freedom from the dull routine. Heretics, runaway servants, poets, and the sociopaths and picaros calling themselves adventurers flock here as a result.

On Alignment

In his famous treatise Annals of the Five-Fold Path, Gaxx the Jerk-King teaches us that five-fold alignment (LG, CG, N, LE, CE) is humanity’s limited, warped, half-right theoretical view (or ontology if you want to get really high-falutin’) of how Zëm’s cosmos works. That cosmos is dominated in the main by the tension between the deadly-dull, seemingly-stable, and entirely-human Corelands and the dream logic of the Weird.

The power of the Corelands maps toward the lawful, though Lawful Good is mostly an aspirational ideal of the monotheistic followers of the Sun Lord with the lion’s share of the conniving, self-serving actual mass of humanity solidly “neutral” (or at best borderline, softly Law-

ful Evil or Good), especially in the borderlands. And while much of the otherworldliness of the Weird maps to the Chaos side of things—and much that is inimical there to the Chaotic and Evil—not all of it does. Because it seems to function on dream logic—and is perhaps just a feverish projection of the human mind—there are also authoritarian distortions of humanity’s dream state like the Eld who can only be described as Lawful Evil.

Religion

The true nature of god(s) is a mystery in Zëm as it is in our own world. The scorecard on the human institution, religion, is not.

Solarity, a religion that makes monotheistic claims, rules the roost over most of human civilization, blotting out and co-opting the older local gods. Among the majority Pahr people of the Cantons, their older gods have begun a long death spiral with only small rural or eccentric urban followings. The so-called “space gods” of the long-fallen Hyperborean states are all but distant memories, fainter even than the dying sects of the Beast Gods. Despite this decline though, a maddening array of smaller lesser godlings and semi-divine beings stubbornly soldier on in the margins.

Sect Characteristics

Attributed Alignment (A): The hyper-powerful beings called gods exist beyond the human-derived theoretical framework called alignment. In fact, many stories of the antics of the gods clearly show them acting in ways inconsistent with alignment behavior and it’s not an infrequent occurrence for many of the most powerful gods to have distinct aspects, manifestations, or incarnations that act wholly in a different alignment mode (though never in the one directly in opposition). Of course, that doesn’t stop humans from attributing a single, approximate alignment to the deity and an aspirational doctrine for followers.

Bonus Spells/Powers (B): Special bonus spells and powers are granted to faithful clergy or other temporal agents beyond their normal spell range. The number in parentheses represents what level the power is granted. All powers are useable once a day unless otherwise specified.

Priesthood Class (C): Clerics are only found in the ranks of the most supreme of all humanity’s gods, the Sun Lord. All other clergy are vocational posts (with special powers/spells) eligible to certain classes as per their deity.

Domain (D): What humans consider as the deity’s area of control. Again the actual deity may consider his or her brief to be something wider and may share or battle another power for jurisdiction.

Solarist Sects

Most of humanity in Zëm (the world that the Hill Cantons reside in) lives nominally under a single, yet highly fractious and localized religion called Solarism. As the centuries have rolled on, this body of religious doctrine has been thought by sheltered Coreland practitioners to be the single “theologically correct” world view, ruled (or at least dominated) by a single godhead, the Sun Lord. Though their inclusion often fires fierce debate two other “entities,” the Celestial Lady and the Antagonist, are recognized—to varying degrees—under the Solarist umbrella.

Paradoxically, the more monolithic Solarity has grown the more hyper-nuanced, locally-differentiated, contradictory, contested and absurd its actual real world practice has become.

A: Lawful Good (with odd, rare Chaotic Good and Lawful Evil aspects)

B: By sect (see below)

C: Clerics only

D: By doctrine all things human, but Illumination, Glory, Warmth, Sustaining the World, Heroic Activity, All Things Related to the Sky and the Sun

It is known that in the post-Hyperborean period, the Sun Lord roamed the world performing great feats. Achingly similar stories of his virile prowess (the bullwhipping of the Unachus, the jilting of the White Goddess, etc.) are told throughout the known world. One school of contemporary thought maintains that the Sun Lord was merely a mighty folk hero, a fleshy mortal sac like you and I, another that the many and diverse manifestations are the work of many separate local heroes. The more orthodox hold that he was an existent god, who manifested himself everywhere as a hero and concealed his divinity as a test of humanity’s worth.

The Sun Lord (his true name is forbidden from mention) drives the Chariot of the Heavens along the wheel-ruts of the Dome of the Cosmos daily. The god spends the winter months dining with the ancient divine “space god” luminaries of Hyperborea. Some savants believe that the god is in reality a godhead of 313 “Rays” and many old gods have been usurped, absorbed, or even eaten.

The faith is currently divided into 31 Houses of Orthodoxy over seemingly absurd doctrinal differences (whether sign of the sun is made clockwise or counterclockwise and how many fingers should be used, the number of wheels on the Sun Chariot, etc.)

The Sun Lord grants special favor to his servants that walk the path of the prim and orderly weal (LG), they gain access to the full range of spells and bonus powers. Clerics that have lapsed into Chaotic Good can use the full range of spells but not the bonus ones, while those who have decadently slipped into Neutral (a sad majority of this class, really) are limited to the first 3 levels of spells. Perversely Lawful Evil clerics gain access to all levels of only the spells that have reversible effects (and then only the reversed form, naturally)—though clearly they gain such nefarious power from secret affiliation with the powers of the Anti-Cantons or Ha-Vul the Antagonist (see Part 2). Chaotic Evil clerics do not exist.

Supernal Orthodox Temple of the Puissant Sun Lord

The Supernal Orthodox Temple of the Puissant Sun Lord is the official religion of the Overkingdom with an established and widespread hierarchy throughout most of human civilization. Projecting itself as a monotheistic (if syncretistic) religion, the Temple dominates the Overkingdom spiritually. The Temple itself holds a tight monopoly on the manufacture and distribution of the Seed of the Sun (gunpowder), which does not work in the Weird.

A: As above

B: Light (1), Continual Light (4), Disputation (6): priest lays down such a mighty and byzantine line of theological polemic that the listener must save as if struck with a Confusion spell, only usable on

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humans who understand Vulgar Hyperborean (the common tongue of the realm).

C: Clerics

D: As above

The Ultra-Orthodox Patriarchate

Ultra-Orthodoxy is the official religion of Kežmarok with the Patriarch as its supreme spiritual head. Though astoundingly rigid in its doctrine and intolerant of other sects of the Solarity, it is shockingly tolerant of other “apostate” religions to the point of allowing their open (if regulated and taxed) practice .

A: As above

B: Smell Heresy (2): priest can smell out followers of solar sects in a 20-foot radius, Continual Light (4), Disputation (6) (see The Supernal Orthodox Temple, above)

C: Clerics

D: As above

Minor Houses

The clergy of these minor aspect sects are allowed to be clerics and follow the same advantages of the Supernal Orthodox Temple above. The Thousand-Faced Myrmidons

A martial order of clerics and lay-brothers who emphasizes the herocult manifestations of the Sun Lord.

Brothers of the Other Mother

Orthodox monastic order that promotes the veneration of a less divine “Marian” mother-figure to the Celestial Lady.

Followers of the Cleansing Rays

An ascetic order that believe one must drop away all care for the material world and devote oneself to full-time basking in the rays of the sun and other devotional acts.

Brethren of the Supernal Skies

A mystical and martial order of monks devoted to a heretical reconciliation—cosmic “remarriage”—of the Sun Lord with the Celestial Lady. They are nominally at war with the Other Mother cult.

The Quadraligists

An orthodox sect that dogmatically maintains that the Sun Lord’s chariot has four wheels—and four wheels only. They are in mutual and heated conflict with the Two-Wheeled School of Immanence and the Troikaits (who go as far as to say at times that the chariot could be in fact a sled).

The Fustians

It’s unclear what their actual beliefs are other than a highly contrarian worldview that involves the shouting down of opponents.

Primitive-Reconstructionists, Heimtbach Conclave

An Orthodox sect that maintains that the Sun Lord has a single aspect to be venerated above all others. There is internal confusion however on what that aspect is, paralyzing the sect’s spread.

Habeka the Celestial Lady

A spurned and feisty female deity (also called the Lady, She Who We Shall Not Mention, or the Triple-Goddess) whose now-heretical followers seek to restore her place in the Divine Family. While her

relative divine status is disputed, her location and lack of mobility is not: she is currently chained to the Great Hearth constellation—a situation she and her followers greatly resent, naturally. Men of learning attribute the nourishing twice annual Blood Rains to the Lady’s periodic revenge beatings of the Sun Lord with her star-forged silver chains.

Her followers are divided among three bickering secret societies: the Evening Star, the Morning Star, and the Starry Void Lodges. The first two societies are mostly moderate and socially egalitarian factions with a strong base of artisans and denizens of the Borderlands. The Starry Void is a zealous, secretive, and lotus-addled crew who are rumored to dabble with the Mysteries of the Outer Void (and of which, we can not speak).

A: Neutral (Evening Star), Chaotic Good (Morning Star), Neutral to Chaotic Evil? (Starry Void)

B: Darkness 15’ foot (3), Commune (7), Meteor Swarm (15)

C: All classes but Clerics and Druids may join the Morning and Evening Star societies. Magic-Users, Monks and Assassins are the only permissible classes to join the Starry Void

D: Co-Ruler of All Creation, Mystery, Motherhood

The Antagonist, The Fallen Demiurge, Ha-Vul

A third malicious yet lawful entity, carefully never called directly by its true name, is often attributed to the Solarist religious grouping. Some in the borderlands believe that the god has no real substance and is merely a folk legend maintained by the Sun Lord’s spiritual lords to scare some moral purity into the dullards of the Corelands. Others say that this entity is the collective spirit of that fell domain known as the Anti-Cantons and a brave few maintain that he may even be a wayward, malicious aspect of the Sun Lord himself.

A: Lawful Evil only

B: reversed spells only, Cause Light Wounds (2)

C: (Anti) Clerics

D: Rigidity, Corruption, Being a Dick

Pahr “Old Gods”

The gods worshiped by the formerly-nomadic Pahr people of the Overkingdom and Kežmarok before their conversion to Solarity. Out and out worship is only seen in the most remote of villages. An Old Pahr religious revival seems to be stirring in the borderlands, a movement buoyed by the foundations being laid for a great new temple dedicated to the Pahr Pantheon deep in the wilds of the Feral Shore.

Svat the Four-Faced

Svat is a distant, vaguely warm father figure god, head of the Pahr Pantheon but greatly diminished in power to the point of his fading from existence outside of the four-faced, wooden pillar shrines. It’s unclear what he does all day and when he gets home he sits by the fire, smiling distractedly.

A: Chaotic Good in some aspects, Neutral in others

B: Pass Without Trace (2)

C: Druids, Fighters

D: Formerly all things. Unclear what current domain is other than his veneration by the unemployed and harassed Pahr fathers.

Radegast

Appearing in most incarnations wolf-like with a fierce, fanged overbite Radegast (or Radhošt in the old tongue) is a god that affirms the earthly joys and excess pleasures of human existence. While a young godling, he catapulted into a more prominent position in human worship by stealing the divine platonic ideal forms of hops and barley from Svar's sacred fields and joyously sharing them widely in what by all accounts was "one hell of a party." He is still widely revered during harvest rituals throughout the cantons as a folklore symbol of the exuberant side of life even by Sun Lord worshipers.

A: Chaotic Good

B: Resist Drink (1): can voluntarily elect to drink three times as much as normal without becoming inebriated, Friends (2), Cheat Fate (5): reroll a single die roll, Otto's Irresistible Dance (15)

C: Fighters, Rangers, Thieves, Mountebanks, Magic-Users

D: Hospitality, Games, Ludic Activity, Generosity, Fermented Drinks and the "Dionysic Soul"

Storm-Child

Reputed by certain esoteric orders to be merely the half-human offspring of one of Radegast's many dalliances with the female half of humankind, he is undoubtedly the most beloved of the Lord of Hosts' children and his cult flourishes to this day in the backhills of the borderlands. His followers' abodes are instantly recognizable by the littering of children's toys, many teeth-marked, throughout their living space. Not one for subtle interventions, Storm-Child demands the attention of all mortals he encounters. Many of the "touched" ruffians, mountebanks and picaros that style themselves "adventurers" spread too-consistent tales of hearing the godling's howls carried by a far wind while deep in the Weird.

A: Chaotic Good

B: Shocking Grasp (3)

C: Fighters, Thieves, Half-Ogres

D: Thunderstorms, Willfulness, Dice

Marzana

A few able-toed fallen deities manage to adapt to their downshift, sometimes recasting themselves with entirely different briefs and personas as they adapt to their new station. Marzana, the old Pahr goddess now coasting a head above local godling status, is widely suspected to be Mara, a chthonic goddess of legendary emotional iciness. It is said that after running hot for a while with the jet-set gods of the Latter Hyperborean successor states as a trendy "goddess of bittersweet remembrances, poised languidness, and doleful fashion," she had a tremendous row with a divine lover and in that baleful fallout, covered the world in ice.

Like Radegast she ekes out a life mainly as a Hill Cantons folk-festival patroness (plus tiny pockets of worship) where a rag-filled, garlic-be-decked straw effigy of her is dragged through the streets toward the local water source while being dipped into every puddle, pond and mud mire along the way. At water's edge the effigy is burned and a nearby tree festooned with gaudy baubles. Druids (either real, if in a pagan community, or celebrants symbolically draped with granola if in a Sun Lord-fearing community) march behind the procession chanting "it's not much, but it's a life."

A: Neutral

B: Ice Arrow (3), Reincarnation (11)

C: Female Druids, Magic-Users

D: Winter, Dead and Rebirth, Emotional Distance

The First Beasts

When Overgod begat the Little Gods, the first of the Little Gods little resembled today's humans and beasts of the field and forest. The First Beasts (or Zvir) were magnificent creations, walking tall and massive with verve and panache in their furry steps.

The great molding hands of Overgod (never much of a details kind of god) slipped on occasion. He was quite displeased with his own sloppy efforts regarding the Beasts. Overgod fretted and worried and, after slow aeons of divine navel-gazing, began to reshape his imperfect efforts. Here, he would grab a creature and remold its marred proportions. There, he tore off and flipped away an unsightly talon, gullet, skin flap, or tail.

Most of the Zvir patiently suffered the celestial makeover and remain today in the form last given. Some, however, resisted and even evaded his great reworking, maintaining what original forms they could under the strain of the long processes of the World-Dialectic.

Racial memory holdovers in the Weird keep a dwindling number of the First Beasts and their descendants as petty gods of a sort. Occasionally, worship of the so-called Beast Gods even grabs an especially isolated pocket of humanity on Zëm. The barbaric blueskins that prowl the Northlands above the World Canal are said to be especially prone to such lapses.

An Abridged List of the First Beasts

Vlenosh (Angry Sloth)

Under the molding hand of Overgod, Lazy Sloth willingly became shorter (and more adorable). His defiant brother, Angry Sloth, however, fled to the deepest folds of the new world. There, seething in his unbridled anger issues, he became unhinged, demonic even in countenance. From the sullen thoughts of this banished First Beast came lesser beings bearing his likeness and his hatred for all of creation: the Slothrogs.

A: Chaotic Evil

B: Slow (4, or Slothrogs over 40 hp)

C: Slothrogs, lazy and evil human Magic-Users

D: Malice, Sullen Lethargy, "B-side" Animal Demons

Grandfather Tyger

It came to pass many aeons ago, in the murky depths of the Anti-Cantons, that the Eldish prince Xzhilhaag inherited the vast protein plantations of his house. Xzhilhaag, a being so renowned for the sublimity of his arbitrary cruelty and the depths of his sadism that even the Eld found him noxious and tiresome, found himself more and more at odds with his brothers.

Through dark magic foul—and copious applications of a food-borne contaminant—he transformed his visage into that of a demonic cat and began arming a host of his hairless ape slaves to aid him in his coming rebellion. That act, of course, was a dismal failure leading to his mortal death and spirit-exile back in the world mundane.

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What is less known is that, in his cat-form years on Zēm, he had an illicit, ill-matched, and mutually denied amorous relationship with the noble First Beast of Smilodons, Queen Zub. Their congress resulted in the oddly-named and utterly sinister Grandfather Tyger (who has had no offspring).

- A: Chaotic Evil
- B: Eye of the Tiger (3): +2 to hit for 1d6 rounds when in the heat of the fight.
- C: Assassins, Weretigers, “Eldmen” (human slaves that pretend to be of Eld descent), Tiger Wrasslers
- D: Killing for Pleasure

Koza (Regimental Goat)

While the worship of most First Beasts is banned in the Overkingdom and the rest of Solarity, a few atavistic remnants manage to hold on.

Nowhere is this more obvious than among the Great Nemec Company of the Black Army (the Overking’s standing army) who hold—and indeed do homage—to the seemingly immortal Koza, a First Beast nursed back to fighting pride by the company’s founder Oldemar two centuries ago.

Woe unto the clueless, backwater Pahr who calls this creature a mascot! For not only does he hold the rank of Subaltern in perpetuity (except for a brief three months in which he was demoted for spewing, while on a bender, half-masticated star tulips over the wool gown of the Overking’s most beloved of illegitimate daughters) he is offered sacrifice and devotions by the men of the company.

- A: Lawful Good
- B: Stubborn Pride (1): morale of troops under direct command raised to 11 for 1d6 turns. Horns of the Goat (5): a single head-butting attack of 3d6 hitpoints damage.
- C: Fighters, Goat Majors
- D: Military Tradition of the Absurd, Stubbornness

Himyari Religion

Traditional Himyari religion revolves around the worship of “Ilmuqah the True Moon,” a third white moon that believers say is so pure in its divinity that it cannot be perceived by the inadequate human eye. Popular representations of the deity present him as a massively-ripped, vine-draped man with a bull’s head who masochistically rips himself apart with raw lightning in the shape of a sickle once a month. This divine self-mutilation is said to be both a training regimen for his annual “ass-kicking” of the Sun Lord on the first day of winter and a self-imposed penance for the self-evident horribleness of human existence.

In recent centuries traditional worship has been replaced in the sophisticated coastal cities with the abstracted doctrine of the Thousand-Seeded Pomegranate, a belief system that is so multi-faceted, highly-theorized and internally contradictory as to defy explanation to heathen northerners. (The doctrine has no organized clergy and thus no set of powers.)

The mountain clans (while outwardly professing old-time Ilmuqah religion) are said to worship in secret a tribe of demon powers.

- A: Lawful Good, Lawful Evil? (backcountry aspects)
- B: Cure Headache (1), Regenerate 1d6 hit points in a turn (5)
- C: Fighters, Ghost Minotaurs, Bearded Women
- D: Virility, Strength, Guilty Contrition, Self-mutilation

Godlings

Gaxx sets forth in *Annals of the Five-Fold Path* that “puissant and sage paragons who follow alignment as defined to the absolute letter must eventually move off into another plane of existence.” Such apotheosis must be the case as, despite humanity’s seemingly inexorable march toward monotheism, a bewildering number of godlings on the rise have joined the ranks of demi-gods, fallen gods, and nature spirits that densely pack most corners of the Weird with their Immanence.

Kosteĵ the Deathless (detailed further in the upcoming *Kezmarok Undercity Supplement*)

Medved, Master of the Dunes (see *The Slumbering Ursine Dunes* for more information)

The Mistress of the Mountains

Svatek the Guardian

The Horned Oracle

Moon Calf

Vul the Drowned

Ježibaba the Witch-Bitch

Firuabakir

Water, Wood, and Hill Spirit-Gods

The Town-Gods of Marlinko (see *City Supplement: Marlinko* for more information)

Civic Gods

Atrophied Gods

Even beings as powerful as gods inevitably face sunset. Without the power of veneration they coast for years living on past glories, perhaps regaining a spring in their step here and there when fashions revive a pocket of faddish worship.

Many of the Old Pahr deities, like those of the Kaftors and Boreans before them, have faded to shadows. Who knows—indeed, even cares to know—these days of the cosmic wrestling between Chernobog and his brother Bilibog? Or the Cattle Raids of Velesh? Or even the aching pain of the Great Stonefisting? All-powerful world-shattering gods slowly become autumnal backhills gods worshiped only by yokels and then—before the longer night of sleep claims them—they finally slump into mere godlinghood.

The Silent God

The Silent God is rumored to be the Father of the Sun Lord, though the increasing tight-lippedness of his dwindling congregants makes the true nature of this god and his doctrine a head-scratcher for most. His symbol is the nine-pointed star. Complicated esoteric equations and schematics are often utilized with savants that follow him.

- A: Lawful (Good? Evil?)
- B: Confusion (5)
- C: Any but must be born into the faith
- D: Inscrutability, Stoic Continuity, Guilt-mongering

The World Turtle

Jarek the Nagsman, Marlink bon vivant and sage, maintains that the World Turtle the Hill Cantons rests on swims through time in a series

of dialectical mini and macro cycles towards to the End of History. The other planes, he contends, may be the antithesis or synthesis of the present of the HC—but of course that's absurd heresy.

At High Summer, the shortest night of the year, Altnoc, is celebrated by placing a turtle shell (for the World Turtle naturally) inside a wagon wheel and rolling it into an enormous bonfire while celebrants plait wreaths of nightshade and jump across the blazing logs in defiance of the demons who dwell Beyond the Veil.

Perhaps troubling for the continuing existence of the world, very few actually worship the World Turtle anymore.

Hyperborean "Space Gods"

The Late Classical Hyperborean period suffered from a surfeit of power-intoxication best personified by the wicked, vying Necromancers' pursuit of divine transformation. Lying in state in the Cerulean Vaults far below the surface streets of Kezmarok they spend millenia pondering dream logic and building up the will to metamorphose into beings of pure energy. Small cults nestled in the Undercity continue to serve and worship them.

Zirran the Golden
Nezar the Aborted
Hisvart the Underwhelming
Onig the Prober

