



Religions of Jorune

By sholari James

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GREATER RELIGIONS

The Auris Flame

Auris is the manifestation of the Creator, or rather, the Creative Force, identified by the northern light that can be seen on winter nights. It is the mysterious source of everything and the place where all will go when their time comes (symbolised by the burning of their dead – placing the dead in the ground is to separate a soul from Auris and binding it to the earth). It can be felt through the isho, and in its purest form; the flame. This raw force cannot be asked for favours, but the knowledge that a greater purpose exists brings a strange kind of calm to the Jaspian. Strong believers in fate and interpreting the signs of the future (and thus Auris Will), the Jaspian produce many seers and oracles. After religious disputed in their history, all kinds of temples have been banned throughout the realm of Jasp. Priests are not allowed and seers can not meddle with politics. Religion is to be conducted in the privacy of the home. Wandering seers and other “perceivers” of Auris’ Will or the future are still common in the towns and villages.

Most Jaspian have an ornate lamp in a special shrine in their house, which burns with a holy flame, lit during an Auris display. The flame is the focus for meditation or pondering upon the signs that might predict the future, the reason for an occurrence or ones fate. It is an everlasting, creative and destructive flame, which ends life and clears way for new life. Its enigmatic ripples and movements hold the universal secrets for those that are patient enough to see it.

Ejecca

The cruel Erucian gods are known as the Jecca or Jecca People. Those that understand them or can lure wisdom from them are Ejecca. This is the Erucian name for their priests and has become the name all other people use for this religion. The main Erucian gods are:

Jarca. God of Fire. Lord of fires, volcanoes, lava, lightning and heat. Mightiest, oldest and wisest of the Jecca and primary god of all priests. His wisdom brought the hearth fire to the humans and destruction to the enemies of the humans. Powerful, chaotic and dangerous.

Cyracy. God of Waters. Lord of the sea, abysses, rivers, lakes and rain. Greatest enemy of Jarca and the most wrathful of the Jecca. Worshipped by mariners.

Caris. God of Trees. Lord of the forests, animals and creator of ships (a weapon against Cyracy). Least powerful of the gods but very important to hunters.

Vojecis. God of the Earth and Tombs of the Dead. Lord of the Underworld, earthquakes, the soil and the mountains. Worshipped by farmers, but also by the priests who consult him often to watch over the dead. (As an Erucian Tomb God, Vojecis has cults and secret temples in Lanna, Thantis and Toronia, as well as some small covens in Burdoth and Heridoth.)

Giira. Goddess of the Sun. Lady of warmth, growth, stars, deserts and Bringer of Visions and sight. The only female deity among the Erucians and the only one of the Jecca that will not respond to prayers, offering or rituals. Her powers are great

(drought, sunstroke) and she uses it upon the world to battle her former lover Cyracu. She enables humans to see and will sometimes grant visions of wisdom.

Evorca. God of Winds. Lord of hurricanes and storms, isho, crystals and the seasons. Enemy of Cyracu and Caris. The wisdom of cutting crystals, navigating along underground crystal lava streams was lured from Evorca. Will most frequently interfere with humans through storms, isho storms and severe seasons.

Erucians believe that their gods created them when these were fighting for supremacy over the world. The gods had first created elemental beings of fire, water, trees, earth, sun and wind and these beings were used as soldiers or slaves. As the elementals used their powers in the battles of the gods, great destruction fell upon the world in the form of droughts, floods, earthquakes, forest fires etc. The gods never grew tired of the eternal war and revelled in the destruction it brought. Nothing could fully grow or develop during this time. The elementals, however, grew weary and finally, one day, lay down their weapons. The gods became enraged and started to punish their elementals, destroying many of them. The elementals then fled from their masters and joined with each other to become stronger. Their bodies fused together and created a new creature that would have some of all the powers of the elementals, but none so prominent so that it could create vast destruction of the proportions they had used to. In this way they could outwit the gods, prosper and give the world a chance to grow and flourish. These were the first humans.

Humans (Erucians actually, as other humans have lost most of their powers and become empty husks of men) have part of the gods powers and Ejecca priests will early in a person's life try to discern which power is the strongest (fire, water, tree, earth, sun or wind). This power describes an individuals personality and his actions can be somewhat predicted. Erucians often carry their main elemental visible upon themselves in the form of jewellery or decorate their weapons, ships or clothes with it.

Ejecca worshippers believe that humans have an important role in the world and are very capable of creating their own destiny. They have freed themselves from their gods, but still use these to lure favours or protection from them. The relationship with their gods is one of fear and dependence. Ejecca priests will lure wisdom or answers to questions from the gods through complex rituals or by travelling to their "palaces". Every god has a Grand Palace and several smaller palaces all over the world. These will be places associated with their powers and some of them cannot be reached by humans. (Volcanoes are abodes of Jarca, maelstroms, large waterfalls or great rivers the abode of Cyracy etc.) In such a place the god is very powerful and can destroy humans. But it is here that the priests will have greatest success in luring wisdom from the cruel lords. Temples are often built in or close to these places and are constantly manned by priests.

Priests may also manage to force a god to protect, curse or aid a human if he is cunning enough. This can be done anywhere, but will be most successful close to one of the god's palaces. All kinds of communion with these cruel gods come at a great spiritual price for both the priest and the person asking the favour. Therefore the priests demand a stiff worldly price in the form of money for their services.

Erucians in general spend a lot of time satisfying or "bribing" gods not interfere with their lives, temporary avert their attention (when passing a stormy sea, crossing a great river etc) or turn upon someone else (cursing others). They live their lives

knowing that the gods are at odds with them, but can be held at bay by their offerings or by the rituals of their priests.

Mundell worshippers

Most of the Thodicean tribes living in the western Thanterian lowlands as well as the Thodic Mountains are Mundell worshippers. The Thodicean word “Mundell” means “Mirror” and symbolises how one thing can be seen as two or in two different shades – one true and one false. The Mundell worshippers see the world in shades of good and evil. Every place, time of the day and year, every beast and plant can be found somewhere along the scale of light and dark - good and evil.

There are no gods, only Good and Evil and its servants. Evil or dark things and creatures are to be avoided or destroyed. People can follow the paths of light or of darkness, although the general belief is that darkness/evil should be avoided at all costs.

The shamanistic Mundell priests can see these complex shades of good and evil and can recognise an object or persons place in the order of light or darkness. Complex and pagan rituals must be conducted to please or scare away objects or creatures serving the darkness. Places and objects often have to be cleansed or counter-cursed to be safe for humans. Mundell priests are constantly casting spells, blessing and curses. Their strange altars or scary constructions of bone, feathers, scales and crystals are often seen in the countryside where Mundell worship is strong. Births, weddings, pacts and other important social events must always be safeguarded against invasion or perversion by evil spirits. Predicting good or evil omens is an important function for all Mundell priests and quite often these omens mean different things in different parts of the Thodicean cultural sphere.

As it is the traditional religion of the more tribal Thodicean Culture, Coronians and Erucians have often scoffed at the superstitious people from the mountains and their mad pagan priests.

The original Mundell worship has also been adopted by neighbouring cultures who have altered it to suite their environments and needs. Today it is spread as a modern underground cult with distinct prejudices against non-humans such as ramian, cleash, scarmis and croid. Mundell worshippers outside of western Thantier are therefore known as troublemakers and the cult can be found in Thantier, Khodre and Burdoth.

Tolamuun

Belief in the Windows of the Sky or Lore of the Stars, spread throughout the Lusail province of Burdoth. It started as a minor cult in Sychill and Sydra, that later grew to become the main religion of the Lusail Sagedom. The stars are believed to be windows to other worlds. Just like warps are windows to other places on Jorune. By studying the stars, planets and the moons life and the future can be predicted. The different worlds (167 are currently accepted by the High Priest Plenary of Sydra) often have more than one window linked to them. These are bound together in star-signs. The star-signs, planets and moons revolve around the world in complex ways and influence the world differently. Extreme details can be read from the night sky, as well as the behaviour of the sho-sen. Tolamuun priests are mainly astrologers and spend most of their time predicting the future, determining peoples destinies and creating detailed horoscopes. They are known to hoard secrets about the movement and influences of the moons, stars, planets and the sun. The dow seers may present a

more colourful and popular prediction of the future for common people, but the Tolamuun priests claim to be more precise (although their predictions are often so hard to predict that people do not understand anyway.) Tolamuun astrologer-priests will argue for days about the complex interpretation of the stars and a good arguments is seen as a good tourist attraction by Ardisians. Especially the ten Tolamuun High Priests that give advice to the sage of Sychill are well-known for their bickering in court about the interpretation of the night sky.

However, shantic ca-tra sholari have on a number of occasions shown their interest in Tolamuun astrology, which they regard as more scientific and more precise. The Tolamuun obviously have linked certain isho phenomena and weather patterns with the cycles of the moons, and thus attract many caji of the Lusail province. When comparing ancient star-charts and depictions of the Jorune star-system, the earth-tec iscins of the Dharsage have found disturbing similarities. The Tolamuun seem to be very thorough and good observers of the night sky.

Tolamuun does not preach an exact moral or behavioural code. Rather, it presents actions, ceremonies and virtues that should be encouraged or avoided during certain alignments. These change as the alignments change, which has made the populace dependant on the weekly predictions of the astrologers. However, the pompous ceremonies that are conducted in the cities to herald the coming of certain constellations is enjoyed by all and combined with fairs and merrymaking. Drenns and keshts often have private Tolamuun astrologers to tell them when the time is favourable to undertake certain tasks or make certain decisions. Tolamunn astrologer priests have at times struggled to strengthen their political power. They have never succeeded in any other way than being heard for advice regarding the timing of certain undertakings by kings or the sage. However, the tolamuun have succeeded in proving how dangerous other religions are by predicting various natural disasters, which they claim happen because the cycle of the constellations is disturbed. The most renowned religious clash in the Lusail regions was between the Worshippers of the Cross and the Tolamuun. A great pogrom resulted and the only surviving Worshippers of the Cross fled deep into the Suh Larvan swamps or to Reet. Because of this, other religions have always had to tiptoe around the Tolamuun and never make too much public impact. The only exception to this rule are the peaceful dow astrologer-monks that have earned great public popularity with their easily understood prophecies and horoscopes.

Tolamuun study the stars in special towers with external stairways and particular design, often depicting star-signs or the moons. Shantic objects or artefacts otherwise linked to the sho-sen are often found in Tolamuun towers. The towers are also filled with telescopes, maps, obscure holy calculations engraved on metal plates, star-symbols and other arcane equipment linked to astrology. At the base of some of the larger towers are chapels, where the astrologer-priests can meet with the people who come to hear their predictions. Their towers can be found in many larger cities in Burdoth, Heridoth, Khodre, Anasan and Jasp. Quite often Tolamuun and Dow astrologers will be found arguing between their towers or observatories.

Sho-Caudal

The shantic word Sho-Caudal can be translated as “Vast fluid body” and is the name of the shantic religion or view of the world around them. The shantic religion is extremely complex and all of it centres around Sho-Caudal, the moons and the isho that binds these. Complex isho calculations and manipulations are part of the religion and what humans would call science has clearly mixed with religion. The shantas have no gods and do not ascribe the moons, Sho-Caudal or any other isho phenomena with any kind of personality. However, it is clear that the shanta see the moons and Sho-Caudal as different forces that affect the world, the future and all creations differently. Humans have never really grasped the subtleties of this religion but have scavenged what isho lore they could use and finally created the bastardized Ishara religion.

The shantic religion clearly reveres greater beasts, such as the Dhar Corondon, maybe because the corondon must have been their greatest threat during their development, or maybe because it master vast quantities of isho. Other great animals or plants also have a place in their complex mythology. Most of these have one thing in common – they are all especially attuned to the isho around them. Places with strong sho-sen and greater isho phenomena are also a strong part of the great shantic mystery that caji would gladly give their hands to learn.

To shantas, religion is their life. It holds all the secrets and guides the individual through life. It gives reason, ethics, comfort and support. To live without religion would be to live without speech, weaving, family or order.

Shantas are however far from uniform in their religion, interpretation of isho phenomena and their use of isho. The seven sects were established a long time ago as a result of a great splintering of the shantic belief. These sects have certain tasks that serve the race as a whole, but also specialises in certain areas of isho use. The sects also approach things such as politics, moral, history and time itself in different ways. The sects cannot live as one, but neither can they live alone. They need each other and are stronger together.

Shantas and their complex invisible world will always be a mystery to humans.

Ishara

Since the days of Caji Gends, the isho literate muadra have incorporated fragments of the shantic Sho-Caudal religion into their life. Isho was always a very real phenomena and it has naturally become a strong part of the religion of those humans that can perceive it the best. At one time there were many watered down versions of the Sho-Caudal religion spread over the northern realms, but the muadra practiced the one religion that most resembled the original shantic belief. This belief has today become uniform and strong.

After the Energy Weapons War and the coming of Seyat, the isho worshipping religion exploded among both muadra and humans. Muadra priest of the Sobayid Star-God religion incorporated the isho myths into their religion and soon broke free and created their own sect. The new sect became known as Ishara, a name taken after the sacred training temple grounds for caji in Miedrinth. This religion is practiced by most muadra today and the Sage of Miedrinth has been forced to accept and protect this new religion to avoid confrontation with the growing power of the muadra in

Sobayid. The Sage has declared, however, that maudra are the only people that are allowed to practice this worship freely and without instruction, training and guidance from the Sage. Naturally, mudra and humans of the Sobayid are slightly confused and most will pay homage to both religions – just to be safe.

The isharans believe that the isho wind (sho-sen) emanates from a great entity called Sho-Caudal, which is the world and rules with unseen hands. All things are created by and from Sho-Caudal. Mountains and trees are part of Sho-Caudal's physical body, while the copras (souls) of living things are part of the sho-sen of Sho-Caudal. It is within the copra that the real sentiency exists and it is very valuable. Isha is the great life-force or power, upon which all are dependent. Even soulless creatures like the ramian and certain other beasts, depend on the sho-sen to make their crops grow and their cattle healthy.

Much time is spent on determining the sho-sen of an area and the sho-sen to come. By doing this, Ishara priests can determine where the sho-sen is or will be potent so that people will know where crops will grow tall and cattle healthy. A strong sho-sen also develops the copra and breaths health into a person's body. For muadra who can weave the isho it is especially valuable to know these locations. Some Isharan priests also claim that they can predict the future by interpreting the movements of Tra's cloud layers. Crystals, weaving, naull displays and tra-sense are all important parts of the growing Isharan religion. When burying a person, crystal dust is sprinkled upon the body in order to speed the copras' reunion with Sho-Caudal at the Heart/Centre. Great emphasis is placed upon the afterlife and the copras' preparation for it. The worst thing that can happen is for a copra to be caught in the physical world, unable to return to Sho-Caudal. This is done when people die during isho storms or in areas with little or no isho. Ishara priests therefore act as crystal toting, dust spreading, and chanting exorcists when troubling isho phenomena occur. Many muadra remember the scourge of Ishara priests during the warp flash of Ardoth.

With the interpretations and predictions of the sho-sen come complex ceremonies that often are impossible for non-weavers of isho or those that lack tra-sense to mimic. The ceremonies also involve prayers or "weaves" to please various powerful isho entities (the moons are the most powerful of these). This abstract part of the isho religion is what upsets shantas the most. While their religion is far from scientific, shantas seem to lack any desire to ascribe the moons, Sho-Caudal or other isho phenomena certain personalities, which is a typical trait for humans.

Ishara priests are often leaders of kerning bays and one of their goals is to "enlighten" muadra wherever they go by teaching them to weave the isho to understand it (mainly Way of Gends and Seytra). Ishara priests thereby organise the muadra populace and are sometimes seen as a threat and troublemakers by the human leaders of cities and realms. Today, Ishara priests have spread to most muadra communities in Burdoth, Khodre and Heridoth. Jasprians have recently started to complain about the fiery ishara priests that break the ban on temples in their realm.

Mundane humans also flock to their temples to receive blessings and cleansings of the sho-sen that will cure them, drive away misfortune or aid the passing of the souls (copra) of the dead. Priests often help farmers find water supplies or "potent" areas which to build houses, granaries etc upon. It is a popular religion that can actually visually display its powers to its worshippers.

Important to realize is that practitioners of this religion are not totally unified. Shoists (traditionalists) oppose the new teachings of the Seytras, that new dyshas and new ways of using the isho should be sought.

Dowism

A belief in the incarnation of the souls of humans and some other intelligent creatures through eight distinct realms or worlds. These consist of the seven moons and The Living World itself (Jorune). All the eight realms have special traits and reincarnation through them is dependent upon ones deeds and moral life in the previous world. Some creatures are bound to only two realms (like the cleash, scarmis, ramian, croid and most animals), one of the moon realms and always the Living World. After each life they return to their realm of creation. All creatures will always return to the Living World every other time they are reborn. Cleash, croid, scarmis, ramian and most animals are limited to two. Corastin, crugar, trarch, blount, salu and acubon are limited to four. Woffen, bronth, tologra, thriddle and thivin are limited to seven. Humans and shantas can attain all eight, but humans only rarely attain the Enlightened Realm.

Yawin (Jorune) *The Living World*

Life and death struggle. A broad middle plain of existence. All creatures can come here. A base World and a clouded, confusing place where the Grand Design is hard to detect, temptations are many and memories of previous lives are clouded. All realms try to influence the Living World by revealing parts of themselves and sometimes by sending souls to help or lure the souls there. Humans are created here.

Dau-rey (Launtra) *The Primal World*

World of primal, blind desires and instincts. Creative realm of most animals and destiny for souls that have been lustful or primal in nature and deeds. Brings ignorance and often rebirth as animals to the Living World or Rage world. Scarmis, crugar, blount, tologra

Geiling (Desti) *The Rage World*

The world of rage, war, hatred and dispute. Warriors are in great danger of ending up in this realm if they do not stay pure of the rage of war and vengeance. Condrij who enjoy battle are doomed to this realm of fighting and conflict. Cleash and ramian are created here.

Taowin (Tra) *The Paradise World*

A place of beauty, plenty, tranquillity and reward for those that have lived morally good lives and made no transgressions upon other souls. No souls are born here, but many strive to be reborn there. Cannot be reached by Crugar, blount, salu, acubon or trarch.

Naomeng (Gobey) *The Suffering World*

A world of hard toil and often fruitless efforts. Destiny for souls that are slothful or who have never worked towards improving theirs or others lives. Life is a struggle here and souls leaving this world are hardy and true survivors. Croid, trarch, salu and acubon are created here.

Soo-pan (Du) *The Compassionate World*

A place of warmth, friendliness, love and family bonds. Social souls come to this world. Deeds of compassion are often referred to as “experience from Soo-pan”.

Corastin, thivin, bronth, woffen and thriddle are created here. Cannot be reached by Crugar, blount, salu, acubon or trarch.

Eybay (Ebba) *The Sensory World*

World of superb senses and vigilant guardians. From this world souls can oversee the Living World and watch over it. All senses are improved and vigilant, guardian souls come here. Shanta are created here. Cannot be reached by Crugar, blount, salu, acubon or trarch.

Huzai (Shal) *The Enlightened World*

A mystical world of great insight and worldly, as well as spiritual peace. The Grand Scheme is understood here and the end of reincarnation can be reached by coming to this world. Only by living morally correct, in peace and in understanding the Meaning of Life will one reach this world. Many shanta come to this world and know the way here. Only very few enlightened humans (often monks) manage to be reborn to this realm. Some (often shantas) choose to once again enter the cycle of rebirth in order to guide other souls to Huzai. Many normal people are however content to reach the Paradise World, instead of struggling to reach Enlightenment. Can only be reached by shanta and humans.

Much of the Grand Design and the future of every soul and the Worlds can be seen through the movement of stars, planets and the cycles and appearance of the moons. The Dow people had always had a great belief in stargazing, fortune telling and general astrology. The study of the moons was especially vital for determining their wills and the ways of reaching them. Their base religion survived the oppression of the Essajeian Sajja priests and when the Sychillians and their Talamuun astrologer priests came, the Dow embraced the new religion. Instead of converting the Dow blended the two religions into what it is today. Soon, the Dow seers, astrologers and the Dow Horoscope Calendar were considered the most accurate predictors of human future and the state of the world. Religious strife was common in northern Heridoth during most of 2200 PC, as Sychillian High Priests envied and fought the more popular but peaceful Dow monks. When the Dow people freed themselves from a thousand year occupation of foreigners in 2240 PC (1374, according to the Dow Horoscope Calendar), dowism bloomed. Today there is a great caste of seers and stargazers in north-eastern Heridoth, eastern Anasan and Sillipus. Some of the monks have taken to travelling the world, seeking insight and spreading their wise worlds in return for rewards of food and shelter. Dow monks and seers are welcome in most realms except for eastern Thantier and Sychill.

Terrameer (Cult of the Earth Mother)

The belief of the Ros Crendorians, which is called “Terrameer” in Fransei and “Cult of the Earth Mother” in Entren. Like the Ros Crendorian culture, it is generally closed to outsiders. However, a watered down base belief of the Earth Mother also exists among some of the central Doben-al tribes.

Terrameer is a mixture of naturalistic, Iscin and shantic religions with an alarming degree of lamorri influence.

At the centre of the religion is the Earth Mother who is synonymous to The Earth or The World. It is she who gives life to all things, birthing it from her great womb. She

is not good or evil but an order of natural chaos. Among her children are the Old Ones (shantas), animals, plants and certain geographical features seen as individuals, such as mountains, hills, lakes, rivers, forests etc. Major geographical features such as the sky, the earth(soil) and the sea are seen as part of her body (her breath, body and hair). Even spirits and smaller local deities are her children. Most noted among these are Fire, the Seven Moons and the various Winds.

The stars in the sky symbolise other great universal beings, like the Earth Mother. They are her cousins. The darkness between them is their enemies. It tries to constrict and strangle the Earth Mother every night, but always ends up loosing at dawn. Like mould infests a tree, the Earth Mother has been tainted. Some of the other universal beings (the stars) have sent their children to disturb the Earth Mother. These are the Dreamlords, restless sprits or ghosts who once fought the Old Ones. The Earth Mother now holds them imprisoned deep within herself, their spirits degenerating and rotting from selfish and heartless beings to truly evil and malicious spirits. Their kingdom once stretched over Ros Crendor and the vast desert. Other universal beings also sent their children to wreak havoc upon the Earth Mother. They tried to mould creatures out of her flesh and impose their will upon it. Thus the other speaking races were created, humans among them. However, many recognised the Earth Mother for what she was and turned away from their creators to abide her rules and the greater balance. Some did not.

The Earth Mother herself (Terrameer) cannot be asked favours. She can only be pleased or made content. A balance is sought. Her children on the other hand can be interacted with. Their nature, personality and traits vary. Everyone is taught the delicate balance of nature, including the sho-sen (Seen as part of Her Breath). Toppling the balance brings on the wrath of the Earth Mother. Sustaining the balance means everything to Ros Crendorians. It could be politics, a sick child or tribal boundaries. If one maintains the Earth Mother's balance, she will watch over you and keep you safe, just as she does with the rest of her children. Humans, unlike animals and plants, have a choice. They can turn away from the Earth Mother to heed the words of their original creators. If they do this, the world (The Earth Mothers body) will not house them and it will be their enemy.

Only females are allowed into the clergy. Men can at the most be Sijantists (iscins), but are generally not allowed to delve into religious matter. A priestess is not allowed to marry, but will bear children. No higher rank can be achieved without the experience of creating a life. The child will however not be reared by the priestess, but handed to a foster family. Many cruel jokes have been made by outsiders about the secret ceremonies where priestesses choose fathers for their children.

The priestesses are trained in a holy convent called "LiManch" (the Arm [of the Earth Mother]) situated upon a peninsula of Lake Eelish. Any male who set foot upon the peninsula are punished by death. The great Library of LiManch is known in many legends, although no one, except for the boccord priestesses, ever seem to have seen its halls.

In accordance to their belief, the priestesses sacredly guard the old lamorri ruins found in Ros Crendor. Because of the secrets hidden there, but also because they are dangerous. Strange ailments and possessions only encountered in Ros Crendor can be remedied or exorcised by the priestesses. This ancient task was inherited from the bronth guardians "Lambruh" (Spirit Jailers) who occupied the land before the tribes. The priestesses also rule the lands and the High Priestess resides in Ro-Obiss. As the

entire Ros Crendorian culture is matriarchal, this is a natural state of affairs to all Ros Crendorians. Historically the priestesses were at one stage corrupted by darkness.
[See *Ros Crendor* essay for more details.]

Holy Pluran Church

The Pluran Church is the state religion of Thantier and the reason for much fear among non-humans, muadra and boccord. The Pluran belief is strongest in eastern Thantier and growing rapidly in western and northern Thantier. It also grows in the Drail colonies and churches are established in Burdoth, Heridoth and Khodre. The church is very old and has been a political partner of the Coronian rulers of Thantier since the creation of the Holy Coronian Empire. No other religion has been tolerated in its political sphere and the church has always maintained an aggressive approach towards non-humans. Now, the church is going through a revitalisation that threatens all other realms and religions.

Plurans believe that all humans are sinful and have committed a Great Sin in the past. The reason for this Great Sin was the hubris of mankind and the treason of non-humans who sought to bereave humanity of its rightful place in paradise.

According to doctrine, humans lived together with their god (The God) in Paradise. Some humans had become demi-gods through the purity of their actions and thoughts and the destiny of humanity was to become gods, equals of The God that had created them. The God was lonely in his creation and sought worthy companions to share his paradise. But, the other races (first, failed attempts at creating a devout people) were envious and conspired against The God's plans. They lured and corrupted mankind and in her folly she became proud and tried to create things that would equal or rival The God's power. The God was angered at this and shattered Paradise. He spread the shining realm over the firmament of the night sky (becoming the stars) and cast down humanity to the World of Animals, where the other races lived in misery and constant struggle to survive. Among the great predators, diseases and misery of this world, humans understood their hubris and tried to restore their former greatness. They created the Empire (sometimes known as the First Empire) under one of their downcast demi-gods (The Emperor) and his children. They cried to The God to forgive them and pleaded to him to come for them. But The God was angered and did not listen. As the Emperor stared endlessly at the stars (which were the remnants of Paradise) and wept for his kin, humans started to fight amongst themselves for power. The hubris flourished in this world and the non-humans (thones) pretended to be friends of the downfallen humans and continued to plant impure thoughts and desires into the hearts of men. The great Thone Treason finally led to the downfall of the Empire, the death of the Emperor and the plunge into Darkness. These were the Lost Years and humanity became savage as the animals around them. Greta demons invaded their lands and fed upon their young. Some hapless humans were possessed by the wickedness of the non-humans and their offspring became changed and monstrous (the first human mutations that would later stabilise into muadra and boccord).

Seeing this great misery The God felt remorse for his finest creation and spoke to the foremost and purest among them in a booming voice. He told them that He would re-create Paradise when humanity has rid themselves of their hubris and sin. In order to do this they had to rid themselves of their tainted kin and the influence of the non-humans. They had to create a pure Empire, which would herald the Return of a

Golden Age. If humans could live through this Golden Age for 101 years Paradise would be re-created and humans be saved from this world.

This salvation did not only affect humans living in this time, but also the souls of all other humans that had lived before – because these await judgement for their deeds around the great Round Tables of the sky (the moons). Therefore it is important for every human to strive towards cleansing themselves and the world around them from hubris and impurity. If they have led a good life their souls will join the living of the Golden Age in Paradise.

The Pluran Church is organised in a strict hierarchy with titles from ancient Terra such as a Pope, Archbishops, Bishops etc. Churches and cathedrals is the correct name for the temples of The God, although they do not resemble the churches and cathedral of ancient Terra. The church speaks of a return of a Golden Age when humanity frees itself from sin and taint (non-humans and mutants). It preaches an anti-thone message and demands that humans rid themselves of any thone-connections or influences. Especially recently they have incited their followers against non-humans travelling their lands or living at their borders. Muadra are persecuted and feared, while boccord are tolerated until the return of the Golden Age when they must be put down.

The Pluran Church is rich and the clergy is involved in the ruling of the realm and pulls many political strings.

The Pluran Church is also ordered into several martial brotherhoods, such as the Thotyan Condrij (sacred trouble-shooting condrij guarding cathedrals, protecting the clergy and serving the church abroad as spies), Firelance Knights of Slegun (guarding the eastern borders against Thantier's enemies) and the Blood Angel Condrij that all become martyrs of the faith (devout Condrij masses, 1/5 of the Thanterian army, that have been blessed and whose souls are guaranteed to reach Paradise when humanity is forgiven). These martial branches of the church and the persistent clergy have started to sweep over the world to forcefully convert pure-strain humans to their faith and or violently cleanse them of humanity's inherited sin and hubris. The Pluran Cross is a loved symbol among eastern Thanterians, but feared among the non-humans.

Impressive mass ceremonies to display the Church's power are common and the cathedrals are used as impressive monuments reminding humans of the righteousness and power of the true faith.

Doctrine is incredibly important and many internal skirmishes have been based upon disagreement of doctrine interpretation. A notable branch of the Pluran Church are the Pluranian monks of Khodre who spend most of their lives interpreting, copying and researching doctrine. They are known for their constant recitations of doctrine.

[See *Thantier* essay for more details.]

Iscin Reverence - Those That Guide

All iscin races believe in Iscin and see him as their creator. Even the humans admit that this is so. Although some of the iscin races (crugar and blount) believe that Iscin is the creator of all life, the rest believe that he created them and put them apart from humans. Iscin had a hidden purpose to the creation, a purpose only graspable by those that spend decades of contemplation upon it. It is the eternal question of life's purpose and the goal of one's existence. Iscins wisdom superseded the rest of humanities. Why else would he breath life into new (and sometimes better) creations?

The Iscin religions (sometimes called Iscin Reverence or belief in Those That Guide) can be divided into Creation Myth, Great Wandering, Codes of Life and Guides.

Creation Myth

The Iscin races have slightly different Creation Myths but Iscin and the other races all star in them. The myth tells how Iscin created the Iscin races for some reason either lost to time or which will be revealed in time. The form of creation varies from clay sculpting (blount) to beings created out of fire or wind (crugar). All legends speak of the great tragedy which ended Iscin's life, but the races argue about whose fault this was (Choundra or Bomoveris the Demon). The bronth and woffen have legends detailing the slavery under the crugar, while the crugar speak of a great liberation and struggle for justice. Certain traits of a race are often incorporated into the creation myth and Iscin is supposed to have created these traits as part of his plan.

Great Wandering

Often the legend detailing the great exodus from the Gauss Valley and the shaping of new lands where the Iscin races would flourish. While the reason and destination of this great wandering differs from race to race, the story always contains great ordeals which moulded the races into what they are today. Notions of freedom and free will to roam where the race pleases is common. Especially the woffen believe that the world cannot be perfected until the woffen has seen all of it. Some legends (blount and crugar) also mention the physical changing of the races as part of the ordeal of the Great Wandering. Tragic or heroic legends are abundant from this time. More exotic details of strange places and creatures (the tologra was one such detail for instance) remain, but their true source is often lost to time.

A common belief among Tologra, crugar and blount is that the Great Wandering is not yet over. It will not be over until Iscin's creations (the crugar) have reclaimed the Holy Birthing Lands or Grandfather Iscin returns to remould them (blount) into a new creature.

Codes of Life

These are ethical rules or stories supposedly derived from Iscin himself. They have since been interpreted and altered to suit the environment and times the Iscin Races currently inhabit. Most of the Iscin Races try to live by these Codes of Life which in reality contain all moral rules a society needs to survive and function. The moral codes and ethical approach to punishment is well known for its softness among woffen and blount (compared to humans) while the crugar have incorporated a very complex cycle of revenges and blood feuds upon enemies within or outside of the race. Bronth are the true interpreters of the Codes of Life and often serve as judges in Lundere for their wisdom. It is also a well known fact that bronth scholars can argue several lifetimes over an interpretation of what is supposedly Iscin's words.

Guides

The crugar, woffen and tologra believe that all members of their race join Iscin in feasting halls after their death. This great hall is known as Houwrah's Halls among the woffen and tologra, while the crugar know it as Mauwgra's Halls. Here the relatives sit and enjoy the enlightenment of life, Iscin's wisdom and go on splendid hunts. From these halls the ancestors watch over their descendants and guide them through life. It is a great honour to be such a Guide or Guardian and all the aged members of the races who believe in this great hall try to look forward to it. It is often

important to ascertain who the Guide of a certain individual is. The tologra therefore try to keep close records of their relatives (in name and deed) while the crugar only choose guides among the most famous of their race. Woffen are not limited to members of their own race, but believe that other Guiding Spirits exist and that one must listen to all the signs around you. Foremost among these are the shanta, who guide the parentless woffen race through life. Woffen honour shanta and protect their abandoned dwellings in return for guidance through life. It is not uncommon for shanta in eastern Lundere to “adopt” a woffen or a woffen tribe and become their Guardians. The woffen can then consult his sacred Guardian (often requiring a tedious and holy trip deep into shantic lands) when he is faced with troubles or when in need of important advice. This custom is most frequently practiced by the more primitive woffen tribes of southern Lundere and has placed some woffen in the service of the Ca-Desti.

Small tokens or belongings of ones Guide are often kept close and his/her name is whispered often in prayer. It is a devout form of ancestral worship that contains many ceremonies or times when one’s Guardian ancestor or spirit can be contacted. A person without a Guardian (or one who has displeased his Guardian) is a sorry individual indeed.

The use of priests varies among the Iscin Races. The blount follow their huge, bloated and rare females that also serve as priests or conductors of ceremony and Speakers of the Guides. The Bronth have no priests but several scholars that would pass as priests for their theological discussions regarding the Codes of Life. Crugar have a strong shamanistic priesthood that meddles in politics as often as they can. They interpret the Codes of Life in accordance to their or their ruler’s will. Crugar shamans are also known for their vicious curses and blood-thirst. A wounded crugar is taught to rather die of his wounds and go to Mauwgra’s Halls than return limping and invalid in shame to his family. Woffen priests are mainly female and serve as ethical advisors, midwives (as birth is hard to woffen it is a time surrounded by great ceremonies), bond-makers (in marriage) and Guide Seekers for children (finding them their Guide). Tologran priests serve mainly the rulers or conductors of greater ceremonies during certain times of the year. The tologran priests also serve as judges, as they alone know how to interpret the Codes of Life. It is clear that the priests have been greatly influenced by the ramian rochka (priest caste) and try to maintain a powerful grip over the populace. Many tolograns fear the longhaired grey priests of the rulers who serve as advisors at the councils.

The Iscin Races have no gods (although the crugar and blount have elevated some of their most powerful ancestral Guides to god-like status) but do believe that other races do have them. These foreign gods are best avoided and the Guiding ancestor can often protect the individual against them.

Coralli

The Coralli are the host of gods worshipped by the Sholians and Yorkni of Heridoth. Once, the Coralli also had power throughout southern Ardis and northern Sobayid, but now the Star-Gods of Sobayid has stolen ground at the same pace the Sholian Sagedom crumbled.

The pantheon of Gods had different properties and came from seven different realms (symbolised by the moons). The gods of a certain realm would rule or influence the

world according to when their realm(moon) was strongest in the sky. During these times their powers were greatest and the chances best that they would hear and aid humans who worshipped them.

Worship of the Coralli was at first done in small shrines dedicated to local gods. Small offerings of food or tokens were given to the Coralli. As the Yorkni and Sholian cultures grew, so did the religion. Mighty temples were erected to honour the Ruling Coralli of each realm and some of their more distinguished underlings. The priests became powerful and the smoke from their sacrificial burning bowls was soon seen in all Sholian and Yorkni cities. All Sholians and Yorkni must pay homage to their gods at these temples and must bring sacrifices in the form of food or goods that is consumed by fire and thus handed to their gods. The Coralli only accept human sacrifices during extreme conditions of flood, famine or other disasters and never is a man allowed to sacrifice anything else than his own kin.

The Coralli gods are believed to often interfere with the lives of mortals. Either because they favour them, they have been asked for help or simply because they enjoy the game of manipulation. The gods of one's enemy could likewise turn into your enemy if he was favoured by them. As the power of the gods waxes and wanes with the moons, Coralli worshippers worship different gods during different times of the day, month and year. Each god requires different prayers that will better suit their personality. The prayers and curses of the Coralli are well known throughout Burdorth, Heridoth and Anasan for their colourful wording and strong phrases.

Coralli worshippers have house shrines (a room) dedicated to the god that is thought to favour them especially. This god might be regional and class-bound. During certain times of the year people flock to the greater temples in Sholia, Koistra or other greater cities to attend the mass ceremonies that brings them together as a people. Many of these temples now lie in ruined cities or even in Burdorth, but still pilgrims come each year. Coralli worshippers burn their dead, so that their souls can gather in Bathor's halls and not be bound to the land where they can trouble the living.

The Coralli priesthood is still powerful and maintains a steady grip on the populace. They have specialised in different realms and different gods and are known for their lavish robes that distinguish them from each other. Some priests openly fight each other and use their worshippers as pawns.

Although many Coralli exist, these are the greatest:

Taris, Goddess of the Stars and the Mistress of the night, ruler of the Gobey Realm.

Harathor, God of the Seas, lakes and rivers, lord of the Shal Realm.

Hisigel, Goddess of Beasts, ruler of the Du realm.

Arath, God of the Lands, Forests and all things growing, ruler of the Launtra realm.

Siiris, Goddess of love, fertility, whispers and the tongue, ruler of the Ebba realm.

Bathor, God of wisdom, winds, and souls, ruler of the Tra realm.

Bellona, Goddess of war and fire. Her daughters are famine, fear and despair. Her sons chaos and murder. She is the ruler of the Desti realm.

Star-Gods of Sobayid

Many of the tribes of south-central Sobayid have for a long time worshiped various smaller deities. In 1250 PC the smaller tribes were conquered or united under the most influential tribe of them all. The ruler was appointed sage and the religion of the ruling tribe was spread to the other tribes, sometimes forcefully. It is a belief in Star-Gods that survey the tribes and reward them or punish them for their deeds. It might originally have been just one Star-God, but as the tribes united, every smaller deity became a star-god. Every tribe claims ancestry from their special Star-God that came down and spawned them. Thus they have its name in the beginning of their surname (Example: Jandar Kur-Tannis). These gods often take upon themselves the guises of animals to travel the deserts and jungles in order to spy on their human charge. They will sometimes toy with human fate and use them in their internal scheming. They have strong personalities and many tales involve gods falling in love with humans or being envious of them. Mostly the gods will protect their tribe and reward them. However, sometimes a god might find it fit to punish its people. The relationship between the god and its people can be very different from tribe to tribe. Sometimes the god is avoided or given offerings in order to leave its people alone. Other gods require offerings to tend to his people. Some gods can be touched or even made love to, during special rituals. No one, however, is allowed to speak to the gods. Silence must always be obeyed, unless you are one of the Chosen Priests. Tribes send their willing disciples to Miedrinth to become priests under the guiding eye of the Sage and the High Priests. These Soba priests undergo many years of studies and strict religious duties in order to become a priest. After this they have to undergo one ordeal (often in the desert) before being ordained. The sage is the primary divine spokesman of the Star-Gods and only he and his cadre of priests know the true wishes and intentions of the multitude of star-gods. Only they may talk to the Star-Gods. What was originally a bold move to control the people and its religion became a firm religious institution that united the tribes of Sobayid and gave them a strong cultural hub in the city of Miedrinth. The Shining Star of Sobayid is the symbol of their faith, as well as the symbol of the Sage of Miedrinth. The priests conduct many rituals and ceremonies in order to be able to commune with their gods. Most of them are uniform, but some are individually adapted to the Star-God a certain tribe claims ancestry from. Some of these ceremonies will include a whole tribe or a multitude of townspeople in a mass sermon or ritual. This way the common people believe that they are a vital part of the religion and help the priests to make their voices heard among the stars. Colourful stories about the exploits, adventures and tests performed by the various gods, make the religion popular among the people as well as spreading cultural norms and moral. Soba priests are not astrologers as such, but know exactly which star represents which God. As there exists many other humans and races in the world, it is only natural for the priests to assume that they are ancestors of any of the myriad of other unknown Star-Gods of the night sky. Some Star-Gods have undoubtedly lost their children or punished them with extinction for their lack of faith. Ruins of these can be found everywhere and serve as a warning.

Volo-Korrochka (“Eternal Caretakers”)

The dark and to humans terrible religion of the ramian race. Contrary to humans, ramian society is very uniform and free of conflicts. A strict caste system sees to this and ramian generally are quiet and calm beings. The same uniformity and stillness is

seen in ramian religion, where the ramian refer to themselves as Eternal Caretakers of Taurris - the world.

All ramian belong to this religion and to them religion is the truth, history, future and boundaries of society. Ramians do not falter in their belief and do not splinter down into various sects. The degralochi, korochka and rochka castes constantly remind the ramian masses about their place in the world and nobody would ever doubt (or dare to doubt) their word.

According to ramian creation myth the ramian gods created the ramian because they were alone. They needed companions and servants and so created the strong and silent ramian out of hardstone in the far south of the world. The first ramian lived in a vast open paradise where they could roam free wherever they wished and all things listened to their voice and mind. Their bodies would never grow old or sick and their minds would forever remain clear. Their instincts were their own to control. It was paradise living among their gods. According to the same myth, the ramian also served as the very bodies of their gods who lived inside some of them and walked among them. The gods taught them how to speak with the lips and the mind and taught them many secrets. They made ramians the rulers of all creatures and Caretakers of the world.

Ancient ramian texts then speak of a great cataclysm in which their gods were attacked by the rivalling Invisible Gods of the Blind Weavers. A great war ravaged the world and all ramian can still feel the terror and death of this time as it is imprinted in their minds. The great war is often remembered through dreams and rochka (priests) sometimes revisit these times on purpose (many of them going mad in the process). To save their favourite creation, the ramian, the gods chose to withdraw from the physical world and let the cruel Invisible Gods of the Blind Weavers win the war. These gods were very strong and their invisible hands burned the ramian and all things their gods had created for them wherever they pleased. The ramian gods told the ramian that they would return and declared the ramian to be caretakers of their world, until they returned to fight the Invisible Gods again. Then, an only then, would the ramian be given strength and armour to fight the Blind Weavers, as their gods would fight the Invisible Gods. Until that day the ramian must learn to wait patiently like the mountains and be strong of mind and body. The ramian suffered terribly and cried in despair after the gods who had abandoned them – but they had hidden themselves and did not answer.

Even though the ramian thought they had been abandoned, they were watched by their hidden gods. After ten mykrr (approximately ten ramian generations) the gods chose a select few loyal ramian to contact. These, they visited in their dreams and told them where to go to listen to their whispers. In such a way the ramian rochka were created. Only they know what to do and where to go to listen to whispers of the hidden gods. Through the rochka the ramian way of life is maintained and the ramian try to govern and take care of the world of the gods until they return.

Contrary to many humans, ramian have no problems believing in other gods. Their scrolls speak of humans bringing their own gods to the world and how they nearly destroyed the Invisible Gods and the Blind Weavers. A lot of the other races also have gods, which makes it important to know their weaknesses and how to protect oneself from their powers. The rochka know how to do this and if there is ever a question that needs to be answered the rochka will travel to far away places to hear the whispers of their hidden gods.

The gods of the ramian all have powerful physical attributes and are known to have been strong both physically and mentally. Many of them are therefore destructive and

terrible in visage. If you add the fact that horns, scales and claws are seen as normal attributes by a ramian, the images of the gods are often terrible creatures indeed to humans.

The ramian gods reside in the deep abysses of the ocean, in the darkness between the stars (The Dark Sea), deep underground and in barren, remote places where nobody would look for them. They are very cunning and clever.

Ramian rochka hold strict ceremonies during certain times of the year, which the entire populace follows. Among other things, these ceremonies protect the harvest, shirm-eh seekers and ramian populace from the wrath of the Blind Weavers and the fire of the Invisible Gods.

Ramian rochka are also the interpreters and wielders of ancient artefacts and arcane knowledge left behind by their god. With this knowledge they often interfere with politics and aid their rulers. Ramian knowledge of the stars, planets and moons is alarmingly accurate, although several greater gaps exist. Of special significance is the belief in the Dark Sea, the empty void of space, that the ramian are destined to sail forever when their gods return. The moon Tra (referred to as Kaurr) is also important, as an especially potent God lives there. This god can be communed with during certain times of the year and will often answer the prayers of the rochka.

Because of their terrible past and every ramian's belief in the great War that drove their gods into hiding, ramian fear shanta and all shantic things. This primal fear has somehow been strengthened when their former masters, the lamorri, died while they were still psychically linked to the ramian. The fear has become something instinctual and is very hard to conquer for all but the chiven rachu-eh. Ramian priests particularly dislike the humans that can invoke the fire of the Invisible Gods (weave dyshas), and will quite often stop to destroy them if they have the chance.

Tabbrah

The name of the trarch religion and the Mountain of Creation, which spawned them all. Although the trarch are scattered over large parts of Drail, they all share the same creation myth. This myth tells a complicated story of how Mother Sky and Father Wind created the first people. The jealous Uncle Earth was then envious and swallowed them and kept them in his belly. There the first people created beautiful cities and magical artefacts and soon saw Uncle Earth as their parent and forgot about Mother Sky and Father Wind. Mother Sky and Father Wind then tried to create other children, the second people (trarch). These were at first also swallowed by Uncle Earth and were very unhappy. Unlike the first people they had been given eyes to see their parents with and thus could not forget them so easily. Mother Sky and Father Wind therefore persuaded Uncle Earth to release them from the Mountain in which they were kept. After all, Uncle Earth already had the first people and their love, and therefore should not be greedy. Uncle Earth promised to release the second people on the condition that they would always pay homage and respect to all Uncle Earth's creations and to the first people. The second people heeded Uncle Earth's words and always paid homage to the animals, plants and spirits of his creation. They lived alongside the first people and often visited them in their splendid underground cities. Now and again the second people would commune to Mother Sky and Father Wind through the burn stones given to them by Uncle Earth.

But, one day, two lazy sons of the second people started to cut down the forests and plough the lands. They wanted to have more sons and daughters than the land could

supply and greedily envied the first people their riches. They grew many but thin and weak in their greed and Uncle Earth warned them many times to change their ways. Finally, the thin gaunt New People (other humans) attacked and killed nearly all of the first people. The second people fled deeper into the forest and have remained there since. They are free from the wrath of Uncle Earth and do everything they can to preserve the abandoned cities and dwellings of the first people. They still pay homage to Uncle earth and do not take more than they can use.

The trarch believe that Mother Sky, Father Wind and Uncle Earth have many other offspring or spirits in the world. Much like the Mundell, these are seen as either good/benign or evil/mischievous. Sacrifice be given or specially constructed wards must be created to please/avoid them. Trarch shamans differ greatly in appearance and in the way they practice their religion. They go from bone-waving to meditation, from head shrinking to symbol painting. The only thing they do share, is the creation myth and their reverence for nature (and its sometimes brutal laws) and shantic dwellings. Trarch are almost always very superstitious and will not do anything they suspect is wrong (breaking taboos) or dangerous to Uncle Earth without first consulting their shamans.

Most of the trarch found outside Drail lack the religious leadership of their shamans (as the ramians always kill these tedious trouble-makers) and have hybrid trarch-ramian religions or simply follow the same gods as their masters.

Heki

Many salu living close to non-salu cities or working regularly for humans or other races have chosen to follow these religions and abandoning their own. The original religion of the salu from Yobreh bight to Jasp and Burdoth via Khodre is however called by the same name as their great god- Heki.

Heki is the great shipbuilder and the god who gave salu the ability to hide in the oceans and live off its fruits. Heki is depicted as large salu with no eyes and a long tail. He watches over the salu and calms the seas and winds, so that they can travel upon and live in the sea. Heki will require sacrifices now and then. These are taken by his other children, the terrible predators of the sea and the salu are not to mourn if one of them is taken to Heki. Heki sails the sea at day and the sky at night. To help the salu he lights the moons and the stars and by looking at these the salu will always find their way home - no matter how far they have drifted with the current.

Heki is revered through songs or with special horns that blow down into the water from the surface and create an eerie sound. Priests perform ceremonies, bless boats, bind lovers and solve disputes under the guidance of Heki. It is the priests that also predict the future and the success of a sailing venture by consulting Heki and spreading colourful Raspa juices in the water to study its swirling pattern.

The more civilised salu worship Heki and their religion has changed through generations of contact with other humans and races to become what it is today. The more primitive salu despise the worship of Heki (whom they don't recognise as a god) and will sometimes attack Heki priests and their underwater shrines under the guidance of their priests.

It is not uncommon for human or woffen fishermen and sailors to worship Heki or at least make offerings to him in order to earn his protection when upon the sea. Human and woffen Heki shrines are often situated at the very aft of a boat and painted with

holy symbols, which supposedly attracts Heki attention. Offerings of fish, wine and rusper are poured into the sea to please him.

Salume

This is believed to be the original salu religion as it was known in the Kymay Sea before the salu started to spread over Jorune. It is the worship of Salume, a great and terrible ocean entity that resembles the great Sammoril predator of the seas, but with long tentacles and human arms. Salume rules all waters and all things that live therein. The creatures of the land are creations that have fled from him and live in exile. Salume created the salu and gave them the gift to live in the sea, but to hunt on land and on the surface. He prefers his people to be hunters and simple folk and will occasionally require one of the salu as a sacrifice. These are sometimes taken by his other creations, the predators of the sea, but sometimes they are handed to a dharsammoril by his priests. The sacrificial victim is then bled and left close to a dharsammoril's lair.

The Salume priests are bloodthirsty and often require sacrificial victims of other races in order to protect the salu and their ways. The priests are not allowed to breathe air and frequent use of the hasra seaweed (which enhances signature skills) has shrivelled their lungs forever. However, their acute signature skills rival those of the shanta while underwater and they often serve as sentries for entire salu communities. The salume priest is often the leader of a tribe in all but combat, where a champion leads the people. In order to satisfy their god and the priests, the salu often raid their neighbours to find precious goods and sacrificial victims.

Salume priests also incite tribal salu against Heki priests and will destroy any heki shrine they find. They regard Heki as one of the land living traitorous creations of Salume and not a god. He usurped Salume's rule and tried to steal the salu and make them live on land. He is responsible for their decadent ways and the new diseases that originate from land. Salu and humans alike fear the Sign of Salume when they find it painted upon the hulls of their ships. It is said to attract the wrath of Salume in the form of a sammoril that will destroy the ship. Salume priests are also known to be the creators of the Krelee shell crystals and other strange artefacts that rule, attracts or disperses dangerous creatures of the sea.

While many tribal salu are pirates and raiders, allied humans can normally trust them until they upset the salume priests. Once this is done their days are counted. Salume priests can be found in remote and more tribal salu communities around Hobeh, Sillipus, the Eastern Islands and the South Sea.

Some human pirates of Sillipus have been known to sacrifice animals or even humans to Salume in order to be granted a powerful gift associated to the sea or when blessing a new ship for the first time. It is unclear whether the salume priests approve of this and where this custom came from.

Chelnus

When the thivin were abandoned by the ramian they were at the very bottom of the great ramian caste system. They were only allowed to pray to Tcherrnu – god of the deformed and moulder of flesh. He was the only one that could reshape them into the ramian they had once been.

However, this religion would soon change as the thivin became free to roam the world. Now, Chelnus is the patron and guardian. He did not create them, because this was done by the cruel ramian gods, but he gave them great gifts. These were the gifts of:

Health (thivin heal very rapidly and without the need of shirm-eh),

Age (thivin can become much older than ramian),

Wisdom (Thivin have an uncanny memory, sometimes rivalling that of the thriddle),

Family (Thivin have huge families with strong ties), and,

Inner Sight (contrary to the ramian thivin have adapted to the isho of Sho-caudal).

Although the ramian gods had punished the thivin with weak bodies and poor sight, Chelnus rewarded them with great families that would spread over the world.

Thivin pray to Chelnus in solemn quiet prayers and have no priests, but all elders and family leaders are required to know the 12 hymns to Chelnus and His Rules by heart. Offerings of valuable trinkets, such as jewellery, crystals and musical instruments are placed in secret places in the earth (as Chelnus, like his other ramian god-brethren, is hiding) or simply buried. Thivin burn their dead after having placed them for a month in the ground to be taught the final mysteries from Chelnus.

Songs and the creation of musical instruments are an important part of Chelnus worship. The thivin will therefore put great effort into creating beautiful music and praise all good musicians to a degree that humans do not understand. Thivin family bonds (rivalling those of the klades) are strengthened by a religious belief that the Gift of Family will spread them over the world and make them extremely wealthy.

MINOR RELIGIONS

Sajja

Belief in the great all-devouring SkyBird Sajjanis. This god is depicted as a terrible duradon and probably created by the first people who took to underground dwellings in fear of the duradon that hunted on the plains of Essanja. Sajja was the ultimate god of the world and ruled from the peaks of the Accaptas Mountains where no humans were allowed. The duradon were his messengers, executed his will and served as overseers of his world. Humans were given the lands and the sea to walk and sail upon in return for sacrifice. In the early years this consisted of leaving live or dead sacrificial animals to the great God's servants on special altars open to the sky. The Sajja priest would prepare these sacrifices and take them to the dangerous places. There they would see the terrible messengers up close while they were feeding.

As the Essanja culture spread it brought its religion to all places, even if there were no duradons present to monitor them for the sake of Sajjanis. However, as the Essanja culture grew stronger, the Sajja priests evolved and started to get politically active. In the end they ruled the lands of the Essajeans and called themselves Priest-Kings. Great temples devoted to Sajjanis were created and the huge, metal statue of Sajjanis, spewing fire from its beak became feared throughout the neighbouring realms. The Priest-Kings and their strong ruling caste of priests were equally feared for their power, their dreaded curses, their ability to call upon the duradon and their strange hypnotic gaze that would enslave people and send them to their doom.

As the Essanja culture stagnated and degenerated, the Priest-Kings started to demand human sacrifice. Both slaves, unwanted, poor and occupied were given to Sajjanis' servants. As the slaves (and quite a few of the poorer peasants) rebelled against the Priest-Kings, the Sychillians managed to conquer the Essajeans. The worship of Sajjanis was forbidden and punishable by death. However, the cult still exists today in hidden and remote areas of eastern Burdoth, Heridoth, Sillipus and even Khodre. Its name normally brings fear and loathing.

A smaller branch of the cult splintered away during the advent of the Priest-Kings. These religious dissidents did not share the belief that religion should be mixed with politics. They were persecuted and fled the Essajeian cultural sphere into the Glounda Forest. Among the ancient trees the splinter sect and its followers began a new and often hard life. They evolved into the secretive and secluded Glounda Culture and did not re-surface among other cultures for many centuries. Their belief is nearly identical to the original sajja worship and does not require human sacrifices. However, the name of Sajjanis is so feared that many Ardisians, Essajeans and Sychillians demand that the cult be destroyed in Glounda. This would be a disaster and a loss of a very colourful forest culture.

Worshippers of the Cross

Belief in the Sun as great deity and Bringer of Life. It controls the cycles of the year and the growing of crops. It keeps the evil darkness at bay, protects and warms men both physically and spiritually. The sun and its radiance are depicted as a normal cross (not the old Christian cross) that is stylised and beautifully decorated with carved patterns and symbols. In its centre is a round sun, often with a hidden compartment that holds icons, such as bones of saints.

Blind priests clad in white and sun disc decorated robes hold ceremonies to bless crops, people, new-born, wedded couples etc with the suns radiance. The Delmeran ceremony of emerging their young in water while the priest tells the Sun its name, is well-known to outsiders. To become a priest one must first have surrendered oneself to the Sun to hear its silent words. This is done by staring into the sun until the priest is blind. Certain heroes of the faith can sometimes be declared Sun Saints after their deaths. Their names are revered and the particular deed that they are associated with, will always be under their protection.

The priests spread the silent and unheard words of the Sun. These are often the standard moral rules of society. However, of greatest impact is the Law of the Sun that forbids Kings or other supreme rulers to exist and declares their authority non-existent. Other strange rules are The Hospitality to Strangers and Everybody's right to the Wild Lands. This clashed severely with the emerging Sychill rulers at the end of the first millennium PC, who used the Tolamuun to squash these troublemakers. The War of the Star and Cross, in 1332 PC, ended in great pogroms of the Worshippers of the Cross and drove the survivors into hiding in the Suh Larvan swamp or in exile to the island of Reet. Still today Worship of the Cross is banned on mainland Lusail, but is still practised by the Delmeran people of the Suh Larvan swamp and openly by many of the people of Reet. The Tolamuun High-Priests are not concerned, as long as the religion does not start to spread again.

Sura Scripture

The original religion of the Sutturash people was based on the Sura Scripture and used to be common in the southern parts of Thantier. A holy man called Nayvitta, presumably one of the original colony survivors, created the Scripture. It was an attempt at keeping the Hindu faith alive but underwent many changes as Suran priests interpreted the texts to their own liking. It contained a pantheon of gods, the belief in karma and incarnations as well as many moral rules of conduct, essential for a society to function.

When the Pluran Church was formed it destroyed or converted the followers of the Sura Scripture after a series of violent pogroms. The few faithful followers fled into the See'iss desert and join their brethren there. Today, the Sura Scripture is revered only by the Sutturash people of the See'iss desert. To all outsiders these vicious nomads are known for their blood thirst and raids upon caravans and smaller settlements along the Thanterian desert border. Their savage ways towards outsiders is a result of centuries of persecutions by Thanterians.

Small offerings of tokens or food are made to the various gods who are Guardians of certain areas of Lore or Traits. For example: Savashu is the Master of Mental Strength, Willpower, Courage and Determination. Yuvi is the Mistress of Love, Hearts Desire, Lust and Passion. Attarash is the Master of Joy, Laughter, Humour and Friendship. If one god favours a person too much it will lead to trouble as he becomes too confident, too lustful, too gullible etc. Therefore, many rituals of self awareness are conducted, where the priests help the followers to look upon themselves and their vices with new eyes. Suran priests are often consulted during conflicts or when people of a tribe are uncertain what to do or act. This may be family business, tribal affairs or purely political matters. Everyone respects the words or advice given by a priest, who in reality is a moral guardian and councillor of sorts.

By living a good life and a life in balance with all virtues, one might escape the eternal cycle of reincarnation. Those that so far have succeeded (which, according to legend, was easier in the old days) shine down upon humanity from the night sky. Every watching and trying to guide those stuck below.

Sa-Ying

The Korrin worshipped the Sa-Ying pantheon. These gods had strong and varying personalities. They were of two hosts. The Water Gods and the Mountain Gods. The Water Gods lived in all waters and were in charge of the lakes, rivers, rain, snow, the fish of the lakes and streams as well as the protection of boats. The Mountain Gods lived among the high Downtrough mountain peaks and were in charge of the winds, the lands, the growing of crops and animals of the forests. Together they had created man and hidden inside them the secret of the stars. The Korrin placed offerings to gain favour or attention from their gods at small simple shrines (Spirit Houses) in the forests, on the mountain slopes, along rivers or by the lake shore. Some of these simple shrines had developed into small temples manned by hermits by the time the Coronians conquered the Korrin.

The two hosts of gods were constantly contesting with each others powers and playing tricks on each others realms. This friendly and mischievous competition was reflected in the Korrin culture as well and can still be seen today.

When the Korrin culture was swallowed by the stronger Coronian, Jaspian, Fransei and Burdotherian Cultures, the Sa-Ying gods became mischievous spirits that had to be

kept at bay or content. Simple folk continued to place small offerings at the abandoned shrines.

The Khurite Sect is an offshoot of the Sa-Ying religion which has maintained some of the Sa-Ying deities and their personalities.

The Calling

According to skamaan belief (simply called The Calling), Huragach is not considered their homelands. Tyrakaar, their chief War-God, declared their original homelands lost forever after their rebellion against their former masters in the dawn of time. From that time the skamaan were destined to wander and spread, until the world lay at their feet. This was prophesied and promised by Tyrakaar and by all the war gods of Tanrekka (The War-Place/Hell). Not only do the skamaan believe in their superiority over other races and their destiny to rule the world, they also believe in The Great Muster. This is held in the Underworld of Wars, Tanrekka. Here all who die at the hand of the sword will await the great muster when they will be pitted against Evil as the champions of the Gods. They are thus promised bountiful opportunities of war and great worldly treasures for their sacrifices.

The different war gods also protect different aspects of society, like a warrior protects his family, kin and ruler. The main aspects defended by various god champions are: Oneself (protected by *Hakaar*), The Family (protected by *Vaskir*), The Clan (protected by *Rutekka*), The Warlord/ruler (protected by *Kaskaar*) and the People/the Skamaan (protected by *Tyrakaar*).

Offerings of war tribute, such as weapons, loot, bodies of the defeated and even families of the defeated satisfies the different gods. A god is chosen to receive the sacrifice, depending on who needs the protection (oneself, ones family, ones clan etc). The mightier the god, the greater the sacrifice (Tyrakaar traditionally requires the life of an enemy or his slaves).

To many outsiders, the aggressive and destructive gods of Tanrekka is the cause for most conflicts between the skamaan and their neighbours. The pluran church has for centuries tried to convert the skamaan, and has to some extent succeeded among the rural skamaan of southern Huragach. A chaotic (and often violent) mix of religion is now taking place in Huragach and the skamaan dakrani are getting worried.

Immorans

The religion of the mysterious Sky people, who revere the stars and the sun as holy places or realms, which can be astrally visited by their monks in order to gain guidance and insight. Small monasteries and villages seeing to their needs is all that remains of the elusive culture that once spread between the inaccessible mountain plateaus of the Lus'ikai Mountains of western Thantier.

The name Immoran comes from the very first wise woman among them Emanuella Sanchez who was (is) an immortal. She had descended from the stars but spent most of her existence in a Dream State. She awoke from time to time to help her people and presented great inventions that helped them avoid the invading cleash and fly between their havens of the mountain plateaus. In the end Emanuella became weary and sick of the world filled with the evil cleash and never awoke again. According to ancient scripts, she sleeps until this day in a hidden monastery among the clouds of the mountains.

Like Emanuella the Immoran monks tried to find answers to their worldly problems by sleeping and visiting the Holy Realms where all wisdom can be found. The Immoran monks therefore spent much of their lives in a natural or drug induced dream state, where they could pass over the boundaries of time, matter and distance. They visited the distant past, travelled to the star and sun realms and found some of the lesser answers. The first monks acted as advisors to their people and lived in the high towns cut into mountainsides. With the demise of their culture and the destruction of their greater towns, the monks turned to the deeper mysteries and away from their people. They were originally supposed to find answers to more mundane everyday problems but now turned to life's greater mysteries. As the culture dwindled the monks became drug addicts that would spend most of their life in Dream Chambers pondering upon the mysteries of life. Strange rituals not understood by the villagers are conducted from time to time to keep the veil of time intact around the unaging culture. Villagers know no other way of life and tend to the monks and their old monasteries and do not meddle with their Dreaming except when they are in dire need of their advice.

Today, small villages support the last crumbling monasteries hidden from the sight of other humans among the high Lus'ikai Mountains. Only a select few monks know about the great treasure of knowledge from the terran colony that is hidden among one of their abandoned monasteries.

Subjects of the Sleeper

Vucians believe that they are a chosen people of pure-bred humans that will be rewarded with paradise in the Future or Afterlife. In the dawn of time, their Gods gave them the world as a test to whether they could conquer and destroy the tainted humans and non-humans that had invaded Creation. With holy words detailing how to live, rule and create devices for the survival of humans, the Gods left for the stars. However, some Gods stayed behind and laid themselves to sleep among their worshippers. These were the Sleeping Ones, who awoke every time the Vucian people were in need. Over the years the location of these Sleeping Gods and their very existence became lost in the mists of time. Their teachings became garbled and many tomes regarding their interpretation were written by a priest caste, whose power steadily grew. The Vucians were soon ruled by a caste of priests, headed by a Priest-King. The Priest-King and his priests still rule supreme. The cataclysmic end of the great Vucian Empire led to a splintering of Vucian belief. A new sect, The Keepers of the Written Word, was created outside of Vucian territory and became the prime rivals of the Vucian priesthood. The splintering sect stole much of the holy lore contained in scrolls and books, further confusing the teachings of the Vucian belief.

Today, Vucians believe that they are under the Ever Watchful Eye of the Sleeping One. He protects them and they must follow his every decree, as interpreted by the Priest-King that can hear his commands. Among these decrees are very racist views that other humans are far inferior to Vucians and tasteless codes of conduct towards these. Wind bells and wooden wind-driven rolls fill the streets, buildings and central cliff of their last city, Shatur. These various wind chimes are said to please the Gods and bring fortune. In these the Gods play their voices and their wishes can sometimes be heard. A Vucian will always have a smaller metal chime handy to hang in a tree or from a cliff when resting during his travels. All Vucians believe a great future awaits them if they remain pure and untainted by the other races who are far inferior to them.

They await the return of their Gods, the Paradise and their peoples return to ancestral glory.

Keepers of the Written Word

In 2631 PC the mighty Vucian priesthood splintered into two sects. The reason for this was an ongoing struggle between the city-states that had survived the fall of the Vucian Empire. Originally recorders of history, the Keeper of the Written Word objected to the downfall and corruption of Vucian religion under the numerous Priest-Kings and scheming priests. Most of all they objected to the sacrifice of one of the newly awakened Gods and strove to protect the remaining Sleepers. They isolated themselves in the non-Vucian autonomous coastal city of Nokura (which was later renamed Podrola) and collected many of the last tomes and scrolls of knowledge from the other Vucian cities. They also took with them the secret of the Bright Green Road of the Vucian Empire (an ancient Earth-tec based communication system) and the location of lost vucian cities, where Gods slept in eternity. For their treason, they were long hunted by the Vucian priesthood, but held a vigilant guard upon the forgotten ruins of the Doben-al. After a few centuries the sect underwent great changes. Under the rule of ramian invaders of Podrola, the Keepers adhered to the teachings of a great ramian rochka (priest) known as Chrokeer the Prophet. The Keepers became obsessed with Death and death as a necessity for life and vitality. They took the Garnax beetle as a symbol for their belief (as it kills itself by stabbing its eyes and brain with its pinchers in order to let its young feed upon its body and emerge strong). Animal and, later, human sacrifices were made to restore power and potency to the priesthood and to humanity. Even a good was sacrificed, before the last loyal priests fled into the desert, taking the secret of the Sleeping Ones with them and disabling the Bright Green Road. Today the small sect is greatly feared throughout the Coastal Kingdoms. Despite this fear, the people come to the great temple in Podrola to see the sacrifices and gain blessings that will enable their crops to grow in the salty and sour fields. The Keepers torment their bodies and drink the poisonous juices of the Garnax beetle in order to become ghastly red-robed figures with hollow skeletal faces. Bizarre experiments involving dead bodies and terrible chemicals often take place in their dreaded temple. The Keepers have a great religious hold upon the populace of Podrola and surroundings, as well as a great political hold upon its ruler. The fabled library of the Keeper is built like a fort and well protected, its interior a deadly maze.

Lunghoth

Lunghoth means “Followers of Hoth”, which is what a nation of fransei nomad tribes of the Doben-al call themselves. According to their belief a star of the night sky called Hoth is their birthplace. They were driven from their home by evil demons and placed in the barren world of Doben-al. Their brethren and the Shining Creator Hoth himself is, however, looking for them and can hear them. Unfortunately the Lunghoth are very hard to find considering the multitude of stars of the night sky that Hoth has to search in order to find them. Hoth therefore does everything he can to ease the suffering of his people and tries to meet their prayers. So that Hoth will never lose his way and forget them, the Lunghoth sing to him every dusk. It is the song of creation that begins with a great wailing which is birth. The song describes the mythical history of the Lunghoth and every decade becomes slightly longer as history is added. Currently

the song takes nearly an hour to sing and is mainly sung by women, children and the elderly.

The Lunghoth also go to great lengths to insure that they always live under the protection of Hoth and in its light. Mimicking the star's wandering over the night sky during the years, the Lunghoth circle the inner reaches of the Doben-al in a 500 year cycle.

The Lunghoth believe that many wind spirits came with them to Doben-al and watch over them until Hoth and their brethren find them and bring them home. These wind spirits are however constantly assailed by the evil demons that lurk in the shadowy places of the world. The Lunghoth therefore listen carefully to their words, make small offerings of food to them and sometimes aid them in their fight against the demons. Special Wind Speakers work as shamans that often travel the wastelands along to listen to the whispering of the Wind Spirits. Some have been known to even dare the great Man-taliga storms that are Wind Spirits that have grown tired of this world and wish to return home by destroying it first. The Wind Speakers will cast blessings over the tribes and often bring news from the Wind Spirits, Hoth or the other tribes (in fact acting as messengers).

Children of Nuris

The Nuris people refer to themselves as The Children of Nuris, after their Goddess of protection. She resides in the Birthing Waters beyond the horizon and spawns the creatures of the seas and lakes. Nuris was given the guardianship of the humans by their creator in ancient times. She feeds them well, but reminds them to be humble with her great forces of nature. The religion contains other strong ocean deities that have to be pleased in order to survive and prosper. There is but one deity for the land and he is called Old Man Ascorran. The old god's great achievement was the creation of land, animals and humans. Since then he has ascended the heavens and watches over his creation. Tired and weary he never interferes and there is no use to pray to him. Only during the birth of a new individual is his marvel of creation celebrated through humble sacrifices. The holes of his great black cloak (from where sprung all breathing things) can be seen as the stars at night, while his camp fire, his dress clothes and his jewellery can be seen as the sun, sky and moons during the day.

Children of Lenkha

The people referred to as the Kan Lenkhas once roamed Heridoth in a nomadic life. They moved from town to town selling their goods and services. Crime often followed in their footsteps which led to persecutions and bad reputation. The greatest reason for their bad reputation was the fact that they were descendants of human mutants that were expelled from other human communities during the Age of Monsters. According to their legends, they rallied under a mutant or deity called Lenkha. Lenkha was trained by the wise shanta of the Mash-ala culture and gathered the other mutants or freed them from slavery and took them out into the wild to survive on their own. His powers seem to have been much like that of muadra and shantas and Kan Lenkha records accurately describe how he wove dyshas, more than 2000 years before Caji Gends was trained to weave the isho. The Kan Lenkhas no longer wander Heridoth, but have settled in two rich trading towns.

Lenkha priests keep the eternal flame lit by Lenkha alive and guard it in their holy temple of Lendûra. According to legend the mummified body of Lenkha is kept in

this temple along with The Soul of Lenkha (in reality a Lih-Shyee – see *Isho Technology* essay for more details). Through this holy artefact the priests can commune with Lenkha. In reality they can gleam answers to moral dilemmas or find answers to questions that relate to Lenkha's time.

Lenkha him/itself is always depicted as a blue multi-limbed humanoid of unknown gender. It was said to have had the strength of ten men, but the fair voice of a woman, with which it could enthrall all who listened.

Even though the Kan Lenkhas are descendants of mutants, only 10% of the population show any visible mutations. A mutation is seen as a blessing and a stigma shared with the great Lenkha himself. Many of the mutants born to Kan Lenkhas become priests as they can more easily understand Lenkha's will, laws and words. Shanta have always been interested in the Kan Lenkhas and Ca-Tra priests frequently visit their towns in central Heridoth. Muadra have high esteem among the Kan Lenkha and caji are said to wield the powers of Lenkha.

Sacrifices of animals, food and distorted human figures of clay are placed upon family altars to enjoy the protection of Lenkha from their enemies. Priests are consulted regarding both legal and moral problems, as they can tap the wisdom of Lenkha. The priests also try to predict when certain actions should be undertaken or how to act to avoid them. The king of the Kan Lenkhas is always surrounded by priests and must be a visible mutant. It is his sacred duty to organise his people, protect them and guard the holy relics.

Doomsayers (Doom Priests)

Originating in the Drail colonies and spread throughout the civilised lands by red robed doom priests, this religion focuses on the sins of humanity and clearly draws its origins from the Pluran Church. The Doomsayers predict that an end of the world is near as a result of the violence and decadence of the world. If humanity does not rapidly change its ways it will suffer greatly in a great war/disaster to come. A great vision is supposed to have been granted the five original doomsayers after they had suffered the evils of the world. The original vision and the great cataclysm is detailed in scripts held somewhere in Drail but all Doom Priests frequently quote from the holy texts.

Doom priests have a list of events that will herald the coming cataclysm. This list is not complete and seems to change from time to time. As more and more of their predictions of disaster prove to be true, more and more people tend to listen carefully to their words. As the populace listen to the ragged and poor Doom Priests, their leaders suspect that they know more about these disasters than they admit.

All races have a part in this great cataclysm and the ragged doom priests tend to gather a great flock of followers and wailers that will travel with them through the countryside as they spread their message of doom.

The Doom Priests are still a fairly new sight in the northern realms but their words have made a great impact upon the populace. In Thantier they have been known for over a century Thantier and are even carefully accepted by the Pluran church. The doom priests of Thantier are not the poor prophets of doom that you would find in Burdoth or Heridoth, but rich and powerful leaders that have started to dabble in politics.

The Manon's Young

The acubon believe in a great unchangeable cycle of Life and Death. This cycle is not predetermined but necessary and is required in order for the world to keep on functioning. In order for new Life to be created there must be Death. The age-old concept of 'Survival of the fittest' or 'Eat or be Eaten' is very true for the acubon way of seeing life. Acubon live for the moment and take what they can from the world around them before the world, inevitably, takes them. It might be because of this approach to life that acubon society has not risen to higher or more sophisticated levels. Acubon also show a for humans, repulsive reluctance or apathy to help their injured or sick, as Death is a necessary evil, a balance that must not be disrupted. Acubon however also believe in deities that serve this great cycle of Life and Death. These deities ensure that the cycle is maintained and remains unbroken. They will right wrongs. In this way they may even spread Death in order for Life to exist. The gods are merely seen as superior predators or herders that sometimes consume or help the acubon. The acubon in return benefit from the gods by eating their minions or creations (fish, plants etc) or receiving direct help in the form of tool making knowledge etc. Acubon believe that the Manon spawned them, just like all other life forms, into the world and that it is their duty to guard this creator of Life. (The Manon is a myserious and ancient organism of gigantic proportions that resides in a great underwater cave complex under the many lakes of the acubon territory east of Khodre.)

The gods of the acubon are:

<i>Manon</i>	God of Creation and the Navel of the World. It is from Manon that all life is woven and set free to roam the world. Some of this life crawls upon the land, some of it stays in Kiti'kil (Birthing Sea/Lake Dau-Uh-Dey). According to acubon legends, Manon created the acubon to serve it. Only the priest
<i>Sekitl</i>	God of the Deep and master of the waves, currents and winds. God of the Foundation Elements.
<i>Pak'tak</i>	God of the Inner Fire (isho), weaver of light and Bringer of Rage. God of the Elements of Change.
<i>Ketlik</i>	God of Dark Waters and master of all beasts that roam the dark, deeps of Kiti'kil. Lord of Death and deliverer of punishment to those that break the cycle by cheating death.
<i>Tisklir</i>	God of Wisdom and Lore. Possessor of ancient knowledge and the history. He grants certain, worthy acubon with the skills of crafting or invaluable knowledge at certain times. Guards the holy unwritten Laws of the World and details about the cycle of Life and Death.
<i>Hikau</i>	God of Evil, Lies and Meaningless Death. Changer and Perverter of Life. Challenger of the Manon. Avoided by all acubon except his sinister priests and not worshipped in any shrine. Said to reside in the shunned Hikau Lake to the east.

The gods are served by priests, who interpret life around acubon society and the needs of the cycle of Life and death. The gods may speak to the priests directly, demanding them to act in a way that will preserve the cycle. At other times the priests will see

changes around them and look for disruptions of the cycle. The priests have devoted their lives to the acubon gods and have given up use of their lungs (except for Hikau's priests). They simply cannot survive above water.

Since the priests have lost use of their lungs, their vocal cords have equally degenerated. Thus they are always silent. But they spread many important scripts, written in the tikoq runes and often relay their demands through complex signals, known and feared by most acubon. It is not uncommon for the priests to have greater signature recognition and interference abilities than other acubon. If this is due to their never ending submersion in water is unknown. The priests have also been known to use coleels and other acubon artefacts in mysterious and often uncanny ways.

Priests have the right to demand sacrifices in the form of food, goods, prisoners or even other acubon if that is what the gods desire. Their power is great, as is the acubon belief that everything is part of the inevitable and important cycle of Life and Death. Hokik often see the priests demands and actions as chaotic and insane. The acubon however understand that the cycle is very complex and that the actions taken by their priests are not always understood. However, the acubon priests very rarely meddle in politics or interfere with the trade between acubon and hokik.

MINOR CULTS AND SECTS

Tekkol

A hybrid human religion based upon the worship of Tekkol, ramian demon of The Abyss Tower. Worshipped by sailors and many of the fusheen assassins for protection at night and upon the sea. A blood bond must be made and continual, dreaded sacrifices must be made in return for protection, special powers and curses upon the enemies. This dread cult has spread to ports in Heridoth, Burdoth and the Drail colonies, and is supposedly under the influence of ramian rochkas (priest caste).

Etton

Ettons believe that humans first came to Jorune aided by a race of star faring gods. These deities had their home among the stars and humans were their servants and created in their image. For the sins and hubris of the first humans, their progenitors banished them from their homeworld among the stars (all stars being one kind of world) and abandoned them on Jorune. Humans have a chance to ascend to the stars once again, if they can catch the attention of their progenitors by morally correct deeds and a pure life of no hubris.

The ancient artefacts of Dharsage Silver (Earth-tec) were created by the progenitor gods and stolen by humans. Among the sins of humanity was the usage of such devises to change and force the world and all creatures to do their bidding. Ettons therefore oppose the use of Dharsage Silver on the grounds that it breaks the sanctity of these artefacts and returns humanity to its old sinful ways. Powerful artefacts like these should be put to rest and not disturbed. If possible, they should be destroyed for the good of humanity. The only way to be restored to godly grace is to live a simple life with the goal being moral and philosophical achievements.

Originally a small cult from Ardis, the Ettons have quickly grown and incorporated the sinful Dharsage Silver to their religious picture and moral codes of behaviour.

After the horrors of the energy weapons war the Etton cult has spread to the rest of Burdoth, Khodre, Heridoth, Jasp, Anasan and even Thantier. Most rulers will try to control the Ettons and always tend to blame them when Dharsage Silver has been stolen or destroyed. The Ettons are fierce enemies of the Kerell cult and clashes between these groups are common in Ardoth and other larger Burdothian cities.

Kerell

Kerell, like the Ettons believe that humans were stranded on Jorune. However, the Kerell claim that humans came to Jorune of their own free will to help shantas (with what is undefined, but generally referred to as higher civilisation, correct moral ways etc). Humans were later brutally betrayed by the shanta and their means to return to their homeworld among the stars (once again the stars seem to be one great world, off which Jorune is but a small piece) was destroyed. Dharsage Silver is a fantastic reminder of the power and glory of their ancestors and should be revered and used to gain more understanding in order to restore the ancestral glory. Only by placing Dharsage Silver in the hands of those that can master them, are worthy of them and can learn of them, can humanity reclaim its position of greatness and flee the entrapment of the shanta.

Kerell worshippers are destined to rule humanity and restore it to its former glory. Muadra, boccord, salu, acubon and trarch are not regarded as humans and excluded all place in Kerell doctrine. Kerell worshippers try to equip themselves with as much Dharsage Silver as possible, which is a concern to the Dharsage of Burdoth. Complex rituals are conducted which revolve around arcane star maps, mathematical formulas, ancient devices or long dead languages. Most of these ceremonies are mundane but ancient procedures relating to the terran colony exist, but have become obscure over the centuries. The Kerell have also dabbled in astrology based upon ancient manuscripts and fragmented high-tech lore. Earth-tech iscin have however uncovered ancient star charts and other items of lore that are nearly identical to those found in earth-tec caches. It is a mystery where these came from and to most Kerell, what their original use is.

Originally being known as trouble makers after the Energy Weapons War, the Kerell (whom have many members among the higher society) have become more organised and less troublesome. They now scheme on a greater political arena and spread their anti-human sentiments in most towns. A great Thanterian influence is suspected. Kerell frantically seek drennship so that they can legally own powerful artefacts of Dharsage Silver or influence society. They tend to protect their own and help them to attain drennship.

Kerell worshippers organise themselves under Injineers who serve as conductors of ceremonies revering their ancestors and the holy artefacts. The Injineers also possess great knowledge about Dharsage Silver and Pod Creatures and are often consulted by cult members. They direct the actions of the cult and set up the short term goals. Above them are the Navigators of whom there are only three. These mysterious and powerful people direct the whole cult through codes, secret messengers and other stealthy ways of communication. The Navigators are suspected to be very powerful and influential members of the civilised lands, such as keshts or sages.

Needless to say, most rulers fear the Kerell's potential aggression towards the seemingly benign but powerful shantic priests that sometimes visit human realms. They also fear their lawful hoarding of Dharsage Silver and their growing influence. Many suspect ties to the Pluran church and a great plot that is about to be unveiled.

Sanster

Sanster is not really a religion anymore, but more an academic secret society mainly composed of iscin and other educated members of society. It is a watered down version of the Etton belief that humans were stranded on Jorune because of their hubris and that the artefacts of Dharsage Silver are reminders of this fall from grace. Sansters members are unsure of the existence of deities that could have brought humans to Jorune and a great debate is fought by means of pen and paper regarding this matter. Evidence of religion and thus god(s) have been found in the earth-tech caches in the form of religious symbols and religious texts in long lost languages. Neither does the Sanster society believe that humans were responsible for a great evil, but maybe that they used their great artefacts in improper ways which led to decadence. Therefore, Dharsage Silver should be approached carefully, but used to better understand its creators. By studying Dharsage Silver and its effects upon the realms, the Sanster hope to save humanity from another deluge and restore them to ancestral glory.

Sanster members never discuss their belief in public but hold several meetings where they exchange lore and pay homage to their ancestors and pray for guidance (or salvation) when investigating their artefacts. Most Sanster members provide large sums of money to support expeditions searching for Dharsage Silver.

N'Marr

Merely a cult devoted to N'Marr, God of the Underground. Unknown to most people and worshipped by the surviving subterranean Nama people of northern Sobayid. The Nama once inhabited the great city N'ar which was built upon the god N'Marr's tomb in the cliff side of the great dried out river canyons of central Sobayid. The Nama were accused of stealing children and cursing the tribes of the Sobayid. They were believed to have been destroyed in 1634 PC by the Sage of Sobayid (at a terrible price for him) and were forgotten. But in the deep subterranean depths of their ruined city they still exist. Many have hunted the legends and sought the lost city of N'ar among the sand dunes, but none have survived to spread the tale of the black-skinned Nama and their monstrous god.

Khurites

The Khurite sect exists only in Khodre. Its priests and elders worship a pantheon of gods that are very similar to those of the ancient Sa-Ying religion, although the names have changed. They predict the weather and the physical world around them. Normal people of the land come to the wandering Khurites to hear when the time for fishing, farming and other mundane tasks necessary for survival is right. The Khurites have strange rites or dances where they commune with these deities of the land whom quite frequently speak through them. Chieftains and other important people (especially from northern Khodre) often consult the Khurites about the future or how to please certain deities so that they can receive help. To many other religions, the Khurites seem scary and heretical with their possessed dances and red painted faces. The few monasteries or temples owned by the Khurites have always been in trouble for inciting the people against its rulers. They favour a simple life, close to the land and

lake. It is a well known fact that the Khurites and the acubon share many secrets and members of both parties can be found together in the most unusual places.

Mundell cults

A troublesome and racist underground cult found in the larger cities of Thantier, Burdoth, Heridoth, Khodre and Jasp. An offshoot of the Mundell religion (see Mundell under Greater Religions above).

Sajja cults

A scary outlawed cult associated with the great SkyBird Sajanis. It is known for human sacrifices and evil hypnotic priests and is the only remainder of the once great Sajja religion of Essanja. Not to be confused with the Sajja worshippers of Glounda (see Sajja under Minor Religions above).

The Guardians

Lanna is regarded as the capitol of Thantier. The city is ruled by the Holy Pluran Church, the Thanterian Council and the Thankrani. But, among the towering cathedrals and majestic palaces skulk robed figures and yellow painted condrij. These are the Guardians, a mystical and ancient cult of Lanna. According to legend the Guardians watch over the ancient remains of the Empire, the mythical first realm of humans. Lanna is prophesised to fall the day the Guardians leave Lanna. Lanna has during certain times been deserted but the Guardians have always lived upon the great hill. They live in the ancient tunnels deep under the city and watch over its dread secrets. People know better than to follow the deformed and cancerous Guardians into the tunnels and avoid them as much as possible. They only rarely interfere with the rulers of Thantier and the Pluran Church tolerates them because they know their terrible but important purpose.

Two types of guardians seem to exist. The faceless condrij watch over the older temples, armed with carapace armours and helmets without eye slits. The robed Guardians tend to become more and more cancerous and skeletal with age, sometimes seen carrying yellow shining substances from temple to temple at night. Most citizens of Lanna also know that the underground tunnels hold poisonous animals that sometimes bite and kill careless children that sneak into unguarded tunnels.

Great underground gates are said to guard a tremendous treasure. Legends claim it to be a God, the Emperor's remains, fantastic earth-tech or even an eight moon.

The faceless guardians and parts of the Guardians faith resemble the Vucian religion somewhat.

Dypra

The isho is worshipped as an abstract deity and cajiis are the priests and leaders of ceremonies. This is a weird, bastardised form of Sho-Caudal belief. The future is foretold with it, life and death are encompassed by it, and weaves are miracles in the hands of its caster. This movement appeared after the Energy Weapons War and

exploded in the 3470's, but has since been on the decline in favour of the growing Ishara movement. Fanatic dypra priest-cajis and their aged followers can still be seen drifting through the streets of Burdothian cities and warning against the misuse of isho in the kerning bays.

Sharane

A belief that Jorune is filled with travelling or stationary spirits (strong isho sources really). These are worshipped and contacted through intoxicating powders or incences. The spirits give solutions to problems, show travellers the right ways and protect thos that commune with them. The cult is popular among human and thivin travellers and travelling artists especially. Camps worshipping the spirits in the open and free from persecution can be found in the wild lands and in southern Heridoth.

Kharos

A brotherhood of condrij and priests from Salam'arine. Sometimes known as the "Pauper Knights", the condrij fight tirelessly for the weak and defenceless and against their sworn enemies the ramian. Their view of the world clearly has its roots in the Tolamuun religion, but the Kharos have answered a calling or serve out of penance or shame. Strict moral rules and virtues govern this brotherhood. The condrij and priests receive much gratitude and offerings of food and shelter from the lower classes of Gauss and Lusail society. A single cormin flower is their symbol.

World Weavers

A growing sect of muadra who study the isho, sho-sen and warps in detail. Sometimes referred to as "The White Walkers", "The Warpsmiths" or "The Warp Hunters". They dress in white robes and can often be seen with trained wolves who are good at finding active warps. Cunning mathematicians and hoarders of crystals, the World Weavers hoard complex maps over the permanent isho traits of various regions. They also write great tomes about the use of isho on a more scientific level and constantly try to map functions of shantic artefacts. They are known to be secretive and in areas where they are active they will often be seen analyzing the sho-sen.

Drawkiss Order

Originally a pro-human religion teaching the superiority of humans over other races and mutations. It is a fanatic branch of the Pluran Church and often stages acts of violence towards non-humans. In great cities the Drawkiss are often blamed for murders on non-humans.

In Burdoth, the cult has directed its hate towards the crugar. Rich members of the order finance raids on crugar communities in the Kuggin and Liggitt mountains. Lately, the Drawkiss Order has spread among the rich of Burdoth, Heridoth and especially Khodre.

The Fire of Gends

A militant group associated with the Seytra. Mark themselves with the burning touch of Desti and may weave a bright red piece of cushindel silk into their belts to identify themselves to each other.

Kakulya Brotherhood

Originally a brotherhood for muadra trimsmen serving onboard Jaspian crystal schooners. The brotherhood specialises in lore about isho enhancing limilates and the religious study and prediction of future and truths from the vast unseen flow of the sho-sen. It has some influences from the Auris Flame worship and holds vast lore about the different aspects of isho and three wavelengths of isho(alpha, beta and gamma isho). Its members tattoo interlocking blue symbols that flow from the left temple down to the cheek and are greatly respected in Jasp and among other caji societies.

Vojecis Cult

Originally a god of the Erucian ejecca religion. The great Jecca known as Vojecis is the God of the Tombs of the Dead and Lord of the Underworld. To the Erucians he is also the god of farmers who cares for the soil and the god of mountains. But among the coronian cities of Lanna, Thantis and Coronia (and some minor covens in Burdoth and Heridoth) he has a grim and sinister cult worshipping only one thing – death. Vojecis shares the secret of death and how it can be broken to his followers. The cult has secret rites used to embalm their dead so that they can be resurrected when the world ends and a new one is created. The cultists strive to preserve themselves and desperately cling to life. The embalming rituals are much like those of the Erucians. Until the dead can be resurrected, they are kept in secret Necropolises, often hidden underground. The dead ancestors can then be consulted through terrible rites and the wisdom of their past shared. Vojecis cultists will answer to a great ancestor whom, through the priests, rules the cult from beyond the land of the living. These ancestors are fanatically protected and worshipped much like the god Vojecis himself. The cultists have been known to wield terrible poisons and ways of making people appear dead, so that they can claim them as mindless brain damaged servants after they have dug them up.

OTHER RELIGIONS AND OTHER RACES

There are countless other small and very local religions all over Jorune and humans are especially fond of seeking divine solace. Fransei tribes of the Doben-al worship various nature spirits or gods associated with nature (Some even worshipping a dread pit-beast, which binds them to it with pheromones). City folk invent new cults as a way to find answers, find secret unity or simply because they're bored.

Corastin often follow human religions, but in remotes areas worship impressive natural entities such as mountains, a great tree, a river, a lake etc. They will place their dead there to be watched over by this entity but do not seem to do anything else. The croid have a similar belief, but tend to array the bones or remains of their dead in

more elaborate ways, such as hanging them in great roped cocoons or dressing a great tree with them. Neither race has any priests and do not call upon their spirits in prayer.

Cleash and *scarmis* do not seem to have any religion at all, although the *scarmis* worship their queen more fervently than any god.

Thriddle have old legends claiming that the gods who created them and all other things turned envious of the world they had given the sentient races. They wanted to take it back and turned evil. Only by uniting did all the races defeat the gods and banish them forever. Therefore, the *thriddle* do not believe that there are any gods left and none but themselves to call upon in times of need or guidance. They are their own masters and must find the answers themselves. The gods of the other races are not true gods but superstition, stuff of legends or phenomena that have not yet been explained. The *thriddle* are however alarmed at the *ramians* attempts to call upon the banished gods and make them return.