

CULT OF CATURIX

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Mystery Cults series for the Amazons vs Valkyries adventure setting. The religious cults presented here are just a few of the hundreds that exist in this setting. Some are dedicated to chthonic gods that are almost forgotten, while others worship new deities, such as Alexander the Great. These cults are most common in Greece and the Greek colonies, but also exist in Egypt, Persia, Rome, and Carthage. Even in less civilized lands druids, witch doctors, and other religious leaders join together, keep secrets, pursue common goals, and organize themselves in a hierarchy.



MYSTERY CULTS

Mystery cults are secret societies that exist within religious institutions. Like other secret societies, their existence is well known, but their rituals, lore, and objectives are concealed. Only the initiated are allowed access to these secrets.

Levels of Initiation. Cult membership is divided into a hierarchy of at least twenty degrees or ranks. Some cults have more than sixty ranks. Only the high priestess (or priest) is privy to all the cult’s secrets.

Exclusivity. None of these cults require their members to disavow or deny other deities and cults. In fact, many people are simultaneously members of multiple cults.

Cult Secrets. Only the initiated know the true name of the cult’s deity, and they are forbidden to speak it to anyone outside the cult. At each level of initiation, a different true name is revealed to the member with only the high priestess knowing the actual true name of the deity. Mystery cults also harbor many other secrets and esoteric lore. Some examples are listed on the table below.

D20	Secret Lore
1	Facts about mythical events
2	Location of an entrance to the Underworld
3	Location of a gate to another dimension
4	Location of a prison holding a demon or deity
5	Formula for creating magical items
6	Rare spells
7	Facts about other planes in the multiverse
8	Facts about a mythical beast
9	Facts about distant lands
10	The true ambitions of a major political figure
11	Archaic or extinct language(s)
12	Secret of navigating the tunnels of Europa
13	Lore of a lost or forgotten civilization
14	Location of a legendary magic item
15	Clues or answer to a puzzle or riddle
16	Location of a sacred site
17	Lore about a humanoid or monstrous race
18	Lore of a lost, magic-like technology
19	Location of a magical island
20	Lore about the Amazons Vs Valkyries conflict

Initiation Fees. Although membership in most cults is open to everyone, initiation rites have fees. These fees offset the cost of the ritual and help support the temple and its ambitions. The amount of the fee increases with each degree and depends on many factors, including how much the applicant can afford and how much the cult leaders desire the new member.



Initiation Times. Most cults conduct initiations once per year. Common dates include the first full Moon after the Winter Solstice, the Spring Equinox, and the Summer Solstice. The initiation process usually involves preliminary ritual purification, eating sacred foods, and confessing of wrong doing. This takes at least three days and sometimes up to two weeks. The actual ceremony begins at sundown and continues until sunrise. During the ritual, the initiates consume psychoactive substances and venture into a deep cavern where they have unnerving encounters with deities and demons.

Membership Advantage. Besides access to secret lore and powerful associates, being a cult member has other perks. Membership can mean that your business wins a lucrative contract from a trade guild or local magistrate. It could mean that your child is educated by an expensive Greek tutor, or your competitor suffers a tragic setback.

Leadership and Members. Cult hierarchies are separate from temple priesthoods. While most leadership positions within the cults are occupied by priestesses (or priests), not all temple priestesses are members of the mystery cult. Likewise, most cult members are not priestesses or employed by the temple; they are private citizens, lawyers, merchants, stage actors, lords, scribes, and princesses.

THE CULT OF CATURIX

Domains: Nature, Tempest, War

Location: Southern Gaul and Germania

Cult Secrets: Battle strategy, horse riding

Caturix is a fearsome Celtic war deity, known as the Battle King. He is also closely associated with horses. He requires his warriors to collect the severed heads of their enemies and display them as trophies and objects of power. His champions often hang the heads of their enemies from their steeds.

Caturix is merciless and aggressive, constantly driving his followers to war. Societies that embrace Caturix become obsessed with war. Occasionally a Celtic community will turn to Caturix for protection from aggressors. While the Battle King often aids these people, they inevitably become his servants, joining the aggressors and bringing war to their peaceful neighbors.



THE TEMPLES

Caturix's main temple is in the Celtic city of Aventicum. Another large temple is in Essertines.

Most shrines dedicated to Caturix are in the hills and mountains of southern Gaul and Germania, where his influence is strongest. Temples and shrines typically include a pillar or wall with niches for displaying the severed heads of allies and enemies. Most temples and shrines are built in Celtic communities, though the most sacred of these sites is hidden in a remote mountain valley.

Druids recognize Caturix, but rarely conduct any ceremony or observances in his honor. His most fervent supporters are the dread paladins who dedicated their lives to his service. These warlords perform Caturix's religious ceremonies and maintain his shrines.

FESTIVALS

There is one annual festival held in Caturix's honor. Other impromptu observances are held before and after battles.

Honor of Caturix. Each spring, as the snows melt and the war bands gather, his followers hold a ceremony three days long honoring the Battle King. Enemies and horses are sacrificed and prayers for war are uttered.

The Battle Prayer. Before any battle, followers of Caturix make sacrifices and perform rituals of honor, appealing to the Battle King for his favor.



OATH OF THE HEADHUNTER

Being a Celtic war god, Caturix is known for his bloodthirst. The Celt's constant warring flows from Caturix. It does not matter why mortals fight, kill and bleed, all that matters is that they do so. And in the carnage, Caturix smiles.

Every time a head is collected, the Battle King's domain expands. Be it from an ally to be placed in a portico or from a slain foe, to be discarded alongside with their broken weapons, this gesture is a way to connect to the bloodthirsty god.

Those who do battle in his name take the Oath of the Headhunter. They seek the heads of fallen warriors, allies, and enemies alike and they collect them. The blood that drips is the blood that Caturix reaps, growing its divinity in the process.

Paladins of Caturix begin as squires or followers of a senior Headhunter. One day the senior will send the follower on a Headhunt on their own. If they return with an enemy head, they become a champion of Caturix. If they return without a head, they suffer deep humiliation and must wait 1 year before attempting to take another head.

TENETS OF CATURIX

Caturix is a practical god. Either you are doing what pleases him and receive boons so you can continue making the rivers of blood flow towards his domain, or you simply do not exist. Every young Headhunter is expected to find their way to praise and serve Caturix, for the means that the blood flows is of little consequence as long as it flows. That said, decapitation holds a very special place in the Cartuix faith. It is not a gesture of humiliation; rather it is a way to connect their actions to the overseer of violence that is Caturix. A way to make it official that their fighting had the proper escalation to it. It is a way to cleanse the hunter and connect them to the divine.

The way of the Headhunter has the following dogmas associated with it:

Off with their Heads. Friend or foe, once they expire you must collect and present their heads.

Blood must flow. In a conflict, look to spill blood above all.

Hunt Your Foes. Pursue your enemies, do not merely wait for them to make themselves know.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

Strength Domain Spells

Paladin Level	Spells
3 rd	Hellish rebuke , inflict wounds
5 th	Darkness , magic weapon
9 th	Fear , Speak with dead
13 th	Blight , faithful hound
17 th	Anti-life shell , cloudkill

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options.

Lure of Battle. You can use your Channel Divinity to utter the ancient hymn of battle associated with Caturix. As an Action, you may cast a Hex mark on a creature within 10 feet of you that you can see. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom or Charisma saving throw (it's choice) or use its movement to approach you. While under the effects of this hex, the creature repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. On a success, its mind can see it clearly, beyond the lure of battle.

Take the Soul. You can use your Channel Divinity while using an Action to sever the head of an enemy. You gain 2 temporary hit point per Hit Die of the beheaded enemy. These temporary hit points vanish after ten minutes if they are not used. Temporary hit points are not cumulative. If you take a second head while you still have temporary hit points from taking another head, the new temporary hit points replace the original ones.

BLOODLUST

Beginning at 7th level you revel in the promise of violence and combat with great glee.

In battle, you fight with a violent jolt of energy. On your turn, you can enter a bloodlust as a bonus action.

While under the Bloodlust, you gain the following benefits:

- You have advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws.
- When you make a melee weapon attack using Strength, you gain a bonus to the damage roll equal to your Charisma modifier
- You may move twice your movement speed. Only use this feature if you are moving towards a creature you intend to Attack.
- If you are able to cast spells, you can't cast them or concentrate on them while under Bloodlust, but you can Channel Divinity.

Your Bloodlust lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if you are knocked unconscious or if your turn ends and you haven't attacked a hostile creature since your last turn or taken damage since then. You can also end your bloodlust on your turn as a bonus action.

Once you have entered the Bloodlust state a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier, you must finish a long rest before you can enter the state again.

At 18th level, you can enter the Bloodlust state twice your Charisma modifier before you must finish a long rest.



WARLORD’S RESILIENCE

At 15th level, your cruelty and love for war and massacre give your body a vortex-like aura that makes you impervious to pain. You gain resistance to all damage from nonmagical slashing, piercing and bludgeoning weapons.

AVATAR OF WAR

At 20th level you can open a portal in your heart, from it Carturix spills forward, using your body and your will like a sword seeking heats to cut down. Using an action, you open this portal, summoning forth a scarlet shade that spreads from your heart and surrounds your body. You gain the following benefits for 1 minute:

- You gain 1 additional attack when you take the Attack action on your turn.
- You score a critical hit with melee weapons on a natural roll of 19 or 20.
- You have resistance to all damage.



FIGURINE OF WONDROUS POWER: CATURIX’S STEED

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This small wooden figure depicts a mighty steed with aggressive eyes and sharp teeth. The person who is attuned to it must make an offering of blood by cutting themselves with a ceremonial knife causing 1d2 damage. The figurine cracks open and grows to be a fierce carnivorous steed for 90 minutes. Once it has been used, it cannot be used again until 1 day has passed.

Carnivorous steeds are created for paladins of Caturix, though one may serve other characters at the DM’s discretion. If the steed does not taste blood within a week’s time it will leave its rider.

Large beast, Unaligned
Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 26 (4d10+4)
Speed 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	78 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 11
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

SPECIAL TRAITS

Possessed Horse. If a paladin of Caturix performed the ritual and is riding the Carnivorous Steed, the Steed gains Intelligence 10 and is possessed by the will of Caturix.

Violent Horse. If a paladin of Caturix is attuned to this item and fighting while mounted upon the Carnivorous Steed, she may re-roll damage rolls and keep the highest roll.

Hunger for Blood. If the horse moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a creature and then hits it with a hooves attack the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the horse can make another attack with its bite against it as a bonus action and the Rider may also make an attack as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Deathly Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the horse regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

A humanoid slain in this way and then buried in the ground rises the following night as a zombie.



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