



THE CREATIVE NEWT

It seems all gaming magazines focus on the reptilian, from mighty dragons to the lowly kobold. This gaming “magazine” is a free, online PDF; written by an unpublished author interested only in finding a creative outlet. As such, it is no Dragon, or even Kobold Quarterly. In fact, its Reptilian progenitor is small, and perhaps inconsequential – the lowly newt.

However, sometimes very useful information comes from the lowliest sources.

I hope you enjoy the *Creative Newt*.
-D. S. Percival (July 2, 2008)

CULTURAL RITUALS

In many games, there is an abundance of “Splatbooks”. While this is great for players and GMs seeking versatility and change in their games, a challenge arises in tying this content into an ongoing campaign. After all, how many generic “Speak with Dead” and “Summon Monster” spells can a campaign have without distilling the natural flavour of a home-brewed campaign setting?

Presented here is the concept of “Cultural Rituals”, used for Fourth Edition D&D.

Not Just Game Stats

Introducing rituals (or, in fact, any other game element) should not just consist of opening up a rulebook and announcing “we can now use page 200 in our games”. These elements should be tied into the ongoing campaign, perhaps by giving the new rules a history or a special means of using them.

Spells and feats could emerge among suitable cultures; for example, Power Attack could easily be found among orc tribes of the north, while Improved Initiative would be found among the agile elven guerrillas of the Great Forest.

When introducing a new game rule to a campaign, think for a moment about the culture it would appear in. Is the game effect combative in nature? If it is, how so? Would it be more useful in the hands of an agile warrior, or those of a divining mage?

Often, simply by answering that question, you can figure out a useful culture for the new game effect to emerge from. A power that is used primarily by rogues should come from the thieves’ city by the coast, for example.

Of course, if all rogue powers come from the thief city, and all magical powers come from the magical city, things get stale. Sometimes, it’s nice to play against type. A thief only power could come from the city of paladins, for example. But the question then becomes, why?

Perhaps this power (say, an ability to count as being “Unaligned” despite one’s actual alignment) emerged in the city of paladins because thieves were frequent targets of the paladin’s alignment-based attacks, and so the ability emerged as a means of defence. With that simple explanation, you have added depth to the game world, and given the new power a sense of belonging to your campaign world.

Of course, you may not have the time or inclination to do this with every feat, spell, or ritual from every splatbook; pick and choose which abilities deserve an interesting backstory, and go from there.

Following are three new rituals, tied to my own campaign. While the rituals are fairly standard (as far as rituals go), campaign “Flavour” has been added to each ritual to give it a grounding in my “Shattered Isles” campaign.

Bloody Drums

You beat upon a hand drum while chanting and dancing around your companion. As you finish your song, your companion rises up, instantly invigorated.

Level: 3 **Component Cost:** 150 gp,
Category: Restoration plus a focus worth 500 gp



Time: 10 minutes **Market Price:** 600 gp
Duration: Instant **Key Skill:** Heal

Developed by legionnaires from the Tiedfling Armies, particularly bugbear skirmisher units, Bloody Drums has spread into numerous militia units throughout the Shattered Isles.

Upon completion of the ritual, the caster must spend a healing surge. He can touch a single target; the caster cannot cast this spell upon her self.

The target suffers damage as a result of this spell, but regains the use of one or more expended daily powers. The exact result of the ritual is determined by the check result:

9 OR LOWER: The ritual has failed completely. No effect, although the caster must still expend components and spend a healing surge.

10-19: The target takes an amount of damage equal to two of his healing surges, and regains the use of one daily power.

20-29: The target takes an amount of damage equal to one of his healing surges, and regains the use of one daily power.

30 OR HIGHER: The target takes an amount of damage equal to one of his healing surges, and regains the use of two daily powers.

A single character can only gain the benefit of this ritual once per day. Further castings of the ritual automatically fail. This ritual can only be used on heroic tier characters; paragon- and epic- level heroes are not affected by this ritual.

FOCUS: A single hand drum, the skins made of the stretched hide of a regenerating creature (such as a troll). This drum costs at least 500 GP.

Call Upon Warriors of the Thimblewode

After consuming magical herbs, you and your companions feel the spirits of the mystical warriors of the Thimblewode forest pushing you forward.

Level: 3 **Component Cost:** 35 gp
Category: Exploration **Market Price:** 180 gp
Time: 10 minutes **Key Skill:** Nature
Duration: 12 hours

This ritual was devised by Elven huntsmen and scouts in their wars against the Kaellian legions. They would use it to move their soldiers quickly from battlefield to battlefield. The legendary warriors of the Thimblewode fought the legions for nearly ten years, before being betrayed by a companion into slavery within the legions. In death, the Warriors of the Thimblewode still aid those who would oppose the legions.

At its most basic level, this ritual grants up to eight humanoids improved mobility over long distances. Depending on the ritual check result, those affected by this ritual gain minor combat advantages against those responsible for the Kaellian Legions (and hated foes of the Warriors of the Thimblewode) – Tiedflings. Upon casting the ritual, up to eight targets have increased mobility. All targets must spend a healing surge to be a viable target.





19 or lower: the speed of those affected increases by 2 for purposes of overland travel only.

20-29: The speed of those affected increases by 4 for purposes of overland travel. In addition, they gain a +1 morale bonus on all damage rolls made against Tieflings.

30 or higher: the speed of those affected increases by 4 for purposes of overland travel. In addition, they gain a +2 morale bonus on all damage rolls made against Tieflings, as well as a +1 morale bonus on all attack rolls made against Tieflings.



Pact of Trust

You touch the palm of a nearby friend while chanting in the magical language. As your fingers touch, sparks of invisible energy arc between your hands and his. You feel safer, bound now by invisible bonds of trust.

Level: 2 **Component Cost:** 25 gp
Category: Divination **Market Price:** 100 gp
Time: 10 minutes **Key Skill:** Religion
Duration: 1 hour

Used by merchants throughout the shattered islands, the Pact of Trust ensures that neither party is able to lie about the products being traded. Developed for the emerging barter economy employed by merchants in the islands, it enforces honesty on both sides of the bargaining table.

After the ritual is cast (usually, one merchant will cast the spell, while the other will assist in the ritual), both parties know the full extent of the ritual. Both parties must be willing to endure the strictures set by the ritual; it cannot be cast on an unwilling target.

The ritual's full effects depend entirely upon the check result:

9 OR LOWER: The ritual fails. Both parties know the ritual has failed.

10-19: Success. Neither side in the ritual is capable of speaking a lie for the duration. Bending of the truth is possible, however.

20-29: Neither side in the ritual is capable of speaking a lie to the other participant; lying to outside beings is permissible, however. Bending of the truth is a possibility in negotiations, although the other participant in the ritual gains a +5 bonus on insight checks to notice such duplicitous actions.

30 OR HIGHER: As 20-29, though bending of the truth is no longer possible. Both sides must speak only the truth in the negotiations.

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