



ΚΥΛΤ ΟΙ ΠΟΤΣΙΔΟΝ

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.

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 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.

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



THE CULT OF POSEIDON

Domains: Nature, The Sea, Tempest

Location: Greece, Rome

Cult Secrets: Destroying those who have wronged you, taking what you want, revering the power of natural disasters

There are few Olympian deities as infamously greedy and demanding as Poseidon (Roman Neptune), and very few stories portray him in a purely positive light. After the Titanomachy, he and his brothers drew lots to divide the world among them. Poseidon became lord of the oceans and rivers. Pontus and Thalassa, the archaic titans of the sea, became his vassals and the tritons and nereids became his subjects.

Poseidon then set out to find a wife. He had short relationships with Demeter, Aphrodite, and the monstrous gorgon, [Medusa](#). These relationships spawned several heroes and monsters including the Pegasus, the Cyclops, and Chrysaor. Eventually, he met the beautiful sea nymph Amphitrite, daughter of Oceanus and Tethys. At first, she fled from his advances and hid on the far side of the sea. But Poseidon's faithful servant Delphin found her and convinced her to marry him.

Poseidon joined with Apollo in Hera's rebellion against Zeus. When the rebellion failed, Poseidon and Apollo were sentenced to serve the king of Troy for one year. During their servitude, they constructed Troy's massive, impenetrable walls.

When it came time for the Athenians to choose a patron deity for their city, Poseidon and Athena competed for the honor. Poseidon offered them a saltwater spring, but Athena offered them an olive tree rich with oil, fruit, and wood. The Athenians voted for the olive tree. In vengeful retaliation, Poseidon sent a devastating flood across the plains of Attica.

Poseidon's fury knows no bounds. Also known as "earth-shaker," he is a wrathful deity who protects his followers but cares very little for those who do not pay him proper respect. In fact, after the Trojan War, Poseidon spent ten years hindering Odysseus in revenge for blinding the Cyclops. Not helping matters, Odysseus was favored by Athena who is a recurring antagonist for Poseidon.

Notably, Poseidon is not the personification of the Sea. That honor still belongs to Thalassa, daughter of Gaia. Due to being a god of horses and earthquakes, those on land also fear Poseidon's fury and pay him the proper respects. Despite Poseidon's many aspects, the Romans worship him primarily as the god of the Sea, sometimes keeping the symbology of the Greeks, depicting Neptune with a trident.



THE TEMPLES

Poseidon's main temple is on the Isthmus of Corinth. It is a small structure, partially submerged by the tides. It contains several elaborate statues of gold and ivory depicting dolphins, tritons, sea nymphs, Poseidon, his wife Amphitrite, and the sea goddess Thalassa.

Another major temple of Poseidon is the Panionium, high on the slopes of Mt. Mykale in Ionia. Each year a festival of religious rites and sporting events known as the Panionia is held here. In ancient times, the Panionium served as the meeting place of the Ionian League. When the Persians conquered Ionia, the festival was moved to Ephesus. But since Alexander's time, it has returned to its traditional location in Ionia.

Other temples of Poseidon can be found in port cities and coastal villages from Alexandria to Syracuse.

Despite the tensions between Athena and Poseidon over the city of Athens, the Athenian politician Pericles supported a project that included temples to many deities including the Parthenon and the Temple to Poseidon in Sounion. The new temple at Sounion was built over the site of an older Temple of Poseidon that was burned by Xerxes' forces during his invasion of Greece. After the Athenian victory at Salamis, a Persian warship was left at the banks of Sounion as a trophy to Poseidon and a new temple was built, which still stands today.

Poseidon's poor reputation in Athens does not stop many from worshipping him, primarily out of fear, though his cult worships out of genuine respect for his importance to trade and the navy. Even within his cult, there are secrets to be had and it is thought that Pericles might be a member of Poseidon's cult for even suggesting a temple be built in his honor.

INITIATION

Cult initiates are found among worthy sailors and cavalry, both of whom are respected by the god. They are then put through a trial dependent on their preference. They must either tame a wild horse, or be thrown into water while bound and escape from their bindings before they drown.

FESTIVALS

It is common practice amongst those who work at sea to offer sacrificial bulls to Poseidon before major expeditions or long voyages. After catching fish, fishermen offer a portion to Poseidon as thanks for not sending dolphins or swordfish to destroy the nets and ruin the catch. Mariners perform sacrifices to avoid Poseidon's anger for crossing through his domain without the proper respects. Those within his cult dub Poseidon the avatar of disaster for his part in earthquakes and disasters at sea.

Isthmian Games. The Isthmian Games are a major sporting event held in Poseidon's honor at Corinth every 2nd and 4th year of each Olympiad. The games are held in the springtime and attract hundreds of athletes, poets, and artist from nearby Athens, Ionia, and the Peloponnese.

Neptunalia. This two-day festival is held at mid-summer in Rome and is celebrated with sporting events and citizens use it as an opportunity to vote on political and criminal matters.

Even outside of Athens, Poseidon is seen as an important figure worthy of respect and worship. Corinth is the primary place of worship, where they sometimes drown horses as sacrifices to Poseidon. Before naval battles as well, it is custom to offer prayer and sacrifice to Poseidon. Even Alexander the Great offered prayers and sacrifices to Poseidon before the battle of Issus, ordering a four-horse chariot be driven into the sea.

OATH OF DISASTER

As his cult proclaims, Poseidon is the avatar of disaster, responsible for many people being hurt and killed in accidents involving horses, earthquakes, and trouble at sea. The most famous example of Poseidon's ire towards an individual is his treatment of Odysseus after the Trojan War. As a result, those who are within the cult of Poseidon and even those who are not are very careful not to displease the god.

Most devout amongst Poseidon's followers are those who emulate his wrathful behavior, bringing disaster to those who have wronged them. These people follow the Oath of Disaster, combining elements of natural disasters with accidents that happen to befall those around them by using the power of Poseidon himself. These avatars of disaster revel in the misfortune they cause, preferring to be treated as if they were royalty, sparing those who submit to their greatness and causing harm to those who show hubris.

TENETS OF POSEIDON

Poseidon is a varied deity. However, those who revere him most take up the Oath of Disaster. These people take the following creed:

Destroy Threats. Be on the lookout for any threats to your power. When you find them, put an end to them in any way possible, though it is preferable to make such disaster look like an accident or coincidence.

Take Revenge. No matter what the slight, or how small the insult, you are to ensure that the person responsible pays. It is too easy to kill such people. Rather, you must break and humiliate them to the best of your ability so they remember their disgrace.

Remain Strong. Like a tidal wave or an earthquake, be unrelenting in your convictions. Nothing can stop these forces until they have stopped themselves. So must you be.

Respect Poseidon. Poseidon is the one who grants power over your enemies. Never forget this simple fact. To do so is to invoke the anger of the divine sea. Be wary lest you drown in his spite.

OATH OF DISASTER SPELLS

Paladin Level	Spells
3 rd	Create or destroy water, hellish rebuke
5 th	Blindness/deafness, enhance ability
9 th	Earthshaker, water breathing
13 th	Conjure minor elementals, control water
17 th	Commune with nature, trident of disaster

CHANNEL DIVINITY

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

Aura of Disaster. As an action, you create a 30-foot radius aura of misfortune and mistakes around you which can prove deadly. All hostile creatures have disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls while within this aura. If a hostile creature fails an ability check or attack roll within this aura, a stroke of misfortune happens which causes the creature to take 1d8 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage. This aura lasts for 1 minute or until the first time you are damaged, whichever comes first.

Stored Rebuke. As a reaction when you are damaged with a weapon attack or spell by a creature you can see within 60 feet, you can choose to spend a spell slot of your choice. The first time you damage the enemy which damaged you with a weapon attack within the next minute, they take an additional 2d10 bludgeoning damage as the earth cracks and breaks around them in a microcosm of an earthquake and the creature must make a Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. If you use a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d10 for each slot level above 1st. The damage dealt by this ability is magical.

SHIELD OF CATASTROPHE

At 7th level, as a reaction whenever you would be damaged by a weapon attack, spell, or ability, you can spend a spell slot of your choice to instead take half damage, as circumstances prevent you from taking full damage.

WIDESPREAD DISASTER

At 15th level, whenever you are using your Aura of Disaster, the aura's radius increases to 45 feet. Furthermore, the ability no longer ends when you take damage.

PARAGON OF MISFORTUNE

At 20th level, as an action you become misfortune incarnate. Whenever you would be damaged by a creature's weapon attack, spell, or ability, an accident happens which causes the creature to take half the damage dealt to you. Furthermore, the earth cracks and shakes as you walk past, causing an area of difficult terrain within 30 feet of you. If a creature walks in this area, they take 2d4 magical bludgeoning damage for every square they enter. Finally, should a hostile creature that you can see be reduced to 0 hit points, you become invigorated and can spend Hit Dice as if you took a short rest in order to regain hit points. This ability lasts for 1 minute. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you complete a long rest.



APPENDIX I: PALADIN SPELLS

EARTHSHAKER

3rd-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a pebble)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Choose a creature you can see within range that is standing on solid ground. The earth begins to shake around them, twisting and attempting to bind them to the ground while jagged spikes cut deeply into them. The creature must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 4d6 magical slashing damage and be restrained on a failed saving throw, taking half damage and avoiding the restrained condition on a successful saving throw. A restrained creature can spend an action attempting to break free of the restrained condition by attempting a Strength saving throw but takes 2d6 magical slashing damage on a failed save.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for the initial damage for each slot level above 3rd.

TRIDENT OF DISASTER

5th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

A +2 *trident* made of gold and covered in seaweed appears in your hands. This trident has special qualities that make it worthy of a champion of Poseidon. A creature damaged by this trident must make a Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the end of your next turn as misfortunate plagues their every action. Furthermore, when you use this trident as a thrown weapon, you can choose to grip onto the seaweed to pull it back as a reaction once it either hits its target or misses. Finally, due to the seaweed wrapping around your arms, any attempts to disarm the trident from your possession have disadvantage (or if that is not applicable, you gain advantage on attempts to avoid losing possession of the trident). If a creature other than you tries to wield the trident, it immediately reappears in your hands.



APPENDIX II: THE POSEIDON COMMAND

Symbol. Trident emerging from water

Strength. 1,500+

Location. Corinth and adjacent seas

Requirements. Elite waterborne combat skills

Deities. Poseidon

Creed. Master the sea through faith and skill

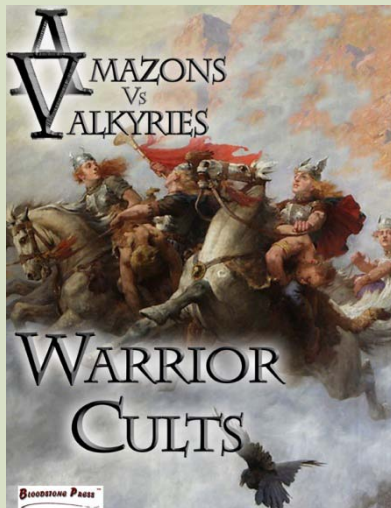
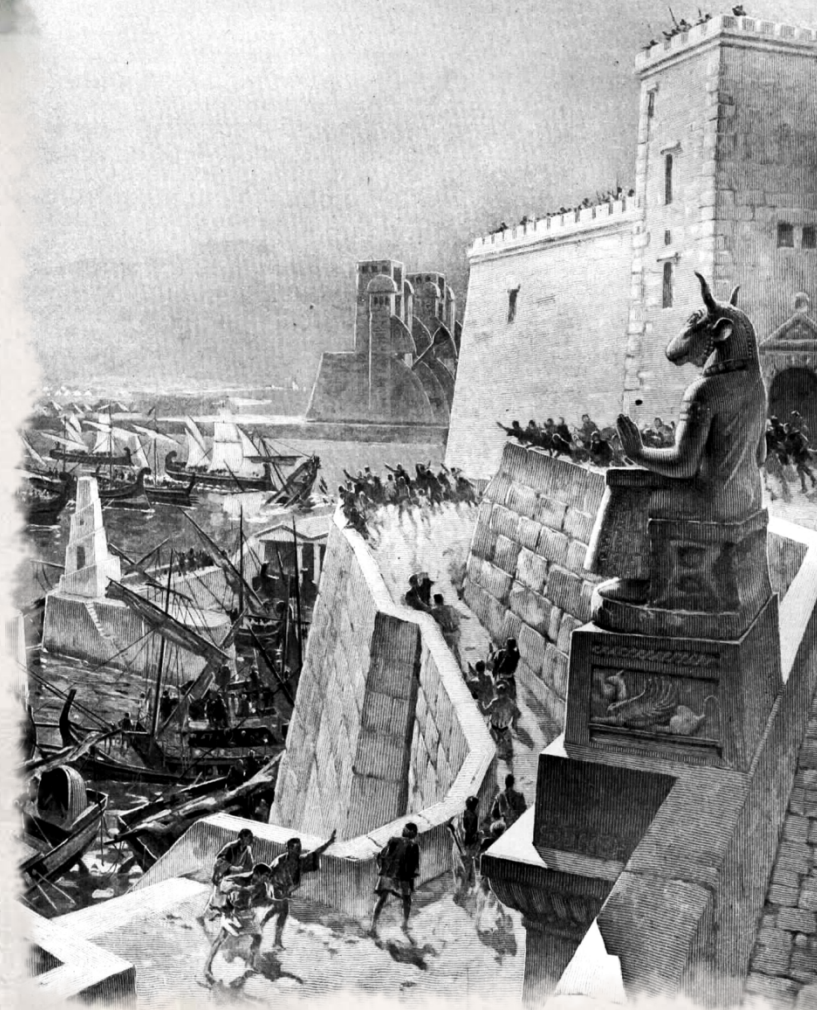
Objective. Serve the King of Corinth in all military matters involving the sea

Missions. The King of Corinth calls upon the Poseidon Command to assist in navel battles and execute amphibious assaults.

Based in Corinth, these elite marines are skilled in ship-to-ship fighting, infiltrating harbors, and raiding coastal fortifications. They are sometimes sent on scouting missions to remote islands or along foreign coasts. On occasion they also face monsters from the deep.

Members of this elite unit must be powerful swimmers, deadly combatants, and resourceful survivalists. Because of the waterborne nature of their missions, they wear no armor and carry only a few weapons (javelins, short swords, knives, spears, tridents, and nets).

Magical Relics. According to rumors, the Poseidon Command's armory includes several magical aquatic relics such as a helm that allows the wearer to breathe underwater, and a conch shell that summons and controls schools of fish.



The Poseidon Command is one of more than 30 warrior cults detailed in the top selling *Warrior Cults* supplement, available on DriveThru!

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APPENDIX III: MEDUSA

The story of Medusa's origin as a beautiful priestess of Athena who Poseidon raped in the temple and then was turned into a monster by Athena is an invention of the Roman poet Ovid, who lived in the 1st Century, AD. Since the Amazons vs Valkyries setting occurs in the Hellenistic Age (specifically 329 BC – 204 BC), that story is not part of the mythology. Rather, characters in this setting are much more familiar with Hesiodis' Medusa, who was born as a monstrous gorgon and had an apparently consensual relationship with Poseidon "in a soft meadow amid spring flowers."

Also, the monstrous image of Medusa's head is an extremely common apotropaic symbol throughout Magna Graecia. It frequently appears on soldier's shields and is often depicted in mosaics and tapestries within homes.

Near the beginning of the Amazons vs Valkyries saga, depictions of Medusa are universally monstrous, with tusks, budging eyes, and protruding tongue.

By the saga's end, artistic depictions of Medusa have softened and taken on more feminine characteristics.



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