

Saints in Bretonnia

After the text by Garrett Lepper

What strikes both the informed student and casual observer alike about Bretonnian religion is their peculiar penchant for the worship of human servants of the divine deities.

“Beholden to the Image of Deified Men : A Sincere and Scholarly Account Rendering the Peculiarities and Curiosities of Bretonnian religion.”

By Professor Ehrlich of the University of Nuln

Religion in Bretonnia is in many ways distinct from the worship of the gods in the Empire, but the primary difference is the Bretonnian focus on Sainthood. There is considerable dispute as to what exactly constitutes a saint, but they are typically defined as individuals who have led an exemplary life in the service of a deity or embodied the virtues of their faith, and that has become revered for their piety. They are believed to act on behalf of those requesting their patronage. In this way a Saint is seen as an intermediary between the worshipper and the deity, who acts as a patron to the worshippers. It could be said that the popularity of saints in Bretonnia reflects an extension of the highly entrenched system of patrons and clients, with the worldly system of masters, duties and obligations extended to the spiritual sphere as well.

Despite the claims of Imperial scholars to the contrary, the Saints are themselves not revered as gods, but rather the channels by which the gods and their worshippers interact. The Saint, in their role of neither human nor god, is able to empathise with both deity and devotee and attend to the needs of worshippers. For Bretonnians, the Saints' position makes their religion very human and close. The nature of Sainthood ensures that the average Bretonnian knows how near the divine world truly is.

Shrines of Saints

The cults of Saints are a wildly popular and public means of worship in Bretonnia. Nearly every temple of any faith has the relics of a past Saint enshrined in their altar or in another location in the temple. There are hardly any shrines or temples that are not dedicated to some saint

or another, by whose name they are known, even if they possess no relics at all or even those of another, lesser known saint. A shrine or temple will have murals, stained glass windows, and other art depicting the life, tribulations, triumphs, and miracles of the patron saint. Saintry motifs decorate the entire shrine and the centre of the shrine is most often the reliquary; a coffin, box, or sarcophagus that is elaborately decorated to the highest of standards. This reliquary houses some physical object or objects that were the saints in life, usually containing all or part of the reliquiae, the body of the saint. Even if it does not house some part of the saint's body, it will contain some other significant physical object that is believed to be imbued with the power of the saint.

The largest temples may house a number of significant saints who each have their own shrine, and in this case the altar of the church holds the most important of all the saints, and it is this saint that the temple will be named after. Smaller temples will usually have one saint in whom they take great pride and is often the centre of worship for the entire community.

Nearly all monasteries in Bretonnia have at their heart a shrine to the founder of their monastery, or else to some other well-respected saint, and it is these monastic saints that are some the most cherished of all. Certain monasteries were founded by visionaries who, after passing on, were then revered and interred as saints; other monasteries, however, were dedicated and built in honour of an individual that had already died and been recognised as a saint. These monasteries are built near a place that had significance in the saint's life: where they worked a miracle; where they were born; where they had a religious epiphany; or where they died. Such monasteries are dedicated specifically to the doctrine that the saint proclaimed.

It should be noted that not all shrines are temples and monasteries, although over the years most important places have had a temple built near them. Some places are recognised as shrines even though no formal temple exists there. A well where a respected saint paused to cleanse the poisonous water may very well be a shrine, as will a point in the wilderness where pilgrims and other journey as an expression of their devotion and as a means of rededicating their lives.



The Worship of Saints

The traditional means of showing devotion to a saint (and consequently to the deity the saint serves) is through worship at a temple or shrine on a particular day of the year. This particular day always falls on the same day of the week but is carefully calculated so as not to interfere with other cults or saints' days of neighbouring temples. In areas of long standing religious animosity though, it is quite common for saints' days to clash, dividing worshippers not only between cults, but sometimes within the same cult if there are two shrines to saints of the same god in conflict over doctrinal matters. Regionally the days of the week are often named after local saints, with each day bearing the name of a different saint, although this is more common in small towns rather than the larger cities.

The ceremonies on such days are fairly typical and usually entail a sermon of religious doctrine, prayers, and songs from the choir. On such normal occasions a few small artefacts may be flourished by the priests or paraded through an aisle of the church. After the ceremony the worshippers may approach the altar, shrine, or other sacred areas within the church invested with religious significance. They hold aloft a candle or other symbol, and petition the saint to intervene on their behalf with the deity. The petitioner then leaves a small monetary offering behind to aid in the maintenance of the shrine. Some clerics, mindful of their income, encourage the unofficial belief that particularly large donations - representing unusual generosity and piety - are more likely to be looked on favourably.

It should be noted that few Bretonnians worship one saint, but rather look to a number of them to fulfil the various spiritual needs the individual has. However, it is not uncommon for people to relate closely to one particular saint above all others. This is not seen as amiss, and such a saint is referred to as a patron saint. Each individual house usually has a small shrine dedicated to its patron saint whom they appease with daily prayers and more elaborate weekly rituals.

The central event of a saintly cult is the feast day of the saint, or feast days since some of the more popular or pretentious saints have more than one day commemorating them. The feast day is always a date marking an important event in the saint's life: the date of their birth; a day marking a grave tribulation or triumph; spiritual ascendance; public recognition; return from a spiritual journey or pilgrimage; canonisation; or death (particularly if martyred). These saints' days are in most cases festive occasions in which the entire community takes part, including many related shrines and even other temples if relations are particularly close. The day begins with the tolling of bells from the temple and possibly other temples if they are participating as well. A crowd usually gathers at the site of the shrine where a service is performed. The clergy wear their formal vestments and bear the regalia of the cult and provide a stirring sermon. Then the reliquary is usually lifted aloft and heads a procession to the centre of the town, village or city in an event known as the saintly procession, and this entourage walks along a given path usually packed with spectators, and when they arrive at the heart of the settlement, the clergy renew the saintly covenant, a claim that the saint

will continue to protect and nurture the people thanks to their dedication.

The allure of the event is that the cults patrons, usually the wealthy and rich, have donated considerable funds for the feast day, which takes place shortly after the saintly covenant is read. Those who have donated money to the saints feast day are mentioned in the covenant by name, those providing the largest donation first. Then food is distributed to those participating in the procession and considerable feasting and merriment begins. Vendors distribute food as well for those who have the money, others bring their own food to share in the spirit of this charitable event, while others must eat the bread distributed on behalf of the donors.

After a few hours, the ceremony ends and the procession returns to the temple or shrine to the tolling of bells, and the donors and their invitees are allowed to attend the return of the relics to their place at the altar. For those outside the feasting may continue all night since the day is a holiday and there are numerous diversions on hand, usually street performers and other entertainers taking advantage of the occasion. Many theatre groups appear as well, performing moments of the saint's life or commemorating other notable events in local or Bretonnian history.

There is one other notable aspect to the worship of deities through saints, and that is the pilgrimage, which plays an important role in saintly cults. The pilgrimage usually entails following the path that a saint took during important events during their life, or else travelling to the recognised centre of a saint's cult, although some of the more devout pilgrims will follow all the travels and visit all the relics of a saint. The intention is that by undertaking such a journey one comes not only closer to replicating in their own lives the spiritual growth of the saint, but to also understand the saint by the experiences they had. The roads of Bretonnia see thousands of pilgrims travelling every year to shrines near and far, and these pilgrimages play an important part in the local economy as pilgrims spend their money en route or perform services or sell goods to fund their travels.

Benefiting from pilgrimage as well are the shrines themselves, who can expect gracious offerings from those who have travelled far as further signs of their devotions. Many temples and shrines see pilgrims as an opportunity to spread their doctrine, good faith, influence, and increase their profit, and provide relics to pilgrims in exchange for their donations. Often resourceful or unscrupulous individuals sell similar items for slightly cheaper prices outside of the temples and shrines. With the most famous saints who have shrines and temples all over Bretonnia, this problem is becoming very serious.

Saintly Relics

At the heart of saintly cults is the physical remnants or manifestations of the saint, usually their body but often their worldly possessions, known as relics, which are highly revered. It is these items that are the focus of the cults for they embody the human dimension of the saint, an aspect long discarded by the figure who now serves the deity spiritually. Nevertheless, these remains still form a

tangible link between this world and that of the gods; although physical rather than spiritual, these objects are believed to be imbued with potent religious energy from the saint and as such ought to be carefully treasured and protected as sacred artefacts of both the saint and the deity.

As mentioned earlier, the most important relics are the remains of the saint, known as the *reliquiae*, the mortal shell of the spiritual being. It is claimed that all the saints will one day return to their bodies, and therefore it is important that they be safeguarded. Furthermore the fact that the body is left behind is a sign that the saint still has a vested interest in returning to the earth and is therefore receptive to the pleas of devotees.

It is these *reliquiae* that are housed in the reliquary, a richly decorated coffin that is often carried forth on important occasions and even taken on campaigns with armies to ensure the saint's continued blessing on the enterprise. In many if not most cases the saint's body is separated into parts with some portions sent out to other shrines to that saint as a means of legitimising the new shrine as well as spreading the influence of the original shrine. Some are horrified by such a prospect of separating the remains of a saint but the sheer demand by worshippers and other clergy for an authentic manifestation of the saint and the concomitant political and religious influence overshadows such concerns. By making a gift of parts of the saints, the original shrine increases its political influence, and therefore nearly all churches turn a blind eye to this practice.

Almost as significant as the *reliquiae* are the saintly accoutrements that the saint had with them in their life. These items are held in awe not only because of their association with the saint, but because they were the tools by which the saint often did their sacred work. The practical and spiritual applications of such saintly trappings are attributed great powers and are not to be underestimated; the shrine may often use these artefacts to fulfil the designs of their saint and deity. In some cases items of incredible religious significance may be more valued than the remains of the saints themselves, although this is rare.

Enjoying less significance, are the *brandia*, or objects that had been associated with the relics of the saint, such as stones in a shrine, vestments worn during ceremonies, and other paraphernalia. These items are donated to lesser shrines or used in common ceremonies, or in many places sold to the devout. Forged *brandia* are commonly reproduced near popular pilgrim centres.

A step beyond these *brandia* are the items related to the cult of the saint but with no claim to a direct association with the saint themselves: the *memorabilia*. These items include prayerbooks, bead necklaces, lockets with pictures of the saints, and other such items that serve to remind people of the importance of the saint.

The authenticity of the relic can be problematic. *Reliquiae* especially are a source of contention, for it is not uncommon for two or more shrines to claim to possess the remains of a saint; claims that due to the politics of cults are very difficult to authenticate. Similar problems occur around other relics as well, complicated by the fact that the very desirability and power of all saintly artefacts means that they are frequently the subject

of thefts. After centuries of thefts, false claims, new discoveries, splitting up of *reliquiae*, losses of artefacts on battlefields, destruction of temples and shrines, and countless other events that the veracity of many cult artefacts is questionable or uncertain.

There are always those unscrupulous individuals who claim to sell true artefacts of the saints, such as powdered bone for potions or other curiosities, and so great is their reputed power that there is no shortage of people to pay outrageous prices for items that may be illegitimate or illegally obtained. Countless thefts have been suppressed by cult authorities or never even recognised, and religious authorities would be horrified to discover how many artefacts had been stolen and switched by not only thieving outsiders, but by the very members of their own cult!

To address the issue of authenticity of cult artefacts, the cult hierarchy has many scholars versed in cult lore and history and claim to be able to identify cult artefacts with unerring accuracy. Naturally, their studies are sometimes judiciously curtailed or otherwise doctored; it is not in the cults' interests to have valuable, popular relics declared fake. Items deemed authentic by the cult leadership, usually after exhausting research, are given a document attesting to their validity, and item known as *authenticae*. Obtaining such a guarantee can be worth almost as much as the item itself.



Becoming a Saint

For the common person in Bretonnia it is quite clear how one achieves sainthood: by living a good and virtuous life embodying those things that one's deity stands for, and after years of service you are recognised by the deity and called to serve them spiritually.

Beatification: The first step towards sainthood comes with beatification. This involves declaring a deceased person to have been blessed and favoured by their deity, and to now be with that deity in the afterlife. Beatification

is automatically given to Cardinals and Archbishops; some bishops are beatified, too, although the honour gets rarer lower down the church hierarchy. Beatification is granted by a gathering of higher clerics of the same deity, who examine the good deeds of the individual in question and weigh them against any misdeeds. After deliberating, they declare whether or not that person can be beatified or not. If they declare them worthy, then a special service is held in their honour, the course and customs of which vary for each cult. Most involve prayers and services (usually paid for in advance by the deceased or their relatives), and each cult maintains texts in major temples listing those that have been beatified. There are some other practices attached to beatification for the different cults. Those beatified by the cult of Taal, for instance, are entitled to a special type of burial, in which they are simply abandoned somewhere far out in the wilderness atop a sanctified plinth for nature to reclaim. Only those who have been beatified are eligible for sainthood.

Few would dare say so, but beatification is not the pious, enlightened system it is made out to be. Nowadays, it is mainly a financial and political consideration. Although the religious authorities would explain the rise in non-priestly beatifications as evidence of increased faith amongst the laity, it is really the money and power of those under consideration that draws the blessings of churchmen. Guaranteed life after death (which is how laymen of all levels regard beatification) is amongst the most coveted of all accolades, and naturally the richer members of society wish to ensure their eternal souls' wellbeing. Noblemen and rich merchants who give lavishly to the local church and have a surreptitious word with the priests can expect beatification after death, with the meeting required to grant the honour being nothing more than a discussion of how to divvy out the richest left to the church. Cathedrals and major temples are littered with huge, ostentatious monuments to beatified aristocrats and bishops, as if the gods looked especially well upon big, expensive memorials. Thus, beatification has been cheapened to some extent. Genuine faith and devotion are often overlooked by clerics who feel that only material contributions merit spiritual reward. Those who don't leave wealth to the church are rarely even considered for beatification nowadays. Nevertheless, to the laity, the fact of beatification remains a paramount goal and evidence of true divine favour. If ever pinned down to answer charges of simony, clerics merely say that gaining and keeping such wealth as beatified laymen have – and having the generosity to give it away – is evidence of the will of the gods, and what right do mere mortals have to argue?

Canonisation: But beatification, although still comparatively rare and distinguished an honour, is a far cry from full sainthood. Whereas beatification implies entry into the realm of the gods after death, sainthood carries an idea of enhanced power and spiritual authority – the favour and power of the gods flows through their saints and relics of those saints. Saints are seen almost as demi-gods in themselves, working on behalf of their deities to interact with those on earth. As with beatification, the fact of the matter is that the process of becoming a saint, known as canonisation, has become far more political than most people understand. There are two

groups controlling the process of elevation to sainthood: the church hierarchy and the nobility. The church hierarchy controls church doctrine and policy and those who contradict or challenge the church are unlikely to ever be canonised. Many charismatic wandering holy people who hold unorthodox opinions are popular and well liked but are rarely ever officially recognised as saints because of their beliefs, and upon their death an unofficial shrine may be built but this can be destroyed by the church authorities as heresy. A few irregular cults have eventually been accepted by the church hierarchy, but this has become exceedingly rare. Nowadays, it is far more common for such cults to be broken up by the local watch and bailiffs, with the regular priesthood stepping deftly in to restore normal worship. The nobility, which is influential in the various churches because of its financial, military, and judicial power, also has a considerable say over whether or not an individual is recognised as a saint.

Also like beatification, canonisation requires the agreement of a priestly council on the case. A council assembled for canonisation is considerably larger than one for mere beatification and must always include the Cardinal of that cult, and at least one bishop each from two other cults; such meetings are difficult to organise and tend to take place only in major cities. Evidence must be presented for at least one miracle associated with the individual under discussion. More recent councils have taken to using physicians, scholars, lawyers and sometimes even wizards to try and prove miracles have taken place (but are far from universally used). Naturally, the potential saint's contribution to the state of the church – especially in a financial and material context – has become an important, though less openly mentioned, criterion for sainthood.

Those who are canonised tend to come from that section of society which does not challenge church authority or teachings, and which works closely with the establishment. Over the years it has become common for nearly all heads of the cults to be canonised as a means of legitimising the spiritual position of the church. Not all are fully invested as saints, and few receive the true devotion and respect of the public, but it is a formality that has become commonplace. Likewise, those wealthy noblemen (and, more recently, successful merchants) who give often and generously are likely to be canonised based more on their monetary contribution rather than their adherence to church doctrine; some cathedrals containing tombs of such saints actually place the amount that individual gave in the tomb's inscription, producing a goal and an incentive for ambitious onlookers. Some 'saints' were murderers, wife-beaters, adulterers and worse; but they were scoundrels who gave a great deal of land and money to the church, which was able to make good all their sins and grant them sainthood. As such the process of canonisation can be a political one that all too often simply reinforces the existing status quo.

As another means of rejecting church and noble controls, the common folk often worship unrecognised saints who are known as '*les Saints du Peuple*', who provide an alternative to formal religion. These movements are quite popular, but are often brutally repressed by the authorities.

Ancient Saints: Ancient, long-cherished saints are generally seen as beyond reproach by everyone, from Cardinals and Ducs down to peasants and beggars. Most often this is because little if anything is known for certain about their lives; minor but undoubtedly venerable cults restricted to just one town or village often have nothing but a name and a couple of relics to go on. Even better-known saints are sometimes only remembered through dubious and fanciful works of hagiography composed many years after their death. In the past, ambitious clerics made a great living out of wandering the country writing saints' lives based only on stock tales and a few local legends; these texts are still used and revered all over the kingdom. It is more than likely that a lot of these saints were little better than contemporary ones. Those scholars and clerics who have studied more reliable sources from the times of early saints have come up with far less inspiring stories of political entanglements and abuses; some saints appear to be little more than bloodthirsty warlords who saved an important monastery from destruction by turning aside an Orc horde, or priests who survived falling from a church tower (undoubtedly an act of divine intervention). Still others have no record at all, or at least no record of any saintly deeds, and are claimed by cynics to be nothing more than fabrications created to draw in crowds of pilgrims and their money. It is even possible that some saints, especially in isolated rural areas, represent survivals of ancient cults that worshipped entirely different (and far less wholesome) gods to those accepted today. However, there are not many who make such statements in public; the ecclesiastical authorities of Bretonnia are sensitive to blasphemy and heresy, and will take swift and stern action against anyone challenging the sanctity of the saints.

A History of Saints

Before the formation of Bretonnia, the Bretonni peoples had a strong belief that although there was a clear divide between the natural and the supernatural, the profane and the sacred; that some special individuals were specially chosen by the deities to serve as examples to others. Some early Bretonni were renowned for their solemnity and their ability to put the dead to rest; others for their compassion and ability to heal; but most important of all were the warrior cults that sought to epitomise martial skill as the means to defeat the threats that beset the Bretonni. These early holy people had great power and influence and were revered upon their death as models to emulate. Some are still worshipped as saints today, although their names and deeds are often tacked on to lesser, later figures or their dates wildly confused.

So even before the formation of Bretonnia the Bretonni had established early ideas about the relationship between the human and the divine. Men looked upon the world of the gods and the dead as a place of power and strength which would be laid open to them through prayer and good works. Primitive chieftains lavished wealth on building small but impressive temples to these early saints.

Soon the cosmology of Bretonnian religion paralleled the social structure of society, so that just as the nobility

mediated between the people and king, so there were individuals such as the clergy that mediated between people and deity. The clergy were held in high regard for this power, and especially esteemed clerics and other holy figures continued to be consulted even after death by noble and commoner alike. During this early period hundreds of people both inside the church hierarchy and among the laity claimed to have received visitations from the dead providing advice and knowledge. Such a vision was, in the right circumstances, enough for the canonisation of a new saint. At this time, moreover, canonisation still lay mostly in the hands of the people; if they believed a person was a saint and began to revere them as such, then after a few years they simply became a saint. There was no complex, authoritative church hierarchy to impose its control over the process.

It was about a century after the disappearance of Gilles le Breton, that saintly cults began to spring up in the modern sense. They have dominated the churches of Bretonnia since.

The True Nature of Sainthood ?

Belief in a saint does not necessarily entail efficacy. It is up to the GM to decide the true nature and power of saints, if any. Below are some suggestions as to the various roles a saint may play, but it should be noted that there are a great number of saints and their origins, power, and authenticity may vary so it may be applicable to provide different saints with different natures.

Simply living embodiments: The Saints were merely people who embodied those principles that the deity held highest. The deity may have blessed these people with powers, in which case the saint may be legitimate and have some potency. On the other hand, they have never been truly recognised by their deity even though their own accomplishments were noted by contemporaries, and therefore the saint may have no particular power at all and the worship of them is actually just the worship of the deity.

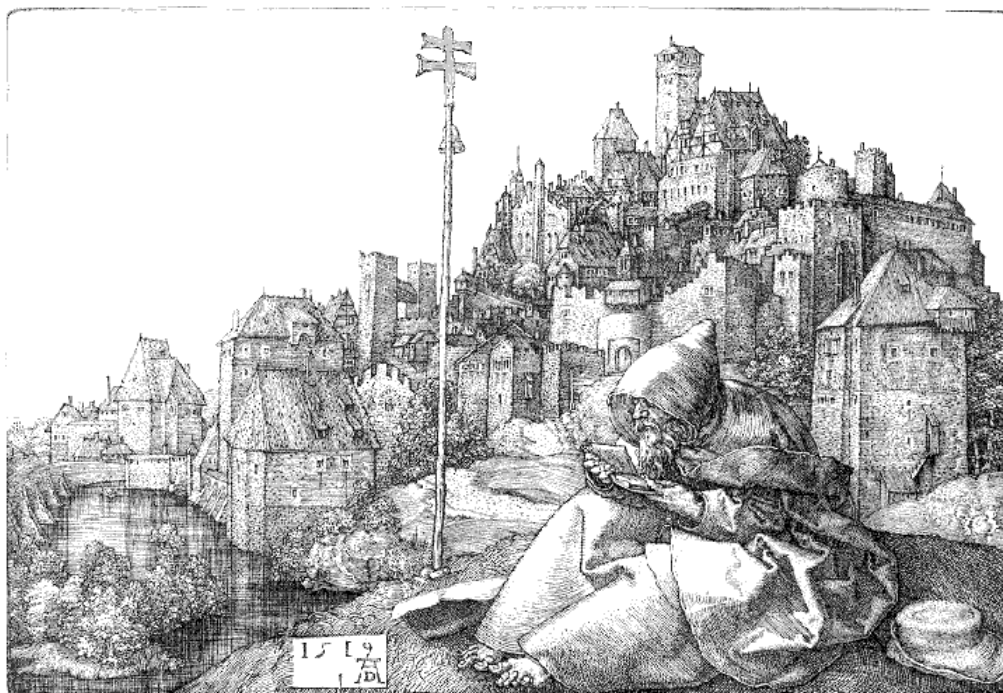
Possessed by the divine: The Saint may very well have been possessed by the divine essence or a servant of their deity, who guided their lives and granted miraculous powers. If this was the nature of the saint, then it is quite likely that the saint is capable of interacting on behalf of the followers. Just as when one is influenced (see below), divinities sometimes work through mortal flesh (i.e., possession), and the mortal being's shell temporarily houses divine energy, infusing the body with great power. The gods use these bodies as tools, and the glory and magnificence of the god is immediately apparent to all. Those who have been possessed by some manifestation of the divine are never the same again; their souls have been eternally transformed, and they either tend to live far longer than normal mortals or die soon after, their body unable to deal with the shock of the manifestation. Visions can be interpreted as possession, with the god sending a small part of their strength to inhabit that person.

Influenced by the divine: Saints may have not been possessed by the deity, but they may have been guided by the divine, in which case the saint was chosen with a specific agenda, and were capable of miracles and other measures since the deity would have allowed for such things to occur, but the frequency and power would have been much less than if they had been possessed by the deity.

Retroactively a Saint for political reasons: As mentioned above, not all people canonised as saints lived exceptional lives, and many saintly appointments are political in nature. In this regard the worship of the saint is quite empty and has little power, and the deity in question will probably not even recognise the cult as being its own. Those worshipping the saintly cult will be denied blessings and spells.

A Sham: The Saints are mere mortals, nothing more, nothing less. Worshipping them is an empty act, and those few priests who do exhibit unusual powers unknowingly tap directly into the patron deity rather than the mundane saint standing between mortals and the gods. The gods may view Saints as a form of heresy, or useful camouflage. In truth the saints have no power, nor do their artefacts.

Minor Gods: The Saints are actually minor gods, elevated to goodhood by their patrons on the occasion of their death, and they are able to intercede on behalf of their mortal followers. Although technically gods in their own right, they are bound to the broad strictures of the supreme deity and have reduced powers.



Saintly Cults of Bretonnia

By Rory Naismith

Below are described a selection of saints linked to the various cults of Bretonnia. Any Bretonnian would be aware of at least the principle ones. There are in fact hundreds more; some great, some not so great, most being very local in nature.

Saintly Cults of Myrmidia

Saint Epiclesius

"Caedite eos. Noverunt enim domini sui qui sunt eorum" [Kill them all. Their gods will know their own]"
Allegedly spoken by Saint Epiclesius during the siege of al Hrakk, 1502 IC.

Cult

St Epiclesius was the scion of an old, distinguished noble family from near Guisoreux in the 15th century. He displayed an unusual aptitude and lust for battle, and took service as a knight in the royal household. There Epiclesius' talents won him recognition from the king at the time (Raoul le Peregrin) and he was appointed Marshal of Bretonnia at the age of just 26 around the year 1476 IC. For the next 18 years, Epiclesius disciplined and trained his forces, raising the standard of royal armies and holding ever more hunts and tournaments for the knights. Unfortunately, military campaigns were few at this time, limited only to undignified slaughters of revolting peasants and raiders.

Epiclesius had his big break when the crusades began in 1494 IC. Raoul le Peregrin wished to send an army to oust the wicked Daryus-e-Quabir, and he decided to place Epiclesius in charge of this force. An enormous army was raised, the grandest produced up to that time by any realm in the Old World. This host and its tall, gallant commander set off to Araby in the company of dozens of other crusading companies, to spend many years far from home fighting for what they believed to be right. In time, Epiclesius became recognised as the best leader and most determined crusader of all (or at least, that's how Bretonnian historians tell the story), leading many great campaigns and winning pivotal battles against the hated Arabs.

It is this aspect of St Epiclesius' history which is so fondly remembered by Bretonnians. They look back on a principled and ascetic monk-soldier who maintained the high ideals of the crusade for over fifteen years. Epiclesius' death, shortly after the final siege of Badresi in 1511 IC, is the stuff of legend; he had been suffering from the effects of a wound incurred in a previous battle, and was on the point of death when the siege finally began. However, by a superhuman feat of endurance (undoubtedly achieved with Myrmidia's aid) he held out until the end of the climactic encounter, directing events

to the very end, and finally expired moments after being carried into Jaffar's private chapel and hearing a final blessing in the name of Myrmidia.

St Epiclesius' cult is one of the most widespread and popular in Bretonnia, especially amongst the upper classes (most of whom can boast crusader ancestors who fought alongside Epiclesius). Even commoners look up to him as what a good knight and lord should be like; often they pray to his example in the hope that less idealistic contemporary overlords will take heed. Dozens of books on military theory have been ascribed to him (though nearly all are later works which have adopted the saint's name to expand their audience).

There is, however, a second side to the life of St Epiclesius which is tacitly forgotten and ignored by most of his devotees. New generations of cynical and inquisitive students are shedding light on the 'true' Epiclesius. They paint a picture very different to that of myth and memory: an Epiclesius who delighted in slaughter and bloodshed, who was not afraid to use torture and unchivalric methods to achieve his ends. It is even claimed that Epiclesius fathered several bastard children both in Bretonnia and in Araby, and was forced into celibacy not by deep religious feeling by an unfortunate jousting accident. The most damning episode of all - and with considerable documentary evidence to substantiate it - is the siege of al Hrakk in 1502 IC, when Epiclesius led a merciless siege of a large oasis-city. He spurned offers of negotiation from the enemy and, after the defiant townspeople had repelled his first attacks, flew into a terrible rage and ordered everyone in the city to be slain. Since al Hrakk is still nothing but a ruin blasted by sandstorms and unhappy memories, there may be more to these claims than the aristocracy would like to believe. Attempts to publicise and spread these heretical ideas would certainly meet with a savage reaction from the nobility.

Shrines

A great many of towns in Bretonnia have temples to Myrmidia dedicated to St Epiclesius; those wealthy temples and shrines which are patronised by the aristocracy are the most common dedications. Many military shrines and temples are also dedicated to St Epiclesius. Castle chapels which are frequently offered to Myrmidia are often in the name of St Epiclesius, too.

Relics

After his dramatic death in Araby, the story surrounding Epiclesius and his remains becomes complex and uncertain. There is a small temple to Myrmidia patronised by visiting Old Worlders in Badresi (on the north coast of Araby) which claims to possess his entire body. But it is likely that at least some of his corpse was taken back by returning crusaders. However, this version of the story only serves to reflect the scope of this great enterprise: if every supposed relic of St Epiclesius were genuine, he would have had four hearts and six arms, together with over a dozen swords and shields. The best claim is probably that of the Cathedral-Academy of St Epiclesius in Guisoreux, which has had a 'complete' body in its collection since the early 17th century at least.

In spite of the dubious nature surrounding many of these relics, any object claimed to be associated with Epiclesius commands immense interest and prices from the Border Princes to the Empire (which is why fakes are so common).



Sainte Leonidas

"Amongst them there was one woman, known as Leonidas, who was touched by the courage and strength of Myrmidia. This Leonidas came to the men of Navarre, and led them against the foe, even though she was a woman, for there were none who could stand before the power of the goddess. With Leonidas at their head and Myrmidia's blessing upon them, nothing but death could await the despised enemy. They were slain, all, and the land was cleansed of their impure blood."

From the Chronicle of Albert de Brionne, c.1550 IC

Cult

The cult of Ste Leonidas is popular throughout Bretonnia, but is especially entrenched in Navarre, which likes to see Leonidas as its own patron. Albert de Brionne's mention of Leonidas is perhaps the first, and it is much clearer than most; yet even so he still doesn't say when Leonidas lived and which enemies she fought. Much energy has been expended upon trying to trace the origins of Sainte Leonidas, and some believe that she is a combination of several figures ranging widely in date, with the latest being active during the Wars with Estalia in the 23rd century, and the first in a distant, barely-remembered tribal war before the time of Sigmar. All the stories, however, do agree that she was a simple, pretty maiden who was inspired by Myrmidia to lead the chastened menfolk back into battle against some hated invader.

One of the most extreme beliefs, recently ventured by a Navarrese academic at Louisienne College in the Guisonne University, is that Ste Leonidas is more of a spirit or goddess which has come down to help the kingdom of Bretonnia (and more especially Navarre) on a number of occasions, taking on the same form every time. Conservative clerics are aghast at such a suggestion, for

none of them would countenance sharing the glory of the saint with others.

Whatever the truth behind Sainte Leonidas, she is worshipped far and wide, especially by soldiers and knights who see her as a kind of substitute sweetheart and guardian watching over them at all times. She stands for fortitude and defiance in the face of adversity, particularly in a military context. Many people in and outside Bretonnia associate her closely with the chivalric ideal, which is ironic given the limitations the code of chivalry puts on women.

Principal Shrine

Leonidas' main shrine is the Cathedral dedicated to her in Brionne. This large, gothic building - the largest temple in the city - is eagerly patronised by the martial nobility of Navarre, and it is full of memorials to knights killed in dozens of wars, feuds and skirmishes over the centuries.

But it is not the only important temple of Ste Leonidas in Navarre: that of Blaye-Leonine is the site of a major festival which takes place at the beginning of summer. Traders, pilgrims and fashionable nobles of Navarre all convene in this small, extremely well-defended town for a week of feasting, praying and celebrating. Much trade in wine is done, especially with merchants from Tilea (who love the party atmosphere), for the most prestigious vineyard in Navarre, 'Côtes de Blaye', is situated in the valley below the town. Blaye-Leonine's motto is 'Numquam polluta' (never polluted) which refers to the town's distinction of being the only place in Navarre never taken by the enemy. According to many versions of Ste Leonidas's history, she was born in this town and set out from here to save the rest of the province.

Most important towns and cities in Bretonnia, especially those with a large knightly or aristocratic presence, have a shrine to Ste Leonidas. There is a large temple to her in Quenelles. Many military chaplains worship her, and portable shrines to her are sometimes taken on campaign.

Relics

The Cathedral of Ste Leonidas in Brionne has the sword of Ste Leonidas as one of its major attractions for pilgrims. It is a beautiful, keen-edged blade which exudes an air of sanctity, and although it may indeed be a magical blade of great potency, swordsmiths who have seen it believe it to be only three or four hundred years old.

Because of her nation-wide popularity, supposed relics of Leonidas are relatively common. The temple to her in Quenelles has a skull said to be hers in its collection, and another temple in Navarre attracts pilgrims to see the shield of Ste Leonidas. The temple of Ste Leonidas in Blaye-Leonine has a helmet and a standard said to have belonged to the saint; the standard, though dazzlingly beautiful, is unquestionably of later date, although the helmet is convincingly austere and of ancient work, and has many stories of miracles attached to it. These relics are placed at the head of the grand procession that marks the start of the great festival in Blaye-Leonine every summer.

Due to the haziness surrounding Leonidas' life (or lives), no one can conclusively say that these relics are the genuine article or not - although the faithful have no doubts whatsoever and are willing to argue the point with cold steel.

Young DesRuisseaux

“And at a time when the world was as cold as the human heart can be, men with their bellies full only with envy spied the beloved of Myrmidia and DesRuisseaux, the first born son of an aged count. And the villeins, covetous of the knights armor, fine steed and noble bearing, let loose with a cowardly flight of arrows. The brave lone knight, his horse fallen and his flank pierced grievously by the wicked barbs stood and received the onslaught, slaying one of the blackguards and gravely wounding two others before being smote upon his scalp by a treacherous attack from behind. Robbed, stripped, and left for dead in the winter night, the younger DesRuisseaux held on to life until his father found him, and with his last dying breath he spoke the names of his murderers.

And Monsieur DesRuisseaux, rather than act in vengeance, called forth some Templars and Priests of Myrmidia to prosecute those responsible. With their execution and his son avenged, Monsieur DesRuisseaux then had the families of the villeins and the all the villagers who had hid them removed from their homes and gave the land to the Cult of Myrmidia to found a monastery and shrine in remembrance of his son.”

From the Prayerbook of Chardonnay, 17th century IC.

Cult

The Cult of Myrmidia has always been elitist in Bretonnia and often prejudiced against the lower classes. At the extreme end of this intolerance is the saintly cult of DesRuisseaux. A returning knight was murdered and those responsible were brought to justice by a small and unusual group of Myrmidians who had some knowledge of law. The martyred knight's father then donated land and money to the Myrmidians in honour of his son to create a monastery which would focus its attention on bringing to justice those guilty of offences against Myrmidia or responsible for assaulting followers of Myrmidia. The cult has a particular vehemence for those who assault their social betters.

Shrine

The DesRuisseaux shrine is a private one on the DesRuisseaux estate about twenty leagues west of Guisoreux, with an immense adjoining law library. There are few visitors, all of whom are invited; but countless 'clients' arrive or send pleas for help; the family priest and his attendants take care of the place, and a body of carefully selected legalists and clerks (trained to a man at the best universities in the Old World). In truth, the knowledge and connections of this cult extend far and wide, being part of fable and myth rather than part of accepted religious practice. Not surprisingly, the nobility in particular patronise the cult of DesRuisseaux. It is

viewed as more of a moral lesson on the depravity of the common man and the nobility of the lords and ladies.

Attendants

There are a dozen of Templars, priests and other clergy at the shrine who are devoted to the Cult of DesRuisseaux. All of the priests are former students and lawyers. Despite their small number and distance from the main cities they have considerable power, and attract important but discreet clients from the aristocracy. They are the only clergymen versed in non-ecclesiastical law and its prosecution, and this gives them considerable power within the cult of Myrmidia; they are often called to attend councils or the Oisillon Palace. Their distance from major population centres lends them an air of impartial detachment.

Relics

At the heart of the monastery in the chapel of the monastery lies the stone sarcophagus of the fallen DesRuisseaux and laid alongside the body are those possessions of his that were stolen by the knaves who murdered him. There are no powers directly attributed to the various items, but it is believed that any who would ever steal such relics would never be able to hide from justice.

Saintly Cults of Morr

Saint Vadnais

“And the rest of both the living and the dead were shattered by the fierce strike of a shard of the heavens that had come hurtling down to smite the earth. With horror the living awoke to find that the dead had arisen from their graves. Families were pulled from their beds by those hungry for their warm breath, beating hearts, and pulsing blood. Human flesh was the grisly feast for the awakened dead. Fear and blood flowed, but one mortal moved with righteousness that dark night, commanding the dead to return to their graves. When the mortals heard his prayers and commands, they took heart; when the dead heard his cries, they returned to their graves or raised their cold fists to attack the lone priest that moved among them. And when they turned to destroy the lone priest, his very touch lay them to rest. Thus it was that the peace returned to Vilморre through the miracles worked by Nicholas Vadnais the Priest of Morr.”

From the Lives of the Saints of Bretonnia by Karolus Arbogastiensis, 11th century IC.

Cult

St Vadnais' cult is not particularly large, and is centred upon the city of Moussillon. As the 'Life' of Vadnais written by Karolus Arbogastiensis tells, St Vadnais was a priest of Morr who saved the townspeople from undead assault.

St Vadnais has become an unofficial protector to the people of the unfortunate city of Moussillon, and his name and symbol (a white or silver skull) is invoked for protection against undead evils. It is said that the soul of anyone who wears a talisman of St Vadnais cannot be forced into the legions of undeath; for this reason, removing the skull-charms carried by most of the people of Moussillon is seen as an especially cruel and heinous crime.

Vadnais' cult is by far most popular amongst the destitute commoners who live in the slums and ruins of Moussillon, but there are a few priests of Morr and noblemen who venerate him; mostly those who live near sites of unearthly activity in north-west Bretonnia.

Principal Shrine

Although St Vadnais is most popular in Moussillon, his home and main shrine are located slightly east of that city, in the small mercantile town of Vilморre (which prides itself for its high-class preserved meats). The largest temple in the town is dedicated to Morr and St Vadnais, whose body is kept inside. The self-satisfied people of Vilморre are highly conservative and insular; they resent any untoward influence from outside and dislike strangers. In particular they detest the pious but disease-ridden pilgrims who often come from Moussillon; there are sometimes so many pilgrims that they build their own shanty town outside the gates of Vilморre and squat there until the town militia sees them off.

There are several small, poverty-stricken shrines and temples to St Vadnais in and around Moussillon, and one or two in other settlements between there and Vilморre.

Relics

St Vadnais' body is claimed by his temple in Vilморre; an ornate casket contains the reliquiae, and despite the fact that the body has not been seen for many years now, the devout swear that it is as fresh as the day it was interred (whenever that was).

The largest temple to St Vadnais in Moussillon possesses a wizened staff said to have belonged to the saint. Unlike the body of St Vadnais, which has not been removed from its casket and shown to the public for decades, the staff of St Vadnais in Moussillon is kept almost permanently on show, and attracts many visitors to the temple. It is claimed that on St Vadnais' day the staff is charged with his power, and can cure any disease connected with the undead and the powers of chaos.

Saint Margelon

"The dead are not merely collections of bones and withered skin. They are our flesh and blood, our fathers and forefathers. When the dead rise and walk among us, their souls are tortured and beholden unto some unholy power which shackles them once more to the hateful earth. For this reason I shall not suffer the dead to rise and chew on the flesh of the living."

From the Teachings of St Margelon, c. 10th century.

Cult

Like many early Bretonnian saints, Margelon's real-life history is poorly known, obscured by millennia of pious legend. According to the best of current learning, he was a priest of Morr living in the region of Parravon around the time of Gilles le Breton, or perhaps a little before. Margelon's homeland, after sustaining an attack of the plague, found itself afflicted by a still worse malady: the curse of necromancy descended, and hordes of hungry zombies and mindless skeletons roamed the stricken countryside.

As the intercessor with Morr, god of death, Margelon took it upon himself to trace and defeat the source of this scourge. It is variously reported that he performed a mighty ceremony of exorcism from atop a great earth mound called la Tumule de Margelon (which can still be seen some 10 leagues south-west of Parravon); hunted down the liche responsible for causing all the trouble and imprisoned him under the aforementioned mound; or that he used the power of Morr to entice all the undead into a pit beneath the mound and seal them there for eternity. All versions of the story focus on the Tumule de Margelon, which certainly enjoys a sinister reputation amongst the locals, who report witches' sabbats and other weird goings on there in the dead of night.

At the end of his life, Margelon too was struck down by the plague, and lay feverish and agonised for days until a young novice of Morr called Sugre came to his side. Sugre spoke soothing, kind words into his old master's ear, and immediately Margelon's pain subsided and he passed away calmly and contentedly.

St Margelon's cult is centred on Parravon and the surrounding region, where he is called upon by those praying for peace in death for friends and relatives. Less often he is invoked by people threatened by the undead, and witch hunters engaged in hunting the undead apparently call on his name when working in benighted Bourgon.

Shrines

In Bourgon and Parravon there are many dedications of shrines and temples of Morr to St Margelon. For whatever reason, the people of this province see it as especially important to secure their souls for the hereafter, so Margelon and Morr are called upon far more than one might expect. He is especially popular in small, isolated towns and villages, where common folk pray devotedly to him every day in the hope of aiding their loved ones in the next world.

The brooding, gothic cathedral of Morr in Parravon is dedicated to St Margelon.

Relics

The body of St Margelon was preserved for some 500 years after his death until the year 1490 IC, when the abbey situated at la Tumule de Margelon where his reliquiae was housed came under attack from person or persons unknown. The abbey was found the following morning, burned to a blackened shell, the monks savagely slaughtered, and the valuables stolen. What became of the abbey's treasures is still a mystery, although gossip

sometimes surfaces of sightings in Orc hoards in the Grey Mountains. The people of Bourgon, however, whisper to each other that someone - or something - which had 'unfinished business' with the saint came to get their revenge...

Strangely, although the Tumule de Margelon is almost universally associated with the saint, it is only very rarely visited. There is an indefinably evil, forbidding quality about the place which seems to deter even the most devout.

Saint Sugre



"Though your soul walks in the twilight of life, fear ye not, for I shall be by your side."

From the Last Catechism of St Sugre, spoken to the dying by priests of Morr.

Cult

As with the life of his friend and mentor St Margelon, St Sugre's history is very obscure. It is said that the elder saint taught the young Sugre, who was an apt and enthusiastic pupil. Before long, however, the venerable Margelon was struck down with plague. Everyone, including Sugre, could see that the old priest was dying.

As St Margelon lay dying in his cell, Sugre (who had always been far too shy and quiet to say very much in public) wept pitifully for his inability to do anything to ease his tutor's suffering. That night, after crying himself to sleep, Sugre had a vision of Morr in his dreams. The god appeared as a talking raven, and taught Sugre how to speak soothing and fortifying words to those in pain and need. When Sugre awoke the next morning, he found that his reluctance to speak had gone, and was replaced with a desire to help the needy and spout eloquent words of spiritual healing. Immediately he went to St Margelon's bedside, and used his new-found skills to alleviate the old man's pain before he passed away.

From that day on, Sugre followed a new calling. Instead of the contemplative life of most clerics, he instead took it upon himself to travel far and wide, going all over the kingdom to teach and help the dying pass on without difficulty. Dozens of towns and villages still cherish legends relating how St Sugre came one day and eased the suffering of some local invalid in their last hours.

At last, after spending decades travelling in this way, St Sugre settled down at a temple of Morr (the location of this last temple is disputed). But he continued to try and reach out to others; Sugre spent his last years composing a famous book of teachings, eulogies and words to be spoken at death, including his famous Last Catechism. The 'Liber Sancti Sugris' is still regularly used by priests of Morr across the Old World when conducting last rites. Naturally, Sugre is most venerated for his famous written work, a copy of which (or at least of the Catechism) is possessed by nearly every shrine and temple of Morr in Bretonnia - and in most other Old World nations too.

Because of the manner in which he was granted his unusual talents, Sugre has also become associated with Morr's aspect as god of dreams. In particular, it is believed that he can provide relief for those afflicted by terrible nightmares.

Shrines

In spite of the very widespread use and fame of the 'Liber Sancti Sugris', there is not a great number of shrines and temples dedicated to St Sugre. Those that do exist are found mainly in larger towns and cities, and provide free, round the clock recitals of the Catechism for anyone in their last moments. Although this service is gladly and honestly accepted by most Bretonnian citizens, in some cases the clerics' willingness to care for the dying has seen murder victims foisted on them in order to prevent the killers being suspected or traced.

There are more substantial temples to St Sugre in Greoncy, not far from Parravon; and in Argeance in Gascoigne. Both ardently claim to be the place where Sugre ended his days and wrote his famous book.

Relics

The two temples in Greoncy and Argance each lay claim to parts of St Sugre's body (respectively, his right hand and jaw bone); no other parts of his corpse are known to exist.

Although not strictly relics, extremely old manuscripts of the 'Liber Sancti Sugris' are treated with almost as much respect, and the age-worn copy held by the university library in Bordeleaux is said by some to have been written by St Sugre himself.

Saintly Cults of Shallya



Saint Jean de Guisoreux

"Let none be e'er so blessed as this most generous son of fair Guisoreux. For he hath given from the heart such wealth to the city that surely the favour of Shallya is in him; it is through his munificence that so many have escaped death and discomfort. Hath he not done as much as the doctor with his medicines, or the priest with his prayers? Praises be to St Jean de Guisoreux!"

From the sermon of dedication at the chapel of St Jean de Guisoreux, given by Cardinal Olivier Lidion, 2110 IC

Cult

St Jean de Guisoreux is said by cynics to embody the materialistic heart of Bretonnian religion. According to them, Jean was nothing but a rich merchant who bought his way to sainthood by lavishing vast amounts of money on the church; evidence of his fabulous wealth can still be

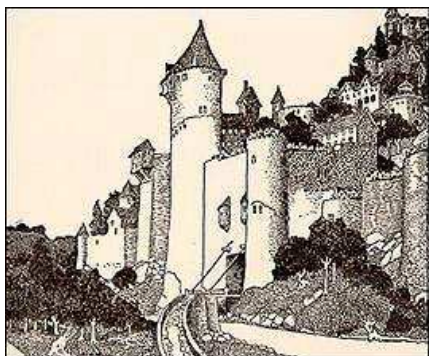
seen all over Guisoreux, with dozens of monuments and public buildings bearing his crest and initials. In life, Jean began as just the son of a moderately successful cloth trader and an impoverished lord's youngest daughter; by the time of his death, he was one of the richest men in the kingdom, with fingers in countless pies and assets stashed away in as many diverse enterprises. Even the king condescended to have dealings with Jean, for his wealth put him on a par with even the greatest nobles in the land. This astounding success was due to a combination of luck and incisive business acumen.

However, as in most cases, Jean's case is not so one-sided as some would make out. For all that Jean did achieve sainthood by giving such huge sums to the cult of Shallya, especially in his will, he was not without religious sentiment or devotion (or at least the intelligence to make a show of possessing those virtues). The public remember his frequent spending on beautiful monuments and handouts of bread rather than his famous eccentricities and personality flaws, and St Jean is still regarded as the embodiment of success and blessings from the gods. People - especially commoners and traders - pray to St Jean when they want things to go well for them, and in some quarters he has become a 'catch all' saint, appealed to for anything and everything by those who wish for a share in the near-divine fortune that seemed to follow him in life.

Shrines

St Jean is worshipped only in Guisoreux and its suburbs. Perhaps the greatest shrine to him is his tomb, which is housed in its own large and lavish chapel on the west side of the Sully Cathedral. The cathedral's completion after many centuries of halted work was funded almost entirely by St Jean. Both the cathedral and the tomb are dazzling in their display of riches; gold leaf, silks and masterful Tilean painters were all used to make this a tomb fit for a king. A heavy iron screen blocks the chapel off from the covetous masses, who are forced to gawp at its splendour from behind bars. Services are held in the chapel every day for the wellbeing of St Jean's soul; the fortune he left to fund these services (which incidentally saved the Shallyan cult from bankruptcy) will pay for three services a day for the next 500 years.

There are a number of other shrines and temples to St Jean dotted around the city, found mostly in lower to middle to class areas. Most of these were actually built using Jean's own money, and some were even constructed in his lifetime; these still bear his coat of arms.



Saint Leyeur

"And in this year there came to Couronne a great warrior, a lord and knight from the south, who was called Gilles le Breton by those who knew him. This Gilles le Breton stood with his companions and soldiers before the gates and demanded entry; not knowing the will of Shallya, the people of Couronne held council. There Leyeur, the high priest of Shallya and wisest man in the city, spoke thus to the assembly: 'We have heard of the flourishing of the men of Guisoreux, of the blessings that attend them in peace and war. Their fields and cattle are the most bountiful; their blades the keenest; their womenfolk the most fertile. In all these things they stand pre-eminent before all other men, and it is known also that they are full of praiseworthy faith and devotion to true religion, abhorring the old and unclean gods of yore. This Gilles le Breton who stands at their head, for one, has called often on the most graceful Shallya to aid him in his quest; is it not clear to all of you here, men and leaders of Couronne, that his is the power to which we must submit? For in following him, it is evident that we would be following the course chosen for this land by Shallya. For this reason I, Leyeur, am ready to bow before Gilles le Breton as my king if he will continue to bow to Shallya as his heavenly guide.' Thus spoke Leyeur, and the men of the council discussed what he had said and at length came to agree with him. Then they went to the gates and allowed Gilles le Breton and his men to enter their city, and they all made good cheer....After Gilles le Breton had enjoyed the peace and hospitality of Couronne for several weeks, he came one day to Leyeur and said unto him: 'Leyeur, I have now won twelve great battles across the length and breadth of this fair land, and now all parts of it have accepted my sovereignty. It behoves me to have these conquests made fitting in the eyes of the gods; I would like for this jewelled crown to be placed upon my head and so for me to be proclaimed to the world and to the gods as king of Bretonnia.' Leyeur listened to Gilles le Breton, and then said unto him: 'My lord, if Shallya be willing I will gladly do this thing for you and let it be an honour for myself and my city; in ages to come, all your line must come here also to receive their crowns in this great city.' Both men were contented and made good cheer; and in that same year, Gilles le Breton was crowned as first king of Bretonnia."

From the Chronicle of Pepin le Grand, 11th century IC

Cult

Although St Leyeur is justifiably revered for his smooth dealings with Gilles le Breton when he began his wars of conquest, and much attention is drawn to the fact that Gilles was crowned in Couronne in the great temple of Shallya built in part by Leyeur. However, one aspect of this proud legend that is not so well remembered is the quarrel which broke out between Leyeur and Gilles shortly before the coronation, supposedly over the rule of Couronne. This was a bitter disagreement, which was never fully resolved; so intense was the discord between the two men that Gilles at the last minute had the first Cardinal of Verena, Chlotharius, summoned from Guisoreux to actually place the crown on his head before a humiliated Leyeur. This is why, to this day, the

coronation of Bretonnian kings takes place in the great temple of Shallya in Couronne but is actually carried out by the Cardinal of Verena. There is still some bitterness on this matter in Couronne, and one or two ambitious clerics dream of rectifying and resolving the age-old conflict and allowing the Cardinal of Shallya to crown the king. Cardinal Dumourieux is certainly interested in this possibility, and secretly funds research into the matter.

The cult of St Leyeur is popular in Flandres and especially in Couronne, where the great cathedral to Shallya is dedicated to him. Leyeur is seen as the patron saint of the city, and is treated with due reverence and respect thanks to his place in Bretonnian history. Pepin le Grand's famous chronicle gives perhaps the most stirring account of his involvement with Gilles le Breton, which culminates in the famous coronation in Couronne towards the end of le Breton's long reign. Traditionally, Leyeur is seen as simply a wise and suitably devoted high priest - forerunner of the Cardinals of Shallya - who legitimised le Breton's power. The real Leyeur was not quite like this, however. It seems that the only reason Gilles chose to be crowned in Couronne instead of in his home city was to try and placate the rebellious people of Couronne; for at the time of his coronation, unification and control in Bretonnia were still a long way off. Leyeur was virtual ruler of the city; a little-known manuscript even describes him donning armour and leading the men of Couronne out to confront those of Gilles le Breton. Fortunately for Leyeur and his successors' reputation, this aspect of his life has been largely forgotten.

Shrines

The great cathedral of Shallya in Couronne is dedicated to St Leyeur. This is amongst the grandest buildings anywhere in the Old World; a near-perfect masterpiece of Bretonnian gothic architecture rising hundreds of feet above the city below. It is believed by some students that the place is so majestic and graceful that it shouldn't actually be able to stand, lacking support and stability in its design; they claim that some force, magical or divine, must keep the thing upright.

Couronne and other settlements in Flandres often have shrines and temples dedicated to St Leyeur, too. Because of their closeness to the upper-echelons of the Shallyan cult in Bretonnia, temples and shrines of Leyeur are some of the richest in the land.

Relics

St Leyeur's entire body is claimed by the cathedral in Couronne, although it is in several parts; the skull and ribcage have been in the cathedral's collection ever since records began and thus are probably genuine. Some doubt is cast on the veracity of the other parts by the fact that, if the claims of neighbouring shrines and temples were to be believed, Leyeur would have had sixteen fingers and four legs. Which if any of these relics are genuine is a question few dare try to answer.

Saint Francois-Xavier

"In the name of St Francois-Xavier of blessed memory and of great Shallya, I absolve you of all sins committed in the past, both of the mind and of the body. May you turn your back on the misfortunes of the past, and instead embark on a new and peaceful life of charity and prayer. Arise."

From the investiture ceremony for 'blood-marred' members of the Pious Order of Our Lord of Repentance.

NOTE : A more in depth look at the cult of St François-Xavier is available in the corresponding article of Bretonnia-Project.

Cult

There are two versions of Saint Francois-Xavier's life, which were given simultaneously to two crusaders (one each from Bordeleaux and Quenelles) who subsequently went on to found separate orders dedicated to the same saint. According to the Bordeleaux version of the saint's life, Francois-Xavier was the son of a noble who lavished all his attention on Francois-Xavier's elder brother. The young saint found himself isolated and neglected, tormented by his brother's fame and glory and his own ignominy. Eventually he decided to take some drastic action, and after dressing himself in armour, sneaked into a tournament held by his father and challenged his brother to a duel to the death. Unable to turn down such an offer, Francois-Xavier's brother attacked and, against all the odds, was killed by his younger sibling.

Aghast at his own rash actions, Francois-Xavier fled the tournament and everything connected to his old life, and spent many years dwelling alone in the wilderness as a hermit. At last he arrived at a resolution (devotees say that Shallya granted him a vision guiding him onto the path to sainthood) to spend the rest of his life trying to atone for what he had done. Francois-Xavier journeyed to Brionne, where he had heard the people to be oppressed and downtrodden by the nobility. The situation was every bit as bad as he feared, and he devoted his remaining energies to helping the city's commoners. He was killed leading a protest (or, if the official records are to be believed, a riot), allegedly by seven stab wounds to his chest.

The other version of the saint's life, that told by the Quenelles branch of his cult, differs mainly in that it claims Francois-Xavier to have been the eldest son of the noble lord. He enjoyed preferential treatment from his father, and although he attempted to improve relations between his brother, his father and himself, rage and resentment began to boil within his brother's heart. These spilled over at a tournament, where his younger brother entered the lists incognito to challenge Francois-Xavier to a duel to the death. Not knowing whom he was facing and eager to uphold his reputation, Francois-Xavier laid into his opponent and soon struck him a fatal blow. On lifting the dead enemy's visor and seeing his brother's face, Francois-Xavier was so shocked that he cast off his armour and noble trappings to flee into the wilderness.

From this point on the story is more or less the same as that of the Bordeleaux version. However, as a result of this divergence in the tales, the two branches of Francois-

Xavier's cult have developed significantly different creeds. Most importantly, the Quenelles branch (the Pious Order of Our Lord of Repentance) is one of the only religious organisations dedicated to a non-military deity in Bretonnia that accepts soldiers who have taken human life; the Bordeleaux branch (the Merciful Brotherhood of the Seventh Knife Wound) is highly disdainful of this practice, seeing its counterparts as dangerous and uncouth heretics. Others regard Francois-Xavier as an emblem of salvation and repentance, and as a charitable saint liable to stick up for the causes of the poor, especially when they need support against or from the aristocracy.

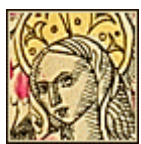
Shrines

As might be expected, the two branches of Francois-Xavier's cult possess their own networks of shrines, monasteries and temples based on their respective centres. Luckily they are sufficiently distant to prevent any regular unrest. Neither branch of the cult is especially large, although they are both popular. Unusually, they enjoy the support of both commoners and nobles, each group finding some aspect of the saint that appeals to them. The Quenelles order in particular depends upon the financial aid of rich nobles in that city who have supported the cult ever since the crusades; several notable families actually have members in order's ranks.

Relics

According to the two texts of St Francois-Xavier's life, there are no relics extant of his life. What became of the saint's body after his death in Brionne is unknown, and due to paucity of precise detail it is impossible even to know exactly where and when other events took place, making the identification of relics impossible. However, there are persistent rumours that the knife used to inflict the fatal wounds on Francois-Xavier still survives, and bookish monks have read vague reports of a journal kept by the saint being held somewhere.

Sainte Julienne



"A fair maiden there was, full golden and pure; her tresses were long and her skin like ivory. Julienne was her name, and she was the youngest daughter of the Duc d'Elmet, who had sent his beautiful and wise daughter to become a nun at the abbey of Merceaux-Descloux. There she amazed her tutors with her kindness, sagacity and devotion; all saw that the blessings of Shallya lay heavy on her soul. But there was one man, a cruel and wicked son of the Comte de la Soucerie, who had yearned and lusted after the virginal Julienne for many a year, and he felt his black heart tear when she left home to take up her life in the cloister. This scoundrel followed her to the city, where he used all his guile to enter the abbey and capture the faithful Julienne alone. He importuned her again and again, forcing his unrequited love upon the maiden; but she refused his advances and made great dole. Julienne ran from his unsanctified clutches and screamed for help; but none

were near to heed her cries, and as she ran through the flower-laden gardens of the abbey, the bloodthirsty suitor caught her up again. Fearful lest her mournful wails unveil his dreadful schemes, the warlike Comte drew his sword and sliced off Julienne's golden head with one blow. Woe to Julienne the fair, slain for the lustful whim of man! Woe for her chaste, virginal blood lending its still richer life to the verdant soil of Merceaux-Descloux! But all was not in vain, for in dying unsullied by the wrathful, impassioned world of man Julienne gained favour in the eternal kingdom of the blessed and sat by the right hand of her lady Shallya. In time another beautiful sister, likewise virginal and pure of heart, came to Merceaux-Descloux, and as she prayed one day in the cloister Julienne appeared to her in a vision, standing over the place where she had been slain and pointing to the ground. This sister ran to the spot which the vision had indicated, and with her bare hands dug into the ground; soon water rose into the hole, spouting out from the earth. These holy waters, enriched by the blood of saintly Julienne, still lend their strength to those in need today."

From the Life of Sainte Julienne by Anne la Forte, 1977 IC.

Cult

Ste Julienne's cult does not extend beyond the abbey and baths which bear her name at the abbey of Merceaux-Descloux, in the small town which shares the abbey's name. The abbey and baths have a good reputation, and attract many old, infirm and rich patrons who dislike the crowds and size of the more famous Couronne baths. Hopeful pilgrims come from all over the kingdom and beyond having heard tell of the baths' properties. All who come go away convinced that the waters of Ste Julienne at Merceaux-Descloux have done them some good, whilst a few genuinely do find an apparently miraculous cure at the baths. There is a collection of crutches and decayed medicines left by those who, having been cured at the baths, have left them there to lend hope to others. Visitors to the baths regard them as a well-kept secret which they do not want to be spoiled by a flood of visitors.

Shrine

The abbey of Merceaux-Descloux is relatively small but well-off, mainly thanks to the generous donations left by visitors to the baths. It is, as religious establishments go, as comfortable as possible; 'cells' feature four-poster beds and private lavatories. Those clerics used to more austere accommodation frown upon such luxury, but they do acknowledge the good work done by the nuns who live in the abbey, and the outstanding collection of books housed in the abbey library.

Attendants

Some twenty nuns actually live in Merceaux-Descloux. Most of these are mere initiates; in fact, the abbey has a reputation as a good place for 'nice' young noblewomen to go, normally to spend a year or two doing charitable works in luxurious, congenial surroundings without any contact with untoward ruffians. Some choose to stay on afterwards and become fully-fledged clerics of

Shallya. The abbess, Laure Chichou, is a small, wrinkled old specimen with a tongue like a whiplash for men and commoners, although she is kind and indulgent with real patients and well-behaved nuns. She is a third level priestess of Shallya; there is also a second level priest, and two first level priests. Some other, regular initiate sisters are granted some special position, too. Aside from the nuns, there is a physician, with an apprentice and a servant; a pharmacist; and over a dozen other servants working in the abbey and the attached baths. Six watchmen are paid to provide protection.

Relics

The skull of Ste Julienne is preserved by Merceaux-Descloux, and is placed in a chapel beside the baths where pilgrims can pray to its healing qualities. Many have ascribed their miraculous cures to praying before this skull. Popular legend states that the waters of Merceaux-Descloux will run dry if the skull is removed. In the abbey's shrine, there is also a vial containing a powdery red substance, which is thought to be the blood of Ste Julienne. It is paraded through the abbey on her saint's day, and a great many pilgrims congregate to observe this occasion. At the climax of the ceremony, the blood turns to liquid, as Ste Julienne manifests her powers for all to see. If the blood fails to turn to liquid, it is said the following year will bring great misfortune for the kingdom.

Saint Antoine de la Peste

*"When the searing blade that leaves no scar
Leaves you unmanned and stricken,
Speak heartfelt prayers be heard both near and far,
And let the name of St Antoine be spoken."*
Popular rhyme to ward off plague.

Cult

Very little is known about the origins of St Antoine de la Peste. According to legend he was a priest of Shallya in Bordeleaux, perhaps in the 4th century, who valiantly devoted his energies to helping those afflicted by a virulent outbreak of plague. He worked tirelessly soothing the sick and attempting to ward off the onset of disease, and it amazed everyone that for many months Antoine seemed to be immune to the pestilence around him. However, even as the plague at last began to abate, Antoine was struck down, and was himself the very last victim of the outbreak; according to legend, he died smiling because the city bells were tolling to mark the end of the plague.

Since then, Antoine de la Peste has become the centre an almost national cult, which includes a number of hospital dedications in large towns. There is also 'L'Entreprise de St Antoine de la Peste' which raises funds from well-meaning nobles and merchants to alleviate the suffering of those afflicted by illness and misfortune; however, although l'Entreprise does distribute a substantial amount of money to needy cases, what it gives out is only a tiny fraction of what the upper classes might be able to pay, and to receive any aid the poor must go

through a complex and highly degrading examination in which they compete with each other to offer the tale of greatest woe to the rich ladies and gentlemen in charge of l'Entreprise.

Shrines

Nearly every large city and town in Bretonnia has a shrine, temple or hospital dedicated to St Antoine de la Peste. Despite his origins in Bordeleaux, he is not noticeably more popular in that city than anywhere else. St Antoine de la Peste's shrines and temples generally have no special function under normal circumstances except as a refuge for the sick; during outbreaks of plague, however, they are thronged by people saying prayers for salvation and seeking some sort of help from the priests. In fact, they become so crowded that it is even more dangerous to enter the shrines and temples than to remain on the streets.

L'Entreprise de St Antoine de la Peste has its headquarters in Guisoreux, but there are independent branches in most substantial settlements. They usually operate in the local shrine or temple to St Antoine de la Peste.

Relics

The remains and effects of St Antoine de la Peste are scattered all over Bretonnia. The temple to him in Bordeleaux claims to have one of his hands and the cloth which was used to mop his brow just before death; this cloth, though pitifully worn after so many years, is believed to have the power to provide miraculous cures, and is occasionally used to try and save high-profile invalids.

Temples in Parravon and Brionne both possess skulls of Saint Antoine de la Peste, and the habit he wore when tending the sick is in the hands of a small temple in the town of Tinchebray, south-west of Couronne. Though this is a comparatively minor town (now boasting a far from minor pilgrim attraction), the habit is most likely genuine, for a local legend, preserved in many ancient manuscripts, tells of how it was brought to Tinchebray from a temple in Navarre by a thief who was 'directed by the blessed will of Saint Antoine de la Peste' to remove the habit from a large, wealthy abbey in Navarre and bring it back to his home town. The abbey, situated some fifteen leagues east of Brionne, would be very interested in trying to reclaim one of its greatest treasures.

Sainte Herminette la Maigre

"Que Shallya protège notre petite Herminette! [May Shallya protect our little Herminette!]"
Chant of the Guisoreux mob at the execution of Ste Herminette la Maigre

Cult

Ste Herminette was the daughter of typical slum-dwelling parents in Guisoreux, born around the year 2460 IC. She came from the very worst area of the city, the Mendigots, where life was cheap and squalor complete. However, in spite of her background, Herminette

displayed a determination and a kindness far beyond anything her neighbours had ever known. She stood out in the slums like a beacon in the night, and by some small miracle lived to the age of seven without succumbing to disease, famine or violence.

At that age Herminette was fortunate enough, when one day begging for alms from strangers near the city walls, to meet with one of the doughty mistresses from the Convent Ste Josephine. This nun noticed the gentle, pious aura which seemed to emanate from Herminette, and after offering to give her a few pennies if Herminette would say what she would do with the money, the girl said 'I would take it home so that my mother can feed my little brothers and sisters.' This was enough to bring the nun to a decision, and a few days later Herminette began her education at the Convent Ste Josephine.

Although she proved an outstanding pupil in all ways (much to the chagrin of better-born students), Herminette always remained passionately devoted to helping her family and friends in the slums outside the city walls, and begged the convent's mistress to let her spend evenings and afternoons off attempting to do good in the slums. To the approval of her teachers, Herminette chose to accept the orders of Shallya and become a nun after finishing her education.

But when she felt the time had come for her to leave the Convent at the age of seventeen, Herminette returned to the Mendigots, where she hoped to use her learning to help the area's inhabitants drag themselves out of poverty. Herminette set up an unofficial hostel based on the surreptitious contributions of a few rich friends from the convent, and there she did her best to care for and educate the locals. However, although the hostel won Herminette everlasting gratitude amongst the paupers of Mendigots and nearby districts, it became apparent to her that no changes would be made until she took some decisive action to attract the city authorities' attention. To this end, Herminette organised a grand - and peaceful - demonstration to take place outside the main gate of Guisoreux in the summer of 2481, when she herself was just 21 years old. On the appointed day, the crowds converged; tens of thousands of people, more than had ever been seen at one gathering before in the city. In spite of the size of the demonstration, it remained peaceful and relatively subdued, with a single nun standing at its head. Herminette cried up to the assembled watchmen atop the gate, asking them to fetch someone with authority for her to speak with. The watchmen did get someone with authority, but not for a conversation with Herminette: the commander of the watch, at that time Jerome Bernieres, was summoned to defuse the situation, which the city's leadership saw as a potential revolution. Bernieres took one look at the assembled crowd, and then quickly took drastic steps to scatter the 'mob' before they could smash down the gates and lay waste the city.

All the troops and watchmen in Guisoreux were brought to bear on the impending riot, and in an orgy of blood and violence (still recalled as the Massacre of Ste Herminette by the commoners; officially it is named the Mendigots Rising) the military scattered the poor men, women and children. The death toll was terrible, and many families in the Faubourgs still bear a grudge against the authorities thanks to this event. Ste Herminette

herself, however, was injured and captured by the soldiers, who took her back into the city. There, she found herself turned into a scapegoat for the massacre, accused of stirring revolutionary sentiment with intent to commit treason. Throughout her show trial Herminette remained stoic and calm, defiant and logical in the face of her accusers' savagery. But there was never any hope of her salvation; the city's leaders knew that they had to show some sort of reaction to the 'riot' in order to deter future unrest, and they had decided to make the upstart girl pay for her wickedness.

Herminette was hanged just over a month after the Mendigots Rising; beheading was seen as too good for her. Although her execution took place firmly within the city walls in order to stop too many paupers from venting their fury, a small number got into the city somehow and chanted and booed at the hanging. Ironically, Herminette's death was the cause of a second, far more violent revolt in Mendigots when her supporters got word of her death and rallied to show their outrage. After a destructive fire and yet more deaths, the watch once more quelled the trouble and a tense quiet descended on the Faubourgs.

But even in death Herminette's name remains a source of difficulty for the watch. Although officially she has been more or less forgotten, the impoverished inhabitants of the Faubourgs have taken to venerating the young, pious and devoted Herminette (known as la Maigre for her small size and physical frailty) as a saint of Shallya. She is prayed to by those of the proletariat who wish for hope and aid, especially in the face of oppression from the upper classes.

Shrines

There are several discreet shrines to Ste Herminette la Maigre stowed away in the poorer areas of the Faubourgs, where people can go to seek help or at least a temporary shelter. Because of Herminette's reputation, these are sacrosanct even to the rough and ready slum-dwellers. Unofficially, the Priory of Shallya beyond the city walls in Louffiat is linked with the memory of Ste Herminette. A rebellious and charitable printer has covertly produced a pamphlet passing on details of Herminette's life and work, copies of which can be obtained from the priory and shrines of Shallya in poorer areas. The watch would certainly prosecute anyone caught in possession of such a publication; in fact, anyone and anything associated with Ste Herminette is liable to be dealt with severely by a watch still mindful of the past.

Relics

As a condemned criminal, Herminette was to meet with an ignominious fate in death. Normally, the bodies of those executed on the scaffold are sold to the physicians' guild or to the university. Fortunately for Herminette, her ardent supporters secured possession of her corpse and spirited it out of the walls into the Mendigots. Its current resting place is a closely guarded secret; only true devotees are told that it is buried in the gardens of the Priory of Shallya.

Saint Jacques, Saint Jacques le menteur

"Have faith, my children! Trust me, I'm a priest!"

Said to have been spoken by Saint Jacques before curing pilgrims.



Cult

According to the 'official' history of Saint Jacques, he was a fine, upstanding, noble boy in around the 9th century who was given by his father to a monastery as a demonstration of piety. In this Navarrese monastery, now named after this very saint, Jacques spent his life calmly and assiduously praying and performing his duties as part of the monastic community. One day, however, he experienced a vision of Shallya in the monastery's shrine, and in this dream Shallya clasped his hands in hers and told him to offer her power to the world.

Shortly after, St Jacques discovered that he had the ability to cure people of dangerous illnesses merely by laying his hands on them. It is said that hundreds - maybe thousands - of people came to him with ailments of some sort, and went away cured. His fame spread far and wide, with stricken souls coming from all parts of the kingdom. An old tradition recounts how each pilgrim placed a rock on top of a great cairn alongside the monastery, with those who received miraculous cures placing the bigger stones. This cairn is now the mountain le Mont des Peregrins; a huge, rocky peak towering over the monastery and the surrounding landscape.

And that, according to Shallyans, was that. Jacques lived a long and pure life offering his godly powers to the needs of the community and eventually passed away peacefully in his sleep. However, unbeknownst to the authorities, there is a whole other aspect to St Jacques 'le menteur', as he is known to those that pray to him in his aspect as one of the few saints of Ranald, god of thieves

and trickery. They claim that Jacques did have a vision at an early age, but that it was not of Shallya but of Ranald. Like the Shallyan version of the story, it is stated that Ranald took Jacques' hands in his and pressed them to the saint's lips. Then the god told him that he would be the best liar the world had ever known.

Worshippers of Ranald then delight in telling of St Jacques le menteur's many daring and amusing escapades, which he committed during a long leave of absence from the dull monastery in Navarre. He wandered through the kingdom, not only deriving pleasure from his adventures, but also using his quite obscene lies (which everyone believed) to help those oppressed by unkind rulers. Thieves, beggars and suchlike know many of these stories, which are secretly passed round wherever such miscreants gather.

The Ranald version of St Jacques' life tells how, after many years, the saint did finally return to the Shallyan monastery in Navarre, where he used his slick tongue to explain away his years of absence (according to one version of the tale, he said he'd become a hermit in the woods; another, more fanciful variant suggests that he was captured by slavers and taken round the world three times). Although he did become a member of the community again, to all appearances pursuing the genuine monastic life, Jacques instead continued to thumb his nose at the authorities and the gullibility of common folk. He put it about that he could cure illness with a touch of his hand, and by cunningly suggesting that his touch had indeed made people feel better, Jacques created a thriving pilgrim trade. This racket still continues, for the tale of St Jacques 'le menteur' is a favourite among pilgrims as well as rogues. Many rogues disguise themselves as pilgrims with some sort of unsightly, painful ailment and travel to St Jacques' old monastery in Navarre, where they hope that something of the old master's power will rub off on them. They carry on his work by 'miraculously' shrugging off their feigned disease and perpetuating Jacques' great deception. In many cities with organised cults of Ranald, such as Brionne, a visit of this sort is commonly prescribed for those who transgress the cult strictures in some way, functioning as a trial for the god. Only if the pilgrimage arouses no suspicion is the trial completed.

Shrines

St Jacques the miraculous Shallyan healer is very popular in Navarre, with a great many shrines and temples dedicated in his name. Others are found throughout the kingdom, though they get progressively rarer the further north one goes.

Peasants and nobles alike have great faith in his curative powers, which they feel just might reach out to them through prayer at an appropriately dedicated shrine. With illness being common at all levels of society, St Jacques is commonly addressed by those touched by disease of some sort. Naturally, because the cult of Ranald is technically illegal in Bretonnia, there are very few shrines or temples openly dedicated to St Jacques in his aspect of le menteur. Only in the largest cities is there any chance of finding a shrine or temple dedicated to Ranald, and if there is such a place it will certainly be

very cunningly concealed, and located in the very roughest of neighbourhoods. Some such shrines and temples are dedicated to St Jacques le Menteur; there is rumoured to be a temple of this sort somewhere in Brionne.

On the other hand, Ranald worshippers claim that if they themselves pretend to be devoted to the Shallyan 'goody-goody' version of the saint and worship at his Shallyan shrines and temples, Ranald is just as impressed as if they did so in his own temples (after all, they are in a way carrying on Jacques' own grand deception).

Relics

The body of St Jacques is kept at the monastery where he died, which is now called St Jacques on account of the fame his relics have brought (long ago, the monastery was called La Maison Haute de Notre Dame Sainte). The bones are kept in a beautiful reliquary adorned with gold and ivory decoration. A great many pilgrims come here every day, making the monastery very rich and popular indeed; it is one of the greatest pilgrim centres in Bretonnia.

St Jacques' houses over 80 brethren plus a great many lay brothers and sisters to do the more menial tasks. A small number of these are devotees of Ranald who live the life of deception in honour of St Jacques and his trickster deity. They don't reveal themselves to anyone else, for to do so would be to break the vow of deception, although to be quite honest the real reason none have ever spoken out is simply that none have ever been sure enough that they're talking to friends. Only the best consider taking on such a life, often as the culmination of a successful career elsewhere.

Over the years, the monastery has grown considerably and now includes a number of hostels for accommodating pilgrims. There are also many craftsmen in nearby villages who sell souvenirs to pilgrims, and bandits hide in the scrubland around St Jacques preying on unwary pilgrims. But if any pilgrim of Ranald speaks to them in the thieves' tongue or shows an example of thieves' cant, they can expect a warm welcome and a trouble free journey; rogues have to look after their own.

Saintly Cults of Verena



Saint Antoine

"Let not your heart be stricken or deceived by the machinations of evil, my disciple; for I shall be at your side, and my power will be yours to draw on."

Catechism taught to adepts of St Antoine, said to have been spoken by the Saint himself

Cult

Unlike other saintly cults, the cult of St Antoine does not actively seek publicity. There are very few shrines or temples dedicated to him, and although many people will have heard of St Antoine and what he is famous for, not many will be able to tell you much more. And few would want to.

The heart of St Antoine's cult is the order of St Antoine. This organisation is dedicated to hunting down and prosecuting witches and other supernatural horrors. St Antoine himself spent his life doing this, travelling all over the kingdom and winning a formidable reputation for erudition and faith. Upon his death, late in the 17th century, King Bernard III le Pieux (who had taken a keen personal interest in Antoine's work) sponsored his canonisation and saw to the fulfilment of his last request: that a religious order be set up to carry on his struggle and protect Bretonnia.

This order is not very large, and has shrunk slightly in recent decades, but is still widespread, well organised and highly devoted. Only sincere priests are inducted into the order's ranks (some laymen even take orders just to lend their talents to the order of St Antoine) and it remains as effective as ever. Outside the order and those few who know its true role, St Antoine is occasionally called upon by those who feel threatened by witchcraft, but only rarely.

Shrines

There are few regular shrines and temples dedicated to St Antoine, but small properties are held by the order all over the country. These provide accommodation and resources for adepts of the order as they travel (usually incognito) around the kingdom watching for signs of witchcraft. Larger, but very nondescript and well-protected abbeys are located in the main cities, where members of the order report back and are trained. The largest of these are located in Guisoreux, Couronne and Brionne. Although the order was for centuries based in Couronne, the decision was taken recently to relocate headquarters to Guisoreux, mainly to be nearer the centre of power (secretly, the head of the order suspect corruption in the highest quarters and in the outsized capital city, although he would never dare confess such fears). The Conventicle de St Antoine in the Vaudois area of Guisoreux now houses the order's leadership; it is where the master of the order, Gilbert Jardine, presides. He reports directly to the Cardinal of Verena, and enjoys an unprecedented level of freedom of action.

Attendants

The members of the order of St Antoine are a varied lot. All are determined and courageous, for few would choose to devote their lives to the struggle against

witchcraft otherwise. Only a very small number of promising young novices are selected to begin training at an early age; most members join later in life. Any priest from any cult is considered for acceptance if he volunteers, as is almost any layman with valuable knowledge or skills. It is said that repentant necromancers, cultists and witches are secretly accepted. Many applicants are found wanting and turned away; those who are accepted must go through the formality of accepting minor orders of Verena (which has no game effect; it is really only a way of granting the goddess's blessing on those about to do the dirty work. Characters currently of chaotic or evil alignment may not, however, join the order) and then usually go through a rigorous course of training. They leave this with unrivalled knowledge of witchcraft and other branches of occult lore.

Relics

The body of St Antoine has been carefully and precisely broken up into hundreds of pieces, some of which have been lost over the years. Every member of the order is given a tiny reliquary containing a piece of St Antoine's body just after completing his training; they are expected to wear this at all times, partly as a sign to fellow members of the order, and partly to provide protection against the forces of darkness which the adept must face.

Saint Bernard

"Bernard est mort? Quelle tristesse touche le coeur du royaume! [Bernard is dead? What sorrow touches the heart of the kingdom!]"

Attributed to Louis le Jeune after the battle of Garrouge, 1246 IC

Cult

There are many versions of Saint Bernard's Life, but all agree on the main course of events. Bernard was an unusually diplomatic and intelligent priest of Verena who served King Louis le Vieux (1193-1246 IC) very well for many years. After the King's death, the throne was left to his son - aged just 16 - who was faced with a rebellion among the nobility, led by the late Louis' brother, Favier des Marches. Favier was a strong but cruel warrior, who was able to cajole many lords into his service and soon marched on Louis le Jeune's small camp at Garrouge. The young king was at a loss over what to do, with hardly any knights and men-at-arms in his army. It looked like the line of correct succession was about to be broken, and Louis considered submitting humbly to Favier in return for mercy.

But Bernard counselled against such cowardice, and immediately took the fastest horse in the royal stables. He galloped around the nearby castles and towns, using stirring oratory (and dire threats, but historians don't like to note such details) to rally a surprisingly large force to the young king's banner in just a few days. It was still dwarfed by Favier's host, but Louis felt able to put up a show of resistance. However, both he and Bernard

recognised that bloodshed was not the best road to a settled kingdom, and so Bernard left the royal camp to try and come to some agreement with the enemy forces. He entered Favier's camp, which was by now set up ready for battle opposite that of the king, and asked to speak with the commander. Favier sneered at the faithful old priest, whom he knew had served his hated brother for years and now wished for him to give up his claim to the throne. He and his closest advisers listened to Bernard's impassioned speech, and though Favier was temporarily swayed and his advisers began to counsel against battle, he refused to heed the priest's words. When Bernard tried desperately to repeat his plea, Favier became enraged and ordered him to be executed. In spite of his advisers' best efforts to the contrary, Favier had Bernard hung, drawn and quartered that very night before he could change his mind. It is said that knowledge of what Favier had done weakened the resolve of his army, and that some men even deserted to the young king in light of this event. Thus, the next day, Louis' much smaller force was able to decisively defeat that of his wicked uncle, and Favier himself was slaughtered ignominiously by a group of footmen; his body was hacked to pieces in vengeance for what was done to Bernard.

Louis le Jeune, who was to be one of the greatest and longest reigning kings Bretonnia ever knew, founded the cult of St Bernard, which has been associated with the crown and royal justice ever since. His sacrifice is held up as a divinely-approved example of service to the monarch. Many subsequent legends tell how priests and sometimes kings received visions of St Bernard instructing them on the best course to take, always at a critical turning point in the royal dynasty's history. As a result of this connection, St Bernard's cult has grown very popular, and used to enjoy substantial royal patronage. The level of support has declined considerably in recent decades, and the cult is now struggling to maintain all its properties as well as they have been for centuries.

Shrines

There are a great many shrines and temples to St Bernard scattered all over the kingdom, with a preponderance in the north. Because of their symbolic association with royal and central control, new shrines built in outlying areas are often dedicated to St Bernard. By far the largest and most important temple of St Bernard is in the small town of St-Bernard-en-Flandres, not far from the site of the battle of Garrouge. The huge temple located in this town is a pilgrimage centre of national standing. Over the centuries, successive kings of Bretonnia have lavished untold gifts on this house in recognition of St Bernard's place in their history; these are jealously guarded by the shabbier clerics working there today, remnants of a lost golden age. It is an established custom for each new king of Bretonnia to come here and pray before the body of St Bernard on the return trip from his coronation in Couronne.

Relics

St Bernard's body is kept at St-Bernard-en-Flandres in the great temple, housed in a reliquary of unrivalled splendour and beauty, though beginning to grow

tarnished. Visions of shining crowns and thrones (and occasionally something more prophetic) are sometimes granted to those who pray to these relics, although it is now impossible to remove them from their reliquary without destroying it.

Other relics of St Bernard - such as pieces of the scaffold from which he was hanged and artefacts from his priestly life - are in the possession of a few other large temples and relic collections; the king and several major nobles are known to possess relics of St Bernard, many of which have such ancient pedigrees and are most likely genuine.

NOTE : St-Bernard-en-Flandres appears in the Bretonnia-Project scenario 'The Letter of De Ribeyrac'. However, the description of the temple of St-Bernard given there is somewhat different. Simply choose the version you prefer.

Ste Joan

"Ut feminae possint scire [So that women may know]" Motto of the College of Ste Joan

Cult

There is no cult of Ste Joan as such; rather, her name and story have been adopted by the college that bears her name in the Guisonne university, situated in Guisoreux. She lived around the 12th century and was abbess of a Verenan monastery near the capital. Famously, she took in many female students and taught them things that had always before then been limited to men. However, she owes her sainthood and fame to subsequent martyrdom at the hands of Burhak the Bald, an Orc chieftain.

Her legend remained relatively obscure until it provided a crucial spark of inspiration to a rich noblewoman. In 2484 IC, the fabulously rich (and equally eccentric) Duchess Martine Courlommiers used her fortune and political clout to establish the very first university college entirely for women, named after Ste Joan. Her actions would normally have been totally unacceptable, but the sheer size of the bequest she offered to the university (which depended on the setting up of the College de Ste Joan) forced the Chancellor into allowing her scheme to go ahead.

Since then, the College de Ste Joan has had to fight tooth and nail to survive and flourish in the face of intense opposition from the reactionary university colleges. However, it faced up to all the disapproval and minor sanctions imposed on it and the college is going strong today. Forward-thinking nobles, merchants and wealthy professionals send their daughters there to receive a thorough academic education. Many subsequently go on to become teachers or even professionals in their own right. It is rumoured that the Chambre Noire recruits its female operatives from the intelligent members of the College de Ste Joan. Nobles and 'proper' ladies are somewhat intimidated by students of Ste Joan, and there is still considerable friction with regular colleges of the university.

Shrine

Unlike most other colleges in the Guisonne university, that of Ste Joan boasts its own shrine to Verena. This is mainly because, when the college was first opened, the university authorities wouldn't let the female students enter the Grande Chapelle to worship with men; it just wasn't thought dignified. Although women have since won the right to pray in the chapel with their male companions, they still traditionally take their evening prayers in college as a mark of respect for the struggle for equality of their forebears.

Relics

Duchess Martine bought the reliquiae of Ste Joan as her interest in the saint grew; when the college was created, she granted these relics to it as well. The bones are still kept in the altar of the college shrine, where they form the centre of college worship.

Saint Gregorius the Silent

"Oportet me dicere plus? [Need I say more?]"

Gregorius the Silent at the close of his speech to the assembled royal court and Verenan clergy, c.1400 IC

Cult

Gregorius was renowned as a judge and scholar in the late 14th century. After an illustrious education at the Grande Chapelle in Guisoreux, he came to dominate the life of the great temple to Verena and was eventually elected to the prestigious post of Cardinal of Verena.

The climactic moment of Gregorius' life came when, around the year 1395 IC, he came into possession of an extremely unusual manuscript, written in a tongue none could decipher, referred to as the Voinier Book. Its edges were blackened by fire and its age-stained pages bespattered with what seemed to be blood. Gregorius set himself the task of discovering the secrets contained in this mysterious volume, and spent the next five years poring over it. At last, his attendants heard a crash from the old cleric's study, and entered to be momentarily dazzled by a blinding white light; for a second, they later claimed, it was as though a second, shining figure stood beside Gregorius, whispering into his ear. But the vision just as soon vanished, and all that was left was the gaunt and pale Gregorius, triumphantly pronouncing that he had decoded the secrets of the Voinier Book. The Cardinal then ordered that a council be summoned, with the king, his chief councillors and all the other clergy of Verena to attend. When this gathering had assembled, Gregorius stood before them...and found that what had been revealed to him could simply not be put into words. He spoke of the wonder, the truth and the power of his new-found knowledge, of how it could mean the dawning of a new era for the world. However, try as he might, Gregorius simply could not describe his experience, and ended up delivering the now famous words 'Oportet me dicere plus?'

After that fateful day, Gregorius never spoke again; his mind and spirit had simply been elevated to such a level that the doings of men no longer mattered. He

ceased eating, and spent all his time reading the Voinier Book and praying in silence. Gregorius died after a month and a half of this punishing routine, and although he had certainly become decidedly odd in his last days, he nevertheless kept an air of otherworldly sanctity that none had ever sensed in a mortal before.

The story of St Gregorius is widely known, and he is often used as an example of an inspired cleric being shown a divine truth beyond sinful men. For this reason, he has come to be associated with truth and clarity; it is believed that those who pray at his shrine receive guidance on the correct course to take under duress.

Shrine

Upon his death, St Gregorius left a secret but highly detailed plan for the reconstruction of the High Temple of Verena in Guisoreux, put into effect even as he lay dying. These designs were astounding in their scope and grandeur, bettering anything seen prior to that time in the Old World (they turned Bretonnian architecture in a whole new direction, beginning the earliest phase of gothic churches). In fact, Gregorius' plan was so ambitious that it was not actually completed until 2291 IC - over 800 years after the Saint's death! The High Temple is Gregorius' only shrine. Apparently, the trusted disciple to whom Gregorius entrusted his secret design for the High Temple explained, after Gregorius' canonisation, that the Cardinal wanted no shrines other than the High Temple.

Relics

The body of St Gregorius is kept in a sealed casket within the altar at the High Temple of Verena, where it is a popular object of veneration. The lectern at which the saint read the Voinier Book is also in the temple's possession, and has been inspected by many scholars seeking some clue as to the Voinier Book and the strange turning point in Gregorius' life. It is a tradition dating back to the time of Gregorius himself that no wizard is allowed to inspect the lectern lest (they say) he try and taint it with magical powers. One or two more rebellious magicians believe there is something far more sinister behind this restriction and the whole tale surrounding Gregorius and the Voinier Book. They ask what was the nature of this text, and wonder at the true identity of the being observed whispering into the saint's ear. As 'evidence' for their concerns, they point to the occasional instances of men and women going insane after praying in the temple; always their madness drags in and harms hundreds of other souls, as if some force chose to afflict only those who might hurt as many others as possible. All wizards feel uneasy about the High Temple, and those few who have entered claim to have felt a tangible sense of dread and despair creeping over them.

Efforts to find the elusive Voinier Book have all proven futile; in one famous case some 50 years ago, the Cardinal of Verena permitted the casket containing Gregorius' body to be opened. Nothing was inside save the saint's bones. Nevertheless, scholars, wizards and clerics still discuss the Voinier Book, and current opinion is that Gregorius' disciple must have stowed it somewhere in the High Temple.

Saint Benehold

"Dona nobis aliquid ex sapientia tua, sanctus Beneholdus! [Give us something from your wisdom, saint Benehold!]"

Traditional chant of monks of St Benehold

Cult

The cult of St Benehold is among the oldest and most respected in the Old World. It extends not only over Bretonnia but also over Estalia and Tilea as well, and even into the southern regions of the Empire and into Albion and the Border Princes.

St Benehold is thought to have lived some time around the 3rd century IC in central Tilea, where he founded a monastery out in the wilds so as to better pursue learning and prayer. Soon like-minded individuals flocked to join him, and even before his death nearly a hundred more monasteries had been founded. Since then, the 'Rule' of St Benehold has been at the heart of nearly every abbey and monastery dedicated to Verena, and is the foundation for the rules followed by many monasteries of other cults. It lays down precisely the way in which a life of pious seclusion and contemplation is to be led, and is for the most part the work of Benehold himself. Monks and scholars seek avidly for the oldest possible copy of the 'Rule' so they can live the purest life they can; the holy grail of this quest would be to find the manuscript written by Benehold himself.

In centuries past, the monks of St Benehold's various monasteries were almost indisputably the best scholars in Bretonnia and the Old World. However, the rise of universities has provided serious competition for them; now, most of St Benehold's monasteries are eclipsed by the new universities in academic terms, and jealously hoard their precious manuscript libraries, preventing any university man from entering. Nevertheless, some houses, such as those of the small order of Vauban, can still claim to equal the universities' academic prowess.

Shrines

The huge majority of St Benehold's shrines are located in abbeys and smaller monasteries; nearly every Verenan monastery is dedicated to St Benehold. However, there is still considerable diversity within these monasteries; there are several competing orders with slightly varying slants on the 'Rule'. Perhaps the most powerful monastic order in Bretonnia is that of Chartry, whose followers are known as the 'black friars' after the plain black cassocks they wear. The order of Chartry is extremely wealthy and powerful, owning large quantities of land and property all over the kingdom. All the monasteries of this order were founded by monks from Chartry (the largest monastery in Bretonnia, situated in eastern Llyonnais) at some point in its 2000 year history; not surprisingly, it now boasts hundreds of dependent monasteries in Bretonnia and a few in other lands. All obey (though not always willingly) the abbot of Chartry, who is one of the most powerful figures within the cult of Verena. The post is currently held by Godefroi de Sept-Forges; even though he is totally blind and aged over ninety, he still has far more control over his faculties than most men a third of his age,

and can recite the 'Rule' from memory. He exchanges regular letters with, amongst others, the Cardinal of Verena, the Duc de Lyonnais and maintains a permanent envoy at the Oisillon Palace.

Aside from the order of Chartry (which has become rather political and worldly for some monks' liking), there are several smaller groups. These include the order of Redanne (an all-women order based in Armorique; now fallen from grace, it has become very lax in its application of the 'Rule'), the order of Vauban (a tiny order situated in l'Anguille, well-known for its scholastic excellence; its abbey provides the nearest thing l'Anguille has to a university), the order of Faral (which broke away from the order of Chartry after a long and difficult legal and theological dispute; it now sticks rigidly to the 'Rule' and actively seeks the oldest and best possible version of the text) and the order of Quercy (all of whose monks must maintain constant silence).

Relics

Strangely enough, despite the proliferation of St Benehold's cult all over the Old World, there is not so much confusion over his relics as there is with many other saints. Benehold's body is kept whole and intact at the great abbey of Monte Arrizzio in Tilea, which was one of the very first daughter-houses to be established by Benehold, and is the oldest monastery in the Old World.

There are no other claimants to parts of Benehold's body, but many other items associated with him exist. Amongst them are a pair of spectacles (kept at Chartry), several styli (held at l'Anguille, Brionne and a few other places) and a pair of sandals (near Guisoreux). Pieces of rock from his original monastery, known as Cazzionotto, are also revered as relics in many houses.

Saintly Cults of Ulric

Saint Leu

"Attends ! We have heard tell of the glories of the blade-wielders in this land, of how in the dark times they were beset by evils unnamed and unnameable. There arose Leu, the wolf-friend, the storm-chaser, sword in hand, leading his battle-learned men to victory. Here begins the tale of Leu, the bravest of warriors, the most generous of lords; let none cast ill-repute on his blessed memory, lest the mighty hand of Ulric squeeze the life from his heart."

From the Old Bretonnian translation of the 'Saga of Leu', made from the original Norscan version written by settlers in Armorique.

Cult

Saint Leu is known and revered under different names and in different ways all over the northern Old World, especially in Norsca, Albion, the Empire and Kislev. He crops up many times in legends and fables, usually relocated either in some mythical never-never-land or into the teller's locality. His name simply means 'wolf', which to some minds makes his reality doubtful. Dozens of sagas and histories of him have been written, and it was

knowledge of these legends among Norscan raiders and settlers which brought St Leu's cult to Bretonnia.

According to the version of his life most widely accepted in Bretonnia, Leu was the chief of a small tribe (which Bretonnians claim lived in Armorique) that came under attack from Orc raiders after a particularly cold and hungry winter. St Leu led the men of the tribe in a desperate defence of their homeland, trying to protect their wives and children from the green-skinned attackers. They put up a ferocious fight, with Leu in particular distinguishing himself by slaying countless Orcs, including the raiders' leader. However, at last the humans found themselves surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered. It looked like the end had come. Then, Leu raised his horn to his lips and blew long and loud. For a second the Orcs halted in their advance, wavering at this unexpected sight. But just as they were about to close in, the horn's mournful lament was answered by howls and barks from the nearby woods; hundreds of wolves had congregated there, and fell upon the Orcs. With the courage of Leu and his surviving warriors renewed, they and the wolves completely defeated the Orcs. Ulric had clearly shown his favour for a strong warrior; better things lay in store for him than to be slaughtered ignominiously by a band of Orcs.

After this episode, Leu rose to become a great chieftain. His wisdom, strength and insight into battle were uncanny, and he came to dominate the lands around his home. Under his patronage, the cult of Ulric was expanded greatly, winning further favour for him from the god of war.

On one famous occasion, Leu was attending a gathering of tribal leaders in northern Bretonnia. The fellow chieftains were envious of Leu's power and success, and whispered that, far from being blessed by Ulric, he had gained his power from a pact with evil gods. So, fearful lest Leu's growing strength engulf them, they resolved to kill the great chief as he slept in his bed.

That night, as the gang of masked murderers approached Leu's tent and slaughtered the guards, Ulric once again manifested his protection for Leu. A pack of baying wolves suddenly surrounded the assassins, who quailed and fell to the ground; Leu awoke the following morning to find them still lying there, weeping in fear like children. All the assembled chiefs submitted to his rule and paid homage to Ulric.

The end of St Leu's long life reportedly came when he died of wounds suffered while fighting off a sea-serpent with his bare hands. All of these tales are retold again and again in taverns and villages along the north coast of Bretonnia, and thanks to printing have found a large and appreciative audience all over the kingdom; however, few have actually taken to worshipping Ulric.

St Leu is invoked by warriors who want Ulric's strength and aid in battle; they look on Leu as an example of the ideal warrior, strong and fearless, who won the god of battle's aid and favour through his exploits.

Shrines

Shrines and temples to Ulric (found almost exclusively in the north and east of Bretonnia) are not numerous in Bretonnia; the cult is not large or wealthy,

and has to compete fiercely with that of Myrmidia. However, those of Norscan or Imperial heritage still hold to Ulric. Because of his widespread fame, shrines and temples to St Leu can be found in both main areas of Ulrican worship.

Relics

St Leu's body has vanished completely; nowhere has any records of ever possessing its body. Believers say this is because Leu never died at all, but still sleeps in an enchanted cave somewhere, ready to emerge and help fellow Ulricans when all seems lost. This cave is said to be located near the coastal town of St Leu near l'Anguille, which has become the unofficial centre of his legend in Bretonnia.

Not put off by the lack of a body, artefacts associated with St Leu are held by a few shrines and temples of Ulric in Bretonnia and elsewhere. In northern Bretonnia, there is one temple which claims to have the saint's horn; another in the foothills of the Grey Mountains says it has his axe.

Saintly Cults of Taal

Saint Gudule

"Praises be to father Gudule, friend to the stag, the bear, the hawk, the forest, the marsh, the mountain, the wind and the rain! Son of great Taal, we give our thanks and our blood to Gudule!"

Traditional chant spoken on St Gudule's day in rural areas.

Cult

Saint Gudule, like other saints of Taal, is very poorly known as a historical figure. All information about him and his life has been passed down as oral legend and hearsay from one generation to the next, and has become rather divorced from the original facts in the process. This is a common fate for saints of Taal, because they rarely had any connection with the towns and rich monasteries where chroniclers lived and wrote. Although this lack of concrete data doesn't bother the rural peasants who venerate him, it makes other clerics and scholars distrustful of Gudule's legend and cult.

It is thought that Gudule lived in Lyonnais long before the time of Gilles le Breton, perhaps even before the time of Sigmar, where he became renowned for his strength, wisdom and affinity with Taal and the natural world. He never set foot in a town, nor passed a night beneath a roof; he rarely even spoke with men, and some versions of his story say that he never actually died at all, but simply became a spirit of the woods, at one with his divine master and the wilderness that was his domain. Some story-tellers still tell tales of weary travellers meeting with a hulking, horned, fur-clad figure who tests the wanderer's kindness and devotion to lord Taal before helping them to safety. More lurid stories tell of those who fail to live up to Gudule's tests, and are hunted down by him and a horde of frothing woodland beasts.

Gudule's cult is widespread and popular in central and northern Lyonnais, but only in rural areas distant from towns and cities. He is venerated as a protector and guardian of the forest and the animals that dwell in it, as an agent of Taal on earth. A common custom is for peasants to leave gifts of food and drink on their doorsteps for Gudule and his woodland companions on St Gudule's day, which marks the spring equinox. Unusually, this practice is still current in some towns and cities, though its origins significance have long been forgotten; now it is regarded as an opportunity for beggars and the poor to scrounge food from their betters, who leave it as a 'gift to the spirits'; the name of Taal is only remembered by the pious and old-fashioned. Similarly, St Gudule's day is taken to mark the spring equinox all over Bretonnia not through the popularity of his cult but because King Charles I l'Enorme decided that it was only right to adopt this peasant tradition of giving thanks to the lord of boar, venison and other delicious beasts served to the royal court.

Shrines

Many villages in Lyonnais boast shrines dedicated to St Gudule, and there are many half-forgotten shrines in outlying areas of woodland. A few larger villages have temples of Taal dedicated to St Gudule. All shrines and temples of Taal are rare in urban areas, but the temple of Taal in Quenelles is dedicated to Gudule, as is that of Parravon.

Relics

A great many shrines and temples of St Gudule claim to have relics of the saint; most of these are probably fake, although they are treated with far more respect than many more verifiable relics located in cities.

One relic, however, the thumb-bone of St Gudule kept at the temple of Taal in the Lyonnais town of Chateaufort-sur-Avre, has so many well-attested reports of miracles attached to it that it is probably genuine. On one occasion, in 2508 IC, a thief tried to make off with the bone in the middle of the night; as soon as he touched the reliquary, animal cries and howls were heard emanating from the woods just outside the town. By the time the thief attempted to leave the temple, a massive crowd of beasts of all shapes and sizes stood in the street outside making such a racket that half the town was woken up, and the local watch soon apprehended the terrified thief.

Saintly Cults of Manann

Saint Brenvard

"Call me Brenvard. Years ago, the desire took me to go across the waves, to seek what lies beyond the sunset; and the glory of Manann shone from the blue waters and drew me like a sparkling gem. Thus I found myself compelled to have a ship built and a fine company of seamen composed. Great things Manann held in store for us..."

The beginning of the 'Chanson de Saint Brenvard'

Cult

The exact details of St Brenvard are very vague indeed; all that can be said is that he (may have) lived many years before the time of Gilles le Breton and before regular records began to be kept. Nevertheless, this has not impeded the imagination of dozens of wily sea-dogs and devotees of Manann over the years, and a wealth of stories and traditions have built up around St Brenvard.

Although these stories vary considerably concerning the saint's early life, all agree that he was a cleric of Manann living on the north coast of Bretonnia (l'Anguille makes a strong claim to be his home) and received a vision of Manann. In this vision, the god commanded him to go on a great voyage into the ocean to the west, so as to spread the god's glory amongst men and encourage them to take to his realm of the sea.

Brenvard duly had a small but doughty ship constructed and gathered a crew of brave clerics and seamen. At last they set sail, guided by Brenvard's unerring navigational skills and uncanny knowledge of the seas' treacherous ways. On this fantastic voyage, Brenvard and his companions encountered many wonderful things: an island inhabited by men with four hands and no feet; a sea monster so huge the saint landed on its back and made camp before realising his mistake; an eery, creaking hulk that prowled the waves collecting the souls of all men who died at sea (Brenvard's name is invoked by nearly all seamen, regardless of religious affiliation, if they ever see this apparition...and sightings are not unheard of). The voyage's conclusion, however, is still the part of the tale that arouses most awe and controversy: it is claimed that St Brenvard reached the 'Island of the Blessed' far across the sea, a land of luxury untouched by man and overflowing in natural bounty. After giving thanks to Manann for leading him to this discovery, Brenvard returned to his homeland and spread word of his great discovery and his amazing journey; thanks to this, the cult of Manann made considerable progress in the north of the kingdom.

Today, St Brenvard's cult is undergoing something of a renaissance as interest in the New World over the western ocean grows: his legend is avidly researched and pursued by explorers and academics, in the hope of finding some sort of proof that can cement Bretonnian territorial claims. 'Landlubbers' tend not to take most of his other legends very seriously, but there are many who, with more experience of the ocean, know to pay more heed to the mysteries of the deep.

St Brenvard's hard core of worshippers is still amongst the shipping and fishing communities of the north coast; they see Brenvard as the supreme sailor and navigator. Those who pray to him hope to be guided safely home by the saint's supreme navigational powers. Fishermen in particular have adopted him as their own, for a later legend states that he once prayed for a fishing boat that had vanished in a thick fog, and that the little boat soon came home safely.

Shrines

Because worshippers of Manann tend to be more practical than others, they have little time for big temples and long, complex rituals. That said, they also know to

pay respect to any power that might lend them some sort of help. Thus, shrines and temples to St Brenvard, like most of those to Manann in Bretonnia, tend to be very impressive but dour, quiet and sombre; they contain many monuments and memorials to sailors lost at sea. Nearly every coastal town and village features a shrine or temple to Manann, many of which are dedicated to St Brenvard. The largest temples to St Brenvard are found in the biggest coastal cities of the north coast: l'Anguille, Flerrion, Candort and Honblanc. That situated in l'Anguille is the largest and most important because of that city's wealth and large seagoing population.



Relics

As befits a saint of Manann, it is said that Brenvard's body was committed to the keeping of the sea, so that he could take care of those who lost their lives in Manann's watery kingdom. Thus, many personal, private offerings to Brenvard are actually thrown into the sea.

There are some relics associated with St Brenvard kept on land; these consist mostly of pieces of the ship in which he made his fantastic voyage. They are highly respected and venerated, even for relics, and there is a story that when once one of these relics was stolen from the temple in Flerrion half the town was wiped out in a great storm; the thief's body was found on the beach after the waves receded the following morning, the undamaged relic clutched in his hands. Security measures have improved significantly since that time.

At some time in the past, one of the pieces of Brenvard's ship was burned and the ashes carefully kept; these ashes were split into hundreds of tiny portions and mixed into clay amulets, shaped like a man in a sailing boat. Although the design has been much copied since then, original amulets containing some of the venerated ashes are believed to be truly potent charms for those taking to the high seas: it is said that anyone who carries such an amulet will never be shipwrecked.