Dragon Roots newsletter #1

Greetings True Believers,

Okay, one of my comrades in arms told me it was childish and immature to do stupid things like call people, "Fan Boys" and "True Believers". He told me such things should be saved for comic books and childish whims of fancy. To him I say, I can't stop so get used to it.

Well, it is in my blood. I can't help it. I grew up on Stand Lee and his innumerable niches of self destructing family dynamics with an added edge of unstable and mostly uncontrollable powers. I come from a background of fantasy and daydreams combined with a modern edge in mutants and superheroes. Fantasy first, superheroes second and my wife & child third (for the record I follow up that statement with, "not necessarily in that order").

So, when I say things like, "True Believer," or Fan Boy," it is a way of reliving my youth and invigorating my future. It connects my past to the present and guides my future. Life is short, reality is not always fun, but it is funny how something so simple as an homage to a childhood icon can bridge a connection to other peoples past and take your mind and imagination to another realm.

Dragon Roots Premiere issue is still under construction. The maps for the premiere issue are being constructed by Mark Manders. He is a co-designer of Dundjinni, a battle map construction tool. I don't want to place the blame on him for our schedule pit falls. He is doing an excellent job and going far beyond expectations to make this a great issue. He should be done in the later part of this month. Hopefully with enough time for us to still meet the October deadline.

Todd Jerde is as still creating the cover. I think it is great so far. I'm sure you will enjoy it too.

Maps are not the only thing we are waiting on. Scott Rouse has been kind enough to find people to answer our interview questions and we are patiently awaiting his reply. Also, a few of the articles are still a bit rough.

To tide you over I will attach a more in depth except from one of our authors. Daniel J. Bishop has graciously contributed an article to the cause

concerning a source of much conflict within the game. Alignment has cause no end of conflict over the years. With a gentle push from his editor in a new direction he has created a great article that should put a nail in the alignment coffin once and for all. Daniel J. Bishop is a frequent contributor on the ENWorld threads and we hope he will grace our covers in the future with other great articles.

Thanks for your continued interest in Dragon Roots. Please enjoy this expanded article excerpt and we will send more information in the near future concerning Dragon Roots.

C.E. Rocco

Editor in Chief

Be Thee For Law or Chaos?
Using Alignment in Dungeon & Dragons

By Daniel J. Bishop

There may be nothing in the Dungeons & Dragons game that causes more arguments than alignment. When discussions turn to house rules and sacred cows, alignment is nearly always among the first things on the chopping block. For some vocal players, alignment gets in the way of role-playing.

Yet, alignment can be a tool to bring depth to your characters and campaign environment. The recent announcement of 4th Edition's upcoming release includes that alignment will be retained, although possibly changed to appear less of an absolute. The idea that alignment is a straight jacket, forcing characters to take certain actions, has never been a part of any edition of Dungeons & Dragons…but the belief that it is has sometimes been pervasive.

This article is an attempt to show you how to use alignment to aid in shaping characters, societies, and religions without being limited by it. You should be advised that some of the advice in this article might go against the basic philosophy of some editions of the game.

What is Alignment?

A lot has been written about alignment over the years. Even within a single edition, people have written articles about alignment, redefining it in various ways. In general, a creature's moral and personal attitudes are represented by its alignment. Alignment has always been intended as a tool for developing a

character's or region's identity, but the basic tenets that alignments represent have seldom been made explicit enough to make this a simple tool to use. Indeed, no matter how carefully we define each alignment, moral and ethical quandaries are liable to arise in a game which we have not considered beforehand.

This is a good thing. Alignment is not a straitjacket, and it isn't necessary to determine everything beforehand. What is required, instead, is an approach that allows individual philosophies to develop as the game progresses. Each alignment represents a broad range of personality types or personal philosophies; so two characters of the same alignment can still be quite different from each other. Few people are completely consistent.

Alignment is described by an ethical axis (Law vs. Chaos) and by a moral axis (Good vs. Evil).

Law vs. Chaos

Law

From an ethical point of view, lawful characters believe that the group is more important than the individual, and that power should serve the interests of the group. This group may be a nation, a kingdom, a town, a family, or even a racial type. As a result of their core beliefs, lawful characters tell the truth, keep their word, respect the authority of the group they identify with, honor that group's traditions, and judge those who fall short of their duties. For most lawful groups, these duties include a duty to marry and raise children, a duty to military service (or other form of defense), and a duty to strengthen the group while forging interconnections through marriage, business, fealty, and other relationships to keep it cohesive.

These duties – marriage, raising children, and military service – exist in nearly every pre-modern society. Marriage is important in this context, not for love, but to create bonds between families, thus drawing the social group more closely together. In some societies, marriage does not preclude taking other lovers. Of course, in some cases religious duties preclude marriage or children, and often in a lawful society taking vows is the only way to honorably avoid those duties.

Having children, and raising them to follow the core values of your society, likewise has little to do with love or sexual preference. In ancient Greece, for example, we have records of men who strongly preferred the company of other men, who yet married and had children for the good of their social group. In a dangerous world, having many children means that you have more potential chances to carry your people into the future, and you have more people available for military service.

In a dangerous world, military service is important. In exchange for the protection of society, each member of that society owes a portion of the risk of defending that society. In the case of player characters, this might be actual military duty, or it might mean that they oust a local hobgoblin tribe without expecting any special pay for doing so. Doing so is not something that requires special consideration; it is a pre-existing obligation.

Lawful characters believe that individuals are owed a certain amount of respect due to the station that they occupy in their society. They tend to honor their mothers and fathers. Indeed, respect for elders, and those in positions of power, is normal. Even if they do not respect the individual, they respect what that individual represents, and act accordingly.

Since all the above is as true for Lawful Evil creatures as for Lawful Good, nearly any society has an easy time tolerating lawful creatures. No matter what their personal moral beliefs, lawful creatures can be generally trusted to follow the dictates of their society, whatever they may be. This doesn't mean that they automatically follow any new decree their government brings forth; the power of tradition is as great as the power of authority, and a rule that violates tradition is liable to be ignored.

"Law" implies honor, trustworthiness, obedience to authority, and reliability. On the downside, lawfulness can include close-mindedness, reactionary adherence to tradition, judgmentalness, and a lack of adaptability. Those who consciously promote lawfulness say that only lawful behavior creates a society in which people can depend on each other and make the right decisions in full confidence that others will act as they should…

For the entire article please check out our Premiere issue #0 coming soon to your mail box.