

This is part of a complete “Planeswalker’s Guide To”-style worldbuilding packet about the Bronze Age-inspired plane of Limbas, which worships the missing god Oga and suffers from an animalistic plague called the Animus. This is the black-aligned faction, the Phanoans, and their society.

The Phanoans

Overview

The Phanoans are a flock of traders and salesmen. They hold a monopoly on Limbas’ trade system, and their jet-black scows are a common sight on the Lifelines. The Phanoans believe in the importance of commerce and dealmaking, and with the aid of their demonic benefactors, they seek endless self-improvement. At their best, the Phanoans can be persistent, hard-working, and reliable. At their worst, they can be selfish, greedy, and obsessed with hierarchy.

Belief System

The Phanoans worship the Hand of Oga, or *Ogaria*, as a symbol of hard work and dealmaking. Their loose religion, often called the *Fleet of Ogaria*, has very hands-off leadership, allowing Phanoans to practice in any way they see fit. The Fleet of Ogaria worship Oga as the very first dealmaker, offering humanity the chance to better themselves at the cost of potential failure and death.

From the outside, most other flocks consider the Phanoans to be obsessed with the accumulation of wealth and power, and, while not entirely incorrect, this is only one aspect of their belief system. The Fleet of Ogaria considers personal betterment to be the ultimate virtue. They believe that everyone should have the opportunity to improve their skills and personal standing, no matter what costs they pay to do so. While much of this self-improvement is indeed focused on physical wealth, the Phanoans place equal emphasis on the nurturing and development of personal talents and skills. For the Fleet, mental improvement is just as important as material gain, especially when one can lead to the other.

Though some shirked customers would disagree, the Phanoans certainly have a moral compass. The Fleet’s morality system is based around dealmaking, and paying what is owed. Nothing is more important to a Phanoan than upholding their end of a deal, as they believe hard work must always be rewarded. There is elbow room for shady behavior, such as willful ignorance and partial renegation of promised rewards. While not completely moral, this is still allowed by the Fleet as they also believe in the importance of competence on both sides of the deal. If one person doesn’t do their research and doesn’t read the fine print, then it’s mainly their fault for not understanding the full terms of their arrangement. Similarly, if the person provides a subpar service, then the dealmaker is justified in not paying what was initially promised. But fully reneging on a deal when the other party performs to the best of their ability is one of the worst things a Phanoan can do.

The Phanoans believe that, upon death, their souls will be collected by the demons and escorted to the center of the world. There, they will be judged based on their actions in life. For the Phanoans, being “good” or “evil” doesn’t matter nearly as much as making sure their choices have long-running consequences, for both themselves and the world. Killing a man to

save a city; scamming one person to achieve long-standing wealth; building a single perfect ship rather than a fleet of mediocre ones; all of these will be viewed more fairly than a boring life where nothing was ever achieved. If deemed worthy, the Phanoans believe they will be transformed into a demon themselves, to spend eternity using their endless power to help future Phanoans. Otherwise, their souls will be consumed.

Societal Organization

The Phanoans' civilization follows a hierarchical system. At the very top sit the demons, the Phanoans' inscrutable benefactors. Just beneath them sit the Mercantile Guild, which manages the overall operation of Phanoan society and serves as a loose authority for the Fleet of Ogaria. Finally, beneath them sit individual trading ships and port towns, each with minor hierarchies of their own.

- At the top sits the *captain*. Their job is to manage the workflows and schedules of everyone beneath them, while also paying attention to the needs of their patron demon. They must also keep in constant communication with the Mercantile Guild, and make sure their ship or town stays safe and profitable. Captains of especially successful businesses can be invited to join the Mercantile Guild if they are deemed competent enough.
- Beneath them sit *specialists*. Specialists answer to the captain, and manage their own small pools of laborers. They must keep their laborers working effectively, and make sure they are aware of the captain's orders and the current day's demands; all while performing their own individual jobs. Specialists include store managers, landlords, bosuns, and more.
- Below them are *laborers*, forming the largest of the tiers. Laborers are everyone from sailors to shopkeepers. They are given a single job and must perform it to the best of their ability, while also providing assistance to the higher tiers when necessary.
- At the very bottom sit the *trainees*. They provide assistance to the laborers, and are expected to learn their responsibilities. Trainees are never paid with money, but are usually provided with food and board and will eventually become full laborers after a certain period of training. All Phanoan youth are expected to become trainees once they come of age, and converts from other flocks and independent villages must start as trainees to earn the trust of the flock.

The placement of each person in a hierarchy is primarily determined by their overall net worth and the amount of responsibilities they need to manage. Phanoans can promote themselves simply by keeping their nose to the grindstone and steadily gaining the respect of their leadership. More aggressive takeovers are common as well. Using physical violence to move up the ladder is generally frowned upon but not exactly uncommon. More often, someone lower on the hierarchy will accuse someone higher up of not being a good fit for their position, and demand to swap places. These cases are taken to the Mercantile Guild, who ultimately decide whether the upstart is justified or not. Finally, making deals with the demons to improve your position is perfectly fine, as all Phanoans recognize the importance of power at a price.

Bloodletting

The Phanoans practice a form of magic known as *bloodletting*, allowing them to control the blood in their body and in the bodies of others. Bloodletting doesn't occur naturally and cannot be taught by humans; it can only be learned from the demons. The price for learning bloodletting isn't cheap, and grows more expensive the more you learn. The demons will teach anyone, even those from other flocks, but their prices are greatly reduced for Phanoans in higher tiers.

With tiny cuts in their veins, Phanoans can pull their blood out of their body and form it into solid weaponry: everything from swords, to shields, to even little flechettes. While not as effective as bronze weapons, blood weapons can be instantly reformed when broken or disarmed. They can also instantly clot and scab their blood, allowing them to quickly heal otherwise fatal wounds.

Phanoans can also affect the blood of others, although this requires far more training. In combat, the most powerful bloodletters can instantly kill combatants by stopping hearts and triggering aneurysms. Lesser bloodletters can thin their opponents' blood, increasing the severity of wounds and making them weaker in combat. Blood from corpses or the wounded can also be used to form weaponry, without risking the personal health of the bloodletter.

Outside of combat, Phanoans use bloodletting quite often in their day-to-day lives. Phanoan salesmen and shopkeepers often allow payments of blood to be used as an alternative to currency, with one pint of blood equal to around one-half of a bar of besa. Blood drawn this way is fed to the demons. Phanoans can also sense a person's blood pressure and heart rate to determine if they are lying, or if a sales pitch is working on them. After all, anxious people tend to panic buy! Bloodletters also make decent physicians, although their services don't come cheap.

Demons

The demons are beings of unfathomable power, and the Phanoans' mysterious allies. The Phanoans believe Oga created the demons to provide assistance to humanity in exchange for payment of equal value. Demons appear as silhouetted humanoid figures with piercing purple eyes that glow in the deepest dark. Rings of violet-colored magic circle around their arms and legs, glowing brightly when the demons channel their powers.

Demons provide power at a price. What you ask for and how you pay for it is irrelevant. All the demons care about is whether or not you hold up your end of the bargain, as they will *always* hold up theirs. It matters not whether you ask for something concrete, like money or physical healing, or something more abstract, like luck or knowledge: the demons will provide. There are, of course, some things even the demons cannot do: they can't bring the dead back to life, for instance. They also can't fully cure the Animus, though they can stave off its symptoms.

The demons will provide to the best of their ability, as long as they receive equal payment. Demons create binding contracts with their deals, stipulating the amount owed and when it is due. They mainly take blood or physical vitality as payment, though they will also accept transactions or even sacrifices as long as the item given up is of equal value. Some deals are indefinite, continuing in perpetuity until the dealmaker cancels the deal or is unable to make payment. Demons are perfectly willing to let these deals end, provided the other party makes it clear they want to stop ahead of time. But while demons may allow for partial payments

or even small defaults, eventually they will come to collect what they are owed. And those who fail to provide payment, or those who try to cheat and swindle them, will pay the ultimate price: their soul.

Demons play a major role in Phanoan society. The Mercantile Guild has several long-standing deals with their own private cabal of demons. These deals provide passive luck and protection to all Phanoans, and are paid for with a tithe taken from the earnings of each Fleet-aligned shop and trading scow. Nearly every scow and port town has its own patron demon, which Phanoans and outsiders alike can petition for deals. Demons are perfectly willing to make deals with members of other flocks, but the prices tend to be steeper due to a lack of trust. And, of course, demons and angels are mortal enemies and will attack each other on sight.

Important Locations

- *Terria*
 - Though the Phanoans have hundreds of ports and trading posts across Limbas, none are more grand than the town of Terria. The city is built alongside the Ogian Basin, a confluence where the Iliac and Vecava rivers briefly meet. The size of the basin allows for a considerable number of ships to be docked at any given time. Terria is a city of markets, where everything is for sale and everyone's credit is good. Phanoan traders and sailors stop at the city to restock and relax, while visitors from other flocks arrive to spend their hard-earned besa on trinkets, curios, and games of luck. Security in the city may seem lax, but thieves and pickpockets beware: the Mercantile Guild has made innumerable security deals with their demon patriarchs, who will appear the instant any criminal activity is detected and quickly deal with the perpetrator.
- *The Palace of Trade*
 - Found in the city of Terria, the Palace of Trade is instantly recognizable by its dramatic bronze sheen. Here leaders of the Mercantile Guild constantly make trade deals, broker information, and collect tithes from the fleets of traders who answer to them. The oldest and most powerful Phanoan demons live within the depths of the Palace, and only the highest-ranking Guild members can commune with them. Many people come to the Palace hoping to make deals with the demons, and the Guild hears their petitions.
- *The Shrouded Sunrise*
 - The Phanoans' scows are a common sight on the Lifelines, and none are more magnificent than the *Shrouded Sunrise*. This is the Phanoan's largest and most expensive vessel, able to carry the cargo of a hundred regular scows and a crew the size of a small city. The *Sunrise* makes constant stops at all the major cities of the plane to buy, sell, and barter. It carries luxury goods from every flock and enough bronze to fill Ogame Crater, but only the most foolish bandits attempt to raid it. The *Sunrise* is protected by Onashk, a most ancient and powerful demon that resides deep within the ship's bowels. People who try to steal from the *Sunrise* or cheat its crew meet quick and nasty ends.

Important People

- ***Zohar Geribzan***
 - A high-ranking member of the Mercantile Guild, Zohar serves as the liaison between the Guild and the clan of demons the Guild answers to. Zohar spends most of their time in the dank basements of the Palace of Trade, providing the demons with their daily tithes and keeping them up to date on the Guild's affairs. In person, Zohar is gaunt and pale. They have a calm, no-nonsense personality, and they are a master at diplomacy, bartering, and legal interpretation. Some rumors claim Zohar is a walking corpse completely drained of blood, animated entirely by the will of their demon superiors. Regardless of the truth, Zohar's work is integral to managing the Fleet of Ogaria, and they're far too concerned with their own work to care about any slanderous rumors.
- ***Elissa Sidos***
 - There are many shipbuilders and carpenters among the Phanoans, but Elissa is considered the best. She has helped design and construct over four dozen ships over her lifetime, and is most famous for her work on the *Shrouded Sunrise*. Ships constructed by Elissa have survived and thrived on the rugged rapids of the Lifelines for decades, to the point that many believe Elissa is a harbinger of good fortune. As a result, her popularity among clients has dramatically increased, but she barely pays attention to them. Elissa has become obsessed with constructing her magnum opus: a perfect ship, one to dwarf even the *Sunrise* itself.
- ***The Demons' Fist***
 - The Demons' Fist is an assassin, perhaps the most effective one on the entire plane. He always does his killing at night, and when the bodies are found, they are drained of every last drop of their blood. Some people believe that's how he kills them: making a tiny cut in their skin, then pulling out their blood until there's nothing left. Others say his killing skills come from deals made with hundreds of demons, and that he collects the blood of his victims to pay off his own innumerable debts. Whatever the truth may be, the Demons' Fist is a master at the art of death. There's no need to try to contact him; if you want his services, he already knows.

Relationship with the Animus

Publicly, the Phanoans consider the Animus to be a highly lucrative new market. Phanoan salesmen make good besa selling placebos and untested "cures" to an increasingly desperate population. Privately, the Phanoans recognize the threat the Animus poses to civilization (and, by extension, their trade routes), but the short-term profits it brings in are too lucrative to turn down. Many Phanoan adharis have made deals with the demons to contain their symptoms, but the price of these deals grows higher and higher with each passing day.

Attitudes on Other Flocks

Harpali:

Parker Faux

- “All those hungry mouths of theirs mean they’re our biggest customers, even if their holier-than-thou priests refuse to admit it. Maybe if they got over themselves and stopped with the endless charity, they wouldn’t need us anymore. Good thing that’ll never happen!”

Sunassa:

- “They understand the strength that comes from knowledge and talent, and they know that it takes a certain moral flexibility to get their work done. It’s a shame how their cold, rigid society suffocates all the interesting practical applications of their knowledge.”

Komanos:

- “They’re pretty quiet, all things considered. They don’t buy much, but that art of theirs is worth far more than they sell it for. It’s a shame that they have such a bizarre aversion to money and power. Imagine what we could achieve with those tireless golems of theirs...”

Izati:

- “On good days, they have no interest in what we’re selling. On bad days, they’re trying to capsize our ships for daring to ‘muddy’ their ‘holy waters’. They can keep wallowing in the dirt and crowing about fate for all we care. If they don’t need us, we don’t need them.”