

# Shamanism

PREVIEW SEVEN PRESENTS AN OVERVIEW of shamanism, the most prevalent example of what is called the Astral Mysteries. In *ON DIVINITY* (2003), N. Robin Crossby said that ‘it is necessary to identify a border area which can neither be called magic nor miracle, or which could be called either.’ He identified shamanism as fitting this ‘grey area’ between the arcane and divine.

Based upon documents and conversations between Crossby and Kelestia Production’s Ken Snellings, the new edition of *HårnMaster* introduces unique game rules for shamanism.

**Sample Shaman PC:** Ken Snellings designed the preview’s sample shaman, Kyho of the Kath (see sidebar background and accompanying PDF character sheet). Ken *selected* the Attributes to fit his image of the PC and, while not all shamans will be such paragons, the resulting skill Mastery Levels (ML) still fall mostly within a range of 50 to 80, leaving ample room for Kyho to face challenging foes and situations.

Consult *PREVIEW SIX* to reconstruct some of Ken’s character generation choices. As part of the ‘puzzle’, the SM and SB on Kyho’s sheet have been left off.

## ASTRAL JOURNEY

Rather than channel primal forces directly into the physical world, like Shek-Pvar mages, shamans manifest esoteric ability by ‘travelling’ to the spirit world to petition great spirit entities. Such an experience is called an *astral journey*, and it consists of four steps.

**[1] Lift the Veil:** the most common way for shamans to access the spirit world is through testing the *Trance* skill. After dancing, chanting, or meditating for about an hour (according to tradition), successful shamans reach such an ecstatic state that inhabitation and perspective switch from their physical body to their soul in the spirit world.

Other less common methods include the Disembodiment arcane talent, the Dreamwalk alchemical elixir, and Lucid Dreaming. Like with Trance, the character’s body remains unconscious in the physical world during the journey, while the personality inhabits the soul.

**[2] Inhabit the Soul:** the shaman’s perspective shifts to the spirit world, to what is called the *astralscape* (see the sidebar on the next page). While the spirit world is infinite and eternal, it still exhibits a correspondence with places and the passage of time in the physical world. For the purposes of an astral journey, one spirit round lasts five seconds, the same length as a combat round in the physical world.

When inhabiting a body in the physical world, souls usually remain *dormant* (spiritually ‘unconscious’). On an astral journey, shamans inhabit their *active* soul, enabling them to take special spirit actions.

**[3] Engage the Spirit World:** shamans may inhabit their active souls for a number of rounds equal to Will Index (one-tenth Will ML, rounded down). Having a Will ML80, Kyho may maintain a spirit journey for up to eight rounds before having to Lower the Veil (step 4).

Each round, active souls take turns in order of an Initiative Rank (IR) equal to their Spirit ML. Combatants in the physical world have an IR equal to their Initiative ML, so the actions of concurrent situations involving both the physical and spirit worlds can be neatly ordered.

## KYHO OF THE KATH

Kyho was born into the nomadic Kath tribe on the island of Hårn. His parents, both hunters, expected their son to follow in the family’s role and raised him accordingly.

During his fifteenth year, the tribe discovered that Kyho could ‘hear’ the attending shaman, Tashinan, communicating with an ancestor spirit. Further examination revealed that Kyho had a strong, natural connection to the spirit world, and Tashinan quickly declared that Kyho must be taught, taking him in as his own apprentice.

This caused considerable tension within the community, as the shaman already had an understudy, Meralin, the son of a politically powerful family within the tribe. While the tribe contained several shamans, tradition held that each passed his lore and position to only one successor. Tashinan considered this a special situation, but some in the tribe felt that this decision put Meralin’s future in question.

The issue came to head when the shaman met an untimely death while demonstrating a herbal concoction technique to his apprentices. While in reality this was an unfortunate accident due to Tashinan’s own mistake, many blamed Kyho. It was decided that Meralin would be granted the shaman’s position and Kyho would once again train as a hunter.

Fate quickly intervened in the form of Kalios al Lesedha. A merchant from Shiran, Tharda, Kalios had maintained for years a trading relationship with the Kath, acquiring various herbs from their range in exchange for some crafted goods. Aware of the series of events that had befallen Kyho, he offered to take the young man into his employment, compensating the tribe a generous amount, as he had great need for a tracker.

His family and the tribe recognised this opportunity as a relief from the continuing tension, and even resentment, that surrounded Kyho amongst his people. The offer was accepted by all parties, even though Kalios was warned that Kyho was not as skilled in the ways of a hunter as might be desired.

Kalios did not care. He was concerned with Kyho’s abilities as a shaman, for it turned out the merchant was a collector of arcane lore and objects. Kalios wanted an agent to go into the world and serve his interests both far and wide.

For several years, and with a seemingly endless supply of resources and contacts, Kalios provided Kyho with the training and equipment he needed to further develop his skills. He is now an effective and formidable factor in the merchant’s endeavours.

## ASTRALSCAPE

Folk often call what they perceive during an astral journey as the astralscape. Their *Empathy* attribute affects how well they 'see'—or, more accurately, feel—their surroundings. The impression entities and forces make in the astralscape also depends upon the target's own essential nature:

**People** in the physical world come across in the astralscape less as a distinctive shape than as a multicoloured cloud, the intensity of which reflects the strength of their mental attributes.

**Creatures and Plants** present a guise according to their Aura. Animals glow more brightly than plants, often resembling their physical forms.

**Objects** such as buildings and tools seem dark and translucent, shadowy masses only vaguely matching their physical world shape and size.

**Spirits** are their True Forms in the astralscape. The glimpse of a demon in the physical world—however chilling—imparts a much more vivid and terrifying impression in the astralscape.

**Energy** is quite discernible in the spirit world. Spell effects in the physical world glow in the astralscape in colours corresponding to their convocation and in shapes and sizes reflecting their power. Barasi Points rise vertically into the infinite 'sky' of the astralscape.

## SPIRIT POWERS

During an astral journey shamans may petition three types of *spirit guides* for powers.

**Ancestor Spirits:** the active souls of deceased tribal members linger in the astralscape to provide insight into skills pertinent to their people's way of life. Such powers increase the shaman's ML in skills important to their tradition, such as Folklore, Physician, or Melee.

**Totem Spirits:** the active souls of creatures can connect with shamans on an instinctual level to impart unique gifts and enhance physical and mental abilities. Kyho of the Kath has acquired a Lion totem that grants a +15 bonus to Stealth (+20 when stalking slowly) and enables a telepathic link with lions (and granting a possibility of one with any animal).

**Energy Spirits:** Principle and Place Energy, often viewed as 'spirits' by tribal peoples, give shamans the chance to manipulate air, earth, fire, and water. While these powers manifest mundanely, they can be wondrous (calling for, and receiving, rain or changes to the wind).

Traditions can emphasise different kinds of spirit guides. Six examples in the book are the Kath and Kubora of Hårn, the Alti and Quarph of northern and central Venariva, and the Neshai and Tuvran of Anzeloria.

Active souls in the astralscape may take one of five *spirit actions* each turn by testing Spirit ML. The first four actions also include a special modifier derived from a specific mental Attribute (CRE, EMP, ELO, REA).

**Spirit Roaming (CRE):** souls cover vast distances in mere seconds. The astral journey begins in the vicinity of the left-behind physical body, but souls may roam to other astral locales that correspond to physical world places thousands of miles away—in a *single turn*.

**Spirit Sensing (EMP):** interpreting the bizarre phenomena of the astralscape is affected by the soul's depth of feeling. Dormant souls of people in the physical world are more difficult to sense than other active souls, and beings with higher Auras are easier to fathom in either case.

**Spirit Communing (ELO):** communication between souls is akin to telepathy, with the clarity of the communer's thought (ELO) modifying the Spirit test (languages are immaterial). A shaman undertakes this action to petition Ancestor spirits and Totem spirits for power.

**Spirit Immersion (REA):** active souls can meld themselves with the energies of the astralscape. Shamans attempt such immersion to acquire Energy Spirit Powers, although failing to can be quite stressful.

**Spirit Conflict:** active souls may attempt to dissolve another soul, leaving it temporarily 'incapacitated'. It is more difficult to dissolve dormant souls inhabiting a body in the physical world than other active souls.

**[4] Lower the Veil:** shamans may stop their spirit journey at any time, but it automatically ends after Will Index rounds. They then reinhabit their body where it is in physical world. Such reembodiment is taxing, leaving shamans wearied with 5 or 10 fatigue.

## SHAMANIC POWER

Ancestor, Totem, and Energy Spirit Powers (sidebar) are all rated by one to three Anima Levels (I–III) according to their magnitude of effect. The total levels of powers, called the 'burden', cannot exceed the shaman's Spirit Index. Kyho has 8 Anima levels of powers: two Anima III Ancestor powers (Melee and Discourse), plus one Anima II Totem power (Lion).

Once shamans configure—or 'store'—an array of powers, it remains the same upon their reembodiment, until changed during a different astral journey. Shamans accrue no fatigue to store or use spirit powers.

Lastly, shamans have the following two abilities that provide their tribal people with some measure of benefit from the stored powers.

**Rites:** by performing a special ceremony, shamans who hold an Anima III power may share a limited benefit of it to rite participants. Kyho, for instance, could grant a Mastery Boost to Melee or Discourse for a respective rite associated with one of his two Anima III Ancestor powers. Rites also exist for Anima III Totem and Energy powers.

**Talismans:** for one extra spirit burden, shamans may bestow objects to individuals that reflect their stored Ancestor and Totem powers. Spirit skill tests by the *recipients* dictate how long they retain its benefit. For example, a lion's tooth talisman grants +10 bonus to Stealth tests.

