

# RELIGION AND CUSTOM

*“Favored by the Lady, I am. She took all my children, and now I’m too old to work. Spare a copper?”*

- ANONYMOUS L’ANGUILLEN BEGGAR



Much as the Empire is shaped by the cult of Sigmar Heldenhammer, Bretonnia is shaped by the Cult of the Lady of the Lake, who is often simply called the Lady. Within Bretonnia, no one else could possibly be meant. There are, however, deep differences between the two Cults. Most notably, whilst the Cult of Sigmar claims the allegiance of all in the Empire, the Cult of the Lady is almost entirely restricted to the nobility. Further, the agents of the Lady take all children who show magical talent before they reach the age of three, and these thefts have left profound scars on the national psyche.

## THE LADY OF THE LAKE

### Goddess of Bretonnia

Revered throughout Bretonnia but barely known beyond, the Lady of the Lake is a truly regional goddess. She stands for purity, nobility, and courage in the face of danger. She is the ideal lady, everything a knight should love and strive to serve. In the minds of many knights, the Lady *is* Bretonnia, in a mystical sense.

Unlike virtually all other Gods of the Old World, the Lady is encountered by her mortal worshippers in this world. All Grail Knights met her at the climax of their quest, and the Grail Damsels are also said to be initiated by the Lady herself, though they speak very little of it. As a result, when the Lady is portrayed, she is portrayed consistently: a young woman of great and somewhat unworldly beauty, clothed in white, with a narrow golden fillet holding a white veil on her head. In one hand, she holds the Grail.

The most prominent difference between the Cult of the Lady and the other religious orders of the Old World is that the Lady has no Priests or Initiates. Instead, she is served by the Grail Knights—the flower of Bretonnian chivalry—and the Grail Damsels, women taken from their families as children and raised by the Fay Enchantress to serve the Lady with mysterious powers.

### SYMBOL

The Lady has two symbols. The first is the Grail, the magical cup from which her Grail Knights drink and from which Grail Damsels and Prophetesses are believed to draw their power. It is depicted as a golden goblet with a wide base, narrow stem, and flaring cup.

The Grail is often shown decorated with the Lady’s other symbol, the fleur-de-lis, though those who have seen it insist that it bears no ornament other than its superb shape. The fleur-de-lis, a stylised lily, primarily symbolises purity and only secondarily the Lady.

Finally, it is common for the Lady to be depicted directly—on banners, after the manner of the one she gave to Gilles le Breton, or in stained glass. Over time, stained glass depictions have become extremely popular, as the light shining through them recalls the light that is supposed to surround the Lady. Most Grail Chapels have such a window.

### AREA OF WORSHIP

The Lady is worshipped within Bretonnia, primarily by the nobility. Both knights and their ladies worship her, and Bretonnians outside their own country normally maintain their



faith. Strong Bretonnian influence among the Border Princes means that there are a number of Grail Chapels to be found there, though the Grail Damsels normally seem to treat that area as outside their sphere of influence.

## TEMPERAMENT

The Lady is concerned with protecting Bretonnia, working through its knights to do so. Their courage and martial skill protect the land from external foes, whilst their nobility and chivalry ensure that the land enjoys internal peace and justice. She seems not to concern herself directly with peasants in any way.

## STRICTURES

The strictures of the Lady are the strictures of chivalry. As these apply to men, they are described in **Chapter Eight**, but the rules for women are different.

- Preserve your modesty and innocence.
- Serve and obey your father before marriage, your husband after.
- Succour those who are weak and helpless through no fault of their own.
- Show favour only to the bravest and most noble knights who seek your blessing.

## GRAIL CHAPELS

The Lady's temples and shrines are called Grail Chapels and are only built on sites where the Lady herself has appeared to one of her worshippers. This is most often the site where a Questing Knight was allowed to drink from the Grail, becoming a Grail Knight.

As Grail Chapels are almost invariably built by the nobility, most are of stone and built in a soaring style dominated by pointed arches and large windows. Each Chapel is a single hall with a high ceiling, a door at one end, windows in the side walls, and a large window in the end opposite the door. Stained glass, depicting the Lady, her servants, and great deeds of chivalry, is the dominant form of decoration. All Grail Chapels face the Forest of Loren, home of the Fay Enchantress and the place where, most believe, the Grail Damsels are trained. In much of Bretonnia, then, they face southeast, which also means that a lot of sunlight falls on that side.

The main window is almost always a depiction of the Lady, but in particularly small or poor chapels it may depict the Grail or a fleur-de-lis. The windows are decorated in order, moving back along the Chapel from the main window. The window over the door is often in the shape of the fleur-de-lis and almost never glazed with stained glass.

Every Grail Chapel is supposed to be attended by a Grail Knight, who guards it, maintains it, and exemplifies the values of the Lady. In practice, many Grail Knights found Grail Chapels on the site where they themselves encounter the Lady, and thus there are far more Grail Chapels than Grail Knights. In addition, most Grail Knights spend their lives wandering

