

MES Vampire the Requiem Appendix 1

Custom Shadow Cult Creation Guide

By Nate Kelly, James Foster and Nycci Daniels

So you want to create a custom Shadow Cult, I don't blame you, Shadow Cults are awesome, and we at the MES want to make them available to a larger population. To help you with the process, we've designed this handy guide! Players who wish to create custom Shadow Cults will need to complete four steps:

1. Determine the concept and focus of your Shadow Cult;
2. Generate statements of Purpose and Praxis;
3. Create Initiations;
4. Recruit Members.

Concept and Focus

Most existing Shadow Cults are primarily Mekhet, however the structure and benefits of Shadow Cults can provide enough useful and enjoyable roleplay avenues for players with characters of other types that custom Shadow Cults are being allowed and encouraged, in order to spread this roleplay opportunity to players with non-Mekhet characters. Membership in Shadow Cults should be restricted in some way, through Clan or Covenant restrictions, or with mechanical prerequisites which must be met (ex: The Super-Secret Shadow Cult of Occultation requires that all of its members be masters of Obfuscate, and the Cult of Heretical Nonsense is for Lancea Sanctum PCs only). Custom Shadow Cults should focus on themes which are appropriate for the Requiem venue, though as secret societies their purposes can move outside these boundaries at times (such as a cult investigating the Underworld). A Shadow Cult which focuses on attempting to spread vampirism to animals would be appropriate; a Shadow Cult which focuses on playing video games is not.

Purpose and Praxis

The Purpose is what the vampire wants to achieve through the cult. Actually, a Shadow Cult has two goals: the purpose that the lower-level mortal members (the ones with only one or two dots in the Initiation Merit) believe that the cult is dedicated to, and the real, higher purpose, which is only open to the vampires who join the cult. Players should thoroughly address both the Purpose known by lower-ranking members, and what is learned by attaining higher ranks. The Praxis is the overarching statement of how the Purpose of the Shadow Cult is fulfilled; it should thoroughly address what methods are employed by both mortal and vampire cult members. Players should work with STs to complete the text creation mechanics found on pp. 88-89 of Mekhet – Shadows in the Dark (including the expenditure of a Willpower Dot by the Founders). Players should also produce a document of some length which is reflective of the IC text which is created. The mechanics for the text call for several hundred thousand words; the document created here should be about 5,000 words and provide flavor for the Shadow Cult, as well as address the Purpose and Praxis described above.

Shadow Initiation

Shadow Cults have five levels of initiation, and special benefits are gained at 1, 3, and 5 dots of the merit.

Level 1 – One free Specialization in a skill which is thematically appropriate and does not require any approval higher than Low

Level 3 – At level 3, players gain access to a single discipline at a reduced XP cost (x6 for out-of-clan disciplines, x4 for in-clan disciplines). This discipline cannot be Celerity, Resilience, Vigor, any Bloodline-specific discipline, or a Covenant-specific discipline. The discipline chosen is cult-wide. The XP cost reduction gained from this benefit stacks with the XP cost reduction from the Requiem Merit. This XP cost reduction can be applied to existing levels of a Discipline if a PC already has it. At this time, custom Devotions are not being allowed as the Level 3 benefit.

Level 5 – Free 3-dot graduated or a 4-dot simple Merit (Excluding creation-only Merits, Clan and Covenant-specific Merits [such as the Nos Mask Merits], and Fighting Styles). This can be used to get an XP refund for an already-purchased Merit, but not one which was purchased with Creation Points.

The PC of the player creating the Shadow Cult will need to purchase all 5 ranks of Initiation prior to the Shadow Cult entering play (the cost of this is 30 xp). This PC will immediately receive the benefits described above once the Shadow Cult is approved. All other players will need to file a separate High Approval to be able to purchase status in the Shadow Cult.

Recruiting Members

Shadow Cults require both Human and Vampire members. Players seeking to create custom Shadow Cults should spend around 30 XP buying Contacts, Allies and Retainers to reflect the Cult's mortal membership. This XP can be spread out among Vampire PCs with at least Initiation 3. Recruiting PC Ghouls to the Shadow Cult will also suffice; each PC Ghoul with Initiation lowers the amount of XP to be spent on the above Merits by 5 xp points. Players seeking to create a Shadow Cult should have at least 5 Vampire PCs with Initiation at the time of creation. All 5 of these PCs must spend the permanent WP dot to form the cult. If participation drops below this number during the course of play, nothing happens.

Ghoul PCs and NPC Retainers (etc.) associated with the Shadow Cult are limited to Initiation level 2. Vampire PCs are not limited in this way. Characters can be involved in multiple Shadow Cults, but only one primary Shadow Cult per Mekhet – Shadows in the Dark. Players may also wish to consider pooling dots in the Haven Merit to represent the Shadow Cult's facilities. The optional system for attracting and brainwashing followers found in Mekhet – Shadows in the Dark is not in play

Conspiracy to Shadow Cult Conversion

This requires at least 5 initial participants. The initial 5 members are not required to spend a dot of willpower. The initial flavor of the Conspiracy should be used as the basis for the new cult, with an appropriate Discipline selected for the Shadow Cult based on the Conspiracy write-up. Only one individual needs to submit the Shadow Cult write-up. That individual should have at least one dot in status of the Conspiracy being converted. This process requires interactions and conversations with the aNST Requiem.

Types of Shadow Cults

There are three types of Shadow Cults, each that have different levels of approval. Please refer to the MES Requiem Addenda for approval guidelines.

Canon: Canon Shadow Cults are listed in approved source material.

Public: Shadow Cults that are open for joining and do not require IC approval to join. These require write-ups that are available on a Wiki or website.

Private/Secret: Shadow Cults that are created to be a secret and are often considered ICly heretical or dangerous. These are built the same as Public Shadow Cults but require IC approval to join.