

Asterius
(The Merchant King)
Lesser Power of Concordant Opposition, N

Portfolio: Wealth, commerce, trade, prosperity.

Aliases:

Domain Name:

Superior: None

Allies:

Foes: Korotiku.

Symbol: Gold Coin.

Worshippers' Alignment: Any.

The Church

Clergy: Clerics, specialty priests

Clergy's Alignment: NG, LN, N, CN, NE

Turn Undead: C: Yes, SP: Yes

Command Undead: C: Yes if evil, SP: No.

Dogma: Only the flow of trade between villages, towns, cities, regions and nations matter to the Merchant King. If anything arises that may threaten to restrict, alter or stop the flow of goods from one place to another, the matter is to be dealt with in the most expedient way possible. Trouble not yourself with the affairs of state, as most nations seek to elevate themselves at the expense of others. Without trade or commerce, nations wither and die. Seek to keep the goods and gold flowing, and in doing so you are giving the tithe of your soul to Asterius.

Day-to-Day Activities: Most priests of Asterius do what is necessary to keep the flow of goods moving between nations, whether its providing clergy and troops to safeguard caravans or mercantile ships through dangerous areas, being arbiters of trade agreements between countries, or removing direct threats to trade and shipping, the clergy of Asterius is a very busy one.

Relationship with Other Deities and Faiths: Asterius usually does not associate very much with the other powers. He maintains an air of neutrality as he is more concerned about matters of trade and commerce, but he does not idly sit by if a power or its faithful threatens the balance of power in either the pantheon or in the material world. At the same time, he is calculating in the extreme, and always seeks to do just enough to restore balance. He is usually more concerned with making sure that commerce is moving smoothly and his faithful usually reflect this attitude, being more concerned with trade between cities, towns and nations unless something far-reaching in scope (such as war) threatens to restrict or halt such commerce altogether. Then they, as their deity would, do just enough to gain a balance in such a region to restore the flow of commerce.

The evilly-aligned part of Asterius' faithful do tend to hoard wealth for themselves and seek to gain political power in order to continue filling their coffers (after giving their King his tithe, of course). The goodly-aligned portion tend to spread their wealth around more, seeking to invest in things that not only gain their church prosperity, but tend to improve the community as a whole, and not just in matters of trade.

While they are not openly hostile towards each other, Asterius and Korotiku do have a very strained relationship. Asterius sees the Fox as a threat to his portfolio, as his thieves have targeted Asterius' churches for daring heists. Korotiku himself has maintained that if Asterius' temples were a little less opulent, they might not be such tempting targets to thieves. This argument has been between the two powers for centuries, but has not yet degenerated into open conflict; Asterius is too diplomatic to allow it to happen, though there have been some incidents between the two faiths in recent years.

Major Centers of Worship: As one would think, the largest two temples to Asterius are located in the capital cities of the nations of Darokin and Thyatis, two of the most powerful nations on Mystara from a mercantile standpoint. In Darokin, the Great Temple is a massive complex of domes and buildings of various sizes. In Thyatis City, The Merchant Lord's Home rests in the most opulent section of the city and is a mixture of aboveground buildings and underground chambers. These two great edifices aside, shrines and temples to the Merchant King are littered throughout both nations along the major trade routes.

Affiliated Orders: Only recently, the priesthood has been starting to sponsor adventuring parties that can show a reasonable chance to be profitable (for a negotiable tithe to the church, ranging from 15-25%, depending upon the negotiating skills of the party involved). Also, the priesthood has begun hiring adventuring and mercenary companies to guard trade caravans and shipments of church and trade goods overland and oversea.

Priestly Vestments: Priests of Asterius, wear the finest clothing they can afford at all times, and usually how most of the priests fare either in their temple hierarchy or through adventuring is directly reflected in the quality and opulence of the clothing they wear.

Adventuring Garb: Most adventuring priests of Asterius wear garb of high quality and function. They will seek to upgrade their armor and weapons as soon as they can afford to, and such items of high quality will definitely pique their interest.

Followers and Strongholds: The followers are received at 8th level. They consist of three 3rd level priests and ten 1st level clerics, with one 5th level fighter and twelve 1st level fighters to act as temple or caravan guards.

Other Limitations: All priests of Asterius must pay a flat 25% tithe of the monies they make to the church. This does not include wages or stipends bestowed by the church, or monies collected for casting spells upon worshippers while working at a temple or shrine, but does include profits from investments, treasure gained while adventuring, rewards, fees and the like.

All priests of Asterius receive religion and negotiation as bonus proficiencies. Their temples are usually based in the largest of cities and centers of trade, with their shrines based in the smaller towns, villages and waystations along both major and minor trade routes. The priesthood is mostly human (85%) but the faith has a rather strong dwarven contingent (13%), and is mostly male-dominated (95%). As would be expected, Asterius' strongest followings are in the Empire of Thyatis and the Republic of Darokin as a whole, as these two nations represent some of the strongest and most active centers of trade on Mystara.

Specialty Priests (Asteranars)

Requirements: Intelligence 13, Wisdom 14, Charisma 12

Prime Requisite: Wisdom, Charisma

Alignment: N

Weapons: All bludgeoning weapons

Armor: Any

Major Spheres: Astral, charm, creation, divination, guardian, healing, necromantic, numbers, protection, travelers, weather

Minor Spheres: All, elemental, summoning, sun, wards.

Magical Items: Same as clerics

Required Proficiencies: Etiquette, negotiation

Bonus Proficiencies: Appraising, gem cutting, modern languages (pick one)

Asteranars can either turn or command undead, but all creatures in a particular group must be either turned or commanded, not both.

Asteranars can select non-weapon proficiencies from the rogue group without penalty.

Asteranars can determine true metal from false. They cannot identify metal per se, but can determine if a supposedly gold coin is true gold, gold-plated, or even if it was magically created. They do this by hefting the item in their hands and thinking of what the material should be.

When they are admitted into the priesthood, asteranars are gifted with the maximum amount of starting money (180 gp) and three magical items through the wealth of the church. They must pick one item from each category: containers, conveniences and miscellaneous. The priesthood will not replace lost, stolen, or destroyed items:

Containers: *heward's handy haversack, girdle of many pouches, pouch of accessibility.*

Conveniences: *crystal parrot, everbountiful soup kettle, fur of warmth, mist tent, murlynd's spoon, sheet of smallness, wind fan, wand of prime material pocket, reglar's gloves of freedom, skie's bolts and locks.*

Miscellaneous: *jewel of flawlessness, murdock's insect ward, nolzur's marvelous pigments, oil of slipperiness, oil of etherealness, powder of coagulation, sovereign glue, universal solvent.*

At 3rd level, asteranars are able to detect metals or minerals once per day for up to two turns duration, as if they possessed a **wand of metal and mineral detection**.

At 3rd level, asteranars can cast **shocking grasp** (Player's Handbook, pg 137) once per day.

At 5th level, asteranars can cast **know customs** (Tome of Magic, pg 67) once per day.

At 5th level, asteranars are able to function as if they carried a **rod of splendor** for a one day period, once per week. During this time, they are bestowed with an effective 18 in Charisma, and their garments and armor appear to be of the finest quality and condition.

At 7th level, asteranars can cast **probability control** (Tome of Magic, pp 83-84), **addition** (Tome of Magic, pg 74), or **fire purge** (Tome of Magic, pg 78) once per day.

At 10th level, asteranars can cast **cloud of purification** (Tome of Magic, pg 89), **grounding** (Tome of Magic, pg 92), or **shrieking walls** (Tome of Magic, pg 95) once per day

At 10th level, asteranars gain the ability to create a palatial tent which lasts for one day, once per week. The tent is a huge pavilion of silk encompassing between 1,500 and 3,000 square feet and contains enough temporary furnishings and food to comfortably accommodate up to 100 people. The tent's duration increases by one day for every two levels the asteranar gains past the 10th, to a maximum of 10 days at 30th level. If the tent is summoned in inclement weather, the tent created is made of materials best suited to keep the occupants comfortable in such a climate, but is smaller in size. The number of people the tent can accommodate in this instance is a maximum of 50 in rainy weather, and only 25 in cold weather.

At 15th level, asteranars may convey The Merchant's Curse upon those who have offended Asterius or his church. To invoke the curse, they must either touch the recipient or strike him with a coin. There is no saving throw. Circumstances will always arrange themselves to cause the cursed beings to lose money, be robbed, suffer a disaster, be heavily taxed, be unable to sell their goods, etc., until the curse is lifted. Such cursed beings **never** make a profit at any endeavor they try (though they may break even, and even then it is a major struggle to accomplish that feat) until the curse is lifted by the asteranar who bestowed it, or if a **remove curse** spell is cast by a higher-level priest than the one who bestowed the curse. If a person is not deserving of the curse, Asterius will not allow it to be invoked, and the asteranar who attempted it must atone to Asterius before he is again allowed to receive spells or use any special abilities.

Special Spells: Truemetal, Doublecoin, Minor Wealthtwist, Wealthtwist, Wealthword. (Faiths & Avatars, pp 180-181)