

LOST KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPHERES OF MANY EYES

by Dennis Payne

Author's Note: After reading "I, Tyrant" from TSR, I was disappointed by the amount of "fact" contained within the product. These are some other theories to promote disinformation.

Introduction

It is unfortunate that Anadar, High Speaker of the Royal Archives, relied so heavily on the works of Ronassic of Sigil for his manuscript on beholders. Although Ronassic's work provided extensive insight into the eye tyrants, I've found reason to doubt some of his assumptions based on my observations and those of other scholars. The following document contains some notes on discrepancies and omissions in Anadar's text.

-Margallian

Chapter 2: Types of Beholders

The Sazaur Hive Mother

The Sazaur was a beholder breed that attained far greater power than other breeds. Unfortunately, (or perhaps thankfully) the beholder nation ended up being destroyed by a weapon of their own design.

Very little information remains on the Sazaur and that which does exist leads to more questions than answers. Carving have been found depicting the hive mother laying eggs. Several theories exist about the drawings. Some sages have proposed that the drawings are simply representations of reproduction and do not actually mean the hive mother lays eggs. Others have proposed that perhaps not simply the physical markings vary according to the breeds but the internal organs as well. The limited number of studied beholders have not shown support for this theory, however. Another possibility is that the hive mother has two reproduction methods, the standard beholder means and the ability to lay eggs. The Sazaur were constantly battling various beholder clans. As no beholder city has ever been observed in such a state, it is possible hive mothers resort to egg

laying to boost their numbers faster than conventional reproduction.

Other pictograms depict the hive mother living greater than 900 years. Most of the information about beholder aging was obtained by studying the standard beholder so it is possible that the hive mothers have considerably greater lifespans. The Sazaur hive mother is also pictured as larger than the typical hive mother. In fact, one scholar suggested that the hive mother might in fact be the Great Mother.

For more information on the Sazaur beholder nation refer to the Wildspace module.

Egg-Laying Beholder

The pictograms of Sazaur is not the only text referring to egg-laying beholders. Before his death, Lagorik of Eastridge had collected some information on beholders. He had only encountered solitary beholders, but claims to have observed the creatures lay eggs. His diagram of the anatomy of beholders differs greatly from the one found in Ronassic's text. A magical organ, the levator magnus, is attributed with their levitation ability. Lagorik's notes are of questionable value, however, as his research relied heavily on second hand information. For example, He believed the lifespan of beholders to be at least 900 years because of local legends of the creature having terrorized an area for that long. It is curious, however, that his predictions match the information found about the Sazaur hive mother.

Further information available from The Ecology of the Beholder in Dragon #76.

Dividing Beholder

David Argall of Calif condemned Lagorik's work. He disputed nearly everything in the manuscript. For example, he claimed beholders reproduce by division. Once the beholder reaches a certain mass, the shell splits in half and two young beholders emerge. At birth the beholders are missing the hard shell and are not strong enough to aim their eyes. After a few hours, one of the creatures will drive off the other and take over the parent's territory. How exactly the young sage learned of such matters is unknown leading many to doubt his veracity. Unfortunately Argall met an untimely death on an expedition to prove his explanation.

David Carl Argall wrote an interesting Forum letter in Dragon #81 which explained the flaws in The Ecology of the Beholder.

Fungal Beholder

It is generally believed that the gas spore took the beholder form either as an adaptation or purposefully guided with magic but the work of the Seed-Beholder Company of Realmspace suggests another possibility. The company takes beholder spores and nurtures them to maturity before sending them back to the beholder clan. If beholders can grow like a fungus, the gas spore may be a beholder-kin.

The Seed-Beholder Company deals primarily with the beholders of H'Catha. H'Catha is locked in a war between several beholder clans. This is similar to situation facing the Sazaur breed but different in that no beholder group is significantly stronger than any other. Asexual reproduction like the beholder spores results in less diversity among the creatures. It could perhaps be the ultimate fallback for reproduction when there is no other option or conditions necessitate more young.

Realmspace provides details on H'Catha and the Seed-Beholder Company.

Eye of the Deep

The eye of the deep is unusual for a beholder-kin. Instead of giving birth to live young, they lay eggs. Whether this is a adaptation needed for their watery home is unknown. It has been suggested that perhaps they are closer physically to the egg-laying Great Mother but no evidence has been found to support this position. It is highly debated currently whether an eye of the deep can fertilize its own eggs but evidence seem to suggest yes despite long held belief against this.

Details can be found in The Ecology of the Eye of the Deep in Dragon #93.

Spectator

Ronassic made a common mistake in assuming the spectator is related to the beholders. Flaws in the theory can be found by comparing the common beholder traits with the spectator. For one, spectators exhibit a long life span compared other beholder-kin. Lifespans of a millennium are not uncommon. Also numerous biological functions

differ in the spectator. Levitation, for example, is controlled by the levator magnus not tiusium gas. This causes them to continue levitating when asleep unlike other eye tyrants. The reproductive method of the spectator remains a mystery and is certainly not the same as beholders as no reproduction glands can be found. The differences are not simply physical though.

Ronassic did note that spectators did not exhibit the paranoia of other beholders. Apparently he did not concentrate efforts on the spectator or he would have learned more difference in the psychology of the two beasts. Large groups of over 1,000 spectators have been known to congregate in Mechanus. These groups have no apparent leader and show no concern over the breeds of others. Although no conclusive evidence has been discovered concerning their religion most scholars do not believe it is the Great Mother or Gzemnid. I suggest those seeking information on the spectator consult Curiosities of Other Worlds, volume six, by Mage-Lord I. J. Jijaks of the Free City of Greyhawk.

The Ecology of the Spectator in Dragon #139 contains this information. By removing the beholder relation to spectators it causes certain problems in that they can no longer be controlled by hive mothers.

Mystaran Undead Beholder

~~Not all undead beholders are the mindless creatures described by Ronassic. The eye tyrant of Mystara has apparently discovered a method of creating undead beholders that retain their intelligence. This process enhances their powers as well. The anti-magic eye reflects magic back on the caster instead of canceling it. It is possible that this undead creature is the result of a beholder mage attempting to become a lich. The few who have survived encounters, however, have mentioned its ability to drain the life of people and the ability to assume gaseous form. Both powers more closely resemble a vampire than a lich.~~

In my haste to document the undead beholder of Mystara, I missed a key piece of information. This undead beholder is a construct of some kind. I have not yet found the ritual for creation nor the origin of the ritual. Presumably if it is not a creation by the eye tyrants, they would be

disgusted by the creature and attempt to destroy it but they are rare enough that no encounter of between an undead and living beholder has been recorded. The rarity and power of the creature has made study difficult.

The Mystaran undead beholder is described in the Dungeons and Dragons Master Set.

Watchman

Unfortunately not all information comes from scholarly investigations. Sir John described a very different beholder. Locals also used the name the watchman to describe the beast which has been adopted in this text to distinguish from a true beholder.

The watchman appears the same as a true beholder but has very different abilities. It possible that the creature is a beholder with mutations that set it apart from others. Sole recorded watchman was killed by Sir John.

According to the stories of the knight and other locals. The watchman could fire force beams and entangling strands from it eyes including the central eye. Sir John wrote that it melted the ground causing a flow of lava. Whether this is truly an ability of the eye ray or simply a lucky blast into a magma chamber is unknown.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the watchman is that the beauty injured the beholderkin. According to the tales the watchman dissolved at the sign of a lovely flower. Unfortunately only the knight's own son has been able to verify the claim.

The Beholder in the Dungeons and Dragons Animated series is very different from those found in any edition. It was named the watchman in a comic book retelling of the "Eye of the Beholder" episode.

Zombie Beholder

Not all beholder hives have the same burial rituals. In particular the Sazaur eye tyrants would encase the dead in large red spheres. Cracked funeral spheres have been known to animate the dead beholder as a zombie. No eye powers function, but its touch saps the strength from victims. The zombie will not move more than 100 feet from its funeral sphere. If the red shell is repaired the zombie loses animation. Whether these creatures are animated by the burial ritual or

some other magical process is unknown. It is possible they are simply a result of the destruction of the Sazaur.

The Wildspace module for more info.

African Beholder

The beholders of Africa are very unusual. They have no eye stalks. Instead the spherical body has three different faces, the moon, the sun, and a human head. The moon can create areas of darkness that drain the life from creatures within the area of effect. The sun shoots a fire ray. The green rays from the human eyes compel obedience to the beholder. Mearly the sight of the creature drives most men to run in fear. But even more interesting is the beholder's society.

The African beholders believe they were created by Nyame. Nyame is generally good and has a significant number of non-beholder worshipers. These worshipers are accepted and respected by the beholders loyal to Nyame. However many beholders have forsaken Nyame for reasons unknown. The loyal beholders have enlisted the aid of the other followers to hunt down the renegades. There many theories about the cause of this beholder war but unfortunately the information is simply too vague to substantiate any claims.

African beholders are briefly described under Nyame in the Dragon #215 article The Deities of Africa.

Chapter 4: Deities

The Great Mother

Andar's text presents the Great Mother as a chaotic egg-laying beholder. Although this may be true evidence supporting this theory is not definitive. Even Ronassic of Sigil acknowledged this although he did believe the theory. Some reports seem to suggest the existence of two Great Mothers. This has led to some speculation of a pantheon of beholder gods and that perhaps both egg-laying and live child bearing Great Mothers exist. Supporters of the Fragmented God theory instead suggest that the number of Great Mothers is only two accounting for the two eyes of the Fragmented God. At this point, however, beholder religion is still largely speculation.

Chapter 5: Powers

Temporary Blindness

As beholders don't roll to hit with eye attacks the target receives a bonus to his or her saving throw (if applicable) equal to the penalty listed for the beholder. Thus, a character hit with a sleep eye would receive a +1 bonus on saving throw if the beholder had a -1 penalty to attack due to temporary blindness.

Keith Strohm gave this response when questioned. Alternately he suggested ignoring the entire section.

10th Eye: Death ray

Skip Williams suggested treating the death ray as ranged slay living effect. Slay living, reverse of the fifth-level priest spell raise dead, allows a saving but still inflicts damage if the saving throw succeeds.

This is part of a Sage Advice response in Dragon #240.

Chapter 11: Campaigning Beholders

Arkayris

Eye tyrants are extremely rare in the arctic lands of Arkayris. Unlike the typical beholders, they have a layer of short fur covering their body. The fur tends to be brown or white in color. The unsegmented eyestalks are rarely longer than 2' and are generally kept close to the central body when not in use.

Chapter 12: Ready Reference Guide

Immature Beholders

Beholders grow their thick hide early in life. Eye powers, however, take longer to develop and master.

Infants: Armor Class: Worsen by 2 (maximum of 10 in any area). Move: No change to Flight; walking (if any) reduced by half. Hit Dice or Hit Points: Reduce to one-sixth. THAC0: Recalculate based on new HD/HP. Number of Attacks: No change. Damage: Reduce by half. Special Attacks: No change. Special Defenses: No change. Magic Resistance: No change. Size: Reduce to one-sixth that of full-grown adult. Morale: No change.

Intelligence: Reduce by 2. Alignment: No change. Experience Points: Recalculate based on new stats/abilities. Eye Powers: Initially only one or two eye powers are active and that may not be at full strength; true beholders typically gain sleep, fear, or cause light wounds (instead of cause serious wounds) first.

Adolescents: Armor Class: No change. Move: No change. Hit Dice or Hit Points: Reduce by one-half. THAC0: Recalculate based on new HD/HP. Number of Attacks: No change. Damage: Reduce by one die. Special Attacks: No change. Special Defenses: No change. Magic Resistance: No change. Size: Reduce by one-third. Morale: No change. Intelligence: Reduce by 4. Alignment: No change. Experience Points: Recalculate based on new stats/abilities. Eye Powers: 50% to 70% of the eyes function.

Aging modifications made to fit the infant beholders found in The Lost Caverns adventure from The Dwarves of Rockhome.

Chapter 15: Myths and Legends

Eternal Eyes

The village of Zarren was once a thriving community. Unfortunately a beholder had moved to a location near the village. The game had decreased and several townsfolk had gone missing. When a villager spotted the beast and told the rest of the town, people became fearful and talked of fleeing, but a band of powerful heroes heard the tale of the beholder and promised to vanquish the creature.

They had fought an eye tyrant in the past and knew what to expect. They managed to lure the creature out of its lair to a designated area. The fighters concentrated their efforts on the eyestalks in an attempt to destroy the beholder's offensive capabilities. After chopping off an eyestalk, however, two grew in its place. Waylek, the sole survivor, claims to have seen a cone of cold emit from one such new eye. When the party realized the mistake, it was too late.

Waylek magically returned to the village to warn them of the adventures' failure. However, time was working against them and many villagers could not escape in time. The beholder killed everyone left in the village.

Sarah's Lost Sight

Sarah was a small farm girl born without sight. She lived in small town whose name has long since been forgotten. Her parents did their best to treat her as other children but her blindness prevented her from participating in many activities.

As Sarah grew older she displayed some unusual perception. For example, she could tell when someone was lying. As word spread of her ability, her isolation increased as fewer children would play with her. Some even began whispering fears of witchcraft.

On the year of her thirteenth winter a beholder hive invaded the village. The town was wholly unprepared for such an attack. During the attack Sarah was gazed upon by one of the beholder's eyes but the eye beam had no effect. The beholder began concentrating its efforts on the girl to no avail. Eventually Sarah was surrounded by eye tyrants but was unharmed. After a few minutes she held up her arms. All the beholders halted their actions and began fleeing.

A fever took the child's life later that year. A sage, who had come to meet the amazing young girl, reported she kept repeating, "The many eyes harm not the sightless." The phrase was repeated in a tongue long dead and known only to various sages.

Chapter 16: Alternate History

The following alternate makes beholder mages outcasts and disagrees with I, Tyrant in several places. Only the creation story remains the same with the exception of the "traitors" creation.

The Traitors

After receiving little to no instructions from the Great Mother, some beholders began to stray from their appointed task of gathering all knowledge. The Great Mother was enraged and cast out the traitors. She corrupted their physical characteristics so that all can see the traitors for what they are. So began the genocidal war of the "true" beholders.

Beholder-Kin

The hive mothers were given the ability to create specialized beholders by the Great Mother.

Some of the specialized breeds began to believe that they were better than the true breed. An observer, Zulterniac, led a uprising against the "true" beholders.

The fate of the uprising depends on the weaver of the tale. The beholders tell of the death of Zulterniac and his rebellion. The Great Mother is also said to have banished the observers to other planes from the mistake of their kind.

The beholder-kin, however, believe that Zulterniac survived the fighting and eventually attained godhood. The observers are said to have left on their own accord for other plane of existence in pursuit of knowledge.

Whatever the outcome of the uprising its effects are still felt today by beholders. In order to prevent such occurrences, specialized breeds are now always sterile so that they must depend on the hive mother. The only exception being the eye of the deep since they are restricted to the watery depths.

Beholders and Magic

A false breed beholder, named Vikhrispa, who had lost its sight in battle, became the first beholder mage. Not only had it failed to perform the appointed task but it also rejected the gifts of the Great Mother. Beholder mages are exiled or killed by beholders just as if they were false breeds.

Interestingly beholders can be found throughout the planes of existence even though they possess no means of travel between them. One theory is that mages whether human or beholder have sent beholders to other planes instead of killing them. This would require a lot more banishments than most sages think is likely. The more popular theory is that the hive mothers can create a beholder-kin with planar travel capability. No such beholder-kin has been found anywhere at present.