

The room was dark, lit only by a single candle. It was also entirely too perfumed and decorated- covered in silks and beads and incense. The man wrinkled his nose but took the open seat before a small table wondering where this mysterious “oracle” was. The center of the table was dominated by a large, flawless crystal cluster. “Impressive,” he whispered realizing the rarity of this gem.

“Indeed,” a voice said and the man started- across from him an elderly human female sat with her hands hovering over the crystal. “I entered while you were engrossed,” she answered his unspoken question, “and now, Hirian Greenbough son of Krien let us see what the future holds for you...”

The Views of Time

Every race has, over time, had people claiming “mystical knowledge” though it is far more common in some cultures than in others. Below is a brief overview of the general racial attitude toward divinations and fortune-telling. They are by no means hard and fast laws and every individual- regardless of race- holds their own opinions.

Elves- Elves are a highly magical society possessed of a great sense of their selves and a connection, in their minds, to all the forces of creation from the natural to the mystical. Elven sages view Divination as reaching into a great pool of possibilities- all things are possible and have occurred at some point in the myriad universes that parallel our own.

Elven mystics are psychics who view the process of fortune telling and divination as a personal channeling of their latent natural powers often using focuses for their visions and rarely employing oracular items or randomness in their predictions.

Barbarians, Orcs - These two races share a common view of divination often defending diviners and fortune tellers fiercely and living closely by their predictions. In many tribes where a fortune teller lives they are considered on of the elders regardless of their age or experience and they favor simple tools for their divinations such as bones, runes and images.

Ogres- Ogres often do not care what happens with the future or the past and, therefore, often treat fortune tellers as oddities at best and nuisances at worst.

Scavengers, Humans- Scavengers and Humans are an eclectic lot and their beliefs are generally shaped not by their species but by the cultures they dwell near.

Biata- The Biata of Vandlar do not believe that the currents of the past or the future reside in each member individual—the world at large moves on currents we could never hope to match and the frailty of the mortal mind cannot grasp the complexity. The Biata look outside themselves and all creatures for their knowledge, trusting not in randomness or fate but in the stars and earth to give them signs.

Gypsy- Gypsies are known by other races as masters of story telling and fortunes, using any and all types of divination catered to their surroundings and the cultures they interact with. Gypsy fortune tellers are known for adding flash and dazzle to whatever they do

whether wielding only mind powers or lavishly painted and gilded cards on a silk table cloth. Those Gypsies who learn fortunes do so with a dedication not seen in most other fortune tellers almost always knowing over half a dozen methods of determining the future and desires of those who come before them.

Dark Elves- Like true Elves Dark Elves believe that random objects and the world in general do not predict the future of individual creatures. They are creatures of law and history, however, and believe that the future follows patterns established in their past. Many Dark Elven diviners rely on historical study and ancient tomes for their predictions, reading “between the lines” to discover hidden information that pertains to the future. Some of the greatest Dark Elven writers are also Fortune Tellers, preserving their words in great tomes for future students to peruse for knowledge of their fates.

Stone Elves- Stone Elf society has no “middle ground” when it comes to Divination. Creatures of logic some point to evidence that it is fact and therefore “believe” in it. Others point to evidence that it is false and therefore consider it a fallacy. In the end it comes down to what each individual elf can prove to himself and therefore what they consider to be the most logical opinion to have.

Mystic Wood Elves- the E'reiledar are a profoundly “mystical” race by nature. That said there opinions about Divinations vary quite widely dependent on the individual attitudes, interests and entertainments of each individual. In general they consider divinations a pleasant pastime and source of good entertainment. Most, if pressed, will admit to believing that divinatory powers are real (even if most diviners are fake) and after possibly millennia of life who can say what they have seen come to pass in their time.

Dwarves- Dwarves are powerful and crafty races rarely using fortunes for anything beyond the luck gained while crafting a particularly difficult weapon or in battle. Their divinations are practiced by all members and usually are done with Runes which the Dwarves believe the ancient dwarves gathered these symbols from the darkest places of the Earth and hold them near sacred, passing down carefully crafted sets from dwarf to dwarf. Most dwarven predictions are double edged—the darkness of the runes showing what negative effects will emerge from even the greatest victory.

Hobblings- Hobblings tend to pick up divination and fortune telling as a hobby or pastime, rarely devoting any real study to it. They prefer cards, runes or other devices which do not require much thought only interpretation. Its easier and more entertaining for all if they can all see what is going on. Often divination is seen as a sort of game and taken with an extremely light air.

Sarr- Sarr practice highly formalized and ritualistic fortune telling based on their mental disciplines—many of the Monk tradition learn to use crystals and bowls of water to see into the future and predict fate. Masters of their own fate Sarr scoff at allegations that the Earth or Stars hold the secrets of their race. They believe that each Sarr creates and steers their own destiny. As such fortune telling for a Sarr is less about determining the future but more about mastering the present and choosing the future they wish to pursue.

Events in Time

Time:

Intersecting Threads

events cause divergent "rivers" or time which may intersect to create new alternate realities



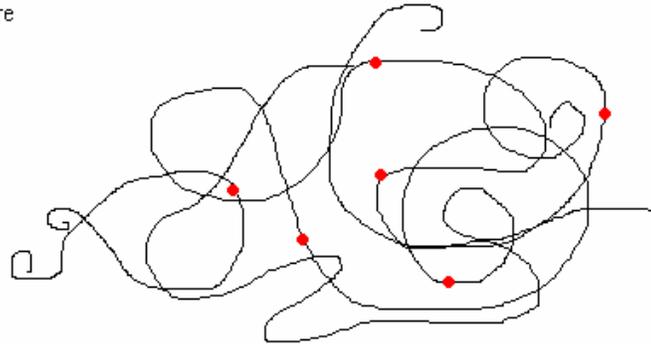
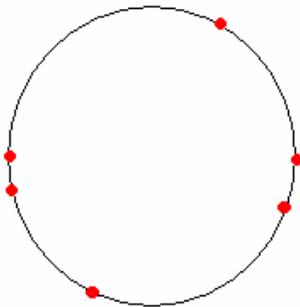
River

all events are pre-destined and plottable on the single course of history



Circular

all events have been before and therefore
the future is truly the study of the past



Chaos

no event can be predicted beyond its
immediate cause and time can
work like any other theory

One of the most important decisions a fortune teller has to make is how they view time and therefore how their predictions come about. Generally most fortune tellers subscribe to either the River or Threads theory or combination of the two.

A River Theory of time is much like its name—time flows from the past into the future without any interruption. Rocks, trees and other events can create “ripples” or “rapids” which a skilled diviner can read though they never in any way impede the flow of the River itself. River diviners often subscribe to the belief that all events are ordained and will come to pass- free will only affects how these events will transpire. Thus River predictions tend to include heavy shadows of fate and any type of diviner can claim to tap into this inevitable force of Time.

A Thread of Time theory hints that there are more worlds, more realities than the one we know and new ones are created all the time as choices are made. Whenever any decision is made, no matter how small, history splits into two parts—one that follows the decision and one that mirrors in reverse that decision. These further split and divide and

if seen from above will appear nearly fractal though while appearing chaotic all points can be traced back to a single moment in time when the initial decision was made that started the chain. Fate has nothing to do with this—all things have happened, will happen and are happening. In this time you did not go down the stairs. In another time you did. Therefore Thread predictions are probability predictions- drawing from your most likely actions to predict the most likely outcome of your questions while still accepting the fact that different choices, different urges and different threads can be spawned.

In a practical sense Thread diviners tend to be very self satisfied- should their predictions not come to pass in this time stream they are sure that in some fashion they did. In essence the prediction itself was enough of a warning to people that they were able to change their actions and prevent or ensure whatever outcome they foresaw. Thread diviners believe that the future can be changed and their interpretations of the cards, runes or whispers in their own mind are a tool they can use to influence these changes.

Circular diviners believe that time, like any other force, cannot be destroyed and in essence flow like blood through the world continually circling. There is a reason, they say, that battles always occur and cities fall—they have done so before and will always do so. Circular diviners study the past as much as the future looking for the signs that they can see now which predict catastrophes that happened ten, a hundred or one thousand years hence and will, they say, happen within the immediate future. Events, they say, cannot be prevented but warning can be supplied (as it always has been) to ensure the survival of what musts to continue the cycle. Most circular diviners see themselves as “guardians of time” ensuring that events come to pass either through psychological manipulation, strong arm tactics or complete non-involvement.

Finally the fourth common theory of time is by far the least popular. Some see time as a complete mystery, assuming things happen as they are caused and seeing no pattern, no over-all goal or fate, for the subjects of their divinations. These diviners do not believe in long term predictions often relying on predictions which are meant to be used within the immediate future based on the circumstances that are happening at this moment rather than any past history.

Types of Divinations and Tools

Oracular- Oracular fortune tellers believe that their abilities to see the future are gifts within their own minds and stemming from their own power. They use some items known as Focuses to channel their power such as Crystal Balls, a black bowl filled with water, a mirror, or a fire -- anything that they can focus on and lose themselves in to awaken their powers. Many become addicted to a specific focus and are unable to use their gifts without their tools at hand.

Random- Random fortune tellers believe that the future and fate cannot be known—but it can be tapped into in unpredictable ways. Some throw bones into fires and read the cracks, others throw a set of sticks, draw runes or, most famously, draw cards from a deck allow “fate” to show them the answers they seek. As with Oracular practitioners

many become addicted to a specific tool such as a rune set or a card deck and feel they need it to perform their divinations.

Extracorporeal- Extracorporeal diviners learn to read signs in the world around them but have no direct interaction with what they are seeing. Biata Earth Readers and astronomers are the two most famous examples of these though some extracorporeal readers learn systems that rely on actions of creatures, weather, even water patterns. The important thing is that the diviner in no way interacts with the tools they are using to divine the future and does not read his own interaction should it have already occurred.

Specific Divination Techniques

Earth Watching—

Largely practiced by the Biata and a few other nature oriented cultures such as the Orcs, some scholars and mystics of other races have picked this skill up. Earth Watching is largely an independent study—you learn to pay attention to the signs of wind, sky, soil, water and animals to detect currents of the future or present that are of consequence to the Earth. Some common signs include:

Eclipse- of the sun or moon either indicates a time of great darkness and the waning of Earth magic in favor of Necromancy. Beware a time of great danger from undead and energy draining creatures.

Turned Leaves- when the leaves of the trees turn upside down and the wind picks up it is a herald of storm moving quickly into the area.

Triple Ripples- when three spots form on a lake in a triangle and the ripples spread out it is a sign that emotional upheaval is approaching either the individual or community, depending on the size of the ripples. Expect a time of emotional turmoil and possible crimes of passion.

Dying Flames- when a fire recedes and flares suddenly it is a warning that danger is near or approaching those who are tending the flames or watching them intently.

Astrology-

Biata watch the stars for specific constellations while other races may look to the heavens for their own symbols and omens. This is a highly intellectual practice and each culture or race has their own interpretations of what is going on in the stars above. It is recommended you seek a teacher who can put you on the path of this divinatory practice.

Scarto-

Scarto is often practiced by the Orcs of Vandlar though many hunters and trappers have learned the practice to better use the resources they gather from nature. Scarto practitioners claim that their readings are incredibly short lived and often colored by the types of bones or remains that they use in the fire. As the bones crack in the heat of the flame they form lines and shatter into smaller pieces which tell the reader various things such as:

A bone that shatters completely is seen as a sign of imminent danger
A bone that cracks lengthwise points to a time of travel. The number of lines that run parallel are believed to demonstrate the length of the journey
A bone with more than one horizontal lines is a sign of good fortune.
A bone with an X of cracks or more implies a time of trouble or danger

Entil Stones-

Some believe these marks originated with the Elves or possibly the Mystic Wood Elves. Entil Stones can be of any substance- bone, wood, stone, ceramic, gemstone or even card or feathers. Whatever the bearer feels best utilizing can be created. Entil stones are drawn or cast in sets of three- the first stone is a critical element of the past. The second stone represents the situation of the present. The third stone represents an incoming influence. The ten symbols are as follows and are interpreted in relation to the question asked by the person who throws or draws the stones.

The Sword-	justice, warfare, fighting, conflict, struggle
The Shield-	defense, hidden things, protection, evasion, lies, deceit
The Mask-	confusion, apathy, emotional blackmail, loss of hope
The Sun-	joy, happiness, mirth, a time of celebration, victory
The Moon-	change, creation, movement, forces beyond the control of the bearer
The Stone-	solidity, rigidity, stubbornness and ignorance
The Feather-	chaos, fickleness, coquettishness, lust, short attention
The Skull-	death, loss, sickness, lethargy, sorrow
The Tree-	growth, expansion, healing, life, vibrancy
The Void-	unknown or unseen forces, and inability to detect

Sword

Adventuring: Justice, Warfare, Fighting

Love: Conflict, Struggle

Wealth: Success through action

Shield

Adventuring: Defense, Protection, Evasion

Love: Lies, Deceit, Jealousy

Wealth: Hidden Opportunities

Mask

Adventuring: Confusion, Illusion or Deceit

Love: Apathy, Emotional Blackmail
Wealth: Loss and Poverty

Sun

Adventuring: Victory, Ingenuity, Progress
Love: Joy, Happiness, Mirth
Wealth: Success and Riches

Moon

Adventuring: Change, Chance, Uncontrollable
Love: Forces beyond control at work
Wealth: Creation and Movement

Stone

Adventuring: Ignorance, Stubbornness
Love: Solidity and unchanging
Wealth: Rigid

Feather

Adventuring: Chaos
Love: fickleness, lust, short attention
Wealth: unpredictable

Skull

Adventuring: Death
Love: Sickness, Sorrow, Loss
Wealth: Lethargy, Failure

Tree

Adventuring: Growth, healing, life
Love: vibrancy and lively
Wealth: wise investment to gains

Void

Adventuring: Unknown or unreadable
Love: Chance and unpredictable
Wealth: unpredictable fluctuations

Rananska-

Rananska is created by three square cards that represent the three elements of creation- air, water and earth. They are covered with lines that cross the cards, each other, and swirl into themselves. Each set of card is unique and nearly covered to illegibility with these lines which often have symbols of various things, often the Entil stones, at intersections of many lines. The querant asks a question aloud while placing the cards on a darkened table in a room lit only by the moon or a single candle and interprets the lines as they flow from one card to the next. Additional information may be found by

choosing and turning one card relevant to your question to show the way the influences will change in the near future. Air governs imagination, intellect and the spirit. Earth governs the body, health and strength and water governs fate, death and emotions.

Gypsy Coins-

The simplest of divinations leave the simplest answer. Gypsy coins are a handful of any coin of the same metal (all copper, all silver or all gold) in an odd number. Heads is named one response, tails the opposite and the coins are dropped or thrown to the ground or table and the number of each answer is counted. The answer with the greatest number of faces showing is the answer. It is the belief of practitioners that only the first time this question is asked by a person will the answer be true—therefore they will not continue to cast coins in the hopes of deluding themselves by choosing their answers.