



## Selen: Shrine of the Spirit King

A series of islands in the southwest hemisphere of Selen named for each of the gods that live on them, and regarded as holy lands by the natives who guard them jealously from outsiders and offworlders, the Tri'Aigul Islands are some of the oldest settlements still remaining on Selen. They are far older than any of the modern major cities, and are home to perhaps the most traditional Selenian ways of life from ancient times, preserving the species' past, history, and culture. Crowning the chain of isles to the north is the singular island of Aytambawanchac, a mountainous island ringed by forested cliffs that transform abruptly into steep, barren cliffs. Named after the King of all Selenian spirits, local myth says that when the world threatens to be ended, and all life to be extinguished, he will rise again from the deepest depths of the oceans to promote the rebirth of all Selenian life.

Aytambawanchac is often described as being formed from the shedded skin of the Spirit King's head, thus accounting for its shape like a mawed, horned skull. The island's coastline is narrow, thin strips of sand giving way after only meters to a dense ring of jungle trees teeming with the descendents of ancient Selenian wildlife that natives refuse to hunt, calling each insect and beast but another form of the shapeshifting god. Rising from the forest is the sky-spearing rise of a long-dead volcano, dark and dormant, gleaming with peaks of obsidian and igneous rock, its sides conspicuously empty of the life its fertile soil nurtured just below. Ancient pathways spiral up the mountain, a thousand steps, according to legend - though likely several more than that - that are regularly spotted at intervals with small, carved stone shrines to various spirits of the Selenian pantheon. Every few feet, any intruder to the island would be tripping over a god's home.

At the peak of the mountain is a shorn-flat caldera, basin curving down to a smooth floor. More carved steps lead down into it, and short, tiered stone walls covered in carvings make up a temple worn by ages and monsoons but kept well-tended, much like every other shrine on the

isle. As one walks under crumbling archways and past pillars, one would reach the base of an immense pyramidal ziggurat, climbing high to once again level with the caldera's edge. At the top sits a stone altar, rising up over several stone steps, merged by a perilously thin stone bridges on either side that extend to the rim. Fresh offerings to prevent the spirits' ire can be found at the altar at any given time, regularly worshipped and cared for by Tri'Aigulan tribes who would make war on anyone that desecrated the grounds.

Native backlash is not the only threat here, however; along with wildlife from both the ocean and the jungles, the weather itself is the most dangerous of all on Aytambawanchac. In the middle of the ocean, the island chain is subject to frequent tropical storms and hurricanes, and any visitor is as likely to bake under the unrelenting sun, surrounded by salt water, as they are to be smashed on the rocks in a tempest.