

Peleset Culture Packet

Leader: The seas do roil, the sailors toil

All: Roll and go, oh roll and go

Leader: The main does rise, the ropes uncoil

All: Round the maw, oh round the maw

Chorus

All: A frightful gale fast on our tail

Roll and go, oh roll and go

With lines held fast we shall prevail

Round the maw, oh round the maw

Leader: The masts hold fast, through lightning's blast

All: Roll and go, oh roll and go

Leader: This rolling storm won't be our last

All: Round the maw, oh round the maw

Chorus

Leader: The rigging fowls, the wind it howls

All: Roll and go, oh roll and go

Leader: The foremast bends the skipper scowls

All: Round the maw, oh round the maw

Chorus

-From "Round the Maw", a traditional shanty

Culture Introduction

The Peleset call themselves "free spirits of the ocean." Held in place only by the whim of the wind and waves, they sail the open sea, making landfall rarely. While some live year 'round on the islands, the call of the sea is ever present. Independent Peleset ships trade with those who do not like the merchant houses, sail routes considered too dangerous and risky, or do other work for coin.

Outsiders more likely call them "privateers," "pirates," or "a nuisance." That tune changes as soon as the Felicitoro have a ship of cargo and need a crew; Many a "Felicitoro ship" is crewed entirely by Peleset sailors. Often, they were not born Peleset, but joined, seeking freedom, riches, or mercy after being taken by privateers. They live among the many islands off the coast

of Marsega, though many come ashore rarely, unless marooned or wrecked. Their days are spent in the bright sun and salt spray. Saragosa, the largest island in the arpeggio, is a place where anything can be acquired for the right price, from the ships that pass through or the Peleset who make it their home.

Peleset clothing is usually made of sturdy and serviceable pieces that will keep out of the way of rigging and sails, patched and repatched at sea with whatever scraps are on hand.

Cultural Values

The Peleset as a whole value independence and self-determination as well as the lives and wellbeing of their crew. While strict discipline is needed at sea in times of action, the governance systems of the Peleset tend to be communal in nature with captains being replaced if they start making bad decisions or working against the interests of the crew. It is expected that a Peleset will move from town to town and ship to ship throughout their lives but while in a community, they embrace that community completely.

Death at sea is a *problem*. There simply aren't gates to and from Death on the ocean. As such, sailors who die at sea find their eidolons drifting slowly to the nearest shore. Imagine walking, slowly, across the ocean. Worse, once they walk back across the bridge from Death, they find themselves stranded on shore, with their crew miles away and potentially unsure of where they are. And though many crews will dedicate a great deal of person-power to charting out the various gates along their course and trying to calculate where lost crew most likely ended up, most can't necessarily go immediately out of their way to collect a single lost sailor (not least because, as ships travel faster than eidolons, they'd beat the sailor there by days and lose even more time from their route). A sailor who finds themselves emerging from a shore gate is likely going to spend months away from their community, doing odd jobs in some strange settlement. Some sailors make the best of this, turning the detour into an adventure (and probably some new friends) in itself, but even these frequently recognize it as putting a happy face on an unwelcome diversion. Most Peleset sailors go to great lengths to avoid their own or their crews' deaths. This is, in part, why the Peleset value the lives of their community over material goods, which can cause conflict with those who have chartered Peleset ships or crews.

It has to be addressed that Peleset have a reputation for Piracy. This is only partially deserved.

Such crews certainly *do* exist, the temptation of easy goods taken from the less-skilled sailors of foreign ships is often too much to resist for less scrupulous crews, especially those who have gotten themselves into too much debt or burned too many bridges with more reputable employers. These crews will frequently have rocky or nonexistent relationships with their home ports, and what to do about crews that have "Gone Pirate" is a frequent subject of debate on land. Mixed pirate crews will often also seek out Peleset sailors marooned by their own crews for bad behavior, reasoning that even a badly behaved Peleset sailor is an asset to a crew that plans to behave "badly" as a matter of business anyway.

All-Peleset pirate crews tend toward the “Gentleman Pirate” archetype: preferring to cow their target ships through a show of blatant superiority and intimidation, and then peacefully transfer their cargo. As mentioned, few Peleset are willing to risk death at sea if they don't have to, and most aren't willing to inflict it unnecessarily. To a merchant prince who has just lost a hold full of cargo, this isn't much consolation, but many merchant crews will breathe easier seeing the flag of a Peleset ship flying over the crew that just boarded them.

This same risk-aversion, however, is at fault for the rest of their reputation: a Peleset crew, boarded by pirates, will often simply surrender their cargo without a fight. It's just property, after all, it isn't worth dying for. Combined with the pattern of Peleset ships being hit less often by pirates (owing to their frequently superior sailing), this leads to conspiracy theories about “Legitimate” Peleset crews (or, worse, Peleset sailors signed on to mixed merchant crews) secretly being “in league” with the pirates who sometimes board them. These theories are especially common among employers who have just lost a hold full of goods because the Peleset sailors they hired simply shrugged and let the pirates have them.

No crew has ever been conclusively proven to be running this particular scam and there are much more benign explanations, but rumors persist.

Geography

“Peleset” is the name for a shared set of traditions that emerged and spread among the settlements of the various islands that speckle the surface of Evren, and so the Peleset are one of the most geographically distributed cultures in the world. Peleset villages can be found dotted along the coastlines of islands from one pole to the other, recognizable and familiar despite both the huge distances and the lack of almost any such settlements on the larger continents between archipelagos.

While the members of other, more land-bound cultures might find this strange, a Peleset might (after a period of initial puzzlement) point out that the continentals are thinking about it all wrong: if they think of the island villages as the only Peleset settlements, they're missing half the picture. They're seeing isolated settlements, when in reality each village (or city) is the hub for dozens and hundreds of smaller communities, carried by sail and oar across the oceans between them.

As such, the Peleset tend to think of geography, and the locations and boundaries of their communities, in a much more fluid sense. A Peleset coastal town might be host to a hundred permanent residents, but be home-port to several hundred more and so, to the Peleset mind, the town is a many-tendriled thing, stretching wherever its ships are, including other peleset towns (some speculate that this is behind the popularity of octopus and squid imagery in Peleset art).

Simply put, Peleset don't have borders, they have landmarks. They are connected by a vast

web of traveling communities, united in one culture

That said, there are a few notable locations.

Doulo, on the island of Ladaran, is one of the few true Peleset cities. A single safe port surrounded by what is otherwise treacherous water and unapproachable coastline, it serves as a waypoint both before and after what is surely a long and unpleasant journey on either side, and as such draws in all the traffic that would otherwise go to the other coastal settlements that conspicuously aren't anywhere nearby. This actually makes it *more* attractive to many Peleset crews, as it means you're much more likely to run into familiar crews or interesting strangers than any other given port.

Drustagnos, on the island of Saragosa, isn't *officially* a Peleset settlement at all. It was founded, and is governed on paper, by the Lothlan. But its position made it very attractive to both Peleset and Felicitoro crews who, needing a place to stop and take on supplies, began using it as a trade hub and rapidly became the backbone of the city's economy. The city has grown to need all three cultures, and couldn't survive the loss of any of the three in its current form. The Peleset are putting down roots here in a way they usually don't in other culture's ports, and living alongside the other two cultures on land (especially the Lothlan, who don't share their freewheeling worldview) has been challenging but rewarding.

The twin Mouths of the Sea are a pair of permanent whirlpools that spin the sea between Marsega and Lazuria in the west and Saragosa and Anuttara in the south. It is believed that each is a gate to the Firmament realm of Water, if one could survive the passage, which would be idiotic to try. The Peleset will tell you that they have a "healthy respect" for these whirlpools, and a glance at their papers would seem to confirm. Every Captain who regularly travels near one of them dedicates massive amounts of chart-space to courses around these massive hazards. What isn't always immediately apparent is that these courses aren't always meant to give the Mouths wide berth: they're often descriptions of how to cut the closest course possible to the whirl without falling in, so as to shave time off journeys or lose pursuers. What's life on the sea without a little risk?

Cultural Practices

The Shore

Life in a Peleset shore settlement is frequently relaxed and agrarian. Most things they can't easily make are brought to them by the ship's crews that form their extended networks. Their main concern is providing food and fresh water for crews that stop in to resupply, and unlike even other farming cultures, a bad harvest season is inconvenient rather than life-threatening: their support networks are distributed enough that they're not in much danger of going hungry. Life is slow, and social: exchanging stories, visits, and trinkets with nearby settlements and passing crews is a huge focus for many shore Peleset.

Twice a year, near the beginning of Spring and the end of Fall, every Peleset ship that calls a town “Home Port” (and invariably a handful of visiting crews who find themselves accidentally too far away from their own homes) will come ashore at once to help with planting and harvest, plowing and reaping fields of hardy tubers and grains, preserving fish and produce, and letting any crew or townsfolk who want to change ships or roles find their places on ship or shore. But these are far from the only visits, most towns will see a continuous trickle of ships (their own and others) throughout the year, and find many occasions to exchange goods and stories and make friends (a common stereotype about shore Peleset is that they have fleets of penpals). Many feel that a good life for a Peleset who chooses to stay on shore is one where they build a network of friends across the world while never having to break the gentle rhythm of their life.

The Sea

If the slow and gentle life of a Peleset on shore is made possible by the far-flung net of ships crews who perpetually return to them, it also serves to *create* those crews. Not everyone is cut out for rhythm and roots, after all, and Peleset who dream of a faster-paced existence and seeing distant sights invariably find themselves joining (or forming) the crew of one of the great ships. Choosing the sea or the shore isn’t permanent, some Peleset remain with one or the other for life, but many go from shore to sea and back again once or several times in their lives.

Even “shore” Peleset spend a great deal of time in the water; most settlements sport a small fleet of short range fishing and transport boats for harvesting the sea’s bounty and visiting other nearby settlements, and nearly every Peleset knows their way around a boat. But the crews of the great ships are a different beast entirely. Built largely from oaks by the continental cultures (especially the Felicitoro), these ships offer passage all over the world much faster and more reliably than the older longboats that Peleset ancestors made their transoceanic voyages in. This allows Peleset sailors to trade far and wide, to see strange sights, and visit far off places (including far-distant Peleset settlements. Stories tell of sets of trinkets, souvenirs, and even unopened crates that have been passing back and forth across the world for centuries in the holds of different ships, just as pretense for Peleset of distant communities to visit each other regularly).

Family Life

Family relations among the Peleset are, as you might imagine from everything else about their culture, loose and communal. Marriage is optional, often not monogamous, and many romantic relationships are long-distance for some or all of their tenures: either one partner on shore with another at sea, or both serving on different crews. Even when partners are together, children of their unions are considered to have their entire community (ship or shore) as backup caregivers and instructors. Once a child is old enough to climb the mast of a ship (or the tallest tree in their shore village) they are generally considered old enough to be mostly-autonomous and can choose their own role in the community (or to leave and join another). Peleset who are physically unable to climb (or who simply feel that their talents lie in charting and mapping rather

than the more physical aspects of sailing) are instead asked to chart a course between two flagged points through a challenging region near their current port, chosen by a senior officer or other elder, and tested by skilled sailors. These two rites of passage are considered more or less equivalent, and are collectively referred to as “Reaching the Colors”.

Culture Organization

Ashore, all towns are governed differently, but they tend toward relatively-but-not-entirely flat hierarchies: loose councils of elders for resolving disputes, town “heads” that simply serve as tie-breakers or whips for town hall referendums, loose elected councils with theoretical executive power but subject to endless recall and override. Similarly, punishment for offenses against townsfolk are similarly anarchic. Peleset towns don’t have space or resources for prisons, so if someone is judged a persistent and irreconcilable problem they are either denied access to the shared resources of the village (and since most resources are shared, this is effectively exile) to see if some other life suits them better, or else killed to see if a journey to Death fixes them. Or one and then the other.

In contrast to their Shore counterparts, governance on a Peleset ship looks comparatively authoritarian: nearly always a single Captain barking orders and enforcing duty schedules through a chain of officers. Compared to the crews of many other cultures, however, there are some key differences: while the chain of command may be unquestionable during times of action, the officers serve at the mercy of their crew (who, remember, are frequently part-owners of the ship) and can be stripped of their position and replaced by a simple vote during any period of calm. A crewmember who defies an order during a boarding action, even an order most of the crew disagrees with, is likely to be marooned at the next port. But by the same token, a Captain who throws around their authority or makes disastrously bad choices is likely to find themselves back in general quarters at the next calm moment (or, if their behavior was truly heinous, marooned as well). As such, unless the situation is life threatening, most Captains rule by a gentle hand, and most decisions that aren’t time sensitive (what stops to make, what cargo to take on, what employers to work for) are made by consensus.

While this is great for crew cohesion and morale, it does frequently make other cultures look at Peleset crews as somewhat unreliable: dealing with a rotating cast of Captains from one job to the next doesn’t inspire confidence, and knowing that the crew might simply vote to jettison your cargo and change course because it “wasn’t worth it anymore” would make many merchants chew off their fingernails (this rarely happens, but it looms large in many continentals’ minds). It’s a good thing Peleset crews are such damn fine sailors to make up for it.

This style of maritime self governance makes sense when you consider that ships are expensive and given their communal, frequently moneyless lifestyle, even Peleset who engage in frequent trade with continentals usually can’t afford ships by themselves. Ships are often purchased by pooling the resources of entire prospective crews (and often placing them collectively in debt). Some Peleset settlements and crews have begun to toss around the idea,

between them, of bartering for the raw materials to begin constructing their own shipyards, but if this is ever to happen it's a ways off.

Cultural History

Relationships with Other Cultures

The Peleset are generally happy to trade with whoever wants to purchase the goods they are selling or charter the ship they are sailing. Outside of Peleset towns, they primarily interact with people in large port towns meaning the more rural Agni-Lana, Hurzicht, and Kalmak are less likely to encounter the Peleset outside of certain cities. Individual crews might have different opinions of other cultures or those outside their crew depending on past experiences, there are a few general sentiments that are mostly well deserved.

The Velliar will hire ships and crews for transporting expeditions or for general research purposes. They do tend to pay well but they don't have a good sense of what is or is not risky when traveling and what is or is not reasonable to request when sailing. If the Velliar in question has chartered a ship for some specific research task, they are likely to request strange things and not take it well when they are told no. Working with that sort of Velliar requires a very patient captain.

The Davenstern will often charter Peleset ships to carry goods, cargo, or prospective messengers. They are reliable and pay fair rates, though they are, as a rule, a bit boring. They are however generally respected as they also value lives over property and will work to protect the crews that they have hired.

There are often tensions between the Peleset and the Felicitoro. Peleset crews will commonly contract with Felicitoro merchants, though the Felicitoro tend to provide their own ships. This can cause some tensions, both the innate tension between employer and employees, and because of the difference in values. The Felicitoro place great value on their property and they expect their employees to take greater risks to protect it than a Peleset crew might feel good about.

Cultural Skills

Basic

- Up the Mast (3): Within five feet of a tree taller than you are, make a three count of "I climb the tree." If you are hit during the count you are interrupted, but didn't spend the skill. If you get the skill off, you are up the tree for the next five minutes, or until you move more than five feet from it. At the end of your time limit, or if you move too far from the tree, yell "Down I come!" While up the tree, you are immune to melee attacks and

touch based powers, and must call "ward" to them, even if they are beneficial. You cannot make melee attacks or use touch powers such as healing on anyone but yourself. You can still use ranged weapons and packets normally, and are still affected by ranged weapons and packets normally. If you are affected by a repel or gust while in the tree, or are knocked unconscious, you fall and take maims to two limbs (your choice). Must have three functional limbs to use this skill.

- Thrown Weapon (2*): You can throw any coreless, safe, approved weapon between 6 inches and 24 inches long. You cannot throw skills other than augments.
- Parry (2): See description under Soldier in the Rules.
- Repel Boarders (4*): Once per event, if you are inside or within 10' of a town structure (Tavern, cabins, tea house/library/guild halls), you may call "Repel Boarders!" For the next five minutes, or until you move 10' from a structure, whichever comes first, you may spell-strike "Repel" with every swing.

Advanced

Before you can learn any Advanced Peleset skills, you must learn all four Basic skills and you must acquire a boat through in-game means. Your first Advanced Skill must be "I've Got A Boat."

- I've got a boat! (4*): Each BGS cycle, choose a location in Evren other than Oak Harbor. For each BGS you perform this cycle, you can specify whether you perform that BGS at Oak Harbor or at the alternate location. You may designate up to 5 other players to travel to that location with you, such that they may also specify in their BGS whether they want to perform it in Oak Harbor or at the alternate location.
- In the Rigging (3): If you are Up the Mast, you can use a use of In the Rigging to either: 1) move from the tree you are at to another tree within 20' without needing to come down. You may not attack or use other skills while you are switching trees and are still vulnerable to ranged attacks and packets, and must call Ward against melee or touch attacks; or 2) to avoid falling out of the tree if hit by a gust or or Repel or if you are knocked unconscious (you still *may* fall out of the tree if unconscious, as your friends probably can't heal you in the tree). A gust still knocks you to the ground and requires you to stand up again. If you use this against a Repel, call "Reduce" and immediately move to another tree in the opposite direction from where the Repel originated, as if using option 1. If there is no such tree within 20', you move that direction until you are ten feet from your current tree, and then fall and take two maims.
- Merchant (3): At check-in, you will receive a list of one or more lots of goods — for example, you might be able to buy up to 3 emeralds for 10 leaf each. The lots might also include the opportunity to sell items. You may expend uses of Merchant to make one transaction from your list at the Staff Center, either after check-in, at the end of any game night, or at check-out. Each transaction takes one use, and you only make a given transaction once. When you come to purchase lots, have the lot lists and your money ready. Please be considerate of staff and how busy they can be. Any uses of Merchant you do not use in game may be submitted as a BGS to look for specific purchases (or sales).

- Back at You (2): If you Parry a normal martial skill used by the person you're fighting, you may immediately use that skill against them. Remember that Slay cannot be parried. This ability does not work on spellstrike calls.

Notes on playing a PC of this culture

You might enjoy playing a Peleset if you want to play a character with a strong nautical theme or background, you want to play someone who is well traveled, or to play a character that is familiar with much of the geography and cultures of Evren, or you want to play someone who doesn't want to be tied down.

Some questions you might think about when creating your character:

General Questions:

- Who are you?: What is your name? What is your personality? What defines you, if anything?
- What has your life been like so far?: How old are you? Where do you come from? Who is your family? What is your trade, if any? What are you leaving behind?
- Why have you come to the Witchwood?: What brings you to a settlement far away from home? What are your ambitions? Why did you leave? Who did you come with, if anyone?
- Other questions: How trustworthy are you? How trusting are you? What do you like? What are your pet peeves? What kind of person do you want to be?

Peleset Specific Questions:

- Have you spent most of your life aboard a ship or in a town?
 - If on a ship, what are some ships you have served on? What roles have you served on that ship? Are there some traditions or practices unique to some of the ships you have been on?
 - If in a town, what was the name of the town? Where is it located? What are some ships that are associated with the town? What are some traditions or practices unique to that town?
- Where have you traveled? What are some significant events that occurred while you were traveling?
- What caused you to leave your town/ship and come to the Witchwood? Did you part on good terms? Do you want to return?