

# Exploring The Wroteh

## A comprehensive overview of the children of K'amut

This outline contains important themes and characters that appear throughout the story of Obelisk and gives context for certain archetypes and how they fit into the great world Reed navigates on his journey.

### Culture and Sociology

Wroteh culture follows a particular set of sociological principles that have evolved in multiple ways over their history of 200,000 years. Their folkways and mores are guided by honor and emphasize safeguarding personal, familial, and communal reputation. These types of structures can be found in real cultures throughout history and the present day. This fictional iteration is an amalgamation of ancient Egyptian, Norse, Spartan, and Japanese cultures. Particularly, they include elements adjacent to the Spartan Agoge. Socialization practices that teach children to become adept fighters and foundational principles for their societal hierarchy. This essentially boils down to the most basic Darwinian principle: survival of the fittest.

Status in Wroteh society is achieved in social displays of power, regardless of the form it may take. Often these power rituals manifest as physical trials like hand-to-hand combat and athletic competition. Sometimes a combination of the two. This, however, has not prevented them from forming complex governmental systems. But clan separations and forced migrations created natural boundaries between different groups during the earliest periods of their civilization. With resources like water and food being in short supply, it was necessary to settle near a ground well or cave system, and learn how to protect it. This led to various periods of war, and slowly formed culture(s) that heavily valued skills that help win battles and protect settlements.

*Unateh* or, "*one tongue*," is the language spoken throughout the 17 different clans and kingdoms located around K'amut. 20 dialects are suspected to exist, but because human envoys are no longer allowed on the planet, the exact number is unknown. It is a complex language that contains a root and pattern system, as well as certain tonal elements. Human scholars have theorized it shares characteristics of ancient Afroasiatic dialects. However, due to an error in documentation and translation after

one of the first meetings between Earth-borne colonies and Wruteh, humans incorrectly refer to the Wruteh language as “Ga’muud.” This has no actual translation, as the word does not exist within the Unateh lexicon, but the closest relative word would be “gem’atu” translated as “weeping wind.”

## K’amut – The Living Seas of Sand and Stone

The Wruteh homeworld of K’amut is a planet with endlessly shifting seas of sand, complex cave systems, and sprawling mountain ranges containing a unique red rock and copious rare minerals. It is situated approximately 135 million km from a G-type yellow-dwarf star in its main sequence, with a planetary diameter of roughly 4,600 km. Its atmosphere is breathable, but its surface is covered in mostly harsh and desolate landscapes with temperatures reaching 50-55° C during the day. Sometimes higher in the warmest months of their orbital calendar.

Based on limited ecological research, human scientists speculate that K’amut was, at one point in its life cycle, covered in shallow oceans. But, due to unknown cosmic activity, the atmosphere heated up and the oceans slowly withered away – leaving behind the unforgiving sands. Complex lifeforms that survived the extinction event retreated into the planet’s numerous cave systems. The Wruteh, are considered to have been among their number. Water flow is all but nonexistent on the planet’s surface, save small green spaces located at the poles. These are the largest and most densely populated areas due to their greater habitability. Most Wruteh societies take shelter underground, settling near underground streams and lakes, farming special strains of flora that can grow in the absence of sunlight. A “newaat,” or settlement, would ideally be located within a rock formation that featured an “anoido,” or a sand hole. This would allow enough diffused sunlight into the settlement to grow larger crops.

Eventually, clans began experiencing population growth that was unsustainable. Though the tradition of *Dolme* (a culling ritual endured when children come of age) was still very much intact, Wruteh leaders held fast to their values around expansion and exploration. Structures that extended from the cave systems above ground were slowly constructed, and were engineered to protect their inhabitants from both sand storms and extreme surface temperatures. These techniques spread during migrations and

pilgrimages, which enabled most clans to substantially increase their populations and the diversity of infrastructure.

## Anatomy

Over time, after taking shelter underground, Wruteh anatomy began slowly evolve. Favoring larger eyes, metabolic systems that could adapt to food shortages, thin limbs and facial features, as well as nocturnal rhythms. Their skin grew tougher over time but retained its rich olive color. The physical characteristics of the Wruteh, at first glance, appear very much human, however, they possess key features that clearly set them apart once they are identified. This process is similar to how someone might distinguish an alligator from a crocodile on Earth.

Anthropological theories suggest that the atmospheric events that afflicted K'amut resulted in a breakdown of longstanding infrastructure. Key skills or trades were lost due to total extinction in certain regions of the planet. It was very much a dark age in K'amuti history. It took several hundred generations for the underground civilizations to bounce back and/or venture out and locate the oases located around the poles. The Wruteh slowly began to grow in size and strength thanks to reestablished technological innovations that improved farming and, subsequently, nutrition.

## Aken Tek – The Faith of Creation

The creation account of the Wruteh largely revolves around the atmospheric anomalies that transpired several thousand years before the modern era of K'amut.

“Aken,” translated as “creator,” is the cosmic deity whom the Wruteh believe to have created the world of K'amut. He formed their home from cosmic wind, forging the mountains and the seas with the tips of his fingers, and set the skies in motion on the heat of his breath. Their father-god marveled at his doing. For thousands of years, he traveled the forests and coastlines and rested on the peaks of his world. But after his millennia of solitude, he longed for a people to call his own. His brother and sister were vile and covetous, and he did not care for their company.

So he called forth the rain over the great valleys of the Dalkaj and plunged his hands into the earth. He formed the first and called them “wru” – his *people*.

For an age, they lived in harmony with what Aken had named “K'amut” – the *womb*.

This time of bounty was short-lived, as the wru grew content and did not crave the feeling of creation or exploration as Aken had intended. Their lust for action waned as they grew more and more comfortable with the pleasures of their world, so Aken planned a test to reward those faithful to his purpose.

One day the sun did not retire as it always did. It hung in the sky and drank the seas, spitting the sleeping sands of the deep into the wind. The sky turned and bled, and wrathful storms stripped the earth of its bounty. It is told that those who cursed Aken's judgment were eaten by the sands, and the faithful knew his heart and found their way through the night. Thereafter known as the "wru tehbat," or the "people of a dwelling faith." Over time the word evolved into "Wruteh," or "the dwelling people."

According to their creation account, the faithful wru committed themselves to the path laid out by their *father god*. This gave birth to their doctrine of the "Aken Tek," often translated as the "true children of Aken." It is also known as "Aken-Fa," or "the way of Aken." The "Tek," as they are colloquially known, believe that one day the "seas of life" will return to K'amut, but only when the "Wru" have returned to the true way of Aken. They can only exist in harmony with the womb of life if they are in harmony with their intended nature. Researchers have found no data in Wruteh religious texts that suggest a specific path was ever written out, only that they were meant to "reclaim the way they abandoned in the womb of life." This has, over time, given rise to numerous interpretations of how Wruteh culture is to function. The prevailing conclusion over the last few millennia is that the Tek are charged with "sweeping the sand from the eyes of the blind, and leaving the weak as a feast for the sun." This is believed to mean that all must be shown the way of the children, and those who cannot live in the way of strength must be eaten by the sun. In layman's terms, for better or worse, left to their own devices for survival.

In earlier periods of underground K'amuti civilizations, this was problematic. The resources for prolonged survival on the surface no longer existed, and during a pilgrimage or clan separation, those too slow, old, or weak were left alone in the desert.

After the resurgence of technology and improved methods of travel and communication, Wruteh repopulated the planet's green zones. However, these places transformed sites of religious importance and were claimed as holy cities – thought to be the "mercy of Aken." Their copious resources made them the target of Aken leadership, who claimed them as the rightful homes of the faithful. The various theocratic governments quickly coalesced and formed the greater Temple of Aken. This unification sought to organize efforts to return the waters of life to K'amut, and provide more structure for customs that exiled the weak and unworthy children. These pole

cities were known as the “Hands of Aken” – Ka’tum in the North and Bra’tum in the South.

As their technological infrastructure began to evolve, the heads of the faith, the seers of Aken, known as the “sen-suu,” saw any form of technology as the evil that drank the waters of life. Certain kinds of tools were allowed for farming, communication, and limited forms of transportation, but all other applications were outlawed.

Extra-planetary travel was deemed blasphemous and outlawed by all branches of the newly united kingdom. This was a somewhat tumultuous time. Many clans had been separated by thousands of years, and not all of their customs and laws were congruent with one another. For a time there was infighting in their government and between previously separated military forces. A short armistice was agreed upon to give the religious leadership time to form the Counsel of Yran. Representatives from all clans spent 2 months in the new temple of Ka’tum. None of the Oheb, *priests*, were allowed to leave until all points had come to resolution and the New Kingdom of K’amut could peacefully begin.

## The Way of The Serpent & Galatic Politics

Like any long-standing religious text with numerous interpretations, differences in opinion and belief are inevitable. Many sects eventually split from the canonical faith of Aken, but the most dangerous is the Aépok-Fa – the “way of the serpent.”

In the religious texts that tell of K’amut’s creation story, there are tales of Aken’s brother, D’are. Outlawed texts detail how D’are was so disgusted by his brother’s trial, he abandoned his ship that sailed on the stars and resigned to the form of a great serpent. He chose this form because it was the one creature that had always endured the sands. Even Aken considered it to be the most resilient of K’amut’s children. D’are buried his snake form in the neverending sands. He waited for the moon to rise and visited Aken’s children in their dreams. D’are claimed that the Aken-Fa was a path followed only by the blind, and promised retribution to all who followed him. He swore to overthrow Aken and steal back the waters of life so that the warriors of K’amut may drink freely in the well of eternity. But Aken was stronger than D’are in his serpent form, and he knew he could not defeat him. D’are charged those who would defy Aken with a single task: harvest the blood of the worthy warrior and offer it to him, so he might

grow strong enough for the day of reckoning. His warriors are known colloquially as “the fangs of the serpent,” or “Aépok-Qoel.”

These Wruteh cults have routinely practiced what would have been known as “blood magic” by proto-earth humans several thousand years ago. They hunt powerful individuals and offer them to D’are, whether their power resides in their physical qualities or intangible qualities – such as influence within the counsel of their community. Though, most Aépok clans interpret the relative texts about sacrifices to only include those able to overpower or kill the huntsman. Most commonly, this refers to another skilled warrior who serves Aken or no god at all. Regardless of the individual used in the sacrifice, *all* clans perform the *prayer of the hunt* – a blood ritual that takes place in three parts: in preparation for the hunt, the feast of the serpent, and the death supplication. Little is known about the specifics of this ritual. The only Unateh word known to refer to any kind of official name for the ordeal is “Kaaletan.” However, this word has no known translation and seems to only be used referencing a *successful* hunt – one that Aépok kill and sacrifice their target. The only detail of the ritual that has been confirmed by outside sources is the selection of the “serpent’s head,” or “Aépok–Avé.” This individual is chosen to lead the hunt and take all responsibility for its outcome. Should their fang strike quickly and true, they would store up favor with D’are in the belly of K’amut. A failed hunt would be the greatest shame for the one named Avé. To live beyond their defeat is not a way of life, so they would then bear the sin of the snake’s body to spare their clan for another hunt.

Some clans believe that blood that is shed with K’amuti steel garners more favor with D’are, as it gives him greater strength. So many consider the Kari of the Aépok to be some of the finest forged steel known to the galaxy. The arrival of humans and hyper-light travel in 4527 CE granted the Aépok passage to the stars in search of greater and more dangerous quarry.

## Political Unrest

Aépok ideals have grown in popularity on K’amut over the last 150 years in response to criticism of the K’amuti theocratic government. After their first contact with humans during the exploration missions known as Operation: Madea, the story of Aken and the creation of K’amut began to look more and more like a fable than the far-flung promise of salvation. The knowledge that their population was unnecessarily suffering a harsh existence when food, improved infrastructure, and other resources were available via the Galactic Federation, separatist groups around the planet began to form. This led to

greater diversification of the Aken faith overall, and for a time, loosened the grip of religious ideals on the culture.

Roughly 50 years after the K'amuti Summit, groups of Wruteh left the Aken faith in droves. These individuals favored the distinction of "K'amuti" over the traditional name of those adhering to the faith. With the help of colonial smugglers, these K'amuti groups started R&D projects to develop spacecraft that would allow them to leave the planet and join the galactic community of Earth-borne colonies. Many K'amuti left during the early years of trade between the Wruteh government and the Federation, but it only took one or two incidents with the Aépok for sanctions to be placed on outgoing space travel for all K'amuti citizens. Much was still unknown about

The Aépok-Fa is currently one of the only groups of Wruteh who have the means and systems to routinely leave K'amut without the Federation's knowledge. The Federation has identified the Aépok as a dual-category terrorist group that violates tier-zero galactic laws including piracy and homicide – collecting unsanctioned bounties across Middle and Outer-Rim systems. However, certain groups within the Federation's military have actively suppressed any attempt by the Galactic Senate to distinguish the beliefs of this rogue faction of religious extremists from those held by a majority of the population who subscribe to the Aken faith. The initiative has primarily been used to bolster the Federation's military and security contractors to suppress foreign presence in UGF space, quell separatist movements in the colonies, and continue the expansion of established Federal space under the guise of Operation: Madea.

Federation sanctions and blockades combined with the ongoing efforts of the Wruteh government to eliminate separatist propaganda have turned K'amut into somewhat of a galactic reservation. The few K'amuti and Aépok terrorists who manage to avoid detection when leaving the planet tend to stay away from systems with a large military presence. Most favor the Outer Rim due to its much lower population but are still considered enemies of the state. This incites prejudice and vigilante activities from colonists and other parties loyal to the Federation. The Aépok, however, have developed ways of camouflaging themselves to escape detection in highly populated systems. Most Federation soldiers choose to avoid any conflict with hunting parties because of their adept nature as fighters. It has been reported on several occasions that Aépok often seek out the Kaarj, Duma, and other clans within the Undalla Syndicate in search of unsanctioned bounties on high-profile individuals.

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