

Atlas Games Presents an *Occult Lore*™ Preview:
The Pangunculus

TWO TAKES ON THE MAGIC OF MISDIRECTION

**PREFACE:
PUBLISHER'S
NOTE**

by John Nephew

In game design, there is rarely a right or wrong answer; very different game rules may describe a common concept for play. In this preview of *Occult Lore*, we illustrate the point with two different interpretations of the pangunculus, an arcane object that misdirects magical attacks.

I encountered the idea of the pangunculus in *The Mysteries*, a book of unusual magical traditions for our **Ars Magica**™ RPG written by Adam Bank and Jeremiah Genest. Inspired by *The Mysteries*, I adapted the pangunculus as a D20 magic item for my home campaign.

When Adam accepted our invitation to contribute to *Occult Lore*, he wrote up his own version of the pangunculus as a creature in the Astrology chapter.

Here we offer both visions of the pangunculus; one from my personal game notes, the other excerpted from the published *Occult Lore* book. Pick the one you like, or use both!



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Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast.



PANGUNCULUS AS WONDROUS ITEM

by John Nephew

Among the many charms that the beautiful witch Elryna shared with me in the course of our week of bliss was a gift that was both tangible and portable. She called it a “pangunculus,” and though it appeared to be nothing more than a crude waxen doll, she assured me that it would be a valuable protective talisman against the evils I was about to face. First, however, I had to link myself to it. Elryna pricked my finger with a sharp needle, and dribbled my blood into the doll's mouth, where it vanished upon contact.

I kept the pangunculus with me, although buried in my pack, and all but forgot about it until the day I faced an ogre magus. He wove a terrible magic to destroy me, and seemed utterly shocked that it had no effect whatsoever. After I had cut him into small pieces, I noticed a stain on my pack. I opened it to find that the pangunculus had melted into its original shapeless wax, as though left in an oven. My thoughts turned again to Elryna, with more gratitude than ever for her generosity.

— *The Extraordinary Journeys
of Harnak the Bold*

GAME INFORMATION

A pangunculus is a protective magical charm. Once activated and kept in close proximity (no more than 5 feet away), it offers protection by means of sympathetic magic, by metaphysically taking the place of its owner as the target of magical spells.

To activate a pangunculus, the user must feed it a tiny bit of her own blood in the course of a bonding ritual that takes about 30 minutes, so that it recognizes its new owner's essence. A character who succeeds with a Knowledge (Arcana) roll, DC 20, will know how to perform the ritual (it's not particularly secret in arcane circles). Otherwise it is necessary to find a written description or someone who knows the ritual and is willing to share it.

Spells targeted at the owner are mystically redirected to the pangunculus instead. Some spells may affect an owner without specifically targeting her; e.g., a rock could be levitated above someone and then dropped, and the resulting damage is quite non-magical. For simplicity, assume that a pangunculus offers protection only against spells that are subject to Spell Resistance.

The pangunculus itself has a Spell Resistance of 15. This means that unless 15 or higher is rolled on a 1d20 + Caster Level, a spell redirected to the pangunculus has no effect whatsoever. If the Spell Resistance fails, the spell is still absorbed by the pangunculus. Its owner is spared the spell effect; however, the magic overwhelms the little wax figure and reduces it to a melted puddle with no further protective value.

Pangunculi have a major downside. Not only do you want to keep one close to you for protection, you must be careful not to let it fall into the hands of an enemy. Because of its magical connection to its owner, a malicious spellcaster can use an activated pangunculus against its owner. A spell target whose bonded pangunculus is held in the hand of the targeting spellcaster suffers a –10 penalty to any saving throw against the spell and automatically fails any other Spell Resistance rolls to which she may be entitled. Having possession of your target's pangunculus also provides the closest possible link for spells that require such.

A person may be bonded to only one pangunculus at a time. The bond is broken only by the charm's destruction, or by someone else performing the bonding ritual and thus taking it as their own.

A pangunculus counts as an amulet with respect to space limitations for use; if it is within 5 feet of its bonded owner, it will block the functioning of any other amulet, scarab, periapt, or the like.

Caster Level: 9, *Prerequisites:* Create Wondrous Item, *spell resistance*; *Market Price:* 25,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.

Variants: Pangunculi can be made with higher Spell Resistance scores. Each point higher than the standard (and minimum) 15 increases the market price by 10,000 gp.

PANGUNCULUS AS CREATURE

by Adam Bank

CR 1; SZ D (construct); HD special; hp special; Init -5; Spd 1 ft. (twitchy crawl); AC 9 (+4 size, -5 Dex); Atk none; Face 1 ft. x 1 ft; Reach 1 ft.; SQ construct, supernatural abilities; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref -5, Will +4; Str 1, Dex 1, Con —, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 1

Pangunculi are semi-living dolls made of wax, alchemical materials, and rotting fluid and tissue. They appear as foul, diminutive caricatures of their owners. They take in no sustenance, living on the science that birthed them. They are incapable of any significant movement or noise other than nervous twitching and crying. They cannot speak, and can only understand the spoken words of their owners. The mystical similarities between these pathetic creatures and their owners create magical interference that can “confuse” spells into targeting the pangunculus instead of its owner.

As long as they live, and the “pangunculus taboos” (below) are obeyed, pangunculi grant the following supernatural abilities to their owners:

Spell Confusion (Su): The owner gains a qualified Spell Resistance equal to 12 + the pangunculus’ similarity bonus. This SR applies only to the following spells: spells cast against the owner with the range of “unlimited;” spells that require Scry checks; and any other spell cast against the owner when the owner is out of the spellcaster’s line of sight. If the spell is successfully resisted, the spell targets the pangunculus instead. If the pangunculus is outside the resisted spell’s range, the spell is effectively counterspelled.

Divination Trickery (Su): If Spell Confusion deflects a divination spell, the GM makes a secret Scry check for the spellcaster against a DC equal to the pangunculus’ SR. If the check fails, the spellcaster is fooled. The divination spell appears to be successful, but provides false yet convincing information or visions. A pangunculus can be instructed as to what kind of false information to give. Treat Spell Trickery as an illusion (phantasm).

Protection (Su): The owner gains a +2 resistance bonus to all saving throws against spells and spell-like effects.

Deny the Prying Eye (Su): The owner is invisible to *arcane eye*, *prying eyes*, or similar spells, although the pangunculus can still be seen.

PANGUNCULUS TABOOS

The powers of pangunculi rely upon sympathetic magic to create the mystical dissonance that confuses spells. To keep those powers functioning, the following taboos must be maintained. None of the pangunculus’ supernatural abilities function during the violation of a taboo, but immediately return upon the taboo’s resumption.

Out of Sight: The owner must not physically or magically see the pangunculus. If the pangunculus is in the same room with its owner, it must be placed in an opaque container.

Out of Touch: The owner cannot be in direct physical contact with the pangunculus. The owner cannot carry the pangunculus in any way. The owner cannot ride on the same mount or in the same vehicle with the pangunculus.

In Mind: The pangunculus must be within 100 feet of the owner.

CREATING A PANGUNCULUS

A pangunculus can be created either as an alchemical or magical construct. Using either method, the first step in creating a pangunculus is choosing its similarity bonus. You can create a pangunculus with a similarity bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier + Astrology rank or lower. Less similar pangunculi are easier and cheaper to make.

Before construction begins, you must designate its owner — the person or creature the pangunculus will protect. A pangunculus provides no protection to anyone other than its particular owner. Possessing another’s pangunculus, however, earns a +10 bonus to Scry rolls against its owner.

The most important ingredients when creating a pangunculus are the flesh and fluids of its owner.

Drawing forth these materials is an unpleasant process, causing 2 hp of damage per owner's hit die. The pangunculus has a number of d4 hit dice equal to the owner's number of hit dice. For example, the pangunculus of a 6th-level character has 6d4 hit dice. The owner can choose to increase the pangunculus' hp total by donating more blood during creation. Each additional hp of damage to the owner raises the pangunculus' hp total by +1. A pangunculus can be given a maximum of 10 + owner's Con modifier additional hp.

ALCHEMICAL PANGUNCULI

To create a pangunculus as an alchemical project, you must possess a nativity horoscope of its owner for the duration of the creation processes. You must also interpret the nativity before beginning the project, which requires the Astrology skill. The nativity provides you with the clues to link the pangunculus with its intended owner. (See page 29 for more on nativity horoscopes.)

Creating an alchemical pangunculus is an Alchemy task. The DC of an alchemical pangunculus is 15 + the pangunculus' similarity bonus. The market price is 100 + (pangunculus' similarity bonus x 100) gp, and the raw materials cost is one-third that amount. To determine how long it takes to make an alchemical pangunculus, use the rules for making things in the Craft skill description. The creation must take place in an alchemist's laboratory or similar workshop.

MAGICAL CONSTRUCT PANGUNCULI

You cannot create a magical construct pangunculus for another creature. Although the creation process is less involved, pangunculi created this way can only protect the magician who performs the creation ritual. The Astrology skill is not required.

A magical construct pangunculus costs 20 x the similarity bonus in gp to create, plus 20 gp for the body. Unlike alchemical pangunculi, which grow from the tissue supplied by their owner, the magical construct's body must be sculpted from wax compounds, requiring a Craft (sculpture) DC 12 check; at the time of its sculpting, the owner's tissue is placed inside a hollow carved where the pangunculus' heart would be.

Once the body is made, the creation ritual can begin. The ritual can only be conducted by a character of at least 7th level with the Craft Wondrous Item feat. Taking an entire, uninterrupted week, the creator must labor for 8 hours a day in a laboratory or workroom. If the creator is interrupted for any purpose besides eating, sleeping, or talking, the ritual fails and the body is ruined. Completing the ritual requires the casting of either *spell resistance* or *spell turning* and the expending of 50 XP. The creator can use scrolls for the spellcasting.

SECONDARY PANGUNCULI

The spell-like powers of pangunculi do not stack; you cannot be protected by multiple pangunculi at once. You can, however, create a pangunculus for another pangunculus — called a secondary pangunculus — but with considerable difficulty. First, magical construct pangunculi cannot serve as secondary pangunculi. The only method known for creating secondary pangunculi is through alchemy and astrology, discussed above.

The DC of a secondary alchemical pangunculus is +5 greater than the DC needed to create its primary. The market price for a secondary pangunculus is double the price of its primary pangunculus. The primary pangunculus must obey all of the taboos for the secondary pangunculus to function.

Occult Lore



Wizards study their academic magics in great halls of learning; sorcerers discover their spells through innate talent; clerics call upon the gods for divine favor. But what of those magic-users who delve into more obscure mystic traditions? What of those who tap into the power of the heavenly spheres, or awaken the secret essences of herbs to distill potent magical concoctions? Those whose gift lies in drawing spirits or elemental forces to do their bidding, or who can explore the twisting paths of a dreamer's mind? What of those whose very presence tampers with the familiar magic of arcane and divine spellcasters?

All these find their place in *Occult Lore*, a 240-page hardcover sourcebook of magical knowledge for D20 System players and GMs alike. Each of this book's ten chapters explores a different avenue of magical study, from the alchemist's quest for immortality through philosophical perfection to the improvised rituals of sympathetic magic. Whether you're searching for a new character concept, or looking for a few tricks to hide up your favorite magician's sleeve, this is the book for you.

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