

Culexus Assassins

Rules for using anti-psychic killers in your games of Inquisitor.

by Ant Loughlin

One of my friends approached me the other day, saying he would like to make a Culexus Assassin for our next Inquisitor campaign. So the other night, I sketched up some rules using the Inquisitor Rulebook and included some of my own ideas to cover what was missing in the rulebook. For reference of the Culexus assassin, I used the Codex: Assassins that came free with White Dwarf 235 and Codex: Witch Hunters. What I came up with surprised me, and I can honestly say without trying to seem cocky that this is a damn good set of rules. I was so chuffed with the results of my labour that I have decided to send them to fanatic in a hope to share them with everyone who enjoys the Inquisitor system as much as me.



However, I must stress, that as an Officio Assassinorum Operative, the Culexus is obviously going to be hard as nails, and will appeal to some of the power gamers that exist in the hobby. However, I feel that these rules are very balanced and fair, and that this character will be a very affective addition to a party, or operating alone, depending on the type of characters each player is using. One thing I will say is this, I do feel it is hideously hard to kill for a party member, so if someone would want to use the Culexus, they must bear in mind the drawbacks of taking on such a fearful weapon.

Below I have detailed the rules (including both advantages and drawbacks) concerning the use of Culexus assassins in Inquisitor. Firstly I will discuss some considerations for using Culexus assassins in a party during a battle. Then I shall discuss my considerations for using a Culexus assassin in campaigns. Following these considerations will of course be the Culexus' stats, weapons and rules. These considerations are to make sure that those who are wishing to take a Culexus Assassin as part of a party will have to literally pay some penalty for taking such an immensely powerful creature.

USING THE CULEXUS IN BATTLE

If the Culexus is being used on it's own, the following rules do not apply.

The Culexus starts off the battle with its Animus Speculum deactivated, and it requires only the slightest thought from the Culexus Assassin to activate it. This is similar to using an Arco-Flagellant or Familiar but with some major differences. The Animus Speculum is the massive and potent helmet that through which the Culexus uses its immense powers. Even when it is not activated, it still omits its eerie psychic powers, and still its effects can be felt on all those around the assassin. However, keeping the Culexus' Animus Speculum deactivated is both beneficial and at the same time, poses some problems.

When the Animus Speculum is deactivated, the psychic effects are reduced. The Animus' Soulless ability is reduced, and only those within 9 yards are affected and the negative modifier on any characters' willpower and nerve tests is -10%. When the Animus is not activated, the Culexus cannot use the weapon built into the helm, nor can it use its Life Drain psychic power, or its Hexagrammic Wards. However, unlike Arco-Flagellants and Familiars, the Culexus' speed is not reduced, nor is any of the Culexus' statistics, and it can move and operate freely.

To activate the Animus, the Culexus awaits the order from its master. The master (in other words your Inquisitor) must utter the Activation code within earshot of the Culexus. An Inquisitor who is intelligent will not use telepathy to activate the Animus, as the cautionary tale of Inquisitor Vastilus and his exploding head is well known throughout the Inquisition. Upon uttering the activation code, the Culexus will respond and initiate its activation parameters, slowly and safely activating the Animus. The Culexus will move at half speed in the next turn, and can only move. In the following turn the Animus will be fully activated and all of the Culexus' abilities can be used and to full affect.

However, the helm is wholly a part of the Culexus and as such there are other methods that will activate it. Should the Inquisitor fall or be taken out of action, in such a way that the Culexus would see or hear this happen, or the Culexus be shot in a way that it either takes damage or successfully dodges the shot during its activation turn; then Culexus will activate its emergency parameters and the Animus will fully activate instantly, screeching an immensely powerful psychic scream. All models within D6 x 10 yards must pass a Willpower Test or suffer 2D6 damage to the head (note that this damage is doubled if the target is a Psyker). The Animus will now operate in emergency mode for D3 turns, and the following rules apply:

- The Culexus will be unable to move, and will be on its knees, clutching its head whilst trying to restore its normal parameters. It has no actions in its own phase; however it will counter attack any time it is fired at, if it can pass an initiative test at half its initiative.
- The Culexus adds 2D10 to its toughness until its emergency parameters end. During this time, however, it cannot dodge shots or attacks in close combat.
- All models within 18 yards or line of sight of the Culexus will suffer -30% to any Nerve or Willpower Tests (including from the Culexus' psychic scream) until the Culexus' emergency parameters end.
- Any model wishing to shoot at the Culexus Assassin must take a nerve test or end their turn immediately (using the above modifier).
- All models that can use psychic powers (Friend or Foel!) within 12 yards must take a Willpower Test or take 2D6 damage to the head (and yes, this IS doubled!).
- The Culexus cannot be taken out of action until its emergency parameters end. Upon ending, the Culexus' head explodes, again spreading an immensely powerful psychic scream. All models within D6 x 10 yards must pass a Willpower Test or suffer 2D6 damage to the head (note that this damage is doubled if the target is a Psyker).

Should the Culexus be shot at during a turn that its emergency parameters are active, these parameters will last an additional turn. This addition can only be made once a turn. Do also note that shooting at a Culexus during this period it is always good to remember that the Culexus is still capable of shooting back at you.

The Culexus will operate normally in any circumstances once it is activated, even if this occurs after its emergency parameters are shut down. The Culexus does not need to be activated to throw a Psyk-Out Grenade, or use any of the following skills: Acrobatic, Ambidextrous, Dodge, Force of Will or Nerves of Steel.



USING THE CULEXUS IN CAMPAIGNS

The Culexus can only be used in a party that includes an Inquisitor and that does not include an Alien Psyker, Demonhost, Rogue Psyker, Mutant or any other Heretic or Chaos Follower. If the Culexus is being used on its own, only the rules on the last paragraph apply.

The Culexus is a permanent and disturbing image of fear and hatred, even for his allies! And an Inquisitor taking on such a perplexing creature could suffer great psychological damage from constant contact with it. After each battle fought that includes the Culexus, any model, friend or foe that spent a minimum of one turn within 12 yards of the Culexus (after the Animus Speculum has been activated) must take a Willpower test (that is not modified by the Culexus' abilities). If the test is failed, the character loses D10 (roll differently for each) from the following statistics: Willpower, Sagacity, Nerve and Leadership.

If any of the statistics are reduced by a quarter of its original amount, then a Willpower test must be taken. If this is failed then the character has been driven mad by the constant contact with the Culexus. Roll a D10 and consult the table below to see what has happened to your character:

D10 Result Mental Damage

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|------|---|
| 1-2 | <i>Mental Shutdown.</i> The Character's sanity crumbles before the Culexus' psychic screaming and their brain shuts down. The character is brain-dead and can take no further part in this campaign, unless they undertake a brain transplant, receive a bionic brain, or recover from the mental damaging (as detailed below). |
| 3-4 | <i>Dementia.</i> The character has been rendered to a pathetic state of mindlessness, and cannot think for themselves at most times. The character must pass a Willpower test to take part in a battle. If not, their party leaves them sitting in a mindless stupor until they return to collect them. |
| 5-6 | <i>Crazed!!</i> The Character has been driven to an angered state by psychic screaming of the Culexus. The character now suffers from frenzy. |
| 7-8 | <i>Unbinged!</i> The character's sanity has left them completely, and they are now in a state of constant senselessness, not feeling pain nor fearing Death. The character now has the following skills: Force of Will, Nerves of Steel, True Grit, and Furious Assault. However, this is now the only Special Abilities they can have (however they still gain from Exotic Abilities), and they lose any other abilities, including psychic powers! (However a psychic power using the Wyrd ability cannot be removed.) |
| 9-10 | <i>Twitthy.</i> The character has maintained their sanity, however the constant exposure to the Culexus' powers has made a major impact on their resistance to it. Any negative affects from the Culexus' powers that affect this character are doubled. |

Any character affected by the psychic screaming can recover from any mental damage caused. This is a rare occurrence, however and it is likely that they will never fully recover from such damage. Roll a D100 after each game. If the result is equal to or less than 10% of their Willpower, the character's sanity is regained. They no longer suffer from any mental damage they have suffered, and they recover 3D6 to their Willpower, Sagacity, Nerve and Leadership characteristics.

However, it is doubtful that an Inquisitor will be unaware of the implications of overusing a Culexus assassin, and as a result, it is likely that he will take great care to reduce constant contact. In between outings, when at the Inquisitor's base of operations, a

Culexus will be kept in a psychic shielded room and only removed from this room with its Animus Speculum deactivated and only when he wishes to use it. In this way, an Inquisitor has the option of whether they wish to take the Culexus with them or not.

Culexus Assassins are mentally brainwashed, Psyker hunters. They do not care whether they live or die, and live to kill Psykers and they savour only these moments. A Culexus gains no experience in campaigns, and in this way they can learn no new skills, and their characteristics will not increase either. However, should a Culexus EVER succumb to a psychic power, they will be driven mad by it's psychic emanations reacting within it's Animus Speculum, destroying what little sanity it had left. In this case, a Culexus will subsequently suffer from frenzy until it is sent away by the Inquisitor to be brainwashed. Sending a Culexus to be brainwashed means it misses the next D6 games, however it returns completely fixed, and all permanent damage is removed from its roster.

HOW CAN GMS COPE WITH A CULEXUS?

A Culexus Assassin is a truly powerful force of nature, creating devastating effects for all concerned. Should it be made to initiate its emergency parameters it is capable of inflicting horrific damage on all those around it. But is this all truly fair? Or do these rules go too far? Well as far as I'm concerned they ARE fair and the rules do not go too far. I knew from the offset that this creature would be immensely powerful, indeed, in

Warhammer 40,000 it has the capacity of being the most powerful Assassin in the game, if it is used right.

So this is what I thought about how I wanted the Culexus to be. It would either be a virtually unstoppable solo operative, or a powerful but dangerous ally. I think this has been achieved quite well, but GMs may feel this is either too much, or not adequate. Of course I would love everyone to see it my way and love these rules, but this probably wont happen, so I suggest that GMs sketch some appropriate concessions to satisfy any discontentment, or any situation I haven't covered.

The idea here is to get the balance right, not making it too powerful, whilst making power gamers and others who love it but want an Inquisitorial Party be forced to consider the tactics of using one very carefully. Besides, the Culexus is a crazy addition to games and such a loose cannon makes for much more interesting games, giving the opponent an opportunity to turn such a powerful enemy to its own allies' worse nightmare.

The Culexus in this way is best used as an independent; however it gives the opportunity for gamers who want one as part of their inquisitor party to have one without seeming unfair or beardy. In this way, either way, the Culexus is powerful, but not unstoppable, and far from being a method to a guaranteed win, stands an opponent in equal stead.

Covered below are the stats, weapons and special rules for using a Culexus Assassin:

CULEXUS ASSASSIN

A Culexus is a fearful killing machine, designed to destroy rogue psykers, mutants and other heretics. An Inquisitor powerful or crazy enough can enlist the support of such a powerful creature. Culexus Assassins are feared by all, even their allies, and have terrifyingly powerful psychic abilities, capable of destroying the minds of psykers, mortals and aliens alike, draining their life-force, or simply reducing them to a snivelling wreck. Beware the Culexus Assassin, for crossing its path will cost you your soul...

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Culexus	90	90	70	70	95	80	80	120	50

Equipment: Animus Speculum*, Psyk-Out Grenades (3), 2 points of armour* on all locations except head*

Special Abilities: Acrobatic, Ambidextrous, Dodge, Force of will, Nerves of Steel, Wyrd: Life Drain**. There is a -20% modify to any attempts to detect an assassin.

Special Rules:

Animus Speculum (*): The Animus is a large skull faced helm designed to channel the Culexus' powers in order to aid its vile purposes. The Animus Speculum counts as a closed helm with auto-senses and has a built in weapon with the following profile:

	Typ	Range	Mode	Acc	Dam	Shots	Rld	Wt
Animus Speculum	Basic	F	single	-	X	-	-	25

The power of the Animus is psychic energy from the Culexus channelled though the helm and fired as a mental projectile. In this way, the Animus uses psychic energy, which is in constant supply from the Culexus and so has no maximum amount of shots and doesn't need to be reloaded. The Animus is not a very precise weapon, however it needs only make contact with its target to unleash its horrific psychic power on the victim's brain.

A character hit by the Animus must take a Willpower Test (This is modified by the Culexus' Soulless rule if they are in range). If the test is passed, then the character fights off the psychic attack and suffers minor damage. Add D6 to their injury total. However if it is failed they take damage equivalent to the amount it is failed by. The location is still randomised, however this is only to work out where the blast initially hits. Half of the damage inflicted is on this location; the other half is on the head (damage is not doubled). If the location rolled is the head, then all of the damage is on the head! Psykers hit by this weapon half their Willpower when taking the Willpower Test.

Soulless: The Culexus is a terrifying sight to behold, and causes terror in all around it. All characters, (friend or foe!) within 18 yards of the Culexus suffer -20% to any Willpower or Nerve tests.

Psychic Abomination: All enemy Psykers who can see a Culexus are filled with fear in the knowledge that they are facing a foe intent on destroying them. A Psyker wishing to target a Culexus with a psychic power, shooting attack or to attack in close combat must pass a nerve test or spend their remaining actions running for cover. A Psyker within 18 yards that fails this test must pass a Willpower test or succumb to the Culexus' psychic screams. A Psyker that fails such a Willpower test takes 2D6 damage to the head (this is not doubled).

Psychic Power – Life Drain ():**

Difficulty: 15

The Culexus senses the energy emanating from a Psyker, and in a greedy screech, draws the life force from the Psyker to heal its wounds and restore its own life force.

The Culexus can use this against an enemy Psyker within 6 yards (can be in combat with the Psyker). Upon passing a psychic test, the Culexus attempts to drain the life force from a Psyker. The Psyker must pass a Willpower test modified by -1% for every 1% the Culexus passed its Psychic test by (the soulless rule does not apply to this power).

If the Psyker fails, it takes damage equivalent to the amount the test is failed by, and this damage amount is taken away from the Culexus' damage total. Any remaining damage points that aren't used in healing the Culexus are lost; the Culexus cannot gain more life from a Psyker, only to heal its wounds. The damage inflicted by the Culexus is not on a specific location and is simply added to the Psyker's damage total.

Psychic Damage: It is important to consider that just about all of the abilities of the Culexus has the capacity to cause damage to character's heads, the easiest way to kill a foe. I have stewed about this and I like my rules, however, I feel that this ability to cause easy headshots will be greatly manipulated. So I have decided that these rules about the psychic damage inflicted from Culexus Assassins need a little tweaking.

Culexus Assassins are designed to kill Psykers, and as such their psychic frequencies are designed to destroy Psykers. In this way, any head damage inflicted by Culexus on a Non-Psyker will have limited affect. Non-Psykers will still suffer that damage during the game; however a 'Crippled' result for a Non-Psyker will not make a subject "dead, dead, dead!" and instead will count as though they had simply suffered system shock. At the end of a game where a Non-Psyker has been made to suffer system shock through damage to the head the damage will not be as severe as other weapons, and as such the affects will wear away somewhat, and as a result, the character will lose D10 from either their Nerve, Willpower or Sagacity (determine randomly). Do note that Non-Psykers can still end up receiving Mental Damage just like any other character.

CONCLUSIONS

Right, that's the Culexus Assassin, for use in your Inquisitor games. I feel these rules are fair and I really will get upset if any of this is left out as I feel that this character is powerful, but should be used carefully in moderation. After all it is designed to rid the world of Psykers, and most Inquisitors are Psykers themselves...

Thanks for reading this and I really hope that gamers and GMs

warm to this as much as the Fanatic Crew. The Culexus will suite campaigns as a solo, party member or even as a NPC. However I do recommend discussing carefully a background to its use in the campaign, making some suggestions to its limitations, such as a party with a Culexus could be ambushed by parties that have Psykers that can sense the Culexus' psychic energies.

Keep gaming...

Ant Loughlin, veteran gamer and Inquisitor Gamesmaster.