

HERMES' PORTAL



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Issue n° 9

July 2003



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HERMES' PORTAL

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Who's who

Tyler Larson

A gamer for 20 years, Tyr or Ty as his friends call him, has gamemastered, dungeonmastered, storytold and storyguided for almost 11 years everything from Amber to Talislanta. Born in Clarkston, Washington he has been and lived all over the world and is fascinated by history and the peculiarities of certain localities. He also has a strong desire to understand quantum physics but is left with only uncertainties. A long time failed musician and slightly successful poet, he is very happy to be a part of Hermes Portal and has dreams of writing gaming books for Ars Magica.

News from the Line Editor: July 2003

There isn't a lot of news to report, since the last issue of Hermes Portal was only two months ago. *Black Monks of Glastonbury* is out, and was a June release. *Sanctuary of Ice* was, last time I heard from Atlas, very close to going to the printers, and should be there by the time you read this. The chance that it will come out in (late) August is steadily increasing. Cross your fingers.

We are very close to 10,000 downloads of the fourth edition rules from RPGNow. A week ago, we were at 9,700 downloads, 450 or so in the previous two weeks. So, by the time you read this, we should be over 10,000 downloads. That's a lot, and we know that at least some of those people have decided to play the game, because they've emailed to tell us. It's still too early to tell how much of an effect it will have on sales, though. We don't see any change in numbers until it filters through to distributor orders, and that can easily take months. So, we know that the experiment was a success; we just don't know yet how *much* of a success.

Work on fifth edition is continuing, and my work on fourth edition is coming to an end — I will be turning the final fourth edition product over to Atlas in the very near future, probably by the time you read this, in fact.

Making a New Edition

What is going into the making of the new edition of Ars Magica? In the first place, and most importantly, a lot of playtesting. Work started some time ago, and the second round of playtesting has already finished. Later playtest rounds will involve people who have never played the game before, but at the moment all the playtesters are old Ars Magica hands. I'm doing everything I can to avoid releasing the fifth edition with problems on the scale of the problems with invisibility and armour in the fourth edition.

I'm also trying to address all the problems that fourth edition has thrown up over the years, and incorporate some of the most popular additions into

the core rules. That is the main thrust of the current work: make a fifth edition that all current players will think is a big improvement over fourth. It is almost inevitable that the current fans of the game will buy the new edition, so it is important not to disappoint them. Of course, I don't expect everyone to like every change that is made. I don't expect that I will like all of them, because playtest feedback will probably force me to do at least one thing I don't particularly like. What I do hope for, however, is a fifth edition that all Ars Magica fans want to use as the basis of their game, with one or two house rules to reinstate their favourite bits from fourth or earlier editions, or even from their older house rules.

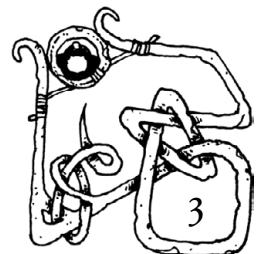
This is throwing up a number of difficulties. One of the most difficult decisions is knowing just how much to change things. Should I completely rewrite rules in problematic areas? There are no simple answers to this, although the over-all aim has to be to produce a new edition of Ars Magica, not a new game. It has to satisfy both the people who think the game is defined by its rules, and those who think it is defined by its background. Of course, the amount I can do without breaking that commitment varies depending on the area of the rules concerned. I can't rip out the magic system and start again; that's too central to the game. I could do that with, say, the rules for enchanting items, or combat, or study. Similarly, I can't take the Order of Hermes out, but I can tinker with the Houses. Ultimately, these decisions are judgement calls, and one of the most important jobs for the playtesters is to test my judgement, and tell me if I've gone too far.

I'm hoping to start playtesting with Ars Magica novices early next year. That's when the second aim gets the focus: the aim of making the game accessible to newcomers. Quite a lot of work towards this will have been done in the first phase, since confusing, contradictory, and broken rules are as much of a problem for old hands as for novices. However, the presentation of the game will get most of its work during the next phase. The old hands already know how to play the game, so they tend to easily understand the phrasing of rules, or the intent of flavour text. Novices, starting from nothing, will get confused and make mistakes, and the presentation will have to be altered to take account of that.

Once I've finished my part, or possibly somewhat earlier, Scott Reeves at Atlas will get started on making fifth edition the best looking edition of the game yet. He's already done an excellent job with *Nyambe* and *Unknown Armies*, so I'm happy leaving that task in his hands. I'm sure fifth edition will *look* great, and I'm working as hard as I can to make sure that the content is great as well.

Publisher's corner

David wrote to me a few days ago saying he would not have much News from the Line Editor for this issue, but in the end, I'm left with just enough space to say issue #10 should be ready in November.





Mythic Zoroastrianism

by Alexander White

Preamble

Without a doubt it [magic] arose in Persia, with Zoroaster. On this our authorities are agreed...

— Pliny, *Natural History* 30.2.3

I have read in many books that magus is the same thing in Persian as priest in our language. What is there in being a priest and in having accurate knowledge, a technique of traditional ritual, sacred rites and traditional law... Listen to this, you who rashly slander magic! It is an art acceptable to the immortal gods, an art... It is a religious tradition dealing with things divine, and it has been distinguished ever since it was founded by Zoroaster and Ohrmazd, the high priest of divinities.

— Apuleius, *Apology* 25-26

According to traditional accounts, the Persian prophet Zoroaster invented the secrets of ritual magic. Latin Father Isidore of Seville said he discovered ‘those four spirits of virtue who stand in cruciatu locis, that is, in east, west, south and north ... who are spirits of the major hierarchy and who have under them twenty-five legions of spirits each’. There are those who claim that Zoroaster invented all of the magical arts. Next to Hermes, Thoth and Moses, Zoroaster stands as a colossus of the magical world. As well as formulating the magical arts, he was the first to proclaim the existence of a single supreme god Mazda, was the first prophet of that god and taught that the world was divided between the two dualistic forces of Good and Evil (Ahura Mazda/Ohrmazd and Angra Mainyu/Ahriman). His faith expanded throughout Persia from as early as 1000 BC and became the official religion of the Sasanians, Persia’s last great empire.

Zoroaster, as much as any such pre-eminent figure, deserves a treatment for *Ars Magica*. His influence over both magic and monotheistic faith is certainly reason enough.

Thanks to: Jack Fairchild for inspiration and playtesting and Jeremiah Genest for valuable feedback and advice. Also to my troupe.

Zoroastrianism in *Ars Magica*

A number of assumptions are made in this article. Ahura Mazda is the same God as that of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad; and Zoroaster is a holy prophet. The fire temples of the Zoroastrians radiate a Dominion aura, Zoroaster had ‘True Faith’ and Zoroastrian activities and rites are within the Divine Realm.

Since Zoroaster is one of the greatest mages, astrologers and sages in history, and the Zoroastrian priests gave the world the word ‘mage’, the Dominion of Ahura Mazda is favourable to magic. Zoroastrian magic performed within a Zoroastrian Dominion adds the aura rating to casting rolls; it also benefits from Magical auras. Non-Zoroastrian magic

gains no benefits or penalties. Might scores generated by the Mysteries below is Divine Might.

As an option, magic taught by mystae that are linked to a yazata (below), such as the Legion of Mithras, also suffers no penalty within a Zoroastrian Dominion. It is up to your troupe or story guide whether Zoroastrian magic suffers no penalty under a Christian or Jewish Dominion. Within a Muslim Dominion, a Zoroastrian mage may add only half the aura. At the troupe or story guide’s option, Zoroastrian mages suffer from ‘The Faerie Problem’ (*Blood and Sand* p. 64).

Other options for Zoroastrian magic include:

- 1) Using Erik Dahl’s *Deus Ex Magica* (HP #3)
- 2) Having Zoroastrian magic entirely within the Magical Realm, or gain only half bonuses from both Magic and Divine auras.
- 3) Discarding the specific Mysteries below and just use Astrology and Theurgy.
- 4) Use True Faith, or a variant of the rules from *Kabbalah*, *The Bishop’s Staff*, *Blood and Sand* or *Hedge Magic*.

Mythic Zoroastrianism: A History

What follows is a synthesis of Zoroastrian theology and history. It is an amalgam of Zoroastrian beliefs and history, relying on a number of sources, both early and late.

Cosmogony and Creation

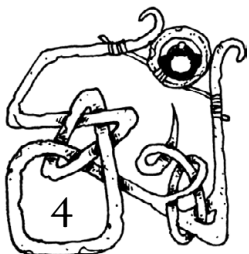
Ohrmazd was on high in omniscience and goodness: for Infinite Time he was ever in the light. That light is the Space and place of Ohrmazd: some call it the Endless Light. Omniscience and goodness are the totality of Ohrmazd... Abri-man, slow in knowledge, whose will is to smite, was deep down in the darkness: and is, yet will not be. The will to smite is his all, and darkness his place: some call it the Endless Darkness. Between them was the Void: some call it Vayu in which two spirits mingle.

Greater Bundahishn, 2:12 – 3:6

This is the orthodox dualist position, describing the original state of existence. The light was above and the darkness beneath; Ohrmazd and Ahriman, each extending into infinity. In his omniscience, the Wise Lord knew of Ahriman and created the Void (Vayu) against the inevitability of attack. The Void became an instrument called Endless Form, which derived from Endless Light and is the raw material of creation.

The First Three Thousand Years

The whole of existence lasts twelve thousand years, from original creation to the final defeat of Ahriman, the duration of this finite time is based on the twelve signs of the zodiac. It took Ahriman three thousand years to become aware of Ohrmazd. He beheld the light, and because it was of different substance to himself, he sought to attain it. To do so, he created the many demons, creatures of darkness designed for battle and destruction. Ohrmazd in this time created the Void, which is the first creation. Of the final nine thousand years, three thousand would pass according to the will of Ohrmazd, three thousand



Glossary

Agiari: a fire temple.

Ahuna Vairyo: the principle Zoroastrian prayer, composed by Zoroaster; it is short and can be uttered in fifteen seconds.

Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd): the 'Wise Lord', supreme divinity, who is personified by the Amesha Spentas.

Ashavan: followers of Truth or Righteousness.

Ashem Vohu: 'Righteousness is the best thing', the opening words of a principle prayer.

Amesha Spentas: 'Beneficent Immortals', the seven deities or qualities of Ahura Mazda: Holy Spirit, Good Intention, Truth, Dominion, Devotion, Wholeness and Immortality.

Angra Mainyu (Ahriman): the opponent of Ahura Mazda and the Zoroastrian Devil or Satan, he represents every negative aspect of creation and is personified by the Daevas.

Atesh Behram: 'the fire of Varahan', the highest grade of consecrated fire.

Avesta: the corpus of Zoroastrian ritual texts, written in a language called Avestan (similar to Indian Sanskrit).

Daevas: The seven arch-demons created by Angra Mainyu to oppose the Amesha Spentas. They are Fury, Lust, Apostasy, Envy/Discontentment, Anarchy, Hunger and Age/Decay.

Dastur: the highest grade of Zoroastrian priest.

Druj: the Lie, Wickedness or Disorder.

Drvants: followers of the Lie.

Farohar: the winged disk topped by a human figure with royal robes and headgear (in the style of the Achaemenians), it has been the principal Zoroastrian symbol since 600BC and represents Ahura Mazda.

Fravashi: the guardian angel of a Mazdean (also a Mazdean parhedros).

Gahambars: seven seasonal festivals throughout the year, each is associated with one of the Amesha Spentas and domain of creation.

Jashan: thanksgiving ceremony performed by at least two priests that may take place anywhere outside of a temple environment to mark special anniversaries or good news.

Kusti: a long, woven cord tied three times around the waist. Personal and devotional prayers are said while untying or tying at certain times during the day.

Mazdean: 'Mazda worshippers', a follower of Ahura Mazda and his prophet Zoroaster.

Mobed: the lowest level of priest; from it originates the term magu (magi).

Navjote: 'New Birth', the first initiation performed before adolescence, in which the young Mazdean is presented with his sedra and kusti, and assumes the responsibilities of the faith.

Nowrûz: 'New Day', the New Year's festival that occurs at the spring equinox.

Pahlavi texts: holy texts composed during the Sasanian period (226-642) as well as some time after the empire fell to the Muslims. The name Pahlavi means 'Parthian'.

Sedra: a plain, short sleeved shirt worn under normal clothes and presented during the navjote.

Tan Dorosti: 'Healthy Body', a prayer of good health, long life and virtue that is often used as a farewell.

Yasht: a liturgical hymn in praise of a divine being. The Avesta contains yashts to various Iranian divinities and spirits, all of whom are agents, helpers or manifestations of Ahura Mazda.

Yazata: a being worthy of worship. Yazatas have varied origins, mostly from the gods of the ancient Persians who have been incorporated into the worship of Ahura Mazda.

Zarathustra (Zoroaster): the prophet and priest of Ahura Mazda, he founded the faith of Mazdeanism as early as 1000BC. He is known as a great magician, sage and prophet.



would pass according to the will of both Ohrmazd and Ahriman, and in the final years, Ahriman would be made powerless and Ohrmazd would save creation from aggression.

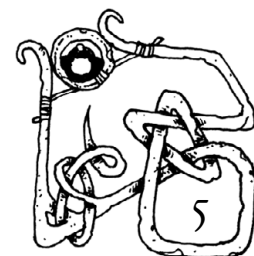
The creation of the Void limited Time, for Ohrmazd saw that if Ahriman were to be destroyed, he would have to be lured out of eternity and become limited within finite time. While Ahriman may seek to incapacitate what Ohrmazd created for a while, he would not be able to destroy it entirely, since all that issues from the hand of the Eternal shares in its eternity. Ahriman, beholding creation, became aware of Ohrmazd's superiority and was unsure of himself. Ohrmazd's complete confidence in the indestructibility of his creation and Ahriman's unsureness settled the course of fate and confirmed Ohrmazd's victory.

Both Ohrmazd and Ahriman had fashioned physical, material bodies for themselves. The Endless

Form of Ohrmazd is his material light, a form of fire — bright, white, round and manifest from afar; from Vayu the Void, is identified Time, the primal matter, and finally the essence of the gods: orderly movement. Ahriman's body is fashioned from the material darkness, in the form of black and ashen coal. From his material self-will, he created concupiscence (varan). Finally he formed the essence of the demons, evil, disorderly movement, the spiritual property that seeks to destroy the creation of Ohrmazd.

They then turned their attention to the intellect and will. On one side Ohrmazd created True Speech from the material light, revealing the productiveness of the Creator. Ahriman on his side created from the Endless Darkness the Lying Speech, making the Destructive Spirit manifest.

Ohrmazd, aware of himself not only as light, wisdom and power, but also as goodness and mercy,





offered peace to Ahriman, although he knew that there could be no compromise in the long run. Ahriman refused, not believing that Ohrmazd's offer was genuine. Ahriman's refusal sealed his final fate: Ohrmazd chanted the Ahuna Vairya, beginning the Good Religion and revealing to Ahriman his inevitable defeat.

Material Creation

Along with the fashioning or creation of the Benevolent Immortals (Amesha Spentas), Ohrmazd, with the aid of Vayu, brings into being the sky, water, the earth, plants, cattle and finally, humanity. Alone amongst creation, mankind corresponds to each part of the cosmos. His skin corresponds to the sky, his flesh the earth and metals, his bones to the mountains, his veins to the rivers, his blood to the water, his stomach to the sea, his hair to the plants, his reason to the cattle and his soul to the human race itself. Each part of creation, as a reflection of the divine realm, was perfect, and Gayomart, the primeval man, shone like the sun.

Onto this ideal world, Ahriman rained evil; he broke through the sky and assaulted creation, spreading poison and pollution where he went. For ninety days the forces of the Druj (Lie) assailed the world. When his victory seemed assured, he sought to return to his dark home but found the way blocked by the spirit of the Sky (Asman), clad as a warrior and flanked by the fravashis, the guardian angels of mankind. Trapped in the material world, Ahriman watched as the destruction he had wrought was healed. Plants grew, the droughts were ended by rain, and humanity continued to thrive.

Although Gayomart had been destroyed, as had all of the other primeval portions of creation, their seed had been spread. From the seed of Gayomart grew the first human couple, Mashye and Mashyane. Try though he might, Ahriman could not destroy creation. Though he killed and corrupted individuals, mankind as a whole continued to increase.

The Prophet

Little is known for sure about Zoroaster, although there are many stories. Mazdean tradition states that the Wise Lord conceived him of the virgin Dughdov over one thousand years before the birth of Christ, and centuries before Moses. The Greeks placed him six thousand years before Plato, while many Zoroastrians placed him 258 years before Alexander the Great.

His coming was foretold by many ancient beings, such as the primeval ox, and the first king, Yima. Conceived as he was by Ohrmazd, his body was made up of three divine parts, khwarr ('heaven sent glory'), his fravahr ('guardian angel') both of which passed through the heavens to the earth, and finally his tan-gohr ('physical body'). As he was born, he laughed rather than cried, so happy was he to be brought into the world. At that moment, nations praised his coming and rejoiced, while devils and demons wailed in terror.



Diabolical Attacks

Raised by a 'pagan' priest, Zoroaster grew up on the borders of the known world, at the very eastern extent of the Persian Empire. As a child he demonstrated wisdom that far exceeded his years. Growing up, he evaded many assassination attempts by his own (diabolically misguided) father and by jealous priests. His piety protected him from attacks by wild beasts. He performed miracles, such as healing injured animals and driving away malicious demons.

After becoming a priest and memorising the numerous prayers and hymns, he retreated to the mountains and lived the life of an ascetic, sleeping in a cave and sustaining himself on a diet of milk and curd. After long periods of contemplation, he divined the cyclic nature of time, the seasons and the course of the planets and came to the conclusion that there was a single universal architect — a supreme God.

Revelation

God revealed himself to Zoroaster soon after. Zoroaster felt no fear towards the Wise Lord, because his love was to be courted by sublimation and love, not sacrifice. Until then, the gods had been appeased by blood sacrifices. Ahura Mazda appeared to Zoroaster both visually, and aurally; the Prophet saw and heard the holiness of God directly. His conversation with God is recorded in his hymns, the Gathas.

Over the next ten years, Zoroaster wandered alone, travelling as far as the borders of mysterious Taugast. He preached his revelations: that there was but a single God, who was opposed by the demonic antithesis of goodness Ahriman. He established many of Persia's most holy Sacred Fires, as he personally designed and even helped build the temples. As he gained adherents including the great king Vistaspa, he participated in a great crusade against the servants of Ahriman. After his death at the age of 70 (or 77) the nascent Persian Empire adopted his teachings.

The Achaemenians and Parthians

Founded by Cyrus the Great, the Achaemenians were the great eastern rivals of the Classical Greeks. They made the faith of Zoroaster the faith of their Empire and rivalled (and even exceeded) the Greeks' scientific and cultural achievements. Indeed, the Greeks regarded him as a pre-eminent philosopher, mathematician, astrologer and magician. The priests of Ohrmazd were known as magi (mobs), and they held the secrets of Zoroaster: how to understand the movements of the heavens, control spirits and unlock the secrets of the natural world.

The great civilisations of the Persians and Greeks came into conflict many times, and like the Mercurians of Rome hundreds of years later, the priests of each warring party participated. Magian faced Hermetic priest, and although the Persians won victories at first, Alexander the Great, who swept through Asia and conquered all in his path, undid them.

Mazdeans in later ages ascribed this decline to the waning faith of the emperors. Darius and other emperors courted the favour of other, lesser, gods. This led to their weakening, leaving them open to outside invasion and conquest. Under the Greek Seleucid rulers (312-64 BCE), mystery cults of countless foreign gods flourished. Mazdeanism became just another temple cult.

After a century of Greek rule though, the Persians rose under the Parthian dynasty. Again, the Magians came to prominence, although this time the Ahura Mithras figured more prominently. The figure of Mithras soon inspired an independent mystery cult, which travelled far beyond the borders of the Parthian Empire. It spread through the Mediterranean to the Roman Empire, where it reached the Rhine, Danube and Thames.

The magi of the Persian Empire now came into conflict with the Roman priesthood. For centuries, the main rivals of the Mercurian priests were the magi of Persia. During this period, eastern mysticism and magical practices saturated the west, as Chaldean astrology and mysticism sailed alongside Egyptian cults to Rome and its far-flung provinces. Zoroaster's magical teachings were disseminated in Syria and beyond.

The Sasanids

As the main rival to the Eastern Roman Empire housed in Constantinople, the Sasanians established Mazdeanism in its classical form. This was a golden age, and the Sasanians waxed strong, becoming a rich and powerful empire. Expanding rapidly, the weakened Mercurians were unable to protect Emperor Valerian from being captured by the Persians. A century before Constantine would adopt Christianity as the state religion, the Sasanians established Mazdeanism as their official religion. This was largely through the effort of the high magi Kartér, who expanded the powers and privileges of the priesthood and founded numerous fire temples. At this time the holy texts were gathered to form the Avesta, hymns that formed ritual invocations of divine figures.

The rise of Islam in early seventh century spelled the end of the Zoroastrian hey-day. The defeat of the Sasanid Empire by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and then Uthman saw the conversion of a large number of Zoroastrians and their mages (see *Blood and Sand* p. 7). Although accepted as a religion 'of the Book', Zoroastrians who refused to convert were persecuted and pushed further and further east. It was not until the new Muslim converts had routed the Magoi that the Order of Hermes was able to enter into the Middle East and found Covenants. The Persian Empire fell, but the teachings of Zoroaster survived.

Zoroastrians after Islam

Islam reduced Mazdeans to minority status after the fall of the Sasanid Persian Empire in 642AD. Muslims considered Mazdeanism, like Christianity and Judaism, to be 'scriptural' monotheists, in effect, ahl al-kitab ('People of the Book'). For all intents and

purposes, Ahura Mazda was the same god as the God of Abraham; the Avesta was placed in the same category as the Torah and the Gospel. Zoroaster himself came to be thought of as a prophet. The formal acceptance of Mazdeanism was very different to its practice in every day life.

In day-to-day activities, Mazdeans are mocked as fire-worshippers and are called gabars ('polytheists'). Most Mazdeans who didn't convert live in the remote and poor areas of South Central Iran. Increasingly they are starting to settle in Western India.

The more numerous Muslims typically discriminate against Mazdeans in daily life. Although considered ahl al-kitab, they must pay the jizya (poll tax) and obey other restrictions placed upon them (see *Blood and Sand*, p 51-2).

Despite this, Arabic has not displaced the local language, and the Iranians maintain distinctly Persian cultural practices. The ancient glories of the Achaemenian era, and the heroes who predated the first Persian Empire, were preserved in countless tales, poems and stories. The Persian poet Abu al-Qasem Mansur (935-1020), whose pen name was Ferdowsi, composed the national epic, the Shah Nameh ('Book of Kings'), written in Persian and which avoided all of the borrowed Arabic words of the eleventh century. Naming practices also conserved Persian culture, as Iranian children were named after legendary heroes like Rostam and Kay Us.

Mythic Zoroastrianism: Beliefs and Practices

Wise Lord and Destructive Spirit

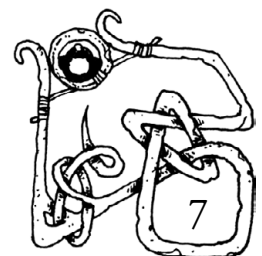
Ahura Mazda

The Wise Lord is embodied by the sun, 'the highest of the high' and in daylight. He is the creator or 'father' of all things, both spiritual and material, and of free will. In later texts, Ahura Mazda is described in anthropomorphic terms: he wears a star-decked robe; the 'swift-horsed sun' is his eye; his throne is in the highest heaven, from which he holds court. Not all Zoroastrians take this literally though and continue to believe in a transcendent God.

To Mazdeans, Ahura Mazda is perfect in every way. He is the source of all that is good, pure, light, beautiful, joyous and healthy. He embodies Truth, the Good Mind, Good Religion and Righteousness. Each of the Amesha Spentas embodies an aspect of the divine nature that mankind can and should share. They are the means by which God interacts with humanity, and by which humanity interacts with him.

Angra Mainyu

Angra Mainyu is the Lie (Druj), leader of the cosmos' demonic hoards; he is the embodiment of every negative and evil thing and concept in the universe. Importantly, the Destructive Spirit is not an evil substance; he is not compelled either by nature or God to be evil. Like every other being in existence, he made the conscious decision to inflict misery upon himself, his followers and the followers of Truth.





The forces that array themselves against Good are the powers of Fury, Arrogance and Bad Purpose.

The Battle against Evil

Zoroastrianism preaches a very high standard of personal morality that binds the laity and priesthood alike. Actions taken in this life form the basis for reward or punishment in the next. Collectively, the actions of the faithful can bring about cosmic changes: the triumph of good against evil, or Ahura Mazda against Angra Mainyu.

The Mazdean faith has a roster of gods and spirits, yazatas and Amesha Spentas, who are opposed by corresponding evil spirits. They can easily be thought of as the host of angels who face a legion of devils. Since the creation of the world, through to the present age and until the final judgement, the universe and earth are the battleground for this contest between the forces of good and evil.

The Pahlavi book Bundahishn ('Original Creation'), one of the Mazdean holy books, relates that for the 12,000-year span of creation, Ahura Mazda is locked in conflict with his adversary Angra Mainyu (also known as the demon Ahriman). Of course, the outcome, for devout Mazdeans, is never in doubt. Ahura Mazda enjoys over Angra Mainyu certain advantages so that eventual victory, after a struggle, is certain.

From creation, whose 'Adam' is the hero Gayomart, Mazdean theology moves to the present age, where Zoroaster is the world's spiritual guide. The final stage is one of renewal, where a saviour, Saoshyant will reign until final judgement and the inevitable victory of Ahura Mazda.

Purity and Corruption

Zoroaster's teachings stress personal honesty and harmony with society. For Zoroaster, the material world was morally neutral, since it was created immaculately by the Wise Lord. It is in the material world however, that humanity makes its choices for right or for wrong. There is no rejection of the material world as being a source of sin or evil, taught by other dualist faiths such as the Gnostics or Manichaeans. The world is to be enjoyed, although in moderation; so asceticism has little place for the Mazdean faith.

The material universe is God's good creation, and all unpleasant aspects of it such as plagues, cold and drought, are demonic products of Angra Mainyu. Because there is danger of physical corruption in the world, elaborate steps are taken with rituals and practices designed to maintain purity. These rites are designed not only to purify the body, but also the soul, and the process is one that starts at birth. All of the rituals are incorporated into everyday Zoroastrian religious practices, such as prayer, veneration of the Sacred Fire, wearing of special clothes such as a sacred undershirt (sedra) and cord (kusti), and so on.

Prime sources of pollution are the dead or putrefying animal matter, including materials cast off of the human body. There are elaborate rituals to separate

people from sources of impurity, which includes the isolation of menstruating women in separate rooms. Corpses are exposed on 'Towers of Silence' or mountains and other high places to be consumed by sacred vultures. Cremation is not performed as it is considered defilement of holy fire. All of these rituals serve either to contain corruption or to purify the individual.

Initiation: Sedra Pushan

The ceremony of Sedra Pushan ('putting on the sacred undershirt') has been practiced since the first days of the Mazdean faith and is first performed at between twelve and fifteen years of age. The ceremony represents a sacred second or re-birth (navjote) and is one of the most important initiation rituals into Mazdeanism. The priest invests the child with two items of clothing that he will wear for the rest of his life, the kusti (cord) and the sedra (undershirt).

The child bathes in consecrated water and is then taken to a room where his parents, relations, friends, and the officiating priest assemble. A new set of clothes for the child is laid before the priest, including the sacred shirt and cord; the payment for the priest (traditionally payment 'in kind', or food); a tray of flowers, to be presented to the guests; lighted lamps and scented candles; a burning censer lit from the sacred fire with fragrant incense; and symbols of prosperity, such as pomegranate seeds, almonds and so on.

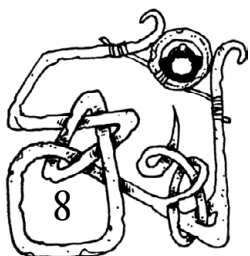
With his hand on the child before him, the priest recites the repentance prayer, which the child also recites. After this, various prayers are recited by the child (with instruction from the priest), including declarations of faith and other relevant passages from the scriptures, which affirm the truth of Ahura Mazda and Zoroaster and reject the evil lie of Angra Mainyu and his servants. During this, the child is dressed in the consecrated undershirt and cord.

One of the most important parts of these articles of faith is that the efficacy of one's own good thoughts, words and deeds in the salvation of the soul. The child declares that neither priest nor prophet will intercede for him, as only his own actions and thoughts will determine his salvation. It is this triad that is the pivot of the whole moral structure of Zoroaster's teachings.

Both the undershirt and the cord contain many symbols, from reminders of one's faith and the sacred hymns, to signs of one's prosperity, purity and faith. The cord can only be removed at certain times or under certain circumstances; the same applies for the undershirt. Untied and retied at least five times a day, the knots on the cord are reminders of devotion. The sedra, with its v-shaped neck, contains a small pocket at the point of the neck, which is said to contain the good deeds of the wearer.

Yazatas and the Amesha Spentas

The yazatas ('worshipful beings') are Mazdean angels who originate from pre-Zoroastrian Indo-Iranian pantheism. Rather than alienate potential



converts, the old gods were adapted as subordinate and benevolent spirits under Ahura Mazda. Figures such as Marduk, Mithras and other local figures of myth or sacrifice became yazatas of greater or lesser significance, but like the European gods-become-Saints, they were given appropriate monotheistic clothing. They occupy the third celestial rank, after God and the Amesha Spentas. The most important of the yazatas, such as Mithras, Haoma, Atar or Vayu, receive a hymn or Yasht of their own. On the whole, many yazatas personify natural phenomena or abstract ideas, such as the moon, stars and winds, or blessings, obedience, and peace.

The yazatas are not akin to a pantheon, such as the myriad gods of Greek mythology. Rather, many Mazdeans prefer to choose their own personal protector, believing that God is too grand, too exalted, for them to trouble him with their small petitions or offerings. Since Ahura Mazda is eternal and transcendent, Mazdeans approach the yazatas, in much the same way as a Christian seeks the aid and comfort of a saint or angel.

Amesha Spentas

May the Wise Lord give us Wholeness and Immortality through the Holy Spirit and the Best Mind, through deeds and words in accordance with Truth, and through the Kingdom and Rightmindedness.

Yasna, 47:1

It was not until the Sasanian period that a second grouping of divine entities was elaborated: the seven Amesha Spentas ('Holy Immortals'). The Amesha Spentas represent the abstract theological and moral aspects of Mazdeanism. Each cares for and protects their creations. Each is a pathway to reaching Ahura Mazda. The ideas that form the Amesha Spentas form the mystical progression taken by Magoi towards enlightenment and God.

The Amesha Spentas personify ideal Mazdean qualities: Good Mind, Truth, Devotion, Desirable

Dominion/Kingdom, Wholeness, Immortality and the Holy Spirit. They are also personifications of the character of Ahura Mazda.

Vohu Manah, Good Mind

The first born (or first 'created') of the Wise Lord, it was Vohu Manah who appeared in full raiment to Zoroaster. The Good Mind personifies God's wisdom, working with humanity and leading them to God. It is through Vohu Manah that Good Religion, and then the Good Reward, is attained. Wisdom, the Good Mind, is one of the most important aspects of God and humanity; it is one of the three parts of the divine personality, Infinite Time, Light and Wisdom. The demons who oppose him are Aeshma (Wrath) and Az (Wrong-mindedness)

Asha, Truth, Righteousness

Most beautiful of the Beneficent Immortals, Asha represents not only the opposite of untruth, but also the divine moral order of the universe. Mazdeans are known as Ashavans, followers of Truth. Those who do not know Asha can never go to heaven. Asha preserves order on earth; he smites disease, death, fiends, sorcerers and all the creatures of the Druj.

Armaiti, Devotion

Sitting at Ahura Mazda's left hand is Armaiti, the Wise Lord's daughter. She has dominion over the earth and the pasture of cattle. She personifies faith, obedience, religious harmony and worship. Her name means Fit-mindedness and Devotion, and it is she that visibly appeared to Zoroaster. Taromaiti (Presumption) and Pairimaiti (Bad-Mindedness) oppose her.

Khshatra, Desirable Dominion

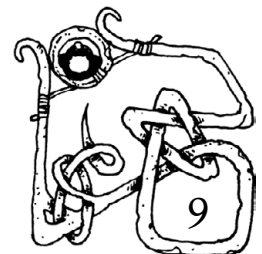
Khshatra embodies the majesty, might and dominion of God, and symbolises the kingdom of heaven and of earth. He protects metals and at the end of times, it is he that governs the sea of molten metal that will wash over the world. Thus, it is through him that all of God's rewards and punishments are meted out. Because in Mazdean cosmology, the sky is formed of stone and metal, Khshatra has authority over the perfectly governed heavens. Saura, personification of Misgovernment, Chaos and Drunkenness opposes Khshatra.

Haurvatat, Wholeness, Integrity

Haurvatat is feminine wholeness, totality and fullness; her symbol is water. She personifies personal salvation and communication, and is linked with Ameratat. Together, they are opposed by Tawrich (Hunger and Thirst).

Ameratat, Immortality

More correctly, Ameratat signifies deathlessness. She personifies the counter-aspect of salvation, the state of immortality. She is linked with growth, vigour and vegetation.





Spenta Mainyu, Holy Spirit

Spenta Mainyu is the Amesha Spenta of God Himself, the active Holy Spirit. From Spenta Mainyu issues life, light and beauty. It is through Spenta Mainyu that God actively wages war upon Ahriman. He does so by creating Good Works and beautiful things, in opposition to the despair and evil created by Ahriman. It is through Spenta Mainyu that mankind can see the good within itself. By this connection, humanity comes under the aegis of the Holy Spirit. It is through Spenta Mainyu that all other Amesha Spentas emanate.

Why Seven?

There are many reasons why there are seven Amesha Spentas. Some possibilities include deep astrological significance, such as the seven stars of the constellation of Pleiades, the planetary spirits (see *Blood and Sand* p. 71-73), or the Sephirothic Tree of Life (see *Kabbalah*, p. 70). Another connection is the similar astrological connection with the Christian identification of the Seven Deadly Sins (personified in part by the Daevas). The aspects and nature of the Amesha Spentas is further detailed below in the Gifts of Gayomart. It is possible for a knowledgeable Astrologer to gain correspondences from invoking a particular Amesha Spenta, gaining a bonus of between +1 and +3.

Traditions Survive

Amongst the Muslims of Iran, the custom of Nowrûz (spring equinox new year) has dishes with small quantities of seven items, whose Persian names all start with the letter 's': sugar, apples, honey and so on. These are believed to be a survival of the devotion to the seven Amesha Spentas.

Story seed: While in the Levant Tribunal, the PCs are invited to a meal by an important Muslim bureaucrat. Each of the seven dishes begins with the letter 's', indicating that the bureaucrat is a closet Zoroastrian or has sympathies for Zoroastrianism. The PCs could exploit this by blackmailing or extorting him; or if one of the PCs is a Magoi, the meal could indicate that the bureaucrat wishes to become an ally.

Story seed: After learning about the Zoroastrian faith in the Levant, the PCs discover that their Covenant cook, who hails from eastern Iran, has been preparing meals corresponding to the Amesha Spentas. Like the above story seed, the cook could be a Zoroastrian himself or could be trying to indicate that he has Zoroastrian connections (a possible mentor or member of the Magoi). Alternatively, the meals could be a (weak) sympathetic connection, allowing hostile Magoi or even antagonistic yazatas a chance to strike at the heart of the Covenant.

The Daevas

Created in mockery by Angra Mainyu, the Daevas are the unholy angels of evil who oppose and contrast the Amesha Spentas. Each Amesha Spenta

faces a demon that is their inverted personification. Together, they are known as the Druj, 'the Lie'. From the Daevas originate every source of unhappiness and evil. All that is foul and corrupt, vile and harmful was created and is personified by a Daeva; they are the darkness to the light of the Amesha Spentas. Not merely to do with nature or physical corruption, the Daevas are also responsible for the darker emotions such as hate, envy and so on. For every good thing and thought created by Ahura Mazda, as many evil things and thoughts were created by Angra Mainyu.

There are seven Daevas: Aesma Daeva ('fury'), Aka Manah ('lust/evil mind'), Indra ('apostasy'), Nanghaithya ('envy/discontentment'), Sauvra ('anarchy'), Tawrich ('hunger') and Zarich ('age/decay'). Note: Indra here should not be confused with the Indian Indra.

Prayer

The primary prayers of the Mazdeans are very old, dating back to Zoroaster. They are written and spoken in Avestan, a language that is no longer commonly used; they appear throughout the Avesta, the Holy Scriptures.

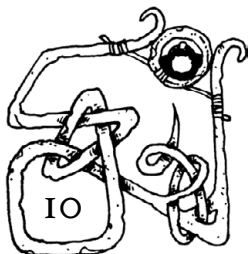
Many of the prayers take an incantation-like form, reminding the devotee of the various battles between Ahura Mazda and the servants of Angra Mainyu, and the reassuring victories as the Wise Lord recites prayer formulas. All of the prayers, although ritualistic, contain a strong ethical content. It is in these prayers that the figures of the Amesha Spentas can be found.

The standard benediction for many Mazdean ceremonies is a blessing of good health, long life and good fortune (Tan Dorosti, 'Healthy Body'), but which is given not in Avestan but Pahlavi. Both the yazatas and the Amesha Spentas are invoked by the Tan Dorosti, which can also be used as a farewell (similar to 'be well').

Priests

Priests, who are the custodians of the great repository of ritual heritage and lore, carry out nearly all the ceremonial obligations of Mazdeanism. A priest says prayers on behalf of individuals whether or not they are present at the fire temple. A Mazdean fire temple is thus not a place of congregational worship, but acts more as a shrine that may be visited by the lay-folk at any time.

Only men can become priests, the office of which can be hereditary since priests may marry, raise families and pass on temple proprietorships to their heirs. To become a priest, a boy must be taught from the age of between seven and fifteen the Avestan prayers and services, which he must know by rote. Although most are also instructed in the meanings of the rites and prayers, the displacement of Mazdeans by the Muslims who conquered Persia in the seventh century means that more and more often the young trainee receives a poor theological education.



Most priests do not receive payment but income from donations and from property and other holdings owned either by individual priests or by the temple itself can mean that the priesthood can be influential locally. Also, priests are permitted to perform secular work. Given that most Mazdeans have a reputation for honesty and fair dealing, they can often be in demand in various professions that value such virtues. Furthermore, priests can accept payments for prayers said on another's behalf, or for funerals and other ceremonies.

There are three grades of priests, depending on training and apprenticeships: mobed, ervad, and dasatur. All practicing priests wear only white to symbolise their purity.

Fire

Fire is the central symbol of Ahura Mazda's divine presence. The typical Mazdean sanctuary is the fire temple, the agiari ('fire place'). It is a square enclosed chapter with grillwork and vents to let the fire's smoke out. The fire rests in an iron urn on a stone dais; the urn is typically filled with sand or ash on which the fire burns continuously. It is maintained by the priests of the temple, who must add wood and say the appropriate prayers in each of the five gahs or periods of the day.

Zoroastrian Dominions

Zoroastrian Dominions are the same as normal Dominions (*ArM4* p. 243). Because Mazdeanism is not a congregational faith, the presence of an agiari and a sacred fire increases the Dominion aura, up to a maximum of 10.

Agiari	Aura Increase
Atesh dadgah	+2
Atesh adaran	+3
Atesh Behram	+5

There is not a great tradition of congregational worship, as an individual may have priests say prayers on his or her behalf. However, the faithful may at any time enter into the inner enclosure and make an offering, often sweet-smelling sandalwood or other scented wood or incense. At the height of the Persian Empire, every fire-temple had its fire burning continuously. Today, with the Mazdean faithful pushed to the edge of the Muslim world, few temples can afford such costly maintenance. In its place, many Mazdeans keep small oil-lamps or wood-fires burning in the home. This type of fire is the simplest and is called atesh dadgah ('fire of the appointed place').

Priests can perform purification rituals for fires by saying prayers as they hold a metal ladle of wood chips above, but not touching, a fire until the chips burst into flame. There are two grades of sanctified fire above the atesh dadgah: the atesh adaran ('fire of fires') and the atesh Behram ('fire of the guardian Varahran'). The middle fire, atesh adaran, is the union of four ceremonially-ignited fires. The highest grade of fire, atesh Behram, requires the combination of fires from sixteen different sources, including

from the workshops of various artisans, a (presumably non-Mazdean) funeral pyre, and fire set by lighting. The consecration of the atesh Behram requires the Yasna and Vendidad (holy hymns) to be recited 1,128 times. Reciting both requires a day, so the entire process takes place over more than three years, although multiple groups of priests can pray simultaneously. Since the destruction or abandonment of many of the greater fire temples of Persia, few atesh Behram have been consecrated.

Story Seed: Near to the PC's covenant an ancient spirit stirs, demanding that an atesh Behram be consecrated. The spirit could be a yazata, making it near godlike in power, but could be any one of a hundred local spirits, a mischievous jinn (see *Blood and Sand*), or perhaps even the spirit of Varahran himself (see below). Succeeding in this task could earn the PCs not only a useful spirit ally, but also allies amongst any regional Mazdeans. Furthermore, the fire could be a source of vis or beneficial aura. Failing or refusing to consecrate the sacred fire could earn the spirit's displeasure, leading to additional problems.

Additional fires may be lit and consecrated for festivals or ceremonies (known as a jashan), or domestic worship outside the temple, but all require the involvement of at least one priest and generally two or more. Jashans mark anniversaries or thanksgiving ceremonies. Given the disparate nature of the Mazdean faith, most communities only kindle fires for jashans, where various offerings of fruit and flowers are made and priests recite prayers for an hour or so. At the conclusion, the congregation can file by and place a pinch of a sweet smelling incense or resin into the fire as participatory communion.

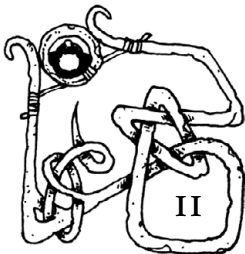
The Scriptures

Mazdean literature reflects three phases of linguistic and scriptural progression, from the Achaemenian period (559-331BC), Parthian (246BC-226AD) and Sasanian (226-641AD). An illustrative way of seeing this is through the name of the principle figures of Mazdeanism. The Great God was known as Ahura Mazda during the Achaemenian era, but became Ohrmazd in later Parthian and Sasanian times. Likewise, Angra Mainyu was such in Old Persian (Achaemenian), but became Ahriman in Pahlavi. All of the Amesha Spentas, Daevas and yazatas have different Pahlavi names.

Beyond even this, the Avesta, the holiest scriptures of Mazdeanism, are in the oldest form of language, comparable to the Achaemenian phonetic inscriptions. Two master copies of the Avesta were said to have been inscribed in golden letters on ox-hides, but were destroyed by Alexander the Great when he captured Persopolis in 331BC.

There are several different forms of Holy Scripture, a short description of which follows:

Yasna ('Worship'): contains seventy-two principle hymns recited daily. At their core are the seventeen Gathas, composed by Zoroaster





himself, which form the moral and ethical content of the rest of the Avesta.

Yashts ('Hymns'): less archaic than the Yasna, they date back to the prophet and are prayers to deities and spirits from ancient Iran and also some from the Vedic hymns of India. They are presented as quotations of Zoroaster and are more ritual than moral.

Vivevdat ('Law against the demons'): a collection of prose texts that oppose the forces of evil through detailed purity laws.

Khorda Avesta ('shorter Avesta'), a collection of frequently used prayers owned by Mazdeans who are not priests

Sirozah: a list of deities governing the thirty days of the month.

Hadhokht Nask ('sayings'): descriptions of the journey of the soul after death.

Story seed: Fragments Remain

Although most believe the master copies of the Avesta destroyed, Alexander the Great was not as thorough as he could have been. Mazdean priests smuggled part, or all, of a gold-inscribed ox hide out before Alexander sacked Persopolis. Rumours amongst the sorcerers of the Levant hint that the master copies can manifest miracles, and have wondrous powers of healing and purification. Finding this relic could bestow great magical powers or holy wisdom, and the Magoi would definitely pay handsomely for any concrete information on the location of the Avesta.

A Zoroastrian Library

Yasna: Authority (Theology: Zoroastrian); Quality -5

Yashts: Tractatus (Theology: Zoroastrian); Quality +6, Level 6

Vivevdat: Tractatus (Occult — Zoroastrian Demons); Quality +6, Level 7

Khorda Avesta: Summa (Theology: Zoroastrian); Quality +6, Level 4

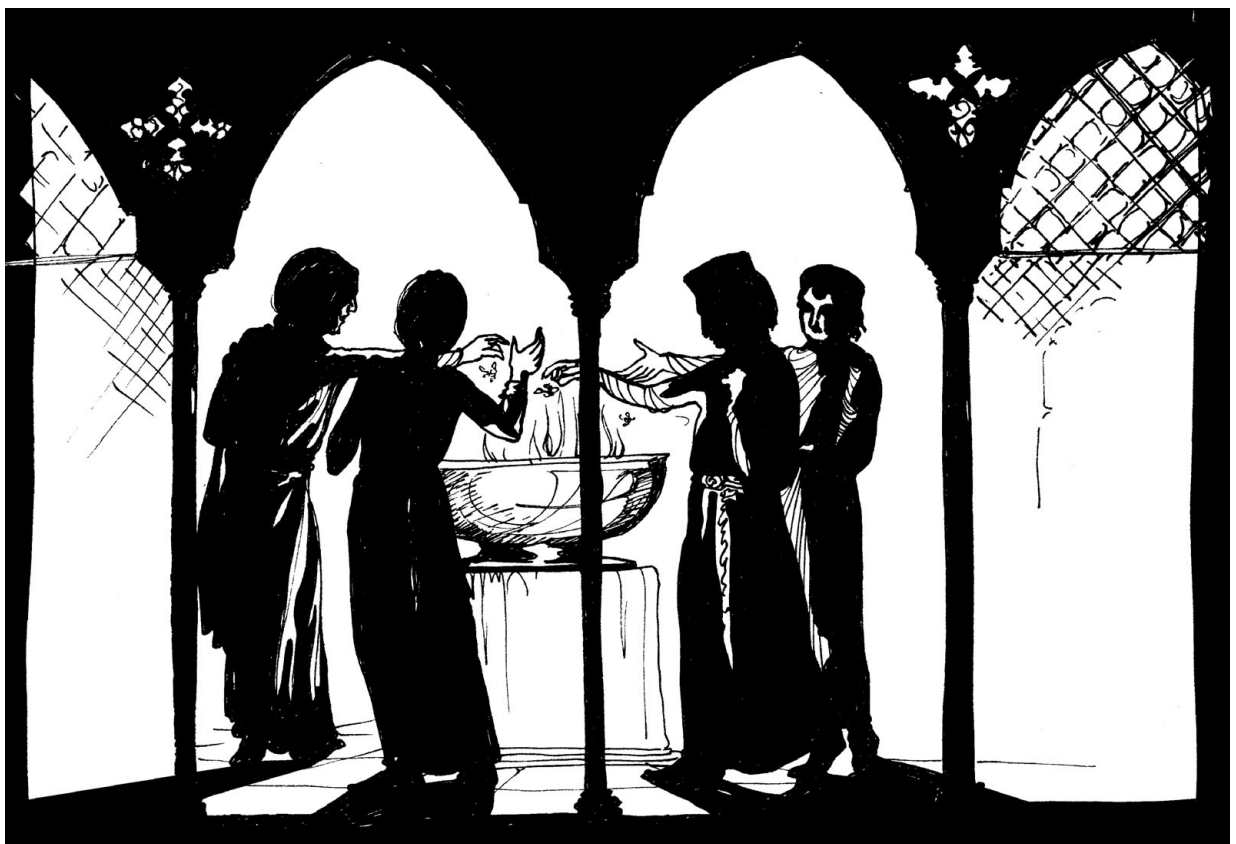
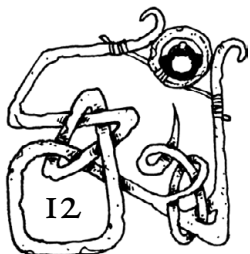
Sirozah: Tractatus (Theurgy or Occult); Quality +6, Level 5

Hadhokht Nask: Tractatus (Legend Lore); Quality +6, Level 4

Zoroaster's Telescope: Authority (Astrology); Quality -5. Zoroaster's Telescope is a scroll written by Zoroaster, which contains a map of the heavens, and the names of the divine spirits that control each constellation and planet. It is incredibly rare, and is written in Avestan. Translations are even scarcer.

Shah Nameh ('Book of Kings'): Tractatus (Area Lore: Persia); Quality +5, Level 6. The great Persian epic, written by Ferdowsi, tells of the numerous Persian heroic kings, such as Kay Us, ruler of the world and builder of palaces of gold, silver, steel and crystal, which granted him immortality.

Zatspram: Authority (Alchemy); Quality -5. The Zatspram is a text that tells of the world's creation, and again was written by Zoroaster in Avestan. Its symbolic language tells of how the world was created: fire was compounded with each of the six elements that composed the world, sky, water, earth, plants, cattle and man.



Story Seeds: The Book of Kings

The Shah Nameh tells us of two great kings, Yima the First King, and Kay Us the ruler of the world.

The Golden Age of Yima

In the tale of Yima, who was offered the role of revealer of the Good Religion, it tells of two powerful artefacts that bless his thousand-year reign: a ring and a golden goad (herding stick). These artefacts allow him to spare his subjects the hardship of bad weather, illness and even death. Despite this, Angra Mainyu causes the world to become corrupt, and Ahura Mazda warns Yima that a great cataclysm will purge the world of its taint. Yima, in order to weather the cataclysm, stores the seed of all living creatures and plants in an underground arc (vara).

Close inspection of the Book of Kings reveals to the PCs a possible location of the vara. This underground cave could be the resting-place of the very building blocks of life- the sacred seed of every living thing. Furthermore, it is possible that Yima's artefacts are also kept there, which could grant the owner immortality, control over the weather and the ability to ward against illnesses. To complicate matters, there is a group of Magoi who wish the vara to be kept hidden, or the spirit of Yima himself, now a yazata, who does not take kindly to thieves.

The Palace of Kay Us

Mentioned only in passing in the Avesta, the Book of Kings tell us that Kay Us ruled the world and built great palaces of gold, silver, steel and crystal upon Mount Elbruz. These palaces had the magical property of restoring youth and curing the sick. Kay Us was stripped of his immortality when he attempted to conquer the sky and house of the Amesha Spentas.

It is possible however, that at least one of his palaces remains, hidden in a regio on Mount Elbruz (in Iran), which could restore the youth of an aged magus or companion. The palace, however, is guarded by Srit, the warrior spirit of King Kay Us' champion. Furthermore, Kay Us' fall from divine favour means that the palace may now be overrun by Daevas or other spirits of Angra Mainyu.

The Calendar

Most Mazdeans use the local calendar, except in areas that are still strongly Mazdean. However, they still follow festivals and other celebrations. The religious year is an ancient solar calendar of twelve months, each of thirty days, plus five days called Gatha Days (released spirits), which are not a part of any month but form the time of a special ritual. During the Gatha Days it is customary to pray for deceased ancestors.

Each day and each month is named for a divinity or divine manifestation, a tradition that dates back to Sasanian times. Consequently, once a month, the day and month have the same name, which is the cause

for special reverence. The ninth day of the month, sacred to fire, is favoured in any month for visits to the fire temple, but especially so during the ninth month (also sacred to fire). The tenth day (water) of the eighth month (water) is a time when many Mazdeans stand at the edge of bodies of water to offer prayers. Devoted to Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas are four days out of each month, but these occur at irregular intervals. There is no strict seven-day week for the followers of Zoroaster.

Separated communities, disparate empires and a failure to account for leap years has resulted in there being three Mazdean calendars and three New Year seasons: two in late summer and one at the spring equinox. Times of ritual observance (gahambars) are related to the Amesha Spentas and are times when the community gathers to pray and feast.

Life and Death

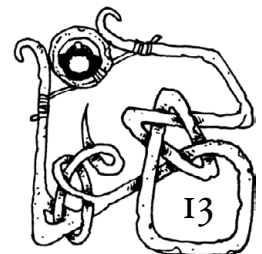
Each human in their life chooses whether to receive their eternal reward by supporting Asha over Druj. Like Judeo-Christian faiths, Mazdeanism has the tenet of free will. By following the teachings of Zoroaster, one follows the path of Asha in the cosmic war between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu.

People have a guardian angel or spirit (fravashi) which looks over and protects them, as well as the soul (urvan) that is housed in the body during life. Upon death, the soul can be aided on its passage to the next life; prayers and a three-day vigil conducted by the deceased's family forms the core of this assistance. While the soul waits by its body, it is often subjected to the Sagdid ('a dog's gaze'), which is believed to drive away spirits of the Druj that come to take or attack it. At the end of the three days, the soul makes its way to the Chinvat Bridge ('the Bridge of the Separator'), which widens for the righteous, but narrows to form a wickedly sharp knife for the wicked, so that they fall into the abyss. The bridge is guarded by the three yazatas Mithras, Sraosha and Rashnu, who pass judgement on the urvan, for good or ill. There are many folk-tales and accounts of this journey. In one, the soul of a faithful man encounters a beautiful maiden who represents his good deeds; the soul of the wicked man meets a foul hag, who represents his misdeeds. Sroasha, the divine personification of obedience, is the messenger of Ahura Mazda and psychopomp, who guides the souls to heaven. Rashnu is the yazata of divine judgement and justice, and personifies righteousness.

Art and Architecture

The symbol that represents Mazdeanism as a whole is the farohar, which represents Ahura Mazda. It takes the shape of a disk with wings, a tail, and a bearded male figure from the waist up dressed in royal robes. The farohar has been around since Achaemenian times and is a common sight on ruins or old buildings in Iran.

For Mazdeans, fire represents the divine presence and a fire burning atop a waist-high urn or square altar is a common decorative device. Fire also





appears particularly as an ornament on the roofs of fire temples, often sculpted into the stone and gilded.

There are no ancient portraits of Zoroaster, but there is no specific law prohibiting his representation. Various depictions of the yazatas are common however, with Mithras and the myriad aspects of Asha being ubiquitous.

Architectural requirements for agiari or fire temples are few. Most are square or rectangular with a grill or vent to let out the smoke from the holy fire. Larger temples have entrance chambers that open into the main chamber that houses the fire, which is generally in a metal enclosure at the far end of the room. Large stone sphinx-like human headed, winged bulls, common amongst Achaemenian ruins and Mesopotamian art, often flank older fire temples. Achaemenian-style columns and other decorative details may also adorn the old temples.

Zoroastrian Mysteries

The Magoi

Symbol: Farohar

Motto: Humata, hukhta, huvarshta ("Good thoughts, good words, good deeds")

Patrons: Ahura Mazda, Zoroaster, the Amesha Spentas, Mithras, and other Ahuras and yazatas

House Affiliations: Any, often Flambeau and Guernicus

Flaw Requirements: Vow (Zoroastrian faith) -2

Origin Myth: The demigod, mage, son and prophet of Ahura Mazda, the great god of Good, Zoroaster founded the faith of the Persian Empire on the principle of monotheism. In his divine hymns, the Gathas, he revealed to humanity that there was one, supreme and all-knowing Eternal God, the Lord of Wisdom. Locked in eternal conflict were two entities: Ahura Mazda, and his adversary, the negation of the Good, Angra Mainyu, the Destructive Spirit.

In order to destroy Angra Mainyu, Ahura Mazda created an immaculate material world based on seven pillars, which are personified by the Amesha Spentas (Beneficent Immortals). The Wise Lord knew that Angra Mainyu would attack the material world, bringing with it disorder, falsehood, sorrow, cruelty, disease and suffering. So he created Man, the pinnacle of Creation, to play the final and decisive role in the great cosmic battle between Light and

Dark. The prophet declared that through their free will, mankind could overthrow Angra Mainyu, using the ethical framework of goodness, of mind, truth, power, devotion, perfection and immortality. By personifying these virtues, and following good thoughts, words and deeds, the eventual annihilation of evil would take place.

For over a thousand years, the religion taught by Zoroaster flourished as the state religion of three mighty Persian empires. Amongst the many subjects of these empires were the Jews, who adopted some of the prophet's main teachings and transmitted them in due course to Christianity and later, to Islam. For many centuries, the Magoi of Persia fought the Mercurian priests of Rome. There was great hostility and antipathy between the two, but ultimately, the Mercurians failed to destroy the Magoi; the Cult of Mercury diminished by the fourth century but the Magoi would continue until the advent of Islam, where they were pushed further and further east... and west.

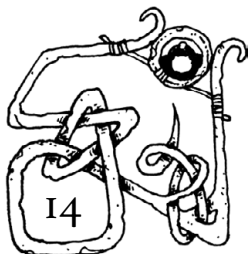
Zoroaster is a looming figure in the world of magic. Amongst the Greeks and Romans, he was believed to have created the art of magic itself. He was a master of many arts, such as astrology, divination and demonology. The followers of Zoroaster, the priests of Ahura Mazda, gave the very name magoi to the world; their sovereignty over the magical arts is legendary — many consider them to have been the greatest mages on earth, although few remain now.

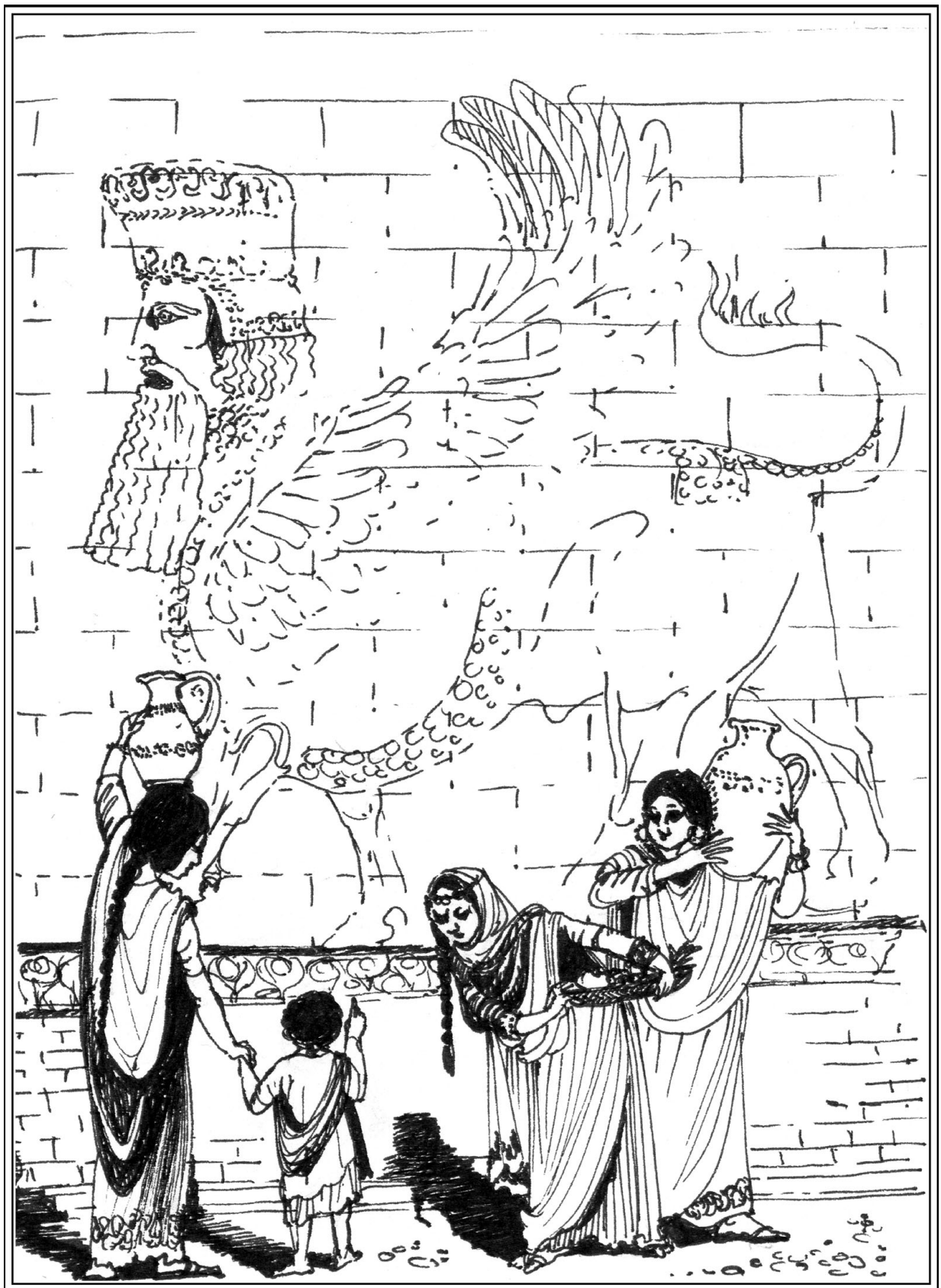
When the Order of Hermes first spread in the Levant, they (re)discovered the Magoi. While most refused to join, and rebutted attempts to kill them, a few did join the Order. Most remained in the Levant Tribunal, but a few travelled west, into Thebes and Iberia. Their ancient and powerful knowledge of Astrology and other magical arts meant that they received warm welcomes from all but the most xenophobic Hermetics.

Levels of Initiation: There are seven levels of purity, each one corresponding to one of the Amesha Spentas. It is nigh impossible to master all seven Gifts of the Wise Lord, since they take two different paths, the Path of Self (commonly known as the Via Ipsum or Hvatô) and the Path of Community (Via Commune or Airyaman).

Goals and Practices: Zoroaster taught that since the world is essentially immaculate and good, man should live well and enjoy its gifts, although always in moderation (as the states of excess and deficiency are the works of Angra Mainyu). Above all, Magoi (and mankind in general) are encouraged to lead active and industrious lives in honesty, charity and happiness.

Although this seems on the surface to be very passive, the living of a happy and full life is one of the chief ways that mankind engaged in warfare against the Hostile Spirit. A full life strengthens men to fight evil. Therefore, monasticism, celibacy, fasting







and mortification are anathema, as they are practices that weaken humanity.

The faithful are also expected to follow a long and strict list of taboos revolving around purity and cleanliness. One's purity can be stained by not following any of a number of tenets, and can render one unworthy to be present before the sacred flame, which burns in every Zoroastrian temple. Certain clothes must be worn, religious festivals observed and other dictates observed.

Magoi are expected to take a more active role in the fight against the Hostile Spirit. This generally involves seeking out sources of unhappiness, decay, corruption, disease, suffering or sorrow and attempting to right them. The Magoi were given the Gift by Ahura Mazda in order that they could take a more proactive role, combating demons, the servants of Angra Mainyu. In truth though, any perpetrator of evil in the world is a servant of Angra Mainyu, who must be opposed.

This active stance by many Magoi has gotten them into trouble more than once with the Quaesitores. But given that many Magoi belong to House Flambeau (attracted by the devotion to fire), some of the Order's greatest Hoplites are Magoi; most walk the fine line between following Hermetic law and acting according to their faith. Indeed, in recent decades, more Quaesitores have been converted to the Magoi, attracted by the insight into truth and light gleaned.

Magoi outside of the Order: Before the coming of Islam, many priests of Mazda were powerful wizards. While some Magoi have joined the Order of Hermes, more still remain in agiari far from the Order, on the borders between Iran and India. Because of the teachings of Zoroaster, many of the Magoi are adept magicians. This can be mimicked though the priest being a Natural Magician (*Hedge Magic* p. 40, or 'Deus ex Magica', *Hermes Portal* #3), a Sahir or a Raqi (*Blood and Sand* p. 64 and 75). With any of these, the Magoi should still be able to initiate into any of the mysteries, gaining the equivalents of Hermetic Astrology and Theurgy. If this option is used, Magoi Natural Magicians should substitute their Theology (Zoroastrian) and Occult scores in place of Philosophiae and Alchemy. Story guides may even decide that Magoi within the Order of Hermes are made up entirely of Natural Magicians or Sahir, in effect being an esoteric lineage.

Virtues taught: The Magoi know many magical secrets, having invented or refined a large number of them. They teach most of the Astrology and Theurgy virtues. Their greatest secrets belong to those who walk the road of the Amesha Spentas, becoming earthly archetypes of the essence of Ahura Mazda. At the story guide or troupe's option, pious mundane Mazdeans may initiate into the Gifts of Gayomart, with magical bonuses applying as knacks or equivalents. Initiation into the mysteries of the Magoi has several requirements. A potential initiate must know

not only the rites and hymns of the Zoroastrian faith, but must also be pure in mind, word and deed.

Initiation lvl (T: Z)	Virtues Taught
Acolyte (2+)	+1 Hermetic Astrology, +1 Hermetic Theurgy, +2 Parhedros (known as Fravashi)
Mobed (4+)	+1 Asha, +2 Celestial Magic
Ervad (6+)	+2 Spenta Mainyu, +3 Vohu Manah, +3 Armaiti
Dastur (8+)	+4 Hauvatat, +4 Khshatra
Unknown (10+)	+5 Ameratat

Theology (Zoroastrian): The knowledge Theology (Zoroastrian) represents the number of prayers and rituals you know. Each pyramid point can roughly correspond to the number known (although it is not an exact figure). Additionally, Theology reflects how well you know the meaning behind the prayers. Use the fluency table on *ArM4* p. 59. Your knowledge of Theology also limits your progression in the Gifts of Gayomart, as you must know the intricate words and rites to purify yourself.

Scribe/Speak (Avestan): Avestan is the archaic and holy language of the Zoroastrian Holy Scriptures that was used by Zoroaster. No longer spoken or written outside of the fire temples, it is a language that is now used purely for sacred hymns and prayers. Scores in this ability allow you to read and write texts in Avestan, and to understand the words of prayers spoken in Avestan. A low score in Scribe (Avestan) reflects the ability to copy or write the symbols of the language but not to understand it. Both Scribe and Speak (Avestan) are skills generally only possessed by Zoroastrian priests.

Preferred Ordeals: Initiation Quest, Good Works, Pledge, Zealot (Good, Truthful etc). Additionally, each Mystery Virtue includes a number of 'ordeals' or sacrifices that are mandatory.

Gifts of Gayomart ('Dying Life', the Primeval Man)

All of the Mysteries include a number of powers that characterise the Amesha Spentas. When you first initiate into the Mystery, you chose one of the benefits, either (in most cases) the Affinity, or the other, specific power. You may then initiate into the other through normal initiation. You do not need to learn all of the lower level Mysteries in order to initiate into the other Inner Mysteries.

Outer Mystery: Asha

Good/Fire: You gain a Magical Affinity with Fire (but not Ignem) with a score of 1; you also gain the Personality Traits Truthful +1 and Law Abiding +1.

You gain the Creative Genius virtue (or lose the Creative Block flaw), and the above Personality Traits.

By gaining the Affinity with Fire, you also gain a Divine Might score, which is equal to the number of experience points you have in the Affinity. An Affinity score of 3 will result in a Divine Might of 6 (at



least); a score of 6 gives you a Divine Might of 21 and so on. You may not increase your Magical Affinity using normal experience points. Only through the performing of a special ritual, Purification of the Sacred Fire, can its score be raised.

This Divine Might is used in a similar manner to the Purity Score from Kabbalah: Mythic Judaism. You may add your Divine Might score to any supernatural Resistance rolls; you also add your Affinity score to any aging rolls, to soak rolls, and stamina rolls to resist disease and poisons. At the option of your story guide or troupe, you may also spend Divine Might to use Divine powers, such as those attributed to Alsatia, the Divine Unicorn (*ArM4*, p. 258-9), although Divine Might spent this way is lost permanently.

Your Magical Affinity is important for continuing to be initiated into the Gifts of Gayomart as it is a measure of your purity and your closeness to the Amesha Spentas. To learn an Inner Mystery, your Affinity score must be double the rating of the mystery: the +2 inner mystery requires your Affinity score to be 4, a +3 inner mystery requires your Affinity score to be 6 and so on.

Divine Might?!

Many story guides and troupes may balk at the idea of gaining Divine Might. After all, it is very powerful and can be used for all manners of things; and all for only a +1 Virtue! Alternatives can be to get rid of the Divine Might altogether and treat Asha as Purity from Kabbalah. Similarly you could change it to Magic Might, or just keep it as a standard Fire Affinity.

Ordeal: In order to be initiated into this, you must perform the various purification rituals that Zoroastrians undergo — this purifies both body and soul. Should you ever lose the Law Abiding or Truthful traits, then you lose access to all this Gift's benefits, including your Might.

+2 Inner Mystery: Spenta Mainyu

Holy Spirit: Despair or hopelessness cannot affect you, and your very presence drives those feelings away from those around you. Your mind and soul are incorruptible to magical and mundane effects that seek to make you sad, or feel hopeless, and as such you are abhorrent to demons that promote these feelings. Any attempt simply fails, although spells can still botch, and demons still spend Infernal Might.

This immunity is reliant on your own faith and belief in yourself and Ahura Mazda. By spending a Confidence Point, you become immune to all negative feelings such as those described above, which lasts for the rest of the encounter. The Confidence Point is regained the next time you succeed in some difficult task (as per normal Regaining Confidence rules).

You gain a Magical Affinity with Humanity, with a score of one.

Purification of the Sacred Fire CrVi (Gen); Ritual

R: Personal, D: Spec, T: Ind

Special: Level restricted by Theology (Zoroastrian) score

This ritual purifies the performer, cleansing his body and spirit. Casting this ritual is unlike that for normal Hermetic ones, as it is deeply religious, involving reciting all of the prayers and hymns from the Avesta before a consecrated fire at the Zoroastrian New Year. This entire process takes a day. At the end of the ritual if successful, add a simple die + the ritual's level - 5. This total divided by five is the number of experience points you may add to your Asha Affinity with Fire. You may only perform this ritual a number of times equal to your Theology (Zoroastrian) score. Once this limit is reached, you must spend time creating a new version. You may only cast this ritual once per year, on the New Year. Which Zoroastrian New Year is up to you, but once you decide, you cannot alter it.

Your Theology (Zoroastrian) score multiplied by five is the highest level of this ritual that you may cast, no matter what your respective Creo and Vim score may be. Thus, with a T (Z) score of 4, you'd be able to learn this ritual at level 20.

(Non-Hermetic Design, based on 'Salvation's Progress', *The Mysteries*)

Ordeals: In order to be initiated into this, you must become, in effect, a Zoroastrian priest, with all of the privileges and prohibitions that entails. This is a -2 Obligation (Mobed) and -2 Vow (Zoroastrianism). If you break any of obligations of your position (such as, if you lie or act in a way that supports the Daevas), you lose this and all subsequent Gifts. At the troupe or story guide's discretion, the Priest virtue must be bought separately.

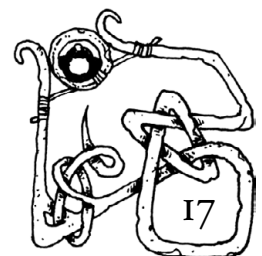
+3 Inner Mystery of Hvato: Vohu Manah

Good Mind: You cannot be lied to. When in your presence, no one, not even a demon, can tell a direct lie. People are not forced to tell the truth, but they cannot speak or communicate a falsehood (such as writing it down or using hand signals).

By spending a permanent Confidence point, you make people or beings in your presence unable to communicate falsehoods. Demons (and the fae) may spend a number of Infernal (or Faerie) Might points equal to twice your Asha Affinity to lie. This power also extends to supernatural illusion. Illusions can be perceived as such (i.e., you will know that something is an illusion), but you still will not be able to perceive what is beneath the illusion. Even Diabolical Illusions can be detected, as can the glimmers of the fae, but the Confidence Points must be spent.

You gain a Magical Affinity with animals, with a score of one.

Ordeals: More restrictions and initiation rituals follow, including a change in personality. You gain (or increase) the Personality Traits Charitable +2, Good +2, and Righteous +2. If you ever go against any of these traits, you suffer -3 to all rolls until you make





amends, and should you lose them, you lose these powers and all subsequent ones.

+3 Inner Mystery of Airyaman: Armaiti

Love for God: Your connection with the land is so deep, you are enriched and strengthened by it. This land becomes your homeland, and you are tied intimately with it. This connection also ties you to the community that lives with and on the land. Their good health and wellbeing are connected to yours: as their prosperity and happiness increases, so do yours; as they fail, so do you. You gain the new Targets: Community (equivalent: Boundary) and Homeland (equivalent: Sight), the new Durations: Fire (equivalent: Year) and Love (equivalent: Season) and the new Range: Ground (equivalent: Arcane Connection). This Gift also allows special spells and rituals to be performed that can regulate the prosperity of the land and community.

You gain a Magical Affinity with earth, with a score of one.

Ordeals: This Gift requires you to undergo a ritual that connects you to the Land, which is extremely taxing on both the mind and body. You gain 2 Decrepitude points and automatically enter a severe Temporary Twilight (resolved as normal), which binds you to the area, giving you an additional Twilight point. After you return from Twilight, you have (or increase) the Personality Trait: Love of God +2.

New Ranges, Durations and Targets

Only mages who have initiated into Armaiti can invent spells using these new Ranges, Durations and Targets. Any mage with Asha may cast spells using them.

Ground: The target can be affected so long as he/it is touching the same ground that the caster is standing upon. The caster need not be able to see the target. Rivers, mountains and other significant obstacles disrupt the spell. Ground is equivalent to Arcane Connection.

Fire: The spell will last as long as the Sacred Fire burns in the Zoroastrian Holy Temple. This Duration may only be used in rituals. Fire is equivalent to Year.

Love: As long as the caster holds a deep and abiding love for God, the spell will continue to last. This can be determined mechanically by the Personality Trait: Love of God (or similar). Love is equivalent to Season.

Community: Affects everyone living in the same community. A community is defined as a group of people living in the same locality, or who form a distinct segment of society (such as Jews, beggars, or Christians, but can also include plants or animals). Community is equivalent to Boundary.

Homeland: Affects everything within what the caster considers his homeland, which must be demarcated by landmarks and such. Specific Forms must be used if more than one aspect of the Homeland is to be affected by the spell. Homeland is equivalent in level to Sight.



+4 Inner Mystery of Hvātō: Hauvātāt

Perfection/Wholeness: Your physical body becomes immune to putrefaction, change, disease and all forms of material corruption and decay. You more easily resist magical attempts to alter the shape of your body, inflict harm upon you or give you diseases or wounds. Your body enters into a period of stasis, like the earth during winter, and resists mundane disease completely. Furthermore, you no longer scar or blemish, as your body returns to its perfect natural state. This extends also to massive damage, Incapacitating wounds no longer leave permanent marks upon you, and given enough time (years) you can re-grow lost limbs and other body parts.

You gain the ability to be understood and to communicate with others your sense of perfection. Increase your Communication by 1. If you speak your ideas and views plainly, you will not be misunderstood (this does not work across languages).

You gain the +3 version of the Purifying Touch Virtue. This Gift protects you from the physical afflictions of Aging; you still roll for Aging and determine afflictions, but you do not suffer them. Decrepitude is also still recorded and applied to Aging rolls, but gives no other penalty. Characters who reach 10 Decrepitude die normally.

You gain a Magical Affinity with water, with a score of one.

Ordeals: Your magic is now intimately affected by your Faith. You are entirely unable to cast spells if you violate any Zoroastrian tenet, such as failing to observe a rite or festival, or if you perform any action that supports the Druj. Should you violate your faith, the next time you roll for Aging, you suffer any affliction that you had previously been protected from. For example, if you had been protected from gaining two Aging afflictions, in the next winter you would automatically suffer those two afflictions, in addition to any you may gain from the normal Aging roll.

+4 Inner Mystery of Airyaman: Khshatra

Desirable Dominion: the Dominion of God is over the Sky and the minerals of the earth. This ability enhances your ability to act freely and to manifest your desires. You gain the ability to create things with your magic that last permanently without vis. The spell requires you use the Instant or Permanent Duration, but you need not expend vis to do so. As with the normal magic guidelines, you cannot use the Instant and Permanent durations with Spontaneous magic. Rituals still require vis, unless you use the Instant or Permanent Duration.

You gain a Magical Affinity with the Sky, with a score of one.

Ordeal: You are so linked with your community and land that you feel its pain and suffering physically and spiritually. Should the community ever suffer a dire catastrophe, or the land be afflicted by drought or an earthquake, it could spell your end; likewise, should the sacred flame ever be extinguished, you will likewise suffer, by losing the ability to cast magic

until it is restored. The story guide or troupe should decide upon the exact ramifications.

+5 Final Mystery: Ameratat

Immortality: So long as you maintain the maxims of Zoroaster and Ahura Mazda, remain in a state of purity and truthfulness, observe the taboos and behave with good thoughts, good words and good deeds, then you will never die. Your body slowly ages, although you can more easily resist its effects if you gained the gift of Hauvatat. While this virtue means you effectively will never die, you can still die from massive damage. Additionally there will generally come a time when you will want to pass onto the next world and become one with Ahura Mazda in Heaven. By gaining this Gift, you are assured of such a thing.

You gain a Magical Affinity with plants, with a score of one.

Ordeal: This mystery is achieved by surviving the final test of Ahura Mazda, known as Saoshyant, which are alluded too in the Gathas. Molten metal (generally lead) is poured onto your body. Damage and the other effects should be determined by the Story guide or troupe. If you survive however, you are miraculously healed of all your wounds, as you ascend to Ameratat. The immersion in the lead purges the soul of any remaining 'evil', resulting in a truly pure soul.

Zoroastrian Daemonology

Zoroaster was renowned for his controlling and exorcism of demons and spirits of all kinds. He discovered the four great spirits of virtue, and brought all of the spirits and angels of Mesopotamia under the aegis of Ohrmazd. What follows is a list of some well-known Zoroastrian spirits or yazatas.

All of the rituals needed to summon these spirits require the +1 Hermetic Theurgy virtue and follow the rules laid out on pp. 126-7 of *The Mysteries*. Most of these rituals will need to be translated into Hermetic spells before they can be used, although good luck or a willing teacher may have Hermetic versions available. Sahirs may have Familiarities with these spirits.

Note: The issue of Might here is left up to the troupe or story guide. You may wish to treat these beings as the equivalent of angels (and thus use Divine Might), or, since old gods are considered a part of the Magic Realm, you could give them Magic Might. If the spirits have Divine Might, they cannot be summoned against their will. If, however, the Theugist has noble or benign intentions, the rituals serve as a way of hailing or inviting the yazata to help.

Lesser Angels (Yazatas)

Aburani, the Undefined Waters

Also known as Anahita, Ahurani watches over both still water and rain and represents good health, prosperity and growth. She is the source of the undefined waters, and all waters on earth. Her name means 'She who belongs to Ahura' and she is reckoned to

be Ahura Mazda's daughter. She embodies fertility, sanctifying the womb of all females and purifying the milk in the mother's breast. From her heavenly home, she is the source of the cosmic ocean, and she drives a chariot pulled by four horses: wind, rain, cloud and sleet. As a source of life, she nurtures crops and herds, and also gives material gifts of horses and chariots to warriors who often pray to her for victory.

She appears either as an ever-falling pillar of water, or as a beautiful Persian maiden, dressed in a light blue dress with a small golden circlet upon her brow that radiates eight rays of golden light. She also wears a hundred stars around her neck, making up a golden necklace and mantle. The statistics below are for her 'earthly' personification, when a part of her leaves the heavens to travel the earth.

Might: 20

Characteristics: Int +2, Per +2, Pre +3, Com +3, Str 0, Sta +1, Dex 0, Qik 0

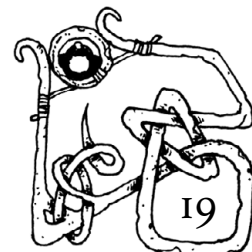
Size: +1

Personality traits: Good +3, Tranquil +4

Weapon/Attack:	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Brawl	+1	+3	+1	+0

Soak: +2

Body levels: OK, 0, 0, -1, -3, -5, Banished





Powers:

- *Summon Water*, 1 point: By reciting a prayer, Ahurani can cause it to rain or create water from thin air, or any similar Aquam or Auram spell effect by spending a point of Might.
- *Bestow Prosperity*, 5 points: With a simple prayer, Ahurani can grant the +3 Virtue Charmed Life (ArM4 45) to a character for a month.
- *Fecundity*, 5 points: Those who receive the blessing of Ahurani are able to conceive a child, even if one of the partners is sterile.
- *Bestow Gift*, 5 points: Ahurani can create a horse or chariot by spending 5 Might, or both by spending 10 Might. The horse is a real, living horse; the chariot likewise is considered to have a Duration of Inst (it cannot be dispelled).

Mah

Angel of the moon, Mah is the keeper of the seed of the divine bull, one of the sacred animals of Ahura Mazda. As the personification of the moon, Mah stands for a great number of things, such as wise speech, glory, prosperity, liberty, healing, vigour, and holy law. As lunar deity, Mah is responsible for the tides and marks the passage of time with his face. He is the attendant of Vohu Manah, the Amesha Spenta 'Good Mind', who protects the animal world and takes souls to heaven.



Might: Varies (20 to 35)

Characteristics: Int varies (0 to +3), Per varies (+1 to +4), Pre varies (+2 to +5), Com varies (0 to +3), Str varies (0 to +4), Sta varies (0 to +3), Dex varies (0 to +2), Qik varies (0 to +2)

Size: varies (0 to +3)

Personality traits: Righteous +2, Law-abiding +2, Wise +2, Good +3

Weapon/Attack:	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Brawl (fists)	+3	+3	+3	+4
Spear	+6	+8	+4	+9

Soak: varies (+2 to +6)

Body levels: varies (OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Banished to OK, 0/0, -1/-1/-1, -3/-3, -5, Banished)

Powers:

- *Augury*, 3 points: As guardian of time, Mah has an instinctive and intimate knowledge of the future and past and can cast an Intellego spell of any level by spending 3 Might points.
- *Control Tides*, 5 points: Mah can control the eddy and flow of the tides, granting a ship easy passage, or miring it with unfavourable tides. Furthermore, this can influence the success of fishing expeditions and any other activity that is reliant on the tide, as determined by the story guide.
- *Divine Insight*, 3 points: Mah may grant a character enough experience points to permanently increase either their Enigmatic Wisdom or Leadership score by one; this cannot raise the character's ability above 6 however.
- *Enforce Oaths*, 2 points: One of the many keepers of the holy law, Mah can enforce the terms of an agreement made in the presence of a sacred fire of any type, forcing either party to adhere to the oath that they made.
- *Face of the Moon*, 0 points: Mah's Characteristics and other statistics vary depending on the phase of the moon. A New Moon sees Mah with his base statistics and the human average of Wound levels. For each phase the moon waxes, his statistics increase, until the Full Moon, where they are at their maximum. As the moon wanes, they decrease back to their base levels.
- *Time's Blessing*, 5 points: For those he considers worthy, Mah can slow or speed up the flow of time, to their benefit. A laborious task that would normally take a day is completed in an hour, wounds that would take a season to heal are gone in a week, and so on. There is no definitive guideline on the benefit: it is up to the story guide. Mah is also able to prolong a character's life. The next time a character would normally accrue a Decrepitude point, it is ignored. Although he could do it indefinitely, by spending Might, Mah only grants this blessing once.

Nairyosangha

The Hermes of Zoroastrianism, Nairyosangha is the yazata of fire and is the messenger of Ahura

Mazda's divine will to humanity. Closely linked with Atesh, son of Ahura Mazda, and with Asha, Nairyosangha is invoked and prayed to frequently in the Avesta. It is he that carries the prayers of humanity up to heaven to be heard by Ahura Mazda.

Might: 25

Characteristics: Int +2, Per +4, Pre +1, Com +6, Str +1, Sta +1, Dex 0, Qik +6

Size: 0

Personality traits: Law-abiding +2, Truthful +3, Creative +3

Weapon/Attack: Init Atk Dfn Dam

Brawl (fists) +12 +3 +5 +3

Soak: +4

Body levels: OK, -1/-1/-1, -3, -5, Banished

Powers:

- *Fire Spells*, 1 point: As a yazata of fire, Nairyosangha can cast an Ignem spell of any level by spending a single Might point.
- *Travel*, 0 points: At will, Nairyosangha may travel across the earth to any Mazdean in an instant.
- *Herald*, 0 points: Can deliver anything to any desired person, including divine blessings, dreams, inspiration, messages and even physical objects and people. This delivery is also instantaneous.

Rashnu

The personification of justice and divine judgement, Rashnu sits in judgement over the souls of the dead next to Mithras and Sraosa, and weighs them with golden scales. Once he makes a decision, it is final and no earthly power can overturn it. He is also the guardian of the Chinvat Bridge, the path that leads to heaven, over which only the righteous may pass.

Rashnu is often invoked by judges or lawmen who wish to make fair and correct decisions. Those of righteous demeanour also call him upon when they attack minions of the Druj.

Might: 60

Characteristics: Int +4, Per +6, Pre +4, Com +2, Str +6, Sta +4, Dex +3, Qik +1

Size: +3

Personality traits: Honest +3, Solemn +3, Righteous +6

Weapon/Attack: Init Atk Dfn Dam

Brawl (fists) +12 +10 +15 +8

Flail (scales) +13 +12 +10 +15

Soak: +10

Body levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5, Banished

Powers:

- *Grant Righteousness*, 1 point: Rashnu can act as someone's Guardian Angel (ArM4 p. 45) for a short time, providing that they are a good person (have not performed any actions that support the Druj). The bonus granted may add to any roll, not merely to resist Infernal powers.
- *Discern Truth*, 0 points: As a part of his role as a divine judge, Rashnu can judge the truth of any statement or action.

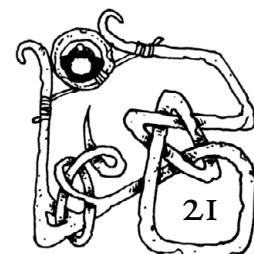


- *Pass Judgement*, varies: When faced with the soul of a deceased person, Rashnu can determine whether that person led a just and worthwhile life, judging whether they deserve heaven or hell. This costs no Might to do. If faced with a living soul, he can pass a premature judgement that cannot be revoked by any earthly power. If that soul is worthy of heaven, then they are granted a Confidence point per 5 points of Might spent by Rashnu, secure in the knowledge that they have lived a good life. Should they be judged unfit, they are inflicted with the -3 Flaw Sense of Doom (ArM4 p. 50), having gained a vision of their eventual damnation. This requires Rashnu to spend 3 points of Might.
- *Guardian of Heaven*, 10 points: Rashnu's role as guardian of the Chinvat Bridge means that he must defend it against all manner of forces who wish to prematurely or maliciously enter heaven. By spending 10 points of Might, he can double the above statistics (including his Might with regards to magic resistance rolls) for the duration of the conflict against the interloper.

Heroes

Varabran

At the end of the third century CE, Varahran rose to the throne of Persia. Under his reign, and the





subsequent reigns of his sons, Zoroastrianism took its current form and turned into the official state religion. Varahran began the golden age of the Magoi and under the guidance of Kartér, the magi-magister who composed classical Zoroastrianism, Sasanid Persia rose to great power. The greatest of the agiari sacred fires were founded by Varahran, and under him the priests of Ahura Mazda became numerous and powerful. As head of the prosperous Persian Empire, Varahran knew the intimate blessing of Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas, becoming close to the European ideal of divinely appointed rulers. Numerous legends speak of him taking on the forms of the beasts sacred to the Amesha Spentas, as he combats the various servants of Angra Mainyu. Varahran ruthlessly persecuted Christians and the heretical Manichaean sect, and was responsible for the execution of Mani in 276 CE, the same year as his own death. After his death, he rose to the status of a yazata.

Varahran appears as a glorious Sasanid king, resplendent in a gold-embroidered, royal blue robe and crown. His beard is curled and oiled; his eyes are bright and filled with majesty. He sometimes appears as a warrior, with burnished bronze scale-mail, long spear and figure-eight shield. He may also carry a mighty hunting bow and a quiver full of arrows, which he carries at his waist. His other forms are that of the sacred bull, a white horse, a camel, a boar, a handsome youth, a bird, a ram, a wild goat and a warrior.

Might: 20

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +3, Com +2, Str +3, Sta +3, Dex 0, Qik 0

Size: +1

Personality traits: Righteous +2, Wise +2, Magisterial +3, Holy +4

Weapon/Attack:	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Short sword	+5	+5	+4	+7
Short sword & shield	+4	+6	+10	+7
Spear	+6	+8	+3	+10
Hunting bow	+3	+3	+n/a	+7

Soak: +15 (bronze scale-mail)

Body levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5/-5, Banished

Powers:

- *Aura of Rightful Authority*, varies: As per the ReMe spell, *ArM4* p. 148. This power costs Varahran no points to use on himself, but by spending a Might point, he can either have the duration vis boosted, or cast it upon another.
- *Consecrate Fire*, 1+ point: During his life, Varahran founded numerous sacred fires. By spending a point of Might, he can turn a normal fire into an atesh dadgah, or atesh dadgah into an atesh adaran. He can also supervise the consecration of the atesh Behram. Fires consecrated by Varahran burn without fuel for a number of years equal to the points of Might he expends as it is consecrated and have their Dominion aura increased by one.



- *Divine Assistance*, 5 points: At any time, Varahran may call upon the help of any of the Amesha Spentas or yazatas. They either manifest at his side, or grant him any aid they deem fit or that he asks for.
- *Holy Vigour*, 2 points: Varahran can grant another person increased sexual potency, literally 'filling their loins with holy fire'. This can have any effect the story guide wishes, but will always result in a child being conceived, even if one of the two partners in the union were sterile (although not if the male was a eunuch).

Mythic Characteristic, 1 or 5 points: May grant himself or another worthy person the +5 Virtue Mythic Characteristic (Strength, Stamina, or Presence) for a day, for 1 or 5 Might points respectively. The Characteristic is chosen when the power is used. Should the character violate any tenets of Zoroaster, or serve the purposes of the Druj, he loses the Virtue immediately.

Shape change, 1 point: Varahran can change his shape at will into any of his divine forms: a sacred bull, a white horse, a camel, a boar, a handsome youth, a bird, a ram, a wild goat and a warrior. Each of these shapes are Beasts of Virtue (see *The Medieval Bestiary, Revised Edition*).

- *Smite Druj*, varies: Through prayer and invocation, Varahran may cast the equivalent of Demon's Eternal Oblivion (*ArM4*, p. 158) or Tide of Demonic Oblivion (*WGRe*, p. 175) with a level equal to five times the number of Might points spent. This is also effective against Unseelie Faeries.

Spirits of Sickness

Nasa

The Nasa are a race of demons that take on the form of large carrion flies and consume the flesh of the dead. In their wake, they spread disease, corruption and pollution and are greatly feared, for they are most often found in the great swarms that cover a battlefield. Nasa are also found near servants of Angra Mainyu, for they are drawn to putrefaction and corruption. When being summoned or controlled by a diabolist or ally of the Daevas, their Might is halved for resistance.

Nasa are rarely found by themselves. The statistics in brackets are those for an average (Size 0) sized swarm. Such a swarm is typically made up of a hundred or so Nasa, with an extra 50 for each +1 Size.

(Infernal) Might: 1 (15+)

Characteristics: Int none (-3), Per -2 (0), Pre -5, Com -5, Str -4 (-1), Sta -3 (-1), Dex 0 (+1), Qik +1 (0)

Size: -4 (0+)

Personality traits: Tenacious +6

Weapon/Attack:	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Bite/Sting	+1	+1	+0	+0
	(+5)	(+5)	(+1)	(+5)*

* **Venom:** The venom of the Nasa is particularly vile, as it is made up of dozens of eggs that stream through the character's veins, causing the character to immediately lose a Fatigue level for the rest of the day. At dawn the next day, the character must make a Sta stress roll of 12+. A successful roll deals the character +15 damage, as the eggs hatch into a number of maggots equal to the number of Wound levels the character suffers after Soak. A failure causes +25 damage, as they hatch into countless huge, yellow maggots and burst from the character's flesh. A botch kills the character in the same manner and unless the body is burned or otherwise destroyed, it will be the source of a swarm, as per the Create Swarm power. Any appropriate CrCo spell, such as *Gentle Touch of the Purified Body* (ArM4 p. 123), or a PeVi spell, such as *Demon's Eternal Oblivion* will destroy the maggots or eggs (who have a Might of 5 collectively).

Soak: -3 (+3)

Body levels: OK, Banished (Special, see below)

Powers:

- *Body of the Swarm*, 0 points: When swarming, Nasa, are not easily hurt or dispersed. They can only be dispersed if a single attack does enough damage to kill all of them. Edged and similar weapons are all but ineffective (damage is divided by 5 before soak). Fire and other area attacks are more effective and do not incur penalties. The swarm must suffer a number of points of damage equal to 10 + (Size x 5), otherwise the attack is ineffective. Nasa swarm attacks are also particularly dangerous due to their smaller size. Armour offers only half Protection against their attacks, as they can penetrate between small cracks and gaps. This also makes it hard to create barriers against them, as they can pass through insect sized holes in two rounds.
- *Regeneration*, 0 points: Any damage that does not completely destroy the swarm outright is

healed at the end of that round, as the swarm regains its original size.

- *Create Swarm*, 1 point: A single Nasa can lay hundreds of eggs in a corpse, which kills it. The next morning, the eggs hatch, creating a swarm with a Size determined by the Random Generation method on ArM4 p. 32. Such a swarm will have a Might score equal to 15 + Size.
- *Spread Pestilence*, 5, 10, or 15 points: A swarm of Nasa may cast the equivalent of the PeCo ritual Curse of the Unportended Plague (ArM4 pp. 127-8). The differing Might cost reflects a different Target; 5 points has T: Group, 10 points has T: Structure, and 15 points has T: Boundary. The Nasa swarm will always produce as large a plague as possible, which results in the swarm's destruction.
- *Sacrificial Swarm*, special: When summoned and controlled by a servant of Angra Mainyu, a swarm will protect its master from physical damage. It can soak a number of Wound levels equal to the swarm's Might score. Each Wound level it soaks in this manner subtracts 1 Might point.

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Ex Bibliotheca Durenmare

by Eric Minton

It takes a good bit of time and effort to create a covenant library. Turning that library into something more than a list of names and numbers is much harder. Here you'll find all manner of pre-generated magical and mundane books to flesh out your Saga's libraries. Feel free to submit your own books, scrolls, clay tablets, and so on for inclusion in this column.

Note that the costs listed for purchasing these books for a covenant's library during covenant cre-

ation do not include additional costs for any special benefits that may apply to a given book. Such alterations to the book's cost are left to the discretion of the individual Storyguide.

To determine a book's point value during covenant creation, use the following formulae:

Liber Quaestionum: Target + Quality

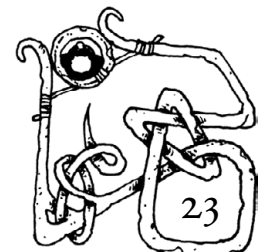
Summa: $2 \times (\text{Level} + \text{Quality})$

Tractatus: $3 \times (\text{Quality})$

An Encyclopedia of the Magical Arts

By Theosêmeia scholae Bonisagi

Appearance: This work consists of seven small volumes, each bound in embossed maroon pigskin, and the whole set fitted into a box of red cedar. The





text has been scribed on parchment of good quality, in two columns of crisp uncial script with fading sepia ink. Each of the text's hundreds of articles begins with a large initial in red and blue filigree, with subheadings marked alternately in red or blue. Burn marks and missing pages mar the second volume, and half of the fourth volume has been scrambled to gibberish by a magical botch. Dozens of parchment slips protruding from the volumes serve as makeshift bookmarks.

Description: Written to provide an overview of the field of Hermetic magical theory, this work provides hundreds of brief articles regarding magical concepts, processes and theories. The text, though dry, is exceptionally succinct. The text even includes limited information on a handful of non-Hermetic magics, primarily in the field of divination.

Mechanics: Magic Theory Summa, Level 6, Quality 10; Magic Theory Tractatus, Quality 7; Occult Lore Tractatus, Quality 7.

Special Rule: A magus consulting the encyclopedia throughout the process of investigating an enchantment may add 1 to his or her Lab Total. Any botch during the investigation is likely to damage or destroy the text.

Cost: 74 points of Knowledges.

Incantations of the Second Magnitude

By Numa Praeceptor scholae Bonisagi

Glossed by Clara discipula Numa Praeceptor

Appearance: A tall, oblong volume bound in blue-dyed leather, with clawed brass corner-pieces and bosses engraved with the crossed keys of House Bonisagus. Within, the script is large and clear, with small, brightly colored arabesques separating the volume into sections and indicating points of interest. Glosses in a crabbed, inexperienced hand fill much of the book's overlarge margins.

Description: This volume, clearly intended for pedagogical purposes, contains ten spells of the second magnitude, all of which have been translated in to a clear, comprehensible format. Several pages of commentary follow each spell. A warm, paternal tone suffuses the text, which appears to have been written specifically for the author's filia. The glosses appear to be apprentice work, of little value to a knowledgeable magus.

Mechanics: Animál Tractatus, Quality 2, *Decay Fur and Hide*; Aquam Tractatus, Quality 2, *Lungs of the Fish*; Auram Tractatus, Quality 2, *Jupiter's Resounding Blow*; Corpus Tractatus, Quality 2, *Gift of the Frog's Legs*; Herbam Tractatus, Quality 2, *Intuition of the Forest*; Ignem Tractatus, Quality 2, *Lamp Without Flame*; Imáginem Tractatus, Quality 2, *Illusion of the Shifted Image*; Mentem Tractatus, Quality 2, *Sight of the Transparent Motive*; Terram Tractatus, Quality 2, *Rusted Decay of Ten-Score Years*; Vim Tractatus, Quality 2, *Maintaining the Demanding Spell*; Magic Theory Tractatus, Quality 8.

Contains the following spells: *Decay Fur and Hide*, *Gift of the Frog's Legs*, *Illusion of the Shifted Image*, *Intuition of the Forest*, *Jupiter's Resounding Blow*, *Lamp With-*

out Flame, *Lungs of the Fish*, *Maintaining the Demanding Spell* (Level 10), *Rusted Decay of Ten-Score Years*, *Sight of the Transparent Motive*.

Cost: 60 points of Arts + 24 points of knowledges + 100 levels of spells.

A Comprehensive Study of the Effects of Injury upon the Faerie Body and of the Effects of Pain upon the Faerie Mind

By Novaculus scholae Bonisagi

Appearance: A collection of loose parchments held between a pair of oaken boards, clasped shut by a pair of knotted leather thongs. The parchment and ink are of middling quality, scribed in a quick, rough hand. Crude sketches depict the internal organs and other anatomical details of faerie creatures; most of these sketches bear splatters of dried faerie blood and ichor.

Description: Written in a clear, precise style, devoid of passion and idiom. The text describes the capture of several faerie creatures and their subsequent torture and vivisection in the author's laboratory. In the case of faeries capable of speech, the writer faithfully recorded their every word; the resulting disjointed monologues provide some insight into faerie nature. Although this work should prove disturbing to any reader possessed of a conscience, the author describes everything in a cold and clinical manner, though certain passages imply a personal vendetta against the faerie folk.

Note: The author of this text violated the Code many times in the course of his researches, and his offenses against the faeries make this book anathema to the Merinita. A story could involve the confiscation or destruction of the book by a visiting Merinita or Quaesitor magus, or a debate in Tribunal as to whether it is legal to possess and use magical knowledge obtained through a violation of the Code.

Mechanics: Faerie Lore Tractatus, Quality 5. Contains the following spells: *Ward against Faeries of the Waters* (20), *Ward against Faeries of the Air* (20), *Ward against Faeries of the Earth* (20), *Scourge the Intransigent Faerie* (30).

Cost: 15 points of Knowledges + 90 levels of spells.

Scourge the Intransigent Faerie (Pe Vi Gen)

R: Near/Sight, D: Inst, T: Ind./Group

Spell Focus: Iron Shackles (+2)

Drains the power of a faerie. Roll a quality die + this spell's level - 5; for each point by which this total exceeds the faerie's Faerie Might, the faerie loses one Faerie Might point. If this drain exceeds the faerie's Might, every additional five points in the casting total costs the faerie one Fatigue Level.

(Design: Based on *Demon's Eternal Oblivion*. Range increased to Near, modified die total reduced by 5.)

MECINAS ATAVIS·FOITE·REGIBUS·
& presidium · & dulce · decus meum ·
Sunt quos arriculo puluerem olympicum
Collegisse laetæ metæq. feruicis · DEAMENIS



Ways and Means, and the Mirror of Vanities

by Michaël de Verteuil

Here it is, the last installment of a three part series on player covenant design. I am unsure whether Jérôme Darmont will cheer its completion or curse its continuation for yet another issue. Perhaps he will do a bit of both. (For those who do not know, the eminent Jérôme is my most virulent critic on this particular series of Heretic's Corner articles.)

I have to admit that as a complete system, it does not entirely satisfy me either. The problem turned out to be far more complex than I had originally anticipated, and the proposed solution is more messy and less simple or elegant than I would have preferred. Perhaps further improvement might help bur-nish what in retrospect still strikes me as an essentially sound foundation.

The list of Virtues and Flaws applicable to each of the four covenant Characteristics can certainly be expanded upon. I worry whether these few examples will prove sufficient to provide balanced cost guidelines for those who would design new additional Virtues and Flaws themselves. Conversely the cost charts for purchasing specific covenant features may be too detailed and numerous (though certainly not, I trust, so much as Jérôme still claims to believe). I have tried to keep those in this article simpler.

Another aspect that troubles me is that the relative costing of features such as for books and vis sources is highly sensitive to subtle future rule changes that are likely to emerge in the new forthcoming fifth edition. Indeed, in an exchange of mails a few months ago, David Chart averred that a substantial revision of the rules for medieval books could be in the offing. It seems unlikely therefore that the player covenant design rules offered here for ArM4 will be usable for the new version of the game without major adaptation.

Be that as it may, I still think the effort has been worthwhile. Jérôme and others have argued that the complexity of this proposal bellies this column's stated commitment to increased simplicity. I think this is to misunderstand the intent of Heretic's Corner. This heretic's hobby horse isn't complexity per se, but unnecessary complexity.

I subscribe to the view presented in ArM3 that the player covenant is the central character of a saga. This is one of the aspects of the game that sets it apart from most of its competitors (if we true believers may grant them such an exalted status). As such, all relevant features of a player covenant (i.e. those likely to affect or come into play) should be provided for in the player covenant design rules.

In addition, all these features have to be balanced so that an advantage in one area has the same cost as one of equivalent value in another. This is, I must admit, less of a problem for experienced troupes

with a good feel for what level of resources becomes abusive or overly restrictive, or is likely to overpower the agreed theme of a saga. For newer players, however, the guidelines have to be tight, comprehensive and consistent. I hope readers will share my view that the system offered here and in the two previous installments of Heretic's Corner is more detailed than that offered in ArM3, as detailed but simpler and less arbitrary (no rolls) than that offered in ArM2 (*Covenants*), and as detailed, simpler and more balanced than that offered in ArM4. Only you can judge. I am certainly willing to concede that the proposal can be improved, and will willingly offer space in this column to anyone with suggestions on how it can be simplified further, while still maintaining the same level of detail.

So let us briefly review the outline of the system before proceeding to the last two Characteristics: Resources and Relations. Player covenants have four Characteristics (Library, Magic, Resources and Relations) used for purposes of comparison, and to determine the specific features of the player covenant. The number of pyramidal points that can be used to purchase scores in these Characteristics (-5 to +5) depends on the season of the covenant and its number of resident magi. Each possible score corresponds to a number of "feature points" (0 to 1,600) used in turn to purchase specific covenant features, and determines the number of Virtue and Flaw points which can be applied to the relevant Characteristic and its associated features.

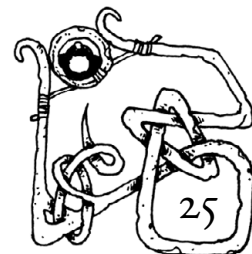
Here is the "Feature Points" or "Purchase" Chart again:

Score	Points	Score	Points
-5	0	+1	200
-4	30	+2	400
-3	60	+3	700
-2	80	+4	1100
-1	90	+5	1600
0	100		

Resources

The Resources Characteristic represents the player covenant defences, personnel, as well as material and enchanted facilities and assets. I propose dispensing with former features such as seclusion, access and terrain as these are on balance neutral features that are more matters of taste than cost-benefit as they tend to come with balancing advantages and disadvantages. As such they are impossible to cost meaningfully. If your troupe wants to place their covenant in an underwater sea cave or abutting the royal palace at Winchester, go ahead. It's free (at least with respect to the Resources Characteristic, though remember to take the +2 Cave Virtue if you choose the "undersea" route).

Fetishists who want to map out every room, detail every lab implement, account for every (Mythic?) penny in the covenant treasury, or detail all its covenfolk will not find all their prayers answered here. Nevertheless, these proposed mechanics should





offer a sturdy framework upon which to hang such detail designed or improvised as needed or when greater leisure allows. The standard Purchase Points are used to select such features as defences, laboratories, enchantments, grogs and specialists. The quality of equipment and facilities, the loyalty, competence and dependability of the covenantfolk, and the lifestyle of the covenant's inhabitants are largely dependent on the Virtues and Flaws chosen.

The total population of the covenant is assumed to be about twice the number of grogs, magi and specialists. The "hidden" inhabitants represent spouses, children and lesser servants who provide the bulk of necessary casual labour as cooks, maids, errand boys, laundresses, valets, gardeners, stable hands, apprentices, etc.. Note that some covenant features and Virtues, even some listed under other Characteristics, require a minimum quota of specialists to remain operative. So peruse the Specialists section carefully. The player covenant is assumed to have the necessary resources to provide the appropriate facilities (including living quarters), maintenance and remuneration for its grogs and specialists. Additional resources will have to be found to increase their number during play.

Defences

The extent and nature of a covenant's physical defences are critical not only to resisting attacks but also to its socio-political image. A castle in a populated area may require some explanation to local inhabitants who are not in-the-know as to the covenant's real identity. But this issue has been discussed at length elsewhere. We will limit ourselves here to costing the brick and mortar, as it were.

The ideas and examples provided in this feature and, subsequently, for design of the covenant's turb, borrow heavily from the Combat chapter of *Ordo Nobilis*. The default covenant with a score of -5 in Resources is probably going to consist of a collection of huts, tents and lean-tos. Its "grand hall" might consist of a large campfire. But once you progress to a defensible position with a palisade you have the equivalent of a motte and bailey. Alternatively, a very small covenant might lodge in a stone tower which requires a smaller garrison. Stone towers can also help in the defence of a curtain wall surrounding a covenant. A somewhat larger but still modest covenant might lodge in a keep, but most covenants will sprawl into the surrounding bailey. There just isn't that much space; even in a keep. Curtain walls of stone might surround the covenant, each succeeding one larger than the next innermost and so requiring a larger minimum garrison. The costs remain the same though, as outer defences need not be of as great quality as inner ones. Finally, each tier of defence can be reinforced by a moat, with or without near stagnant water.

See *Ordo Nobilis*, p. 104, for the consequences of under manning. Minimum garrisons only apply at any given time to the outermost defensive works still held by the defenders. If these are breached by the

attackers, however, sufficient defenders must be able to make it to the next line of defences before the assailants to maintain the minimum garrison advantage. Note that the minimum garrison requirement does not apply to underground fortifications (see the +2 Cave Complex Virtue).

Defence Fortification Chart

Fortification	Cost	Minimum Garrison
Motte and Bailey	50	50
Tower	50	25
Keep	100	50
Shell Keep*	100	50, 100, 200, 400**
Moat (×2 with water)	25	

* or Curtain Wall; ** For each successive wall

Turb

Defences are not of much use if there is no one to man them. Magi also might need a bit of "muscle" for adventures, personal defence and for purposes of mundane intimidation. Enter: the grog! Note the entry for crossbowmen essential for protection against aerial assault (This is a "fantasy" role playing game, after all). All grogs come with appropriate equipment and mounts according to troop type. For other types, refer to "Designing Non-Standard Units" on p. 96 of *Ordo Nobilis*.

Grog Chart

Type	Cost per man
Man-at-Arms	2
Sergeant	4
Crossbowman	8
Squire	8
Knight	32

Specialists

Specialists are valued employees endowed with critical non-combat Skills, Knowledges (other than Speak Local Language) and/or Exceptional Abilities. In principle, they should each have a minimum score of 5 in their primary Ability and a total of at least 30 eps in this primary or in other Abilities relevant to their function. A Specialist's work year consists, on average, of the equivalent of three seasons on covenant business and one attending to his or her own affairs.

For companions to reside at the covenant, they must first be "purchased" as Specialists. If they are assigned a real function (as opposed to granted a sinecure) and their adventuring responsibilities take them away for their formal jobs, they cease to count against the relevant quota of Specialists. In principle, any player mage with the requisite Abilities (or magical equivalents) can play the role of any required but missing Specialist, but at the cost of three of his four yearly seasons of study or research. Of course, several magi can divide such irksome responsibilities between themselves.

Some specialist functions, such as archivist, are clearly optional, but if a covenant wants to keep track of an extensive orderly correspondence and maintain a long-term institutional memory, it is going to need one. All Specialists cost 15 purchase points. The fol-



lowing list contains only the key ones needed to support some feature or Virtue. A specialist described as being required for any specific number of inhabitants is also required for any smaller number. For example, a covenant with 508 inhabitants must include two administrators, two blacksmiths, five carpenters, one physician, two herbalists, five huntsmen and two entertainers to maintain optimal covenfolk living standards. The base lifestyle for magi is “Moderately wealthy”, and for covenfolk the same as for “Average townsfolk” (see “Social Class Ageing Modifiers” ArM4, p. 181)

- **Administrator:** acts as purchasing agent, treasurer, accounts keeper, paymaster and/or supervisor of the “civilian” covenfolk. The principal administrator is usually called the “autocrat”. One is required for every 500 inhabitants or the covenant ceases to function!
- **Librarian:** maintains the covenant library by repairing and copying books near the end of their useful life. One is required to maintain every 500 purchase points worth of books. Additional librarians can be given the task of copying extra books for sale or trade.
- **Blacksmith:** repairs or replaces metal tools, weapons, armour or fixtures, and shoes horses. One is required for every 500 inhabitants beyond the first 500 or grog morale falls by 1 and covenfolk living standards fall one level.
- **Mason:** maintains stonework either living (caves, cellars) or cut. One is required for every 100 points of defensive works (or for every 50 for underground works) or unmaintained defences count automatically as undermined.
- **Carpenter:** maintains the covenant’s woodwork including doors, cupboards, chests and furniture. One is required for every 100 inhabitants beyond the first 100 or covenfolk and magi living standards decline by one level.
- **Physician:** heals sick or injured covenfolk and sees to the general maintenance of covenant public hygiene. One is required for every 500 covenfolk beyond the first 500 or grog morale falls by 1 and covenfolk living standards fall one level.
- **Herbalist:** maintains the covenant’s pharmacopoeia and spice cupboard. One is required for every 500 covenfolk or living standards fall one level.
- **Chef:** runs the kitchen and larder, and prepares or supervises the preparation of the magi’s meals. One is required for every five resident magi or magi living standards decline by one level.
- **Butler:** runs the cellar and supervises the covenant’s brewing and wine-making. One is required for every 10 resident magi or magi living standards decline by one level.
- **Huntsman:** supplies the covenant with game. One is required for every 100 inhabitants beyond the first 50 or grog morale falls by 1,

and both covenfolk and magi living standards decline by one level.

- **Glassblower:** supplies magical laboratories with specialized glass and ceramic implements. One is required for every total +5 in positive lab modifiers or the unmaintained labs decline in quality by +1 per year until they reach a quality of 0.
- **Entertainer:** provides magi and covenfolk with music, song, storytelling and other diversissements. One is required for every 500 inhabitants or grog morale falls by 1, and both covenfolk and magi living standards decline by one level.

Laboratories

Each magical laboratory, whether shared or dedicated to individual magi, must be purchased separately.

Lab Bonus	Cost	Lab Bonus	Cost
-2	5	+2	80
-1	10	+3	160
0	20	+4	320
+1	40	+5	640

Magical Enchantments

Covenants are often endowed with permanent enchantments, servants or collectively owned magical devices or artefacts. These might include a scrying pool, alarms or traps, magical illumination, self operating doors, a shrouded glen, covenant-wide illusions, magical guardians or defences, etc.. Some are Hermetic but others might be from different magical traditions or might even be associated with other Realms.

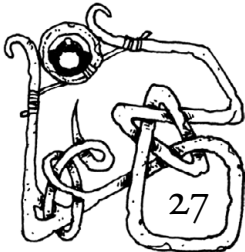
In principle, each enchantment or device has a magnitude equivalent which determines its cost according to the pyramidal function. Thus a first magnitude enchantment would cost 1 and a sixth magnitude device 21. Some devices are bit more difficult to quantify. A magical guardian (an elemental, a griffin or automata, for example) is assumed to have a magnitude equal to its

(Atk + Def + Dam +Soak)/5.

An enchantment increasing the defensive modifier of a fortification by 1 would be 10th magnitude (and cost 55). The Bell of Ibyn and the Golden Ship (see *The Broken Covenant of Calabais* and *Faeries I*) would be 15th and 17th magnitude respectively.

Variable Virtues

Cave Complex: The covenant’s living quarters, labs and possibly its defences (if any) lie underground in natural or man made caves. This permits the covenant to be either hidden or to be far larger than it appears from the outside. Because they can only be approached through its corridors and gates, its underground defences never count as undermined so long as the covenant maintained the requisite number of resident masons. The base cost of the Virtue is +2, with an additional +1 for each tier of defence (motte and bailey, tower/keep and curtain wall) built beneath ground. Underground covenants





are normally built into hills or mountainsides so that each inner tier can be higher than the outer one below for defensive purposes. Pits and subterranean streams can be dug or channelled as dry or water-filled moats.

Beneficial Cultural Trait: With few exceptions, the covenant's grogs and covenfolk share some common beneficial trait, such as loyal, brave or disciplined. The cost of this Virtue is equal to the score in the trait. This Virtue may be taken more than once.

Motivated Turb: Because of esprit de corps or a successful track record, the base morale of the turb is strong. The cost of this Virtue is equal to the positive morale modifier.

+1 Virtues

Magical Mounts: The covenant possesses a number of mounts unfazed by magi and their Gift, which magi can ride (assuming they have the skill) freely. Such mounts are often unnatural, and might include horses that breathe smoke or sparks, have forked tongues, retractable fangs or simply a taste for meat or blood.

Town House: The covenant owns a building in a local town. The building might be a shop, an inn, or a warehouse where visiting covenfolk and their guests can lodge. This Virtue may be taken more than once.

Ship: The otherwise sedentary covenant owns a boat and maintains a crew on a local lake, river or sea that can undertake voyages on its behalf. This Virtue may be taken more than once.

Friendly Forest: The covenant is surrounded by a preternaturally thick and tough wood that slowly moves in on people who stop while walking through it, constantly changing the paths so as to lead them away from the covenant. Those who pause in the forest and are not friendly towards the covenant may find themselves imprisoned on a path that never ends. Only those advancing boldly and directly can find the covenant untroubled, ensuring that its inhabitants are rarely taken unawares.

Self Directed: The corporate culture of the covenant puts a premium on personal improvement and self advancement. Each year resident covenfolk do not receive at least a season of formal training, they gain four instead of the usual two experience points.

Very Wealthy Magi: The covenant's magi live a life of luxury and deny themselves none of the finer amenities, assuming this lifestyle is supported by the requisite quota of specialists.

Moderately Wealthy Covenfolk: The covenant's mundane inhabitants enjoy an impressive standard of living as might be experienced by minor nobles. They enjoy good food, wear fine clothes, and can spend any free time in refined or entertaining pursuits if the covenant includes the requisite quota of specialists.

+2 Virtue

Mobility: The covenant is nomadic in nature, being able to pick up and move by land or sea on

short notice and with minimal disruption. If multiple fortifications are purchased, the covenant can move from one to another as required, remaining vulnerable only during the actual journey.

Variable Flaws

Dysfunctional Cultural Trait: With few exceptions, the covenant's grogs and covenfolk share some common undesirable trait, such as greedy, cowardly or rebellious. The cost of this Flaw is equal to the score in the trait. This Flaw may be taken more than once.

Demotivated Turb: Because of internal rivalries or enmities, or a track record of unremitting failure, the base morale of the turb is poor. The cost of this Flaw is equal to the negative modifier in the turb's morale.

Unreliable Defences: Because of unanticipated environmental factors such as subsidence, frequent earth tremors, dry rot or an unusually corrosive climate, the covenant's defences are always in a partial state of disrepair. The cost of this Flaw is equal to any reduction in the combat modifiers of the covenant's defences.

-1 Flaws

Shirking Covenfolk: While the routine background work in the covenant gets done satisfactorily, individual covenfolk are usually unavailable when specifically sought out for some task or for questioning. This may be due to alleged illness, absence on pilgrimages, or simply because they have "gone fishin'". In rare cases when someone can actually be found and assigned some specific task, he or she will find a way to forget or be distracted by something "more urgent" if left unsupervised. It should go without saying that assigning covenfolk to find and pass messages to others is usually doomed to futility. If the magi or companions want anything unusual done it is usually easier to do it themselves. Covenfolk will always cover for each other in this matter. (Readers are invited to consult the Inept, Unsavory, Overbearing, and Surly Underlings Flaws on pp. 37-38 of *Ordo Nobilis* for inspiration for similar Covenant Resources Flaws.)

High Turnover: The covenant never seems to be able to keep its personnel for very long, making any in-house training a largely futile proposition.

Arcane Unreliability: Inexplicably, the covenant's enchantments, magical devices (including those owned by individual magi in residence) and magical guardians are frequently temporarily inoperative. While such mishaps may cause embarrassment and inconvenience, they fortunately rarely occur when the covenant's survival is at stake.

-2 Flaws

Divided Loyalties: While not necessarily at odds, individual covenfolk only identify with a single faction of the covenant consisting of no more than half the covenant's magi and their confidants. Covenfolk will not necessarily cooperate with members of other factions unless explicitly ordered to do



so on a case-by-case basis. Members of other factions are simply ignored if this can be done safely without fear of retribution or immediate punishment.

Relations

We now move to the last, possibly simplest, but by no means least of our proposed player covenant Characteristics. Relations are often the most neglected aspect of covenant design. Yet the specific social, Hermetic and even supernatural context in which a covenant operates is normally of considerable importance to the unfolding of a saga. Relations are also the one omnipresent covenant Characteristic. Libraries, labs, and much of the covenant personnel are usually left behind (at the home base, as it were) during adventures, but a covenant's Relations will follow every adventuring party of magi and companions through thick and thin, and for good or ill, as would a halo or albatross.

Relations Feature Points are used to purchase Contacts and Agents. Contacts are individuals, sentient beings or collective entities with whom the covenant shares a greater than casual familiarity, either through past history, correspondence or through a mutual acquaintance. Contacts need not be fully aware of the actual nature of the covenant (if this is secret), but should be knowledgeable at least about its public persona. Contacts are approachable and will share, within reason, all public information available to them. They are also usually willing to provide favours or services in exchange for benefits of similar or greater value to themselves. Normally a player covenant will have to stump up payment up-front before a Contact will reciprocate. On rare occasions, a Contact may initiate discussions for an exchange of services, in which case it will be expected to fulfil its part of the agreed bargain first.

Contacts come in three basic flavours, Lesser, Peer or Superior, in terms of power as compared to that of a standard covenant. "Killing" power is not the benchmark, however. For our purposes, a Contact's power is determined more by the entity's general access to resources and influence.

Lesser Contacts might include a wealthy banker, merchant (or even local merchant guild), a baron or landed knight, a Hermetic mage, a Redcap, a Hedge wizard, a powerful faerie, a monastery, an archdeacon, a criminal gang or group of bandits, an outcast local ethnic or religious community, a leper colony, or even a demonologist, a minor demon, or a miracle-working religious hermit. Trainers (see *Ordo Nobilis*, pp. 41-43) might also count as Lesser Contacts. Lesser Contacts cost 10 purchase points each.

Peer Contacts might include a sister covenant, an archmage or a whole Hedge or minor Hermetic tradition, a minor count, a bishop, the head of a monastic order, a faerie prince, a civic commune (free town), a coven of demonologists, a major demon, or possibly even a dragon. Note that the gradations here are rough and ready as all covenants are normally

considered Peers, for example. Exceptionally, a powerful Autumn covenant might consider a starting Spring covenant to be a "Lesser" Contact. Peer Contacts cost 30 purchase points each.

Superior Contacts would include those entities usually seen as more powerful than a standard covenant, such as a major faerie king or queen, a great independent noble or minor monarch, a Papal legate, a whole Tribunal or House, or an Infernal prince. For reasons of play balance, including the Emperor, the kings of France or England, Satan, the Pope, saints, archangels (not to mention God) as Contacts should probably be avoided; but if your troupe really wants to go there, these would count as Superior Contacts as well. Superior Contacts cost 60 purchase points each.

Agents are similar to Contacts, but provide an unreciprocated flow of often private information concerning some particular target entity. They could be considered spies. The significance of the target entity itself and of the information provided is what determines whether an Agent is Lesser, Peer or Superior. A major official at the court of the king of Hungary would count as a Superior contact, as would the assistant of the Tribunal's chief quaesitor. Because of the unreciprocated nature of the relationship, Agents cost twice as much as equivalent Contacts.

Agents are assumed to act from any of a variety of motives such as money, family connections, blackmail, extortion, friendship, or gratitude for past services. Any required compensation or psychological levers applied to Agents are assumed to be specific to them and built into the covenant's existing resources and are not normally transferable to other ends if the relationship with the Agent ends for whatever reason. It should be kept in mind that Agents may be acting due to pressure or necessity, and need not hold fond feelings for the player covenant employing them. The roles of Agent and Contact are not mutually exclusive. The same entity can be purchased separately as both a Contact and an Agent.

Variable Virtues

Allies: These must have first been purchased as Contacts. Allies may be expected to provide reasonable aid and assistance to the player covenant either on their own initiative or when called upon so long as such actions do not conflict directly with their interests. Conversely, reciprocation in favour of Allies experiencing difficulties of their own is expected of the player covenant. Allies will always endeavour to inform the player covenant of any threats they are aware of and can be expected to support the covenant in Tribunals or before third parties. In rare cases of disagreement or conflicting interests, Allies usually settle their differences with the covenant through negotiation or mediation. A Lesser Ally is a +1 Virtue; a Peer Ally is a +2 Virtue; and a Superior Ally is a +3 Virtue. This Virtue may be chosen more than once.





Favourable Reputation: The player covenant enjoys a specific positive Reputation (e.g. Trustworthy, Learned, or Disciplined) with all Contacts and (optionally) with any Enemies. Direct experience at odds with this Reputation may alter it for a given Contact or Enemy during play. The value of this Virtue is equal to the score in the Reputation. This Virtue may be chosen more than once.

+2 Virtues

Clients: These must first be purchased as Contacts. Clients are otherwise similar to Allies except that the relationship is one sided and not reciprocal. A Client is contractually, customarily or through coercion compelled to play the role of ally and supporter while the player covenant is under no such obligation to the client. In non emergency situations, such obligations should not exceed the equivalent of one season's work by one mage per year. Should the Client somehow be destroyed or rendered unable to provide the expected service(s), the Virtue is lost. Only a Lesser Contact can be a Client. This Virtue may be chosen more than once.

Variable Flaws

Enemies: If they calculate that they can do so at little harm to themselves, Enemies will seize any opportunity to harm the player covenant or its interests. At those times when open hostilities break out as a result of some provocation or direct clash of interests, Enemies will actively seek to inflict maximum harm to the covenant, its members, dependants or interests, even at great actual or potential costs to themselves. Enemies have other concerns, however, and need not be assumed to spend every waking moment plotting the covenant's downfall. A Lesser Enemy is a -1 Flaw; a Peer Enemy is a -2 Flaw; and a Superior Enemy is a -3 Flaw. Enemies may not have been previously purchased as Contacts or Agents.

Unfavourable Reputation: The player covenant enjoys a specific negative Reputation (e.g. Untrustworthy, Incompetent, or Factionalized) with all Con-

tacts and Enemies and (optionally) with any Allies. Direct experience at odds with this Reputation may alter it for a given Contact, Enemy or Ally during play. The cost of this Flaw is equal to the score in the Reputation. This Flaw may be chosen more than once.

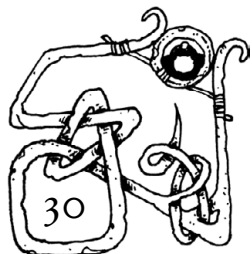
-1 Flaws

Patron: Patrons must first be purchased as Superior Contacts (yes, you have to pay for the privilege of having this Flaw). They are otherwise similar to Allies except that the relationship is one sided and not reciprocal. The player covenant is contractually, customarily or through coercion compelled to play the role of ally and supporter while the Patron has no such obligation towards the covenant. In non emergency situations the covenant's obligations should not normally exceed the equivalent of one season's work per year by one mage. This Flaw may be taken more than once, even with respect to the same Superior Contact, in which case the covenant's minimum obligations towards the Patron rise accordingly. Exceptionally, if the services habitually provided by the player covenant are directly threatened by a third party, a Patron might be moved to intervene on the player covenant's behalf, but will expect additional compensation for doing so. Unilaterally failing to fulfil obligations normally turns a Patron into an Enemy.

Favourites: At least half the player covenant's Contacts and Agents (including Allies and Clients, but not Patrons) will each only deal with a single faction of the covenant consisting of no more than half the covenant's magi or their representatives. Other members of the player covenant are simply ignored. All such Contacts and Agents need not necessarily maintain relations with the same identical group of magi. Some may prefer one faction, others another. If this Flaw is chosen twice, all the covenant's Contacts and Agents (except Patrons) play favourites in this way.

Fixing the combat system

by Tyler Larson



I am sure many of you have heard the multitude of complaints about the Ars Magica 4th Edition combat system. As a consequence of its weak and poorly composed structure, many gamers don't try it out. So I hope that what I have altered and created helps transform Ars Magica combat into something realistic, enjoyable and fun.

One reason that I demand in my games a little realism in combat is because for over a decade I have fenced in the French, Italian and Japanese (kendo) styles. I also spent a few years in the Society of Creative Anachronism wielding everything from claymores to heavy broadswords. As a consequence I've decided to do what I can to bring Ars Magica combat up to snuff, as the saying goes.

First off I decided that the entire design of how combat is run needed to be rebuilt from the ground up, so I started with how I run combat for games without a hard structure of combat and worked from there. My goals were to completely eliminate the mis-

sile phases of combat and to develop a structure of combat that I thought was as unique as it can be without overly departing from the system as it stands in the 4th edition. If you don't see something described below, then it has not been modified.

One basic thing that needed to go is the alterable amount of time a combat round lasts. This I felt was not a good situation for the storyguide to be in. For example, a warrior knows that this hall must be held for one minute before reinforcements arrive. How many combat rounds does it take the reinforcements to come? As the storyguide hmmfs and haws, any decision could irritate the players or possibly make the players think that the storyguide is being "easy" on them.

So in my system every combat round lasts five seconds, so that there is no uncertainty about it.

Combat Structure

1. Description of Setting
2. Declaration of Intent
3. Initial Initiative
4. Action Phase
5. Resolution

Description of Setting

This is what I call seeing the battlefield. During this phase of combat the storyguide quickly looks at each character's Perception + Awareness scores and based on that, describes to them the environment and situation that they perceive around them.

During this phase the storyguide also deals with surprise in the form of ambushes or simply someone sneaking up on a target.

In the case of stealth-based situations, the storyguide secretly rolls the target's Perception and Awareness. Then this is compared to the total of the sneaking character's Dexterity and Stealth.

It is important to remember that there can be many modifiers that may apply in ambushes and any attempt at stealth, based on anything from the amount of light in an area to the amount of sound currently being made that might mask the sound of footsteps.

From this phase the storyguide finds out what "Combat state" every character involved in the combat is in.

A very useful aid that some troupes use is miniatures to help show the situation and take a little off of the shoulders of the storyguide.

Declaration of Intent

After the storyguide's description of each character's situation, the players get their turn to tell what they want to do.

The storyguide starts with asking what everyone wants to do in a general way, such as whether they will be performing a melee, missile, or magic action this round. After that is decided, the players are to be more precise about their intent, e.g. stating what weapon is to be used or choosing if you are going to fast cast or not.

Once you have a score for the decided action, start with the lowest rating and have the player tell the storyguide the specifics of the action that is intended, such as who is being engaged and at what range, or what spell is to be cast and the movement required to reach the target. From there continue on up the scale until every character has described their intent for this round.

A new thing that is decided in this stage of combat is something I call "Fighting stances". These give the players a little more freedom and choice in how they feel their characters are going about their actions.

Some interesting situations can develop because of the differing perceptions of the characters involved in a combat. For example a turb might be walking along minding their own business when they perceive a Flambeau magus chanting and gesturing wildly and the turb might think they are the target when in actuality the magus is targeting the vampire that is sneaking up behind them.

Essentially the storyguide and the players declare in this phase their target, their range, whether they want to move, and their fighting stance if they are involved in a melee.

If the players are taking too long trying to decide their action, the storyguide should reinforce that combat is quick and confusing by rushing them. The technique I use is counting slowly to 5, quietly so as not to overly rattle them. For *Ars Magica*, I add Quickness to 5 until they state their action.

Initiative

This phase of combat is very important for here is when, "when" is decided. In other words who goes first and who does what they want to do.

Since everyone has already declared what they intend to do at this point, they just have to roll their appropriate Initiative score with a stress die.

Now, the storyguide knows from the Initiative Totals who goes first and who wins their engagements.

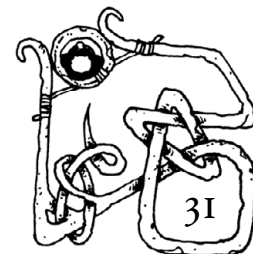
Each combat round is split into segments with each segment being a number. Your Initiative Total is the segment you start at, though your action may take place after that segment because of movement and other modifiers.

After the first round of combat, this phase can work without rolling dice because of the option of Pressing the attack. Initiative is rolled whenever there isn't an Advantage bonus while a warrior is Pressing the attack or after a warrior chooses to Go for hit (whether it does damage or not).

Action Phase

This is the meat of the combat sandwich. During this phase you find out what happens.

First you start off with the highest Initiative Total and decide if there will be a first strike bonus and what it will be. Importantly, if the player gave a great explanation and description and really got into char-





Rate of Fire

With missile weapons it is possible to get off more than one shot in a round or take many rounds to reload. When all the time of a missile weapon wielder is spent taking no other action than firing and reloading, they develop a rhythm or rate of fire.

Each character with a missile weapon takes their Initiative score and compares it to this guideline to find out how long it takes to reload.

Initiative Score	Rate of Fire
-20 or lower	1 shot every 5 rounds
-19 to -15	1 shot every 4 rounds
-14 to -10	1 shot every 3 rounds
-9 to -5	1 shot every 2 rounds
-4 to 0	1 shot every 1 round
+1 to +5	1 shot the first round and 2 shots the second round
+6 to +10	2 shots a round
+11	2 shots the first round and 3 shots the second round

When a missile wielder happens to have a high rate of fire, they can attempt multiple shots in a round. Every shot after the first takes place during a segment of combat 5 less than the previous shot. For example a master archer has a rate of fire of 2 shots a round. The archer's Initiative Total is 15 so the first shot goes off then; and the second shot takes place during segment 10 of combat ($15-5=10$). If the archer had a third shot then it would take place at segment 5 ($15-5-5=5$).

acter, the storyguide should, as a "reward", give the player a bonus to the intended action.

Next roll and calculate the effect with all the modifiers applied.

Now the storyguide should describe the situation with flair, to capture the players' imagination with what is going on and to encourage them to be interesting when they describe their actions.

If the combat is melee, the defender may Riposte if their Defense Total is higher than the opponent's Attack Total. If the Riposte is successful, then a choice must be made to Press the attack in the hopes of hurting the opponent in the future, or to attempt immediate damage and Go for a hit.

The same options are, of course, available to the successful attacker as well.

Movement

You may automatically move your Base Move during the combat round without penalty. If you wish to move beyond this you effectively slow down your character's speed in taking whatever action was declared. Your initiative is lowered by 1 segment, for every pace you walk, per 2 paces you hustle, or 3 paces you run.

After your initiative is lowered you may still make an action as long as you have a positive initiative, otherwise you can make a full move using the standard movement rules (ArM4 page 163).



From there, go from the next highest Initiative Total until you have gone through everyone. If in melee combat, the lower initiative in an engagement may not take an actual action other than defending or riposting.

Resolution

At this phase of combat various bookkeeping is dealt with and if necessary, Combat Fatigue is rolled.

Normally combat starts over again with the storyguide describing the new situation and going from there.

Wounds and Damage

I have heavily modified the way wounds and damage are dealt with, for the sake of realism. In my mind it makes absolutely no sense that a character can be scratched 6 times and ends up dead, while another character can have his stomach ripped open but still be alive.

Again I have taken from *Ordo Nobilis* by utilizing the optional rule on soak to increase the danger of combat and to balance out the other modifications. (See page 85 ON)

Instead of the old way of adding each level of damage to the previous damage, now each wound is kept track of individually.

For example, a warrior has been fighting continuously for an hour and has taken 3 hurt wounds and 2 light wounds. In the old system death would be the result ($3+4=7$ body levels); with my combat system the warrior is still up and running.

You still keep the penalties for each wound the same and in fact you add them together. If you have more than one wound you add together the penalties for each wound to get a "Cumulative wound penalty".

Using the above example, the warrior would currently be suffering from a Cumulative wound penalty of -2. The 3 hurt wounds each apply no penalty at this time and the 2 light wounds each apply a -1.

Making this change has required other modifications, like dominos, in order to maintain fairness and balance.

First off, those entities with extra body levels from size or other sources are dealt with in a different manner than before.

Since each wound doesn't stack the way it used to, instead the aggressor must deal more damage to have a large effect. As a side effect, this makes some of the large creatures from various books much, much more difficult to defeat quickly and as a consequence strategies such as closing for battle and doing a couple of light hits, then pulling out and hoping for the wounds to infect, is viable.

For instance a large person in the old system has an extra hurt Body level; in the new system he or she also has an extra hurt Body level. Rather than the extra 5 pts of damage staging up the wound from hurt to light, it stays at hurt. So a wound will be a hurt wound from 1 to 10 pts of damage.

Magical healing is modified so that any spell that grants a recovery of a Body level, now grants a recovery of one Body level for each wound.

Battle Tricks

Maneuvers, patterns of attack, mini-skills and more fill in this category. I will sketch some examples and explain how it works. Feel free to come up with new tricks, and decide if these tricks are free to your players if they meet the requirements. In my rules each “trick” has an experience point cost based on whether you developed the maneuver yourself (2 experience points) or if you were trained in it (1 experience point). If you are being trained than you can allocate the experience between the combat skill and your new trick/s.

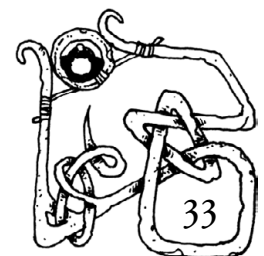
Some tricks are Exclusive in that they cannot be used with any other trick that is Exclusive in the same action. The storyguide should use common sense about when two non-Exclusive tricks can be used. Every trick has some sort of requirement, usually a Combat Skill, and some tricks only work with some weapons.

- **Bash:** With this trick a warrior, after the engagement contest, closes Range from Reach to Touch and deals blunt damage with anything from a sword's pommel, fist or a shield. The attacker's Damage Total is Brawling modified by whatever is used to “Bash” and the defender takes the standard -6 penalty if equipped with a Reach ranged weapon or can choose to use Brawl. Requirements: Melee Combat Skill of 3 and Brawl of 3. (Exclusive)
- **Deadly shot:** An excellent archer is something to be feared, even by heavily armored knights. Apply the Optional Damage Rule for longbows and crossbows (ArM4 page 165) to longbows, crossbows, and composite bows. Requirements: Bows skill of 6 and Awareness skill of 3.
- **Feint:** By faking an attack at one location and making a strike at another spot, an attacker is hoping that the defender will fall for it, whether the maneuver is simple or very complex. Add your Intelligence to your Attack Total. Defenders add their Perception to their Defense Total and +1 per previous feint attempt the attacker has tried versus this opponent in this combat. Requirements: Melee Combat Skill of 3 and a positive Intelligence Characteristic. (Exclusive)
- **Find Armor Weakness:** After studying the way armor is made and where it tends to be weakest, a skilled and perceptive warrior can use this trick to find a flaw in an armor's protection and with that knowledge make a pattern of strikes to set up a blow to that or other vulnerable locations. Reduce an opponent's Armor Protection by your Perception Characteristic +1. Requirements: Craft Armor of 2, Awareness of 4 and Combat Skill of 5.

Fleche: A quick lunge that can easily take an opponent by surprise. Base move of the warrior with this trick is doubled though it must be in a straight line and be on even ground. Requirements: Single Weapon Skill (sword) of 3 and Athletics of 2. (Exclusive)

- **Giving up ground:** The defender declares the amount of paces to be moved and adds 1 to their Defense Total per pace they back up. Requirements: Combat Skill of 1. Quickness must be higher than your opponent and you must have the room to give up. Use of this trick is limited by the Base Move of the defender. If the ground is difficult at all, then a defender using this trick must make an Athletics roll and if failed, subtract from their defense the amount of paces they attempted to move plus the difference between the Athletics Total and the Ease Factor provided by the Storyguide.
- **Hook Shield:** With certain weapons a warrior can hook an opponent's shield and pull them off balance or maneuver a shield out of position. This eliminates a shield's Defense bonus. Requirements: Axe, Hammer, Chain or Hooked Longshaft Combat Skill of 4. (Exclusive)
- **Sidestep:** A Brawling maneuver in which a defender evades an attack by footwork. The defender gains a +3 bonus to Fist/Kick Defense by dodging an attack against one opponent. Requirements: Brawl of 3. (Exclusive)
- **Shield Blind:** By making a pattern of strikes, a warrior forces an opponent's shield into a position that interferes with his vision. Reduce your opponent's Defense Total by half of the Defense bonus of the shield.
- **Requirements:** Melee Combat skill of 4 (Exclusive)
- **Shield Defense:** A warrior using this trick makes it hard for an attacker to land a solid blow with skilled use of a shield. The defender gains a +2 bonus to Defense when using a shield against one opponent. Requirements: Shield and Weapon skill of 4. (Exclusive)
- **Sundering the shield:** With this trick a warrior tries to destroy the enemy's shield. A warrior makes a strike with a -3 penalty to the Attack Total while disregarding the Defense score of the shield. After a successful attack the warrior must Go for a Hit against the shield itself.

Each shield has a Soak score and a number of Body levels. Starting with a buckler it has a Soak of +7 and 2 Body levels, with each larger shield following adding +1 to Soak and +1 Body level. Each Body level lost subtracts 1 from the Defense Score of the shield. Requirements: A Combat skill of 3 and a positive Strength Characteristic. (Exclusive)





- **Superior Feint:** As warriors become more skilled they can be less predictable. Your opponent doesn't gain the +1 previous Feint bonuses if your Intelligence Characteristic is higher than your opponent's Perception Characteristic. Requirements: The Feint trick and a Melee Combat skill of 5. (Exclusive)
- **Superior Shield Defense:** With this trick a warrior becomes even harder to hit effectively. The defender gains +3 to their Defense Total when using a shield against all non-flanking opponents. Requirements: Shield Defense trick, Shield and Weapon skill of 6. (Exclusive)

Other Changes

Now that the combat structure has been dealt with, it is time to move on to the other modifications I've made or taken from other sources, mainly *Ordo Nobilis*.

A major problem I have felt with the combat is the way 4th Edition deals with fatigue. With my experience I've found that most people tire easily and quickly but trained athletes can fight for a truly long time.

I've tried various methods but have found the *Ordo Nobilis* optional rule to be supreme (see page 84 ON). A major side benefit, I feel, is that it speeds up combat by eliminating a roll most of the time.

I do have an addition I have made to the way Combat Fatigue is dealt with that I call: Second Wind.

If the roll is 12 or more then you recover a lost Fatigue Level (as long as it is not long term). For every 3 points above 12, recover an additional Fatigue Level.

Ordo Nobilis also dealt with another problem I have with the standard combat system, Combat Encumbrance, this rule is also used in this system. (See page 84 ON)

Not so much a problem but just something I like is the armor rule set on pages 82 to 84 in ON.

Since I have eliminated the magic phase, the benefit that Fast casting gives you is plus 5 to your Initiative Total. This is enough to give a magus a chance to beat a decent swordsman to the punch.

I changed the Routing rule because in any real fight I've ever watched or been in, if someone was to stop fighting and try to run they would be the one run through! Routing doesn't give an Initiative bonus or allow you to add your Defense score to your Defense roll. Also, you can't make any attacks during any round you are routing.

A few things about magical combat are different too. I utilize the missile damage rules for aimed spells rather than the standard rules. It is logical because aimed spells use most of the same rules as missiles, except that in the standard rules an accurate shot doesn't do any more damage than a shot that barely hits. I also allow magi who have mastered an aimed spell to "concentrate" and hold a spell up and ready, so they can spend a round aiming at a target and gain

the same benefits that the Aimed Combat State gives missile wielders. They have to make a concentration roll with an Ease Factor based on the situation in order to succeed.

There are a few considerations to make if you plan on using the ON optional soak/damage rule with spells and possibly even Certamen. Either you accept that spells do incredible amounts of damage or drop the damage a spell does by 5. With Certamen I could see allowing a defender to add Concentration to the "Soak" Total, balancing out the extra damage done by using this rule across the board, rather than just in combat.

Multiple opponents are a major issue with me. I have found that a good swordsman (4 or 5 weapon skill) can defeat two competent attackers (3 weapon skill) most of the time. An excellent swordsman (6 to 8) can handle 3 or 4. A master (9+) can easily handle 8 or 9. I also introduce flanking which is "really" hard to deal with in combat.

The reason that the above is true is because most people get in each other's way when fighting so a good fighter moves and sets up patterns to increase this chance.

I have thought about allowing flanking bonuses to warriors trained in fighting as a team who are disciplined and aware of the other's fighting style. Since really well trained forces, from my understanding, aren't really common in the 13th century this should be rare or it could be introduced as part of the package of Templars or other military orders.

New Terminology

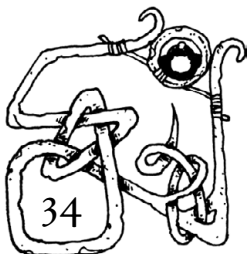
Advantage bonus: The difference between the Attack total and Defense total of two combatants, applied to Ripostes, Pressing the Attack, and Going for a Hit.

Base Movement: Quickness + Athletics = Base Move. If a character's Base Move is actually a negative score, rather than giving free movement it instead increases the cost of moving altogether. You add the score (remove the negative) to the normal 1 cost of making a move. For example a character with a -3 Base Move pays 4 (1+3) segments to walk 1 pace, hustle 2 paces, or run 3 paces.

Blunt damage: Attacks that inflict bruised wounds. Damage from these attacks is called bruised wounds. Some of the various sources are Quarter-staff, sap, cudgel, non-spiked gauntlets, and unarmed attacks like punches.

Bruised Wounds: The first level of each bruised wound is recovered at the same rate that fatigue is recovered. After that the bruise is considered a standard wound except that you don't have to stabilize it with medicine or surgery.

For example a light bruise and 2 hurt bruises are dealt to the warrior during a fight. A light bruise is equal to being weary so it takes 10 minutes to recover. The 2 hurt bruises take 2 minutes each to recover so after 14 minutes the 3 bruise wounds become 1 hurt wound.



Combat States: States of readiness for combat and preparation for combat.

- *Totally surprised:* After failing by 3 or more or botching the perception test, you are totally unprepared for combat. You may not attack or riposte this round. You don't add your defense score to your defense total.
- *Unprepared:* Just became aware of the enemy and not mentally prepared for combat and weapons are not readied. -3 to the Initiative Total, plus quick draw penalties if using weapons, otherwise use brawl. Missiles use normal WIB (Weapon Initiative Bonus).
- *Prepared:* Spending a round to be aware of the enemy both physically and mentally, without weapons being drawn. Apply quick draw penalties if applicable. Missiles use normal WIB.
- *Ready: (melee)* Prepared with weapons in hand. Standard state of combat.
- *Ready: (missile)* see above. Normal WIB is ignored for the purpose of Initiative; instead use a +5 WIB. Weapon is in hand and loaded/armed.
- *Aimed: (missiles only)* By spending the previous round declaring a target with the weapon ready and aimed, WIB is ignored for the purpose of Initiative, instead use a +10 WIB and an adjustment of -3 to the Ease Factor of the shot.

Cumulative Wound penalty: The total of all the penalties you currently suffer from that occur because of wounds.

Fighting stances: Declared during the declaration of intent phase. Once declared they last until the Initial Initiative phase of combat, or in other words, whenever Initiative is rolled.

- *All out attack:* +6 to your Attack Total against one opponent, attackers using this stance cannot add their defense score to their defense total.
- *Aggressive:* +1 to Initiative Total, +2 to Attack Total, -3 to Defense Total.
- *Opportunistic:* Standard stance with no modifications.
- *Responsive:* -3 to Initiative Total, +2 to Defense Total.
- *Defensive:* +6 to Defense Total against one opponent, +3 Defense Total against other opponents. May not attack, riposte or take any action other than defending.

Go for a hit: A successful attacker compares the Damage Total from the attack (Advantage bonus + Damage score) in order to wound by comparing it to the defender's Soak.

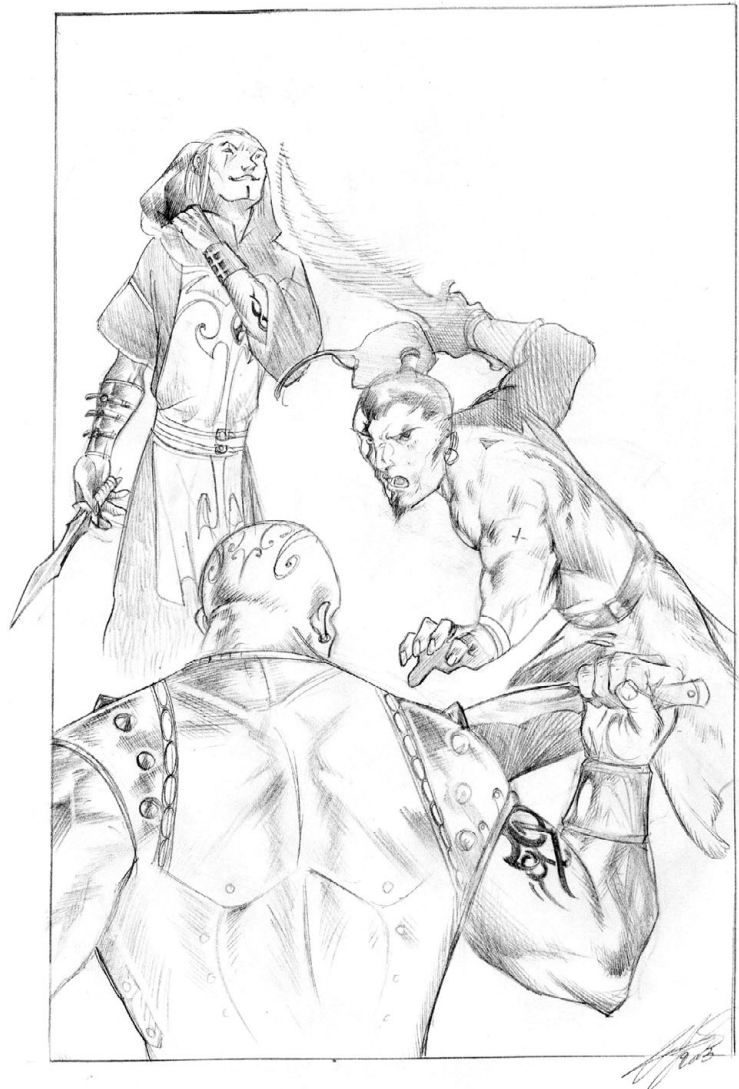
Indirectly Incapacitated: If the Cumulative Wound penalty of an individual ever surpasses a threshold of their Stamina + 7 then they are incapacitated. When recovering from incapacitation, a roll of 9+ stages down the highest wound. (see page 179 ArM4)

Infected Wounds: At the end of combat (within a half hour, at the most) if a surgeon or physician hasn't stabilized your wounds there is a chance of the wound becoming infected. When a surgeon isn't available, make a Stamina test with an Ease Factor equal to the number of wounds + the Cumulative Wound penalty. Should you fail then the difference between the Stamina total and the Ease Factor is the number of wounds that become infected. The "lowest" wounds are staged up first. When a wound is infected, stage up the wound by one level.

For example a warrior suffers 3 hurt wounds and 2 light wounds. The Ease Factor for not receiving surgical attention is 5 (# of wounds) + 2 (cumulative wound penalty) = 7. A roll of 4 causes 3 wounds to be staged up. As a consequence the warrior would now have 5 light wounds.

Also, if a surgeon is available but fails the stabilizing test (EF=3+) then the wound becomes effectively infected, with various causes such as the surgeon being particularly ruthless when cauterizing the wound or not washing his hands.

A surgeon must roll for each individual wound but only applies the wound penalty for that wound to the ease factor unless the injured individual is





attempting to do it himself, in which case the whole Cumulative Wound penalty is applied.

If any of these rolls above are botched, roll on the catastrophe sub-chart for each wound affected.

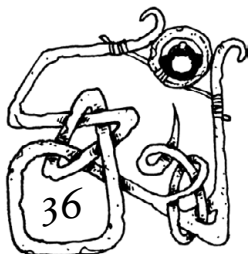
A second series of tests is required for each non stabilized wound if the requirements for recovering long term fatigue are not met that night after the battle, such as a good meal and a good night's rest.

Invisible attacker: An invisible attacker gains a +10 bonus to the first attack roll attempted (don't forget modifications from combat state). After the first attack the bonus drops to +5. If defender's combat score is 5 or higher, drop the bonus to +3. Invisible attackers may attempt to disengage and then re-engage.

Invisible defender: A storyguide decision, usually a Defense bonus of +1 to +10. Depends mostly on how much room there is to maneuver and how, why, when and where the defender turned invisible.

Multiple opponents: A -1 penalty to all combat rolls per opponent beyond one is applied, with a -4 penalty per opponent applied if flanking. This is when any of the opponents are on opposite each other with the enemy in between, in other words one is in front and one is behind or one is on the left and the other on the right. A beset individual fighting Multiple opponents cannot Press the attack; but instead must Go for a hit with all successful attacks. The Advantage bonus that the Multiple opponents gain against a single opponent add together and are used by all the attackers. In addition to this, should any of them decide to Press the attack, the defender temporarily loses initiative and can only defend against the other opponents and cannot Riposte until the "group" Advantage bonus has been removed.

For example, a warrior is fighting three inferior guards. The warrior is overconfident and thinks that victory is certain as long as they can't use flanking. The warrior suffers a -2 penalty because there are 3 enemies but still gains initiative on all of the guards. For the first attack, the warrior is forced to Go for a hit after successfully attacking and scratches the guard's forearm. On the next attack the guard surprises the warrior by sidestepping the warrior's lunge and ripostes and gains an Advantage bonus of 3. The guard decides to Press the attack and thus prevents the warrior from attacking guard #3 as well as giving initiative to that guard, who now attacks and adds the previous Advantage bonus of 3 and increases it to 5. The guard chooses to keep Pressing the attack because it seems a good strategy. As a consequence all three guards have initiative and use the previous round's roll to decide initiative amongst each other. The guard #1 attacks and nearly botches by slipping on a patch of muddy ground. The warrior successfully ripostes and scores a light wound on the guard's shoulder. Since the warrior has eliminated the Advantage bonus, the other guards are no longer pressing the attack so the warrior's "suppressed" initiative returns and the combat continues.



Don't forget that Multiple opponent penalties also apply when using missile weapons at different targets in the same round. "Flanking" would be when the target is at a 90 degree angle or more from the previous shot. Like if you had to change your facing or orientation 180 degrees then you would be totally opposite the original facing you started with and as a result take a -4 to your second shot.

Pressing the attack: Attackers may use their Advantage bonus from successful attacks to set up their opponents and force them into bad positions so that they may significantly wound them. You have Initiative until such a time that you no longer have the Advantage bonus, the defender chooses the option of Taking the hit or you decide to Go for the hit.

For example the warrior above is being pressed by two of his opponents in the first round. They all have Initiative next round, even the wounded enemy.

Quick draw: During the round when the melee weapons are drawn, all combat rolls are minus one. Missile weapons don't follow this rule.

Riposte: When an attack is poor the defender may, after blocking the attack, take advantage of an opponent's overextension or bad form and gain a free attack that round. Add the Advantage bonus from the successful defense to the new attack roll. If the defender's Riposte is successful, a choice must be made to either Press the attack or Go for a hit. The next round, the initial attacker may riposte back and combat can go back and forth without the Initiative phase requiring a roll. No more than one Riposte can take place every round.

Taking the hit: With this combat option you choose to force your opponent to Go for a hit and in return you get an attack this round (much as a Riposte works). Essentially you are avoiding being put in a bad position by a more skilled or lucky fighter and stealing Initiative as well in exchange for being wounded. The Damage Total is doubled before applying Soak.

Conclusion

Many of these changes add quite a bit of complexity to the system that may not be wanted by the average player or storyguide. That is perfectly understandable.

I've attempted to provide a realistic system that is full of optional rules that can be whittled down or expanded upon as you choose.

Much like the old dueling system in *Ars Magica* 3rd Edition, you have the option to use all the special rules only in the big world-shattering battles and use the basics the rest of the time.

I hope you find this work to be of use to you in your games and I wish you all luck and good fortune.

Special Thanks to my troupe of play testers: Jeremy Dahlin, Jeremy and Dyan Johnson, Rick Stelljes, Eric Pierson, Rowdy Parks, Sheldon Adams, and my beta Storyguide Matt Steele.

The Simonium: Shrine to Simon Magus

by Alexander White

Legends of the epic battles between the Apostle Peter and the arch-magician Simon Magus are legion. A powerful gnostic and practitioner of the magical arts, Simon Magus lived during the time of Christ's crucifixion in the land of Samaria and then in Rome. There he engaged St. Peter in a duel of spiritual miracles and wonders before the Emperor Nero and died when angels caused him to plummet from his magical flight to heaven. A shrine was erected where he fell, called the Simonium.

The Legend

After the crucifixion, when the apostles and their followers were preaching the word of God, Philip reached Samaria and encountered Simon. Samaria was at this time a place filled with unclean spirits that possessed a great many people. At the arrival of Philip, those possessed and made lame were cured. Simon Magus, who lived in Samaria spoke to the people, and they praised him, saying 'This man is the power of God that is called Great.' He performed many miracles and magical acts, but Philip proclaimed the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, and so the people of Samaria were baptised. Even Simon believed and was baptised also. He followed Philip and was amazed at the miracles and signs that took place.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted the word of God, Peter and John journeyed there and prayed that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit. John and Peter laid their hands upon the people and the Holy Spirit entered them. Simon Magus saw that by the act

of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit was given to people. He offered them money, saying 'Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'

Peter sharply rebuked him for attempting to buy the gift of the Lord. Chastised,

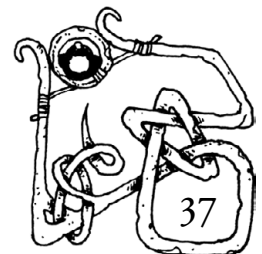
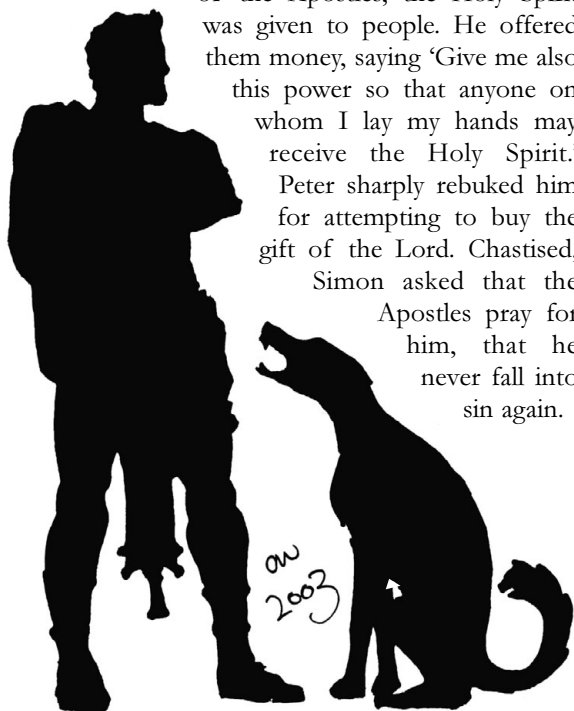
Simon asked that the Apostles pray for him, that he never fall into sin again.

Simon Magus resurfaced in Rome during the reign of Nero, twelve years after Jesus' death. St. Peter received from the Lord a vision of Simon Magus creating displays of sorcery and magic, and going by the title of Christ. Leaving Jerusalem, Peter reached Rome to confront Simon. He preached to a crowd at the docks, denouncing Simon as a deceiver and calling on them to turn to God. Those gathered there repented and told Peter that Simon lived in the house of Marcellus, a powerful and wise senator, who gave to the poor, orphans and widows, and whom the emperor had great regard for. Peter grieved that Simon should have deceived such a godly man.

Going to the house of Marcellus, Peter found that a great hound guarded the door, chained there by Simon to protect him from those who wished to see him. The crowd that had followed Peter told him that any who tried to enter the house without the permission of Simon was set upon and killed by the hound. So Peter took the hound's chain and loosed him, saying 'Go to Simon and tell him in a human voice "Peter, the servant of the most High God, wishes to come in."' The hound ran in and rushed to where Simon sat with Marcellus and spoke what Peter had said. Those with him marvelled and asked, 'Who is Peter, or what is the power of the man of whom the dog spoke with a human voice?' Simon said to the hound, 'I bid you tell Peter in a human voice that Simon says, "Come in."'

But Marcellus repented and went to Peter and confessed his sins. Peter beseeched the Lord that the house of Marcellus be blessed. The hound left Simon and came to Peter and sat at his feet, having turned his face from Simon. It said to the Apostle, 'Peter, you will have a great contest with Simon, wherefore you shall receive from God the reward for your work.' Having said this, the dog gave up the ghost, and many people in the crowd were converted.

There was in Rome a great uproar and scandal because of Simon and Peter, since they were working wonders in competition with each other. The prefect Agrippa heard the uproar and reported it to the Emperor, saying 'There are some men in this imperial city working miracles and wonders against each other. One calls himself Christ; the other says "He is not Christ, but a magus, for I am a disciple of Christ."' The Emperor ordered that both be brought before him, and that Pilate be brought from prison (where he had been placed earlier). When they were before him, he asked Simon, 'Are you he whom men call Christ?' Simon replied 'I am'. Then Nero asked Peter, 'Is he really Christ?' Peter replied 'No. I am the disciple of Christ and in my presence he ascended to heaven.' Summoning Pilate, Nero asked him about Simon, 'Is he the man you handed over to be crucified?' Looking closely, Pilate answered 'He is not the man.' Nero then asked Pilate about Peter, who replied 'This is the man whom I asked "Are you the discipline of Christ", and he denied that he was, so I





let him go.' Nero had both Simon and Peter thrown from the palace, on the grounds that Simon was an imposter, and that Peter had denied Christ.

Both remained in Rome. Simon stood before Peter and denounced him saying, 'Here I, Simon, am. So come Peter and I will convict you of believing in a mere human being, a Jew, the son of a carpenter.' He turned to the crowd there and said, 'Men of Rome, you are no fools. Is God born? Is he crucified? He that has a master is no God.' Many there agreed with Simon. So Simon went to a dead boy, who had just died and said 'Men of Rome, if you behold the dead rise, will you cast Peter out of the city?' The crowd cried 'We will not only cast him out but will burn him on that very instant.'

Then Simon went to the head of the dead boy and said three times, 'Raise yourself up.' The crowd saw the head lift and move and open its eyes, and bow towards Simon. The crowd leapt towards its torches and wood, but Peter said 'Your eyes and hearts are addled, supposing that this man is raised, who has not lifted himself up. Let him stand and talk and call to his mother.' And the people saw that Simon had not truly raised the boy. The crowd was angered, and Peter laid his hand upon the boy's side and bid him rise. The boy stood up off his bier and cast aside his grave clothes and cried out the name of the Lord.

But Simon Magus, after a few days had passed, continued to work his miracles. At his touch, men who were blind were healed, the lame walked and the dead were raised. And always Peter did the same, and followed Simon and denounced him.

Finally, Simon came before Emperor Nero, and said to Peter and the crowd that followed both of them, 'Men of Rome, you think that Peter has prevailed over me as more powerful. You are deceived,

for I shall forsake you, godless and impious that you are. I shall fly up to God, whose Power I am. Whereas you have fallen, I am he that stands before God my Father.' To Peter he said 'You said that Christ your god ascended to heaven. See, I too can ascend. If your god is able, let him show that faith in him is faith in God and let him appear at this time.'

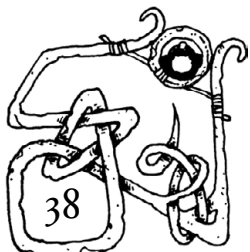
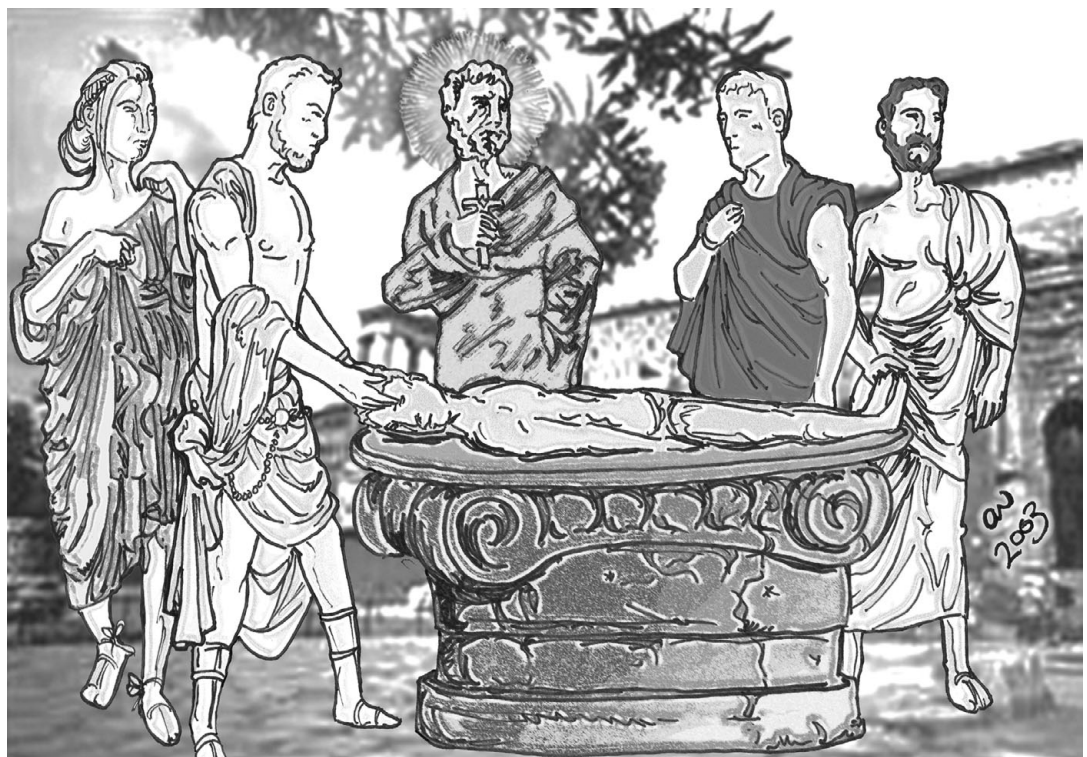
Simon was then borne high up into the air, and all saw him fly above Rome and the temples and the mountains. They then looked to Peter, who prayed to the Lord saying 'If you suffer this man to accomplish what he has set about, now will they all believe that the signs and wonders that you have given were false. Hasten therefore, your grace O Lord and let him fall from the height.' Peter prayed and Simon was hurled from the air to the ground, to the street, and there he perished. His remains were left there, and a stone shrine was built around them. From that time onwards, it has been known as the Simonium.

When the Emperor Nero beheld the death of Simon, he was angry and ordered Peter be arrested and put to death. St. Peter was imprisoned and then martyred, being crucified upside down, for the Apostle had said 'Let me not be crucified as my Lord was.'

The Simonium

The Simonium is a shrine dedicated to Simon Magus, built at the spot that he fell from the air, or where the citizens of Rome erected a statue in his honour. According to one legend, his body was not removed, but rather was covered by stones and turned into a shrine. Another legend places his shrine on the island in Tiber, where a statue stands with the inscription *Simo Sancus*, ('Simon the Holy God').

The Simonium is the site of pilgrimage amongst the members of the Order. The two different sites are visited by different groups of magi, depending on their interpretation of the Simon Magus story. Those



who see Simon as an illustration of magical hubris and a way for magi to achieve salvation journey to the small bier near the now-ruined Imperial Palace. Those who see Simon as a powerful theurge to be admired visit the location of his statue.

Each shrine has a different effect on those who visit. Many Pious Magi visited the shrine of Simon Magus before achieving the deep understanding of God and their magic. They have reported feeling a deep sense of the consequences of their magical acts. While standing before the shrine they examined their hearts and minds with a clarity never before achieved. The shrine, they say, was a concrete example of magic used for the wrong purposes. Later they said that whenever they felt tempted to use their magic for ill purposes, the image of the shrine of Simon Magus was summoned in their mind's eye and they did not stray from the true path.

In contrast, the site of the ruined statue to Simon is written of as being a catalyst for eager pilgrimages in their pursuit of magical enlightenment or advancement. Some influential researchers are often said to have travelled to Rome before revealing their great work, their minor breakthrough, or their spell. Amongst groups that seek to attain Final Twilight or search for the Enigma, the shrine is a place for contemplation that often results in an epiphany. Members of House Criamon and of Twilight cults who have visited the shrine have spoken of feeling a sensation akin to flying towards heaven, or towards a great Flame. Others have reported similar things: of rising above the limit of the Lunar Sphere and seeing the middle realms, governed by angels and spirits, and of the great Fire that is heaven.

Within the context of an Ars Magica game, it is up to each storyguide or troupe to decide the exact effects of the Simonium, or whether it has any real effect at all. Pilgrimages in Mythic Europe are always significant events. The end of the pilgrimage is always a place of wonders and miracles: the sick are healed, the blind see and the lame walk.

In this context, the Order of Hermes finds for itself holy places to visit and venerate. The secular and non-spiritual nature of Hermetic magic means that wizards are required to seek other sources of spiritual fulfilment. Sites of pilgrimage and the locations of legendary magical feats are just one way that magi fulfil this need.

Pilgrimages are also opportunities for storyguides to get their player's mages out of the laboratory. If a mage is struggling to reach a lab total for a specific spell or magical breakthrough, hinting that visiting the shrine of a powerful historical mage could grant some insight would get just about any covenant-bound Bonisagus lab-rat on the road. The journey can often be as significant as reaching the destination, and they are fodder for many types of stories, from travelogues of strange events ('a funny thing happened on the way to the shrine...'), to the good old vis hunt ('for your longevity potion you will need a dram of dew from the stones of Simon Magus'

shrine'), or even something more momentous ('The promised resurrection of Simon Magus is prophesised to occur in the Age of Aries 1369, where he will again attempt to storm the gates of Heaven').

The Simonians

His followers use exorcisms and incantations, and they employ familiars and dream-guides, in order, by magic, to overcome the angels who created the world.

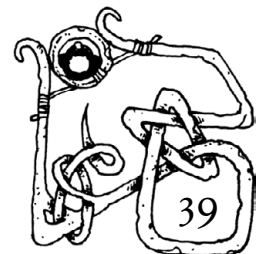
– Irenaeus

Simon Magus has been labelled as 'the First Gnostic', and 'the father of all heresies'. His doctrine was based on the principle that Fire was the primary force in the cosmos, and that within it resided both sexes. It focuses on the redemption of humanity through secret knowledge. For Simon, the world languished under the tyranny of angels and spirits, and those angels corrupted and imprisoned the Thought of God within matter. Removing oneself from the cycle of material existence would free the soul and allow it to unite with God.

Before creation only Fire existed, active and receptive, forceful and generative, eternal and self-sustaining, male and female. Creation came into being from the Uncreated Fire through Silence, personified by six aspects or 'Roots': Mind or Power (Nous/Dynamis), Thought (Ennoia) (the two highest 'Roots'), Voice (Phonê), Name (Onoma), Reason (Logismos) and Reflection (Enthymêsis). Thought and Power divided from each other, forming an infinite space between them. Thought named Power, and from that name ('He who stands, has stood, and shall stand') and the perception of Thought, come the Aeons: Heaven, Earth, Sun, Moon, Air and Water. Comprehending the design of Power, Thought descended into the lower regions and produced the angels and spirits. These lower authorities then created the cosmos in the image of the Aeons. Prior to this material creation, the Aeons were purely spiritual. Thought then placed the Breath of Power into the cosmos, creating the primal man, as a reflection of Fire.

The lower authorities did not know the Uncreated Fire and wished to rule the cosmos themselves. They divided the primal man into two sexes. From then on, the two sexes would desire to reunite. That union would only increase their separation however, as it would result in yet more divided offspring. The Angels captured Thought before it could leave the lower regions, and there they forced it to incarnate on earth, wandering from vessel to vessel, until it could be found and saved by Christ.

Simon was the personification of Power, the 'Great Power of God', also known as the Christ ('Anointed One'). The Simonians believed that God had seen the tyranny of the angels and had descended to the lower regions and appeared as (although was not) a man. He offered salvation from the angels through his divine knowledge (gnosis) of the divided male-female essence that fills all humanity.





Salvation for the Simonians was freedom from the tyranny of the angels and the repetitive cycles of physical life. These cycles were perpetuated by desire, so only by extinguishing desire could one be freed of the mortal coil. Ending the cycle of desire could only take place after the desire for union between man and woman was fulfilled with an ecstatic reunification. Like most gnostics, the reunification would allow the Simonians to concentrate on spiritual matters and no longer be corrupted by physical desire.

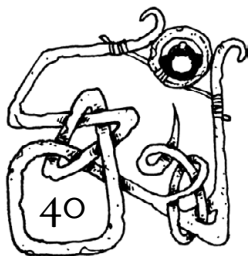
The Simonians prospered until the time of Constantine, when they gradually declined. Their influence on gnosticism in general, and Simon's influence within Christianity was considerable (although negative in the case of Christianity, as the term 'simony' comes from Simon's attempts to buy the blessings of the apostles).

Simon Magus and the Order

Within the Order of Hermes, Simon Magus stands for many things: a warning against challenging the divine, an exemplar who mastered the many forms of magical art, and as a diabolist punished for his sins.

Primarily amongst those magi who are faithful Christians, Simon Magus stands as an example of the hubris of magic and of power. His pride at believing he could rival the power of the divinely guided Apostles, and his mistaken belief that he could buy that divine power is seen by Christian mages as a warning to those who would challenge God. Simon tried to purchase power to aggrandise himself, turning power meant for the salvation of humanity to advance his own selfishness.

In the polemics of these Christian mages, Simon's initial acceptance of and by the Apostles shows that the magi of the Order can reconcile their faith with magic. If the Apostles Peter and John accepted Simon, rebuking him for his selfish use of power, but baptising him and letting him receive the Holy Spirit, then surely all magi can be accepted too. Peter's rebuke against Simon for attempting to buy God's gift indicates that magi should not accept money for their services and nor should they sell them. They should offer their aid to holy and pious endeavours. As Peter said to Simon, 'Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.' (Acts 8:22.) Clearly, the act of magic is not itself a sin, but rather the intent of the practitioner's heart. Simon's and Peter's later actions in Rome indicate the correctness of the Hermetic Limit of the Divine: God is sovereign, and magic should not seek to rival the power of the Lord. Simon's fall is illustrative of the helplessness of magic against divine miracles, and also represents Simon's spiritual fall into sin and Hell. Simon's hubris, pride and bitterness saw him fall from grace. Magi within the Order who follow Simon's lead of performing false miracles and using their magic for twisted ends will follow Simon and also fall.



There are many other views of Simon Magus within the Order however. Like many other figures from history, Simon stands as a patron of secret Hermetic cults and colleges. He is one of the great thaumaturges and theurges of Antiquity; many magi seek to replicate his feats of causing statues to laugh and walk. The tales of his flights, not only the final one above Rome, are littered with accounts that he compelled powerful spirits to hold him aloft. He summoned up the spirits of the dead to learn the future and even created life by forcing the soul of a boy who had been killed into a new body (a homunculus) made from air. These feats have been copied and attempted by many mages since, and are a source of inspiration to many mages since his time.

Many of his feats, and the final conflict with St. Peter are taken by some as encouragement that the Hermetic Limits can be broken, or that at least some of them can. Some of the accounts of Simon speak of him compelling angels rather than spirits. His raising of the dead and creating of life in particular are used as inspiration. His declaration that he would rise and stand before God is seen as an indication by some mages that Twilight is a path by which magi can know the divine, and furthermore, that magic can allow magi to ascend. Other Hermetic theorists use the Simon Magus story as a parable on Hermetic Limits. His inability to truly raise the dead parallels the Hermetic limitation of the Soul. His fall was precipitated by attempting to penetrate the Lunar Sphere, and the failure of his prophecy to return after three days indicates that Hermetic oracles are imperfect at best.

Furthermore, those mages who are opposed to the Dominion and the Church see Simon Magus as a martyr and a hero who stood against the divine realm and almost triumphed. They spread tales that Simon did not die in Rome that day, but lived to prophesy his death and resurrection, or that he did not even fall, but continued upwards as the first mage to ascend to heaven in Final Twilight.

Finally, there are those who cling to the strictly Christian interpretation of Simon Magus: that he was diabolically guided and empowered, and that he represents the worst kind of infernalist. Magi within the Order who believe this are few, but they are vindicated by support from the Church, who see Simon as representative of diabolism, paganism, heresy and gnosticism, all opposed to the Truth of orthodox Christianity.

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Dear Abelard

Dear Abelard is a column devoted to the writings of an elderly follower of Bonisagus, who believed the best way to fulfill his duty to the Order was to share all of his advice and research in the form of written correspondence with a network of readers, carried by Redcaps to magi throughout Mythic Europe. If, through the course of your saga or studies, you discover a question that you think could have been addressed to Abelard, please forward it to the editor,

Hermes.Portal@wanadoo.fr or to

dearabelard@yahoo.com

and we will attempt to find a record of his reply.



Salvete Sodales,

The sun blazes hotly outside and the days grow longer, and I find myself spending more time on the grounds of our covenant, embraced by the warm air and carried by the dry, scented winds that fill this pleasant valley. The time flies so quickly now, and I am so occupied with thoughts of life and leisure, that I have completely neglected my letters, and now I find myself writing quickly, speaking loudly in hopes that it will cause my pen to move faster, so that I may return to my activities with a sense of fulfillment, and thus banish any guilt I might feel for putting it off for so long. I hope you will not notice any lack of care on my part, gentle readers, for I can assure you this project is still of great importance to me and that I have no intention of forsaking it.

I have begun at last upon another endeavor, in addition to my tasks here at Scriptoris Socii, which fills me with great anticipation — I have decided to take an apprentice. This thought came upon me last spring, creeping up as I, all unawares, surely had no expectation of its arrival. This is one reason so much time has passed since last you heard from me. I tell you first, my dear readers, so that I may assure you that the child I have picked, like fruit from the vine, to learn my ways and the ways of our Order, will also assist me as I maintain our correspondence, and maintain our confidentiality as it concerns that correspondence when it is so desired. It is too soon to introduce you properly, but be assured that when the moment is proper you will hear all about us; I will not keep you separated for much longer.

I find myself musing on the reasons for taking an apprentice; there are many that would explain why a magus of my age might decide to adopt a follower. I might wish to experience firsthand the joys and challenges of fatherhood that the longevity potion denies me. I might need assistance with my work, a scribe and assistant in my lab to help with onerous chores that have begun to occupy too much of my valuable time. Perhaps I desire to see that my opinions of magic are continued, creating a magical lineage like our Founders, training House Lanatus (I must interject how absurd this sounds to me!) to create the future of our Order. But it seems that none of these reasons resound in my heart. I find I desire an

apprentice for the simple reason that I wish to do good; I have a peculiar talent, and I would like to help another person with a similar talent to adapt to our unusual place in society. My apprentice will be my friend. Those who read my regular writings know I am not a vain man, for my only thought is to share the gifts that have been given to me with others. But I am filled to bursting with this noble purpose, and I ask my wise readers to share their advice with me for proper raising of young magi, for I want to succeed and I know my good sodales will help.

So focused have I been on this task, and in savoring the beauty of the earth as nature draws to its zenith, that I fear I have little to contribute to this letter that it is my custom to regularly send forth. How thankful I am, then, that at this time I have a message addressed to my dear friend Moratamis, and that she has consented to read it and respond here in this same way, for all to read! It is a contentious but passionate letter, and very worthy of her careful attention and respect, which she has done the honor to bestow upon it. Read on, and learn of the thoughts and doings of Bevorus, filius of Bulistie who is Primus of House Tytalus.



Dear Abelard,

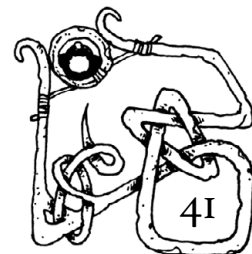
As a regular reader of your missives, I must confess to some astonishment at Moratamis' sycophantic portrayal of the late twice Queen Eleanor, now deceased. Were I to know how to reach her independently, I would have written Moratamis and protested directly, but in writing to you I hope not only to correct her misconceptions concerning this detestable woman, but those she may have unfortunately spread to your other faithful readers as well.

We knew Eleanor well here at Fudarus, and how the machinations of this evil, scheming and unprincipled woman not only denied her grandson, the young Duke Arthur of beloved memory, his rightful claim to his father's and grandfather's inheritance, but conspired to his death, blinded and strangled in the dungeons of her repulsive and loathsome get, John Lackland.

How this Harpy, this Discord incarnate, could be offered up as a model for our younger, fairer and more impressionable sodales totally escapes me. Better to have chosen Semiramis, Delilah, or Brunhild whose monstrous sins at least have the merit of not having plagued us in living memory.

Need I really remind you that Eleanor betrayed both her husbands, set her sons against their father (whom she married when he was merely count of Anjou and not king as Moratamis inaccurately claims), broke the rules of rightful succession by placing her youngest, John, on the throne of England, and kept the lands of our Tribunal in such continual armed turmoil that none of us could go about our affairs in any semblance of carefree security and peace.

That a rich man of enormous appetite should be seen to eat is no cause for praise or wonderment.





Why, then, should it be any different for the hatred, despair and misery Queen Eleanor was able to sow in her wake, endowed as she was through no merit of her own with vast wealth, great beauty and a total lack of scruples? Had it not been for my Oath, you can be assured that I would personally have taken the steps needed to relieve from her arrogance and wickedness both realms she defiled as queen.

What incubus (I will have to look through my catalogue) could possibly have possessed Moratamis to reach into the mundane realm for such an inappropriate exemplar as Eleanor, when our own Order presents numerous examples of virtuous and successful magae who have honored through their character and achievements not only their Houses but also the Order as a whole? (If she needs a more powerful Circular Ward Against Demons, I will gladly provide her with one.) Need I really call her attention to Trianoma, Pralix, Bjornaer, Belin, and Merinita? And if members of our own Order prove not to her taste, she could have reached back to the magistra of Tytalus and his lesser frater Tremere, the fragrant Guorna herself who founded two Houses, a feat unequalled before or since.

It would seem that some of the members of House Guernicus see fit not only to persecute and harass law-abiding researchers into the occult, whose discoveries could harness the powers of darkness to brighter ends, but to trouble our peace and equanimity by praising vice and iniquity to our younger sodales as well.

I am dismayed.

I pray you accept my most distinguished sentiments and commiseration,

Bevorus, son of Bulistie,
follower of Tytalus

My dear Bevorus,

I have shared your letter with Moratamis, and she has taken the time to write a reply, which I will also share with you. Yet as little as I know of these events and famous figures, I feel compelled to comment briefly upon some of the things you have brought to our attention in your message.

As a figure worthy of discussion, it seems to me that Eleanor of Aquitaine was a good choice, for your contribution provides us with further evidence of how her life was complicated and varied. Obviously, I am no authority (certainly not as familiar with her as you and Moratamis seem to be), yet I can say that even I have heard her name and know something of her deeds. I would not have called her a paragon of virtue or role model to young women, yet I am also not a woman, and perhaps that makes a difference. Moratamis, as well as others of the fairer sex that have done me the honor of writing to me, have told me that they truly admire Eleanor's life and legend, and I must make mention of their opinion.

Thus, it does seem good to me, in response to many other letters I have received through the years complaining that it is not so, to show that there are some women outside of our enlightened Order who

may act to change the world in which we live. It is unfortunate that Eleanor is not regarded highly by all who know of her, but perhaps you will acknowledge that her actions have shown that women of our time must not always remain hidden in the shadow of their husbands. Whether she used her power for good or ill, I see Moratamis's point that Eleanor demonstrated something of what power all women might wield, were they given the respect that they deserve.

You make an excellent point that there are many in our Order who have set a better example in this regard. In fact, I will investigate the lore further and do my best to provide an accounting of some of these influential magae. I hope that you will look upon my research with a tolerant eye, for although I always endeavor to present as many examples of dissenting opinion as I may, there may be reasons why one might think more highly of Trianoma than Guorna, for example. I pray you will excuse such conceits of taste, and I hope it would not offend you were I to suggest you might harbor a similar bias at Fudarus. As Eleanor (or even Moratamis) has shown, not everyone will agree how a given individual has affected history, for better or for worse, and it may be that our dissent comes primarily from seeing our own reflections in the mirror of the past.

Please allow me to tell you how I admire your willingness to share your opinion with me, Bevorus, and again I proclaim the wisdom of your House's dedication to challenge and confrontation, for in so doing you teach us all to question what we would otherwise take for granted, and in turn we learn more about ourselves and the nature of the subject at hand. Thank you very much for writing to me, and for consenting to allow me to share your letter with others.

I am pleased to share now with you and my patient readers the entirety of Moratamis's reply, without gloss or interruption.



To BEVORUS, filius of Bulistie, follower of Tytalus, law-abiding and esteemed magus of the Order of Hermes; MORATAMIS, she who serves the Order in the name of Guernicus.

Thank you for your letter, a copy of which has been conveyed to me by Lanatus, my sodalis here at Scriptoris Socii. It seems that we have each seen entirely different faces of the late Eleanor of Aquitaine; you have experienced a very sinister side, while I have seen what appears to be her opposite profile. Yet I do not wish to oppose *you* in this; while I have a contrary impression of Eleanor, I recognize there is controversy inherent in her tale, and I allow that my opinion has been swayed by my own experience. Perhaps you, also, have a more personal stake in her memory, as would not be surprising if you identify closely with the interests of the nobility in your immediate neighborhood. As I believe it is wise to temper the influence of these politics when they coincide with the affairs of our Order, I will offer



you an account of my singular encounter with her, in the hope that I may thereby illuminate a side of her that you have never seen, and perhaps help you to see her as I do, more human than Harpy.

I was a woman of twenty-two years, and was nearing completion of my apprenticeship to Empistula, follower of Guernicus. We belonged to no covenant at that time; Empistula preferred not to answer to a council or charter, and thus we often simply traveled from place to place, and occasionally took shelter in the abbey of Fontevault, for the abbess, Matilda, was distantly related to Empistula and very fond of her company. We spent several winters of my apprenticeship there in study, and often brought books with us for this purpose. That spring, after another visit of this kind, my mistress and I embarked upon a task that I am not at liberty to discuss, but that took us into lands north of the city, and had disastrous consequences for Empistula. I do not wish to go into details about what we discovered or what happened to her, for it has no bearing on this story and is very painful to me. I will say only that we did not succeed at what we were attempting to do, and I found myself on my own without horses, grogs, or even any clear idea of where I was — only a copy of a Mentem summa from which I had been studying the previous season. The book belonged to Doissetep, from whom we had borrowed it, and as I had been there on two other occasions and knew I would need to find other magi if I were to be adopted by another master, I decided I would have to go there. I knew the covenant to lie vaguely south, and thus I traveled in that direction with as much speed as I could muster, intending to refine my heading as I found landmarks I recognized. The sky clouded, and I became turned around during my flight, and I did not recover my bearings until I had stumbled upon a wide road several days later, in sight of what I learned later to be the Loire River. I turned to follow it, thinking it must lead somewhere where I could find shelter, for though I had been lucky in that it had not rained yet, I knew it surely would soon. I was very frightened of the impression I would make once I reached a village, and much occupied by these thoughts, I did not hear the approach of horses or shouts of men until the riders were upon me.

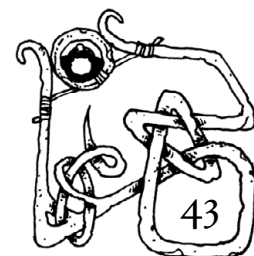
I stopped where I stood, turning, and the lead animal, likely sensing my Gift, reared in alarm and threw an armored man to the ground. I was frightened and surprised, and as I moved to help him, he leaped to his feet and drew his weapon. I fell to my knees with a cry for mercy, and prepared to cast a spell under my breath, but he did not strike me, for his lady had approached behind him. “What has happened, Sanzay?” she asked, in a light voice full of humor, “have you fallen from your horse?” I remember looking up at her and gasping audibly at the sight of her full beauty in direct sunlight, which she noticed and which seemed to please her; the man calmed himself and muttered an apology, bowing. She nudged her horse closer to me, but it was reluc-

tant to approach, and so instead she studied me from where she was while I continued to stare at her, entranced. She seemed out of breath, her cheeks flushed — perhaps in great haste, but also possessed of some great happiness — and she deigned to speak to me, asking my business.

I had not yet prepared a tale, and I could think of nothing to say. I simply took in her radiance, my mouth wide, and she looked indulgently at her small band of retainers and said something to them, causing them to pull back a little. She leaned forward and asked me my business again, and I managed to answer that I had come from Fontevault, on an errand from the abbess, but that I had lost my way. She examined me with her keen eyes (and it struck me then how like an eagle she was, full of majesty and grace and cunning perception), noting the book I held clutched in my hands as well as other aspects of my dress that I hoped would support my lie. She commented that I was many days from Anjou, and that the journey was hardly safe for an unaccompanied young woman. I had begun to realize who she was, and feared I should leave her quickly lest she learn from me secrets I should not share, but she would not release me from her gaze. I remember clearly her words, as she smiled and said: “I now have great need of a traveling companion; you will ride with me until we may return you to your abbey.”

I felt strangled by her kind words, but her knights and followers seemed in great spirits and loyally offered to carry me. She would hear none of it, and instructed the man I had unhorsed to lift me up before her, calling him “constable.” It seemed I was literally arrested; I knew in my heart that she had guessed there was something unusual about me, yet there was nothing I could do while surrounded by her retinue with all their eyes upon me. I found myself seated upon the animal, which fidgeted and complained while the lady maintained a firm hold and patted its flank, and soon we were moving. Her cloak flew about behind her, and she placed a hand on my shoulder to keep me from sliding off, while I clutched my book in the folds of my gown and tried to stop trembling. I remember the mad thought that if I looked over my shoulder I might catch her eye and thus cast a spell upon her, and when she began laughing I was convinced she had read my mind. But nay, her laugh was a free, pure laugh of joy, like a little girl running down a grassy hill, and we rode quickly towards the sun as it peered around ominous clouds in the distance.

We approached a great city, and I began to notice signs of activity on the outskirts; people were busily stripping the trees and decorating their houses with them, and I realized the date must be very near Palm Sunday. In the distance I could see a large castle, which I recognized as belonging to Count Theobald, and I deduced we were entering Blois. The small party made its way towards the abbey of St. Lomer, where the woman I had recognized as queen had apparently decided to break her journey. She spoke





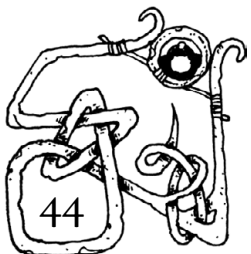
little to the monks, and was only barely gracious to the abbot and hostillar at supper, for it seemed she had become very tired. I wondered if she now regretted her impulsive decision to take me with her; she said almost nothing while she made ready for bed, and after I looked her in the eye and wished her a good night, I could see that she was already beginning to lose track of who I was. I intended to slip away in the night. When I heard the bell for Compline, I listened carefully to confirm that her breathing was steady, and then I quietly cast a spontaneous spell that would hide my image (very difficult in those holy surroundings) and quickly left the guest-house.

Outside, the cloisters were quiet, for all the monks were inside the chapel. I had made my way towards the animal pens and the entrance when I overheard steel clinking in the shadows, and spied two armored men hiding behind a nearby shed. They spoke roughly in low voices to each other as I stood still and prayed they had not sensed my presence, and as I listened to their coarse discussion, I inferred that they were the count's men, sent here to keep an eye on the queen while the garrison prepared for some action. They seemed to believe her union with King Louis had been annulled only days before, and made vile jokes about her person. Slowly I became aware that Count Theobald planned to capture her, drag her from her refuge to his keep, and there force her to marry him. Possessed by some strange loyalty, I saw that his men became very sleepy, and then hurried back to Eleanor once I had made sure they had not heard me. I cancelled the spell that made me invisible and woke her, explaining that I had gone for a walk and telling her what I had overheard. She was furious, but her anger soon turned to indignation. I remember that she commented on Theobald's impudence, for he was not even an eldest son, unworthy of such a wife as her. She quickly roused her knights and informed them that we would leave Blois at once. We were lucky that neither the porter nor the count's sleeping guards stirred as we led the horses past them, and we set off by moonlight, riding within her covered carriage.

I remember looking across at Eleanor as we fled the city and continued towards Tours, after the horses and carriage were loaded onto a barge to make the journey less unpleasant, and seeing her perfect features creased with worry. She was visibly shaken at what had nearly happened, though she tried to hide it, and she was very grateful to have escaped, graciously thanking me more than once for my warning. I kept very quiet, not wishing to add to her concerns by giving her cause to think I had done more than she knew, yet through no will of mine she seemed now to wish to talk with me with respect and friendship, and for most of our journey she did so. She spoke passionately in the *langue d'oc* as she told me about her famous Crusade and the splendors of the city of Antioch — a paradise of sun-strewn green, as she called it — and about her uncle, Raymond of

Poitiers, whom she clearly loved and admired like a father. She spoke very little of the king, which surprised me as she had only just left him in Beaugency, yet it became clear to me that she loved another, and she was eager to forget the past and enter joyously into her beckoning future. It was as if the great lady was traversing a border between two countries, passing from one life to another, and I felt very fortunate to be there with her as she made this crossing.

Perhaps now more aware of her danger, Eleanor sent squires ahead to act as scouts, and word returned to us that another trap had been set for her, a full-scale ambush at Port-de-Piles, where she had been expecting to cross the Creuse. She was forced to change her route once more, and decided to ford the Vienne at a point downstream, remarking to me that we would need to return to Aquitaine as quickly as we could, and thus that it might be some time before her knights could see me back to Fontevault. With luck, she said, we would celebrate Easter in the safety of the castle walls at Poitiers, and she hinted that there might soon be cause for her to make a great many more expeditions north. Her mood improved even more after we had shaken off this second aggressive suitor (whom I later learned was young Geoffrey of Anjou, Henry's brother) and she mocked these silly men as we rode. She spoke to me



as if I was her younger sister, confiding to me her worries about administering her estates, and how she might have to stand up to the traditionally turbulent vassals of her lands. I marveled at how unlike a typical noblewoman she was, for she did not speak of having her men do these things for her, but as if she would herself lead armed expeditions against the more intractable rebels.

She began to ask me questions as we traveled, as I feared she eventually would, but fortunately I knew enough from my talks with my former mistress that I was able to tell her of Matilda, the abbess, and her sad history before coming to Fontevault. I also related more details about the abbey, explaining its unusual arrangement: how the abbess had authority over both the monks and the nuns, some of the details of which she was thankfully already familiar. I remained as vague as I could and tried to keep her from questioning why I would have been sent the errand I claimed, but she could see I was well educated and unusually independent, and I doubt she could think of another place from which a woman like me could have originated. Many times I saw her struck by great puzzlement and I feared my charade might be revealed, but now I think in comprehending me, she was questioning a woman's place in society and making those choices about what she would and would not do in the new life that she was at that moment creating for herself.

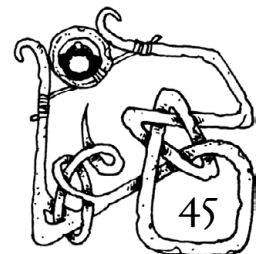
It must be said that this noble lady, who has been called evil and scheming, saw fit to treat me, a strange and apparently lowly young woman, with such kindness and grace that I can hardly recognize her in the stories later told by her chroniclers. I do not argue that she was not ambitious, or that she did not greatly desire to set her seal against the world, but I believe this did not come from malice or a lack of scruples, but rather from a rebellious desire to change how women and men were to behave. She was insulted that these two ineligible lords could seek to wed her by force, and I believe she had vowed she would choose her own husband, someone who would become great not just because of his birth but also because of their alliance. I see now that she knew exactly who that would be, but at the time she merely spoke of him as a vision, like a wind blowing out of the north. As we rode together, I believe I watched Eleanor determine the destiny of Henry, then Count of Anjou, soon King of England and Duke of Normandy, and one of the most powerful rulers the world has ever known.

I wish I could have seen the marriage ceremony, as it happened only a month after we had arrived safely in her lands. Yet I had to depart quickly before I was discovered, for I was sure Eleanor would communicate with the abbey in short time if I did not act. In the rush and excitement of the festivities, everyone became far too busy with their preparations to think much of the young woman who had ridden with Eleanor, and I made sure as best I could that she would have no memory of my passing before I stole

away south. I think that the woman who was twice queen did not entirely forget me, though, for immediately after her wedding she made a special point to visit Fontevault and return the abbey its charter, saying that "divine inspiration led me to want to visit the sacred congregation of the virgins of Fontevault, and by the grace of God I have been able to realize this intention. Thus I have come to Fontevault guided by God; I have crossed the threshold where the sisters are gathered; and here, with heartfelt emotion, I have approved, conceded and confirmed all that my father and forebears have given to God and the church of Fontevault."

I know much of what Eleanor later went on to do, and it pains me to say that her actions were not all done with the same spirit of deep emotion and goodwill I saw during the week I spent with her. Yet I stand by my accounts; enough of her detractors have criticized her flaws, and those who are interested must also hear of her virtues. Believe that I was also saddened by the murder of the young Duke Arthur; concede at least that Eleanor's complicity in this act was never proven. She should not have supported John, but she was not alone in this, and her maternal sentiments and concern for Arthur's youth must have weighed heavily on her mind. While she did indeed rebel against Henry, and broke her vows of submission and obedience to him, he had been equally culpable by keeping her under close guard, denying her access to her ducal officials, and publicly consorting with women of loose morals, even going so far as to seat them at court in the place rightfully reserved for her. Can you see how this must have hurt her; after all she had done to ensure that she was her husband's equal? As to the wars men fought, Eleanor did no more than accompany her sons' forces at their behest, so as to ensure loyalty in their absence. I believe that she appreciated the pageantry of war, though I do not think she truly saw herself as an Amazon of ancient times, fighting men with spear and bow. Instead, I believe she saw herself fly before men like the sign of heaven's blessing, the eagle of the North Wind as was foretold in the prophecies of Merlin Ambrosius, and I shall always remember her in that light.

In closing, let me say how I appreciate the frank concerns of the mighty magi of Fudarus for my spiritual well being. Though I am a firm supporter of the distribution of knowledge among all magi of the Order, I must decline, with regrets, the copy of your improved warding spell. I will keep your offer in mind, though, should I have need of it in the future. Otherwise, I believe I am at present free from infernal influence; but should that blessed state falter, I can tell you I have access to many apotropaic resources of my own that I might use if it becomes necessary to keep my soul free from damnation. In turn, I hope the same is true for you, Bevorus. My colleagues and I have regarded your research with great respect and interest over the years, and I am continually impressed by the exemplary integrity you





have demonstrated — so far — in these morally and legally hazardous undertakings. Please continue to keep me informed of your progress, and farewell.



I must thank my dear friend Moratamis again for sharing her great knowledge and wisdom with us, and especially for honoring us with her story of her meeting with such an important historical figure. Because of her contribution, this letter has grown very long, and as much as I would like to write a few words of dread about incubi and other spirits of the night (which would seem appropriate to me in response to Bevorus's message, where he cryptically gives mention of them), I fear I must refrain. Perhaps another time I will share what legends I have heard of these fell creatures. Instead, for now I will declare this letter finished and leave it here to be copied.

I assure all of my curious and inquisitive readers that I am always happy to receive their letters, and hope that they will continue to send them to me, so that in answering them I may continue to fulfill our covenant's goal of distributing knowledge to all those who desire to receive it. Please do write, no matter how trivial or difficult your question, for knowledge is what makes our Order great, and by sharing it we together grow hale and strong.

Until next season, my dear readers,

ABELARO

This letter was written by Lanatus, follower of Bonisagus, with aid from his sodalis Moratamis, follower of Guernicus. To receive his regular correspondence, or to ask for his advice, please send your name, covenant and Tribunal to Dear Abelard, Scriptoris Socii, Normandy. Your confidentiality will be respected.

Omnibus Grimoire, Scroll IV: Corpus

by Andrew Gronosky

"Esteemed Colleagues of the Order,

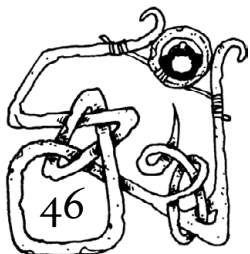
I am honored to bring to you, after a brief but unavoidable delay, the fourth scroll in my omnibus collection of lesser-known spells from the libraries and grimoires of the Order. As many of my honorable readers know, I am in the process of assembling a grimoire in ten scrolls, one for each Form of magic, to enrich the libraries of the Order and stimulate interest in the collection and study of formulaic spells.

This scroll is devoted to the Form of Corpus, a Form to which many of us in the Order devote considerable study. Even magi of a scholarly bent find Corpus to be of great value in brewing longevity potions: those who are of a more combative spirit value it for healing and for harming their enemies. Yet this is only a fraction of the full scope of the Art of Corpus, as I hope to demonstrate with the spells on this scroll.

Once again, I have tried to keep the interests of young magi and Corpus beginners in mind. Fully half of the spells on this scroll are of third magnitude and below, and should therefore be accessible to non-specialists. It is my hope that you, esteemed reader, will find several of these spells useful in your travels and your arcane missions. There are a few, however, that I hope you will never need: the healing spells.

Your colleague and servant,

JARIUS OF HOUSE MERLEGE



Creo Corpus

Growth of the Flowing Locks (CrCo 5)

R: Touch, D: Sun/Inst, T: Ind

Spell Focus: The Blood of a Bat (+3)

Cause the target's hair and beard (if applicable) to grow to considerable length — even if the target was originally bald. The caster's Wizard's Sigil often manifests in the color, tidiness, or styling of the new growth. This is a Creo Corpus spell, not Muto Corpus, because it actually creates new hair. The blood of a bat is said to cure baldness.

Design: Growing hair was deemed a low-level effect, and assigned a base Level of 5.

Preservation of Life's Tenuous Thread (CrCo 20)

R: Touch, D: Special, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A bloodstone (+3)

This spell only works on a human who is Incapacitated. It keeps the subject alive for seven days and seven nights — there is no need to make Stamina rolls during this period (see ArM 4, p. 179). Like all Creo Corpus spells, this spell prevents natural healing while it is in effect, but it does not interfere with magical healing. It is mainly intended to keep the subject alive long enough to reach a skilled surgeon. The bloodstone is believed to staunch bleeding and speed healing: place it in the subject's clothing or bandages to facilitate casting of the spell.

Design: Keeping an Incapacitated character alive is somewhere between stabilizing a wound (Level 10) and healing a Body Level (Level 20), so the base effect is Level 15. The Special Duration is longer than Sun, so it is treated as Moon (+1 magnitude).

Wizard's Splint (CrCo 25)

R: Touch, D: Sun/Inst, T: Ind

Spell Focus: Carnelian (+1)

Mend a broken bone or other injury such as a sprain or pulled muscle.

Design: Healing a broken bone is somewhere between healing a Body Level (Level 20) and restoring a lost limb (Level 25).

Intellego Corpus

Watch of the Intangible Sentry (InCo 10)

R: Touch, D: Ring, T: Circle

Spell Focus: A twig (+1)

Requisite: Mentem

You become aware when any human enters or leaves the Circle. If you are asleep, the spell awakens you. This spell originated among magi of the Roman Tribunal, who often leave their sancta to stay in townhouses in Venice and other cities. They have devised a number of spells that provide non-lethal defenses for a magus's temporary dwelling. If using the spell focus, lay the twig inside the circle. It will snap if anyone enters.

Design: Sensing the presence or absence of bodies is very general information, so the base Level is 5. Reduce Range from Sight to Touch (-4 magnitudes), increase Duration from Momentary to Ring (+3 magnitudes), and increase Target from Individual to Circle (+2 magnitudes). The Mentem requisite allows the spell to wake you when someone enters the circle.

No Refuge For the Thief (InCo 15)

R: Near, D: Conc, T: Struct

Spell Focus: The collar of a watchdog (+1)

Learn the number and locations of humans in the target Structure. This spell works around the Limit of Arcane Connection by affecting a building, so you need to see the structure, not the people. Occupants are entitled to a Magic Resistance roll and if they resist the spell, they are not detected.

Design: Sense a specific piece of information about a body, Level 10. Decrease Range from Sight to Near (-2 magnitudes), increase Duration from Momentary to Concentration (+1 magnitude), and increase Target from Individual to Structure (+2 magnitudes).

Sense the Mystic Threads (InCo 15)

R: Arc, D: Mom, T: Group

Spell Focus: A mirror (+1)

Learn the number and types of objects that are valid Arcane Connections to you. Ordinarily, the spell identifies only Arcane Connections that were once parts of your body (hair, blood, and so forth). With a Vim casting requisite, it finds all Connections regardless of their origins. The spell does not tell you anything about the locations of the Arcane Connections, but once you know they exist, you can use further magic to locate and/or destroy them.

Design: Sense very general information about a (piece of your own) body, Level 5. Increase Range

from Sight to Arcane Connection (+1 magnitude) and increase Target from Individual to Group (+1 magnitude).

Muto Corpus

Suppleness of the Writhing Serpent (MuCo 25)

R: Touch/Near, D: Sun/Moon, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A snakeskin (+2)

The subject's body becomes unnaturally flexible, like a snake's. The subject can squeeze through small openings and gains a +6 to all rolls to escape from bonds or entanglement. Because the subject's skeleton becomes flexible, he cannot exert his strength as effectively: -1 to all Strength-related rolls.

Design: There is no guideline that applies, but the effect is an extensive, unnatural change. Treat as Level 25.

Gaze of Medusa (MuCo 40)

R: Eye/Near, D: Sun/Perm, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A live asp (+3)

Requisite: Terram

Turn the subject to stone. The asp is the snake that grew from Medusa's head, so it aids the casting through the Law of Sympathy.

Design: This is a straightforward application of the Muto Corpus guidelines.

Perdo Corpus

Disarm the Arrogant Knight (PeCo 15)

R: Near, D: Mom, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A human bone (+2)

Clearly break the subject's arm. The right arm is affected first; if the spell is cast a second time, the left arm is broken. Additional castings have no effect. Although clearly harmful, this is a non-lethal way of dealing with hostile mundanes. If using the spell focus, break the bone and the target's bone is more easily broken due to the Law of Sympathy.

Design: Destroy a limb, Level 15.

Thrust of the Invisible Dagger (PeCo 15)

R: Near, D: Mom, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A dagger (+2)

Inflict one Body Level of damage.

Design: This is a straightforward application of the Perdo Corpus guidelines.

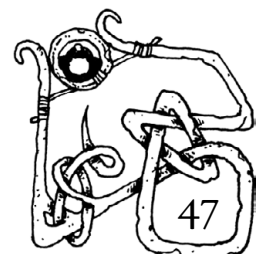
Curse of Sickness (PeCo 30)

R: Eye/Near, D: Sun/Moon, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A branch of holly (+1)

Inflict a sickness (influenza) that can be dispelled, but not cured. The sickness is the equivalent of three Fatigue Levels but these Fatigue Levels cannot be recovered until the spell is broken. Once the victim is afflicted, additional castings have no effect.

Design: Causing one Fatigue Level is one magnitude lower than causing one Body Level, so analogously causing three Fatigue Levels is one magnitude lower than causing three Body Levels, or Level 20. Increase Duration from Momentary to Sun (+2 magnitudes)





Rego Corpus

Stumbling of the Drunken Revelers (ReCo 15)

R: Near, D: Mom, T: Group

Spell Focus: A tankard of ale (+1)

Each person in the target Group must make a Dex stress roll of 9+ or fall down. If the roll botches, the victim may injure himself as he falls. People who are sitting or lying down, including those mounted on horseback, are not affected. If using the spell focus, throw the ale on the ground near the targets.

Design: Control the large-scale movements of a target, Level 15. Reduce Duration from Concentration to Momentary (-1 magnitude) and increase Target from Individual to Group (+1 magnitude).

Ease the Pains of Mortal Flesh (ReCo 20)

R: Touch, D: Moon/Year, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A passion flower (+1)

Dull the subject's sensation of pain, reducing wound penalties (not Fatigue penalties) by one step. Because this spell is Rego Corpus, not Creo Corpus, it does not interfere with the process of natural healing. The passion flower is an herb with analgesic properties.

Design: Eliminate the penalties of fatigue and wounds, Level 25. Since this spell does not affect Fatigue, reduce one magnitude to Level 20. Reduce Range from Near to Touch (-2 magnitudes) and increase Duration from Concentration to Moon (+2 magnitudes)

Flight of the Hesitant Sparrow (ReCo 35)

R: Sight, D: Conc., T: Ind

Spell Focus: A broomstick (+3)

Lift the target into the air and fly him about as you direct. The target need not be willing. When you cease concentrating, the target falls. To use the spell focus, have a willing target ride on the broomstick.

Design: Control a target's motions, Level 25. Increase Range from Near to Sight (+2 magnitudes).



The Omnibus Grimoire is accepting spell submissions. Next issue's column will feature the Art of Herbam. E-mail your submission to

agronosky@comcast.net.

If your spell is accepted, you will receive a free issue of Hermes' Portal.



The Seven Deadly Traits

by Erik Dahl

Personality Traits in **Ars Magica** are a game mechanic intended to serve two functions: to describe how characters are likely to act in a given situation, and to provide descriptive adjectives that help players distinguish one character from another. They represent paths that characters are likely to follow, but do not necessarily dictate those characters' actions. That is, unless some kind of supernatural force or Flaw is influencing the characters, or the characters need to succeed at some kind of emotional test, players can usually roleplay them as they wish.

Thus, the mechanics for Personality Traits have been left somewhat vague, to allow different troupes to use them as they see fit. However, when dealing with spells and abilities that influence characters' behavior, I have found it is very helpful to have some standard methods for describing this influence. Furthermore, I think supernatural powers, especially divine and infernal ones, often affect or are affected by people's behavior, and that therefore more definition would improve character interaction among the representatives of the Realms in Mythic Europe.

For example, in *Festival of the Damned*, the way that the characters behave can dramatically influence the events of the story as it unfolds. In one chapter (I don't wish to give away the plot), the book describes a situation that is much more interesting if one of the characters is somewhat lazy. Yet although every character can be lazy or not lazy to some degree, Lazy is not a Personality Trait that many characters have. I think most storyguides have little concept of this side of their characters' personalities, even if it is important to this story. Perhaps that is because there is usually no reason to rate a given character's laziness except for flavor or as a character quirk.

I think this is a shame, yet an excellent opportunity. Of course, we can't rate characters for every possible Personality Trait, because there are so many of them. It seems like every character has a new descriptive term, each providing a different look at a different facet of that character's personality. None of these traits are exactly the same. Their numerical values aren't even consistently positive or negative — one character is Lazy +3, another is Industrious -3, another is Slow +3, another is Hard-working -3. Aren't these all basically the same trait? I mean, if I want to see what a character will do when he has to work hard, don't all of these traits provide basically the same information?

I have developed the following rules to address these points, providing a framework by which players can more easily determine how their characters might act under unusual circumstances, and to give storyguides more tools to categorize the characters' behavior. They define categories that demonstrate how the four traits in the example above all basically describe the same trait. I designed these categories

based on the seven deadly sins of medieval church lore, which I think contribute a lot of flavor to Mythic Europe. Using this system, I can determine more precisely how lazy a character is — or how any trait might apply to that character, really — based on the premise of grouping similar Personality Traits together.

I have found that the term “Seven Deadly Sins” is perhaps a misnomer. These evil appetites or desires (pride, wrath, envy, lust, sloth, gluttony, and avarice) were thought by medieval philosophers to lead to sin, but were not truly sins in themselves. Rather, it was thought that they were simply immoral facets of one's personality. They are “deadly” in that if you dwell too much or act upon them, you will surely put your immortal soul in peril. St. Gregory and St. Thomas Aquinas referred to them as the “capital vices,” however, and that perhaps describes them more accurately, in that they are extremely serious examples of dubious behavior.

There are also seven capital virtues, which offset the vices but do not directly correspond to them. These consist of four “cardinal virtues” (courage, prudence, temperance, and justice) and three “theological virtues” (faith, hope, and charity). The theological virtues tell medieval folk how to do God's work, while the cardinal virtues tell them how to live a good life. Together, they form seven habits that broadly describe how to avoid sin. Again, like the vices, they are not goodly actions in and of themselves, but rather goodly traits that when nurtured should lead to virtuous thought and behavior.

As part of this, I have provided rules for integrating Personality Traits with Confidence. Confidence provides a useful mechanic for representing a character's willpower and personal goals, and these rules link that mechanic to the character's personality, to encourage development of those traits that would increase the character's self-confidence. That is, a character naturally has more confidence in actions that fit his personality, and less confidence in actions that do not. This allows Confidence to act as a reward for roleplaying, making the use of Confidence points more descriptive of the character.

These rules do not require significant redesign or adaptation of existing characters to use, as the changes can be incorporated with a minimum of effort. In some respects, they feel like Passions from Third Edition (for those who miss that idea in Fourth Edition), but in any case they simply require assigning each of the characters' existing Personality Traits to a personality category for conversion, and I've pretty much done that for you.

Categories

When developing a character's personality, players should consider what sort of motivations their characters might have, and how they would be likely to





act in situations where those motives might come into play. To facilitate this process, as well as to more clearly define what Personality Traits might have a bearing on a given situation, I have developed seven personality **categories**, or (as I like to call them) **tempers**. These categories encompass many types of actions and emotions, and suggest situations where any one of a class of behaviors might apply to the character.

Note: I don't use the divine Tempers from *Pax Dei*, and so this term doesn't cause confusion in my game. However, since many players do use the term and the mechanics I have continued to refer to them as categories rather than tempers in this article, to avoid confusion. I do think the term "temper" has much more flavor for this concept, though; it sort of hints at "temperament," and suggests that a character will either temper his feelings or lose his temper.

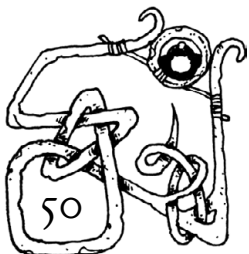
The seven categories of Personality Traits are primarily based on the capital vices and virtues of medieval theology. I have broadened their definitions slightly to accommodate the more common traits in the game, and to more closely balance them as opposing traits, since they don't have obvious correlations. Also, I have tried very hard to maintain clear distinctions between the motivations of each category, so that they don't blend together into generic "good" and "bad" traits. To help make the differences clear, I've included some examples of what I would consider positive and negative traits of each.

Loyal (Faith/Pride): Loyalty applies in situations where the character is called to follow orders or aid another in need. To some extent it governs fidelity and faithfulness, but is most appropriate when the character is called upon to fulfill an obligation to one who is worthy or asked to give up something for a greater good. It stems from **Faith**, the theological virtue that describes devotion to God and belief in His plan, and offsets the capital vice of **Pride**, which might be described as wicked independence. The proud man thinks himself better than others, and perhaps even better than God, more confident in his own powers and abilities than in the divine will. Many magi fall prey to this vice, often considered "the beginning of all sin" because by turning away from God one naturally turns toward evil.

Positive: Dedicated, Faithful, Humble, Reliable, Trusting

Negative: Arrogant, Haughty, Proud, Rebellious, Vain

Tolerant (Hope/Wrath): Tolerance represents optimism, understanding, and a willingness to work out differences. A Tolerant character promotes discussion, encourages debate, and seeks a common ground. She believes in others and trusts in providence, even in the face of great difficulty, and seeks to overcome violence and hate. A person who is not Tolerant may eventually give in to the desperate sin of **Wrath**, and come to behave spitefully and vengefully. Such a person boils over with anger, which keeps her from thinking positively. This vice may be



based in fear or despair, but its measure is in how the character acts when she encounters adversity. A Wrathful character becomes violent instead of cowardly. The theological virtue related to this category is **Hope**, which represents the confidence that God will do right, and will watch over and provide for those who follow Him.

Positive: Cheerful, Hopeful, Gentle, Patient, Peaceful

Negative: Angry, Desperate, Spiteful, Vengeful, Violent

Kind (Charity/Envy): A Kind character is filled with love and feeling for his fellow man. His actions are directed outwards, usually to make others more comfortable or to help them through hardship. He sees to the needy, looks after strangers, and cares for the sick. He seeks to do good for others, as he would have them do for him. This is tied to the theological virtue of **Charity** or love, meaning doing God's work by giving as much of oneself as possible. It counters the capital vice of **Envy**, which is a person's jealous desire to "even the score" between himself and others with whom there is a perceived imbalance. Acts done out of envy are hurtful and cruel, designed more to punish others for their fortune than to help oneself. It differs from Avarice in that the envious character wants to hurt those who prosper, not take what is theirs for his own.

Positive: Charitable, Compassionate, Forgiving, Merciful, Nice

Negative: Cruel, Envious, Gruff, Jealous, Meddlesome

Brave (Courage/Sloth): Bravery and courage represent a character's ability to hold her ground, or maintain her position in the face of opposition. A Brave character might undertake a dangerous adventure, work hard on a difficult task, or valiantly protect her family from danger. She persists and pursues what she believes right no matter what the risk, and is not easily swayed by fear or fatigue. The capital vice related to this category is **Sloth**, or *acedia*. It is a physical and spiritual laziness that prevents the person from doing what needs to be done, either because she fears the consequences of her actions or because she cannot believe she will succeed. Like Wrath, this vice may be based in fear, but in this case the character will hide or flee, or perhaps stand petrified, rather than face that which frightens her. The cardinal virtue associated with this category is **Courage**, in which the character finds the heart to continue and the zeal to strive for greater and better things.

Positive: Bold, Courageous, Determined, Ready, Zealous

Negative: Cowardly, Cynical, Indecisive, Lazy, Shy

Wise (Prudence/Lust): A character that is aware of his limitations and strives to overcome them can be said to be Wise. He behaves in traditional and tested methods of overcoming temptation or folly, and strives to act in ways that set a good example for

others. While knowledge and experience can aid him in this, he also possesses an innate temperament for moral right and wrong. He triumphs when his reason overpowers his base desires. **Lust** is the corresponding vice, found in a person who gives in to his physical desires and the reckless abandon of caution. It can indicate a love of carnal pleasures, but also for illusion and fantasy, leading to an inability to treat people and things as they truly are, coasting on the “high” that comes of imagining what they could be. The cardinal virtue is **Prudence**, meaning the character is practical and chaste, more mindful of the consequences of his actions than the fulfillment of his fleeting impulses.

Positive: Careful, Cautious, Chaste, Practical, Prudent

Negative: Fanatical, Lustful, Naïve, Overconfident, Reckless

Strong (Temperance/Gluttony): Strength of will and body indicates the character’s ability to overcome his wants and do without. These traits govern self-control, and how one deals with hardships that come from within. The Strong character has a healthy mind and body, practices moderation and restraint, and is thus better able to resist temptation. The negative aspect of this category is **Gluttony**, from the capital vice, indicating an excessive appreciation of luxury and fine living. It is essentially an inability to be satiated, a sort of greed for pleasure associated with excess. Unlike Envy or Avarice, Gluttony is tied to physical desire, and unlike Lust this desire is inherently selfish, deliberate rather than impulsive. A glut-

ton is an addict. He who practices the cardinal virtue of **Temperance** resists these sorts of overindulgences, which are found not just in food and drink, but in all ways in which a person might coerce himself into sin.

Positive: Content, Healthy, Selfless, Serene, Vigilant

Negative: Gluttonous, Indulgent, Selfish, Sickly, Weak

Just (Justice/Avarice): Just is the behavior category concerned with the character’s sense of fairness, and his decision to do the right thing despite his own wants and desires. Just characters accept that there are consequences for acts that bend or ignore the rules. They give others their due and do not deprive them of that to which they are entitled. These actions come from the cardinal virtue of **Justice**, a kind of general even-handedness and recognition of truth and honor for everyone. Opposite this is the capital vice of **Avarice**, greed for material goods and desire for more than one’s fair share. An avaricious character cares little for codes of conduct, but instead seeks to acquire by any means necessary, cheating and even stealing when given the opportunity. Avarice is sometimes called the root of sin, in that most sinful actions stem from unreasonable want; thus it has been said that the love of money is the root of all evil.

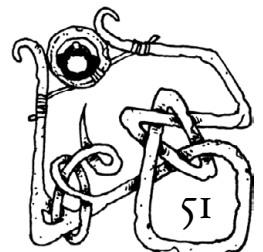
Positive: Even-handed, Fair, Honest, Honorable, Straightforward

Negative: Ambitious, Cunning, Devious, Greedy, Manipulative

Traits

Using this system, a Personality Trait consists of three parts: a category, a value, and a specialty. For example, a character that is particularly dependable might be Loyal +3 (Dependable). Loyal is the category that generally describes the character’s behavior: he responds in a Loyal fashion to situations where he is called upon to act. The +3 value describes how strongly the character and his actions might be influenced, relative to his other traits. “Dependable” more clearly outlines the situations to which this trait might especially apply — for example, “Dependable” might influence a guard deciding whether or not he should leave his assigned post, but “Humble” might be more appropriate if he had to finish an unpleasant task. This is mostly for roleplaying; the specialty doesn’t really have any mechanical effect, except when used with Confidence or influence as I describe below.

When rating a Personality Trait, the value can be either positive or negative. A positive value indicates a character is more likely to behave in the way suggested by the category, and a negative value means that the character is less likely to behave that way. For example, a character that is Loyal -3 (Rebellious) would be much less given to obeying orders and much more likely to rebel against them, because his Loyal trait is negative. In situations where loyalty was called for, the character would be at a disadvantage.





Likewise, the character might do well in a situation where pride or disloyalty would work in the character's favor.

Characters' traits only apply to a single category. That is, you could be Loyal +2 (Loving) and Kind +2 (Loving), but these are still two slightly different traits. In rare cases where a trait doesn't seem appropriate to any category, the trait may simply stand on its own, though. An animal trait for a follower of Bjornaer, for example, probably doesn't apply to any category (though it could perhaps be categorized under a common personality trait of the animal in question). The character would simply take an (Animal) +3 trait, as normal. The troupe should take a good look at traits like this, though, to prevent odd traits designed solely for mechanical benefit. Traits of this nature should represent odd character quirks and the influence of the supernatural, to aid in roleplaying, and should not give any kind of character advantage.

A character can have multiple Personality Traits within the same category, even with what would seem to be opposing traits. For example, a character could be both Loyal +3 (Dependable) and Loyal -3 (Haughty). In such cases, the player should determine which specialty best applies to a situation where loyalty is needed, and evaluate the results based on the score of that trait. Altogether, characters should be playable and interesting, with strengths and weaknesses, so conflicting traits should not be so common that the character's motivations make no sense.

Occasionally, players might be called upon to make personality rolls, to suggest how well their characters might react to a situation. In such cases, I choose an appropriate category, and if the affected player has one, he chooses a Personality Trait from that category. This value is added to the result of a simple die, compared to an ease factor determined by the storyguide. Or, if a character is conflicted about what course of action to take, the player can make multiple rolls, adding a different trait to each, and assume that the character chooses to act on the trait with the greater total.

For all other mechanical applications of Personality Traits, such as when used with Confidence or for influence, the absolute values apply, meaning that it doesn't matter if the trait is positive or negative. A Tolerant -2 (Violent) trait counts as Violent +2, just as a Just +1 (Honorable) trait counts as Honorable +1. This is not the case when applying a category, like when making a personality roll above; it only applies when looking at a specific trait.

When designing new characters, I suggest that you assign Personality Traits, giving each character seven points to spend as the player wishes, with no traits increased or reduced beyond 3. These traits shouldn't be bought with pyramid points; they should simply be assigned, with one point for each positive or negative step. For example, a starting character might have a +3 trait, a -2 trait, and a +2 trait; or perhaps seven -1 traits. To convert an exist-

ing character, simply assign each trait a category and leave the values as they are, until the troupe can evaluate them based on how the character is being played.

Personality Traits may be increased or decreased as part of the story, but I imagine they don't go beyond 3 without an appropriate Virtue. Rules similar to those for gaining or losing Confidence might be used to determine changes to Personality Traits. However, I figure that Personality Traits are one of those things that should have a lot of leeway as far as assigning them goes — in particular, I find that I'll often give a new character some generic traits, and then refine them over time as I play. It's nice to be able to sort of migrate the scores around in response to character development.

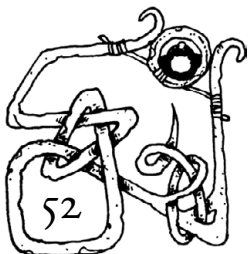
When choosing Personality Traits, consider *why* the character behaves a certain way, and what motivates that behavior. Is she Meticulous because of a desire to produce excellent work, or is it based in arrogance or a meddlesome desire to "show up" others? Does a Clever character act wisely, avoiding temptation and "looking before he leaps," or does he cunningly twist the rules and manipulate others to serve his own ends? Examining the underlying assumptions of actions behind a Personality Trait will not only make it easier to categorize, but will make the character more interesting and easier to play.

Confidence

Confidence represents characters' sense of self-worth and belief in their own potential, and their ability to positively affect the outcome of actions in which they have a personal stake. Confidence usually begins at 3, but can be increased over time. According to Fourth Edition, any number of Confidence points can be invested in an action that is particularly important to the character, and each point adds 1 to the total.

I suggest that Confidence be directly tied to Personality Traits. When using Confidence, the player chooses one of the character's Personality Traits whose specialty best applies to the intended action. The value of this trait is the maximum bonus that may be applied from Confidence to the total. For example, a character rolling to calmly defend himself against a taunting attacker might add Confidence to his action if he is Tolerant +3 (Calm). Because the Personality Trait is +3, he may invest up to three points of Confidence in this action.

To regain lost Confidence, the character must still fulfill some important long-term goal, but with these rules it must be related to one of his Personality Traits. If successful, a number of Confidence points equal to the absolute value of the Personality Trait are regained. For example, a character with Loyal +3 (Dependable) might regain 3 Confidence points when commended for excellent service. A character with Tolerant -2 (Violent) might regain 2 Confidence points after burning down a fallen rival's home.



Characters with True Faith have Faith points instead of Confidence, which represent their unshakeable devotion to God's will. Faith points can be used as Confidence points under this system, adding +1 to any roll, up to the level of an applicable Personality Trait. However, I suggest that only positive traits may be used with Faith in this way; negative Personality Traits represent actions that go against goodly teachings and thus are not supported by the character's Faith.

Unfortunately, there is no similar system in Fourth Edition for those who have surrendered themselves to evil. However, if the False Faith +3 Virtue from *The Maleficium* or a similar system is used, those "un-Faith" points might be used in the same way, boosting actions in support of negative traits. Of course, diabolists may have many other infernal powers that allow them to use their sinful traits to their advantage — but that's a different article.

Influence

Inherent in rules that apply to morality and behavior is the need to represent how characters can influence others with their actions. Characters should be able to teach those who follow them, and pick up personality quirks from those with whom they spend a lot of time. I figure that Personality Traits are very fluid; they gradually change over time based on how the character is played and events of the saga. However, when a character tries to inspire another, this change might be more immediate, and perhaps even supernatural.

Magic and other powers can simply affect Personality Traits directly. However, it seems that divine and infernal beings prefer to work through people whenever possible — demons want to corrupt individuals through their actions, not by force; God judges and forgives sinners but guarantees them free will. I believe those who serve one of these powers must have some way to inspire such actions in support of their cause. I have thus come up with two means by which a person can intervene in the motivations of another, and thus represent these powers on a mundane level: ceremonial and personal influence.

Ceremonial influence relies on religion; it fills characters with a holy (or unholy) charge and purpose, based in their shared faith in established rituals. I imagine this most often occurs as part of the Sacraments in church, but there might be other situations — a call to arms, or the blessing of a hunting party — where it would also be appropriate. Inherent in the ritual is either the subjects' willingness to be moved or the speaker's authority over those he is influencing; he must be a host with his guests, a parent with his children, a priest among his parishioners, or a lord among his vassals. The ceremony takes at least ten minutes and costs the speaker a Fatigue level and a point of Confidence. Any number of partici-

pants may be affected at a time, as long as they can all hear the speaker and his influence is appropriate to their relationship.

Personal influence occurs over the course of a season between a willing student, group, or community and a teacher with some claim to moral authority. That is, his audience must regard the influencing character as a mentor in some way, enough that they are willing and able to learn from him. The teacher spends the time watching over his charges, conversing with them, and generally setting an appropriate example. This might include giving lessons, advice, or even intimidation and punishment. This can be done while engaged in other activities, but it is similar to gaining experience from practice or exposure, and thus none of the characters involved can gain extra experience from casual activities during that season. For example, you might study a book while engaging in personal influence, but you would not gain additional experience in Concentration that season.

Characters with the Inspirational +1 Virtue can invoke ceremonial or personal influence with anyone. They are considered to have personalities strong enough to inspire all who see and hear them speak or who spend a lot of time around them, giving them the moral authority to move any who will listen to them. Otherwise, the only characters able to affect the personalities of others in this way are churchmen, parents, teachers, lords, and masters.

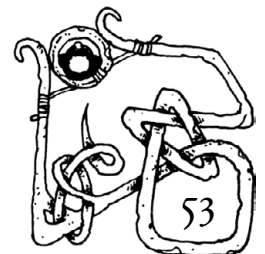
After the conditions for influence have been met, roll a simple die and add the influencing character's Presence + Leadership + the Personality trait in question, and divide this result by 5 (rounding down). If this total is greater than each of the influenced character's Personality Traits in that category, the character increases (or decreases) the trait to match it. If performing a specific Church ceremony, such as one of the Sacraments or a church blessing, you may substitute Church Lore for Leadership. This rule might also apply to Occult Lore when performing an evil curse or dark ritual.

If the subject is willing and the teacher has moral authority, spend a season, or a Fatigue level and a point of Confidence, and roll:

simple die + Presence + Leadership (or Church or Occult Lore) + the Personality Trait, divided by 5

If this value is greater than all of the subject's traits in that category, he or she gains the trait at that level.

For example, Father Gilbert spends a season teaching Jean, a member of his parish, the merits of patience. Jean is already Tolerant +1 (Patient), and Father Gilbert is Patient +3. Jean is also Tolerant +2 (Calm). After the season is finished, Father Gilbert's player rolls a 5, adding 7 (Presence + Leadership) and 3 for the trait. He divides the result, 15, by 5, which





leaves 3. This result is greater than both of Jean's existing Tolerant traits, so Jean now has Tolerant (Patient) at +3.

In contrast, Jean later pauses on a journey to listen to a hermit cursing the nobility and inciting a riot. The inspirational figure preaches anger and revenge to the crowd, and because of recent events Jean finds he has some sympathy with this speaker. The hermit spends a Fatigue level and a point of Confidence, and rolls a 5, adding 5 (Presence + Leadership) and 3 for his Tolerant -3 (Vengeful) trait. The result, divided by 5, yields 2. This is less than both of his current Tolerant traits, so Jean may also gain the trait Tolerant -2 (Vengeful).

Remember that an affected character must *want* the new trait, at least subconsciously. Influence has no effect on an unwilling participant. New traits gained through influence are effectively permanent, in that I do not have any system for them fading over time, because that sounds like a bookkeeping nightmare to me. I do offer the suggestion that after each story the troupe should take a good look at their characters' traits and modify them to correspond more closely with how they have been played. It's not very interesting if every character has a trait for every category at +3, so unless the character gains Virtues or Flaws to represent this imbalance, I think characters should eventually standardize to about seven points of traits. These should be the traits most commonly played, and probably shouldn't go beyond 3 unless the character has a Virtue to represent the increase or they come about in the course of play through influence.

Supernatural Influence

Players of *Ars Magica* may already use the magic rules to allow them to affect Personality Traits, but I decided to include these brief notes on the subject to help troupes that might not have considered the implications.

Hermetically, I figure a Personality Trait is an artificial property of Mentem. This is mechanically similar to affecting an emotion, according to the Fourth Edition spell guidelines. For example, a CrMe spell of level 15 might cause a target to gain a trait at +3 or -3. InMe might tell the magus what Personality Traits the target possesses from a particular category, and at what level. MuMe would allow you to increase or decrease an existing trait, or perhaps reverse it completely, changing a -3 trait into a +3 trait. Or, it might allow the magus to change a trait of one category into a trait from another, keeping the same value. A PeMe spell might suppress a trait associated with a particular category

This system also allows for some more interesting applications of ReMe magic, which isn't capable of many low-level effects as things are now. A ReMe spell might attempt to control a target through a particular Personality Trait. For example, if the target is particularly disposed to fear — perhaps Brave -3 (Cowardly) — a ReMe spell might force him to act

on that trait; that is, he might run away or stand petrified with fear if he doesn't make a successful Brave roll. Rego might thereby “activate” traits that have not otherwise been applied to the situation, resisted by Personality rolls from the applicable category.

The reader is presumably familiar with the rules for Psychomachia in Fourth Edition, whereby infernal creatures can inspire sinful behavior in others based on Personality Traits. This system may be used to codify the mechanics a little more, letting demonic creatures activate or enhance negative traits in a particular category, much like the ReMe effect I just described. Divine creatures might have similar sorts of powers, enabling them to inspire and encourage positive traits in those that they encounter. In fact, this idea doesn't really need to be a separate Psychomachia ability, but simply a ReMeXX power that costs them nothing to activate.

Unlike other kinds of influence, supernatural influence doesn't require that a character wants to be affected, and because of that its effects should be essentially temporary, like any effect that magically changes a character. Of course, if the effect *is* actually permanent, write it down by all means.

Modified Virtues and Flaws

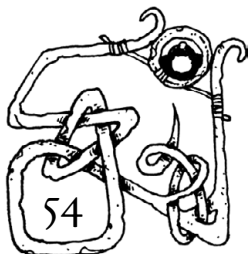
Some of the standard Virtues and Flaws in Fourth Edition require slight revisions in order to be used with this system, particularly those that refer to specific Personality Traits. I have thus modified them accordingly, below.

Berserk (+1): You are capable of entering a blinding rage when in combat or frustrating situations. You begin with the Personality Trait Tolerant -2 (Violent), which can be decreased further at your option.

Any time you lose a Body level or wound an enemy, roll a stress die and apply a Tolerant trait. A total of 5 or less means you go berserk. The storyguide can also call for a roll when you are extremely frustrated. You may deliberately try to go berserk, in which case you need less than 9 when you lose a Body level or wound an enemy, or less than 6 if you have not been wounded or caused a wound.

While berserk, you add your Violent trait to Attack, Soak and Fatigue rolls, but suffer it as a penalty to your Defense. You cannot retreat, hesitate to attack, or give quarter. If you are still berserk when there are no enemies present, you attack your friends. You may roll once per round to calm down if you desire, requiring a stress die + Perception + a Tolerant trait total of 6+ (your Tolerant trait is most likely negative).

Inspirational (+1): You are a stirring speaker or a heroic figure, and can urge people to great efforts. You can invoke ceremonial or personal influence with moral authority over any group that chooses to listen to you, and others are very likely to become inspired by your example. If you already have moral authority over your audience, add one to the results



of your influence rolls — if they would receive a trait at +3, they gain it at +4.

Reckless (+1): You tend not to notice that situations are threatening. You begin with the Personality Trait Wise -3 (Reckless), and cannot take any Personality Traits reflecting care or patience. Whenever the storyguide would have you make a Brave roll, make a Wise roll instead. A failure means that you do not realize your danger and may act without further bravery checks.

Strong Personality (+1): You may assign up to seven additional points to your Personality Traits, which can range from +6 to -6. This Virtue can be taken more than once, but keep in mind that a trait at +6 represents near-mythic virtue, indicative of saintliness, and -6 would suggest a wicked tendency to sin at every conceivable opportunity.

Meddler (-1): You want to fix other peoples' lives: arrange matches, teach children to sew "properly," or tend the sick. You waste a lot of time and energy on such endeavors, and people usually resent it. You have a Personality Trait of Kind -3 (Meddlesome) and a bad Reputation, level 1, as a meddler. If you are a magus, you probably interfere in the affairs of other magi, companions, and apprentices. You don't violate Hermetic law, but you probably come close — and you almost certainly irritate the other magi of your covenant.

Reclusive (-1): You prefer to do things on your own, and do not like being interrupted. You feel that an intrusion by another upon your time is unnecessary at best and an insult at worst. You begin with a Personality Trait of Loyal -3 (Reclusive). If someone interrupts you, roll a stress die and apply your Reclusive trait. Unless you get a 6 or better, you rudely show them the door. If you botch, you lose your temper completely, and a multiple botch is likely to result in violence as you try to get rid of the pest.

Overconfident (-2): You have an exaggerated and unshakeable opinion of your capabilities, and you do not hesitate to try things that promise only defeat. If you are convincing in your speech, you can infect others with your overconfidence. When preaching such behavior using ceremonial or personal influence, you effectively have moral authority over anyone who will listen to you. You begin with the Wise -3 (Overconfident) Personality trait, and cannot have any other Personality Traits that reflect a careful or prudent nature.

Summary

From a mechanical standpoint, I think these rules make Personality Traits more interesting because they limit when characters may use and regain Confidence points (and thus make the players focus more on their characters' motivations). They also allow them to influence the behavior of others, which makes giving stirring speeches or casting spells designed to temporarily change someone's personality have a measurable effect on the game. As I see it, one of the most powerful effects of the divine or

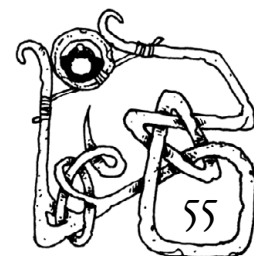


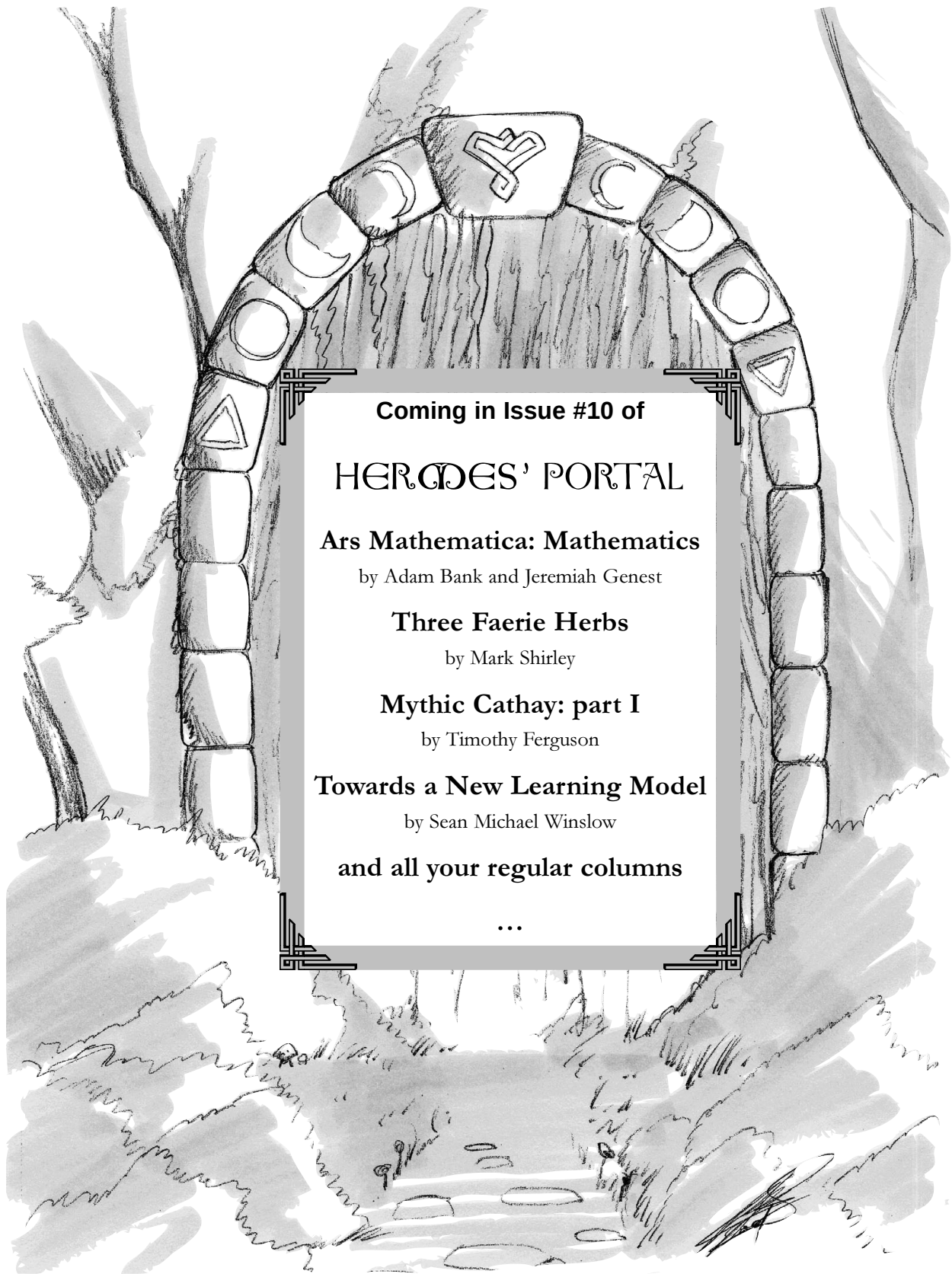
infernal powers in Mythic Europe is influencing behavior, be it via Psychomachia or mundane politics, and these rules make that influence more important by providing standard Personality categories to target.

I originally intended these rules to replace *Pax Dei's* divine Tempers in my saga. Rather than tracking active supernatural influence, I thought it might be better for churchmen to influence the flavor of a local area through their behavior, not the aura. Thus, if a bishop continually speaks out against the magi, those within his see might become more vigilant over time, less susceptible to the wizards' influence. Or, an abbot might call for God's justice within his monastery, inspiring his brothers to behave more fairly and honestly while they try to solve a mystery. A diabolist might even inspire members of his community to evil works by teaching them mistrust and intolerance. These charges, I think, more accurately depict a community's response to a moral crisis.

Finally, I feel that ethics as taught by the Church, specifically the seven capital sins and their place in medieval understanding of human nature, are not represented in much of the game. I feel this categorization of behavior should be more pervasive throughout Mythic Europe, and have an effect on everyday life. I think Personality Traits are the best way to do this; I think players should be aware when their characters are behaving virtuously and when they are not, as it is something with which I think medieval people would be more familiar.

I hope that these ideas help you to more closely examine characters' behavior in a medieval moral context, while making Personality Traits a more interesting and integral part of the game. I would be very interested in reading your comments about this article, should you choose to share them with me, either on the Berkeley mailing list or via your email-
ing eriktdahl@yahoo.com.





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