

Arte Magica

# Lands of the Nile

Egypt, Ethiopia & Nubia



by Ferguson,  
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**Timothy Ferguson** is a librarian who lives in Gold Coast, Australia. He'd like to dedicate this book to his wife and children. He would also like to thank the other authors for stepping in and finishing the book during a period of personal crisis. Finally, he'd like to recommend *Egyptology: The Missing Millennium* by Okasha El Daly, which was of great assistance in his sections.

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## Chapter One

# Introduction

*"[In Egypt] there are races horrible on account of their strange faces and monstrous appearance...it also abounds in wild beasts and serpents, and precious stones, cinnamon, and balsam are found there."*

—The Beatus Map

This book describes the lands of the Nile Valley. The River Nile is a major geographical feature of Mythic Europe, dividing as it does the continents of Africa (to the west) and Asia (to the east), just as the Don separates Europe and Asia, and the Mediterranean Sea separates Europe and Africa.

Many people think of Egypt and picture barren deserts. However, more accurately Egypt and Nubia (and to a lesser extent Ethiopia) are the lands on either bank of the River Nile. These are therefore exceptionally fertile lands of plenty that are surrounded by deserts and wastes. Visitors are often struck by the bounty of the Nile Valley: its fecund pastures, fields, orchards and groves; its rich tropical forests teeming with animals; and its lush swamps, marshes, and reed beds.

This book concentrates on the lands of the Nile in the thirteenth century. There are countless books available - scholarly, popular, and game-related - which provide information about the culture, customs, and religion of pre-Ptolemy Egypt. That material has not been reiterated here, but could be consulted by troupes wanting to include elements of Ancient Egypt in their game. It should also be noted that this is also Egypt from the perspective of its 13th century inhabitants, and so there are features that do not agree with modern archeology.

## Themes

There are a number of saga themes that run through the Valley of the Nile. None

of these are mutually exclusive, and in fact some complement each other well.

### The Red and the Black

The continent of Africa - which includes the lands of Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia - is a battleground between two vast magical spirits, entities so great that it is difficult to conceive of them as singular beings. Instead they are constructs of ideas that are most commonly summarized as The Red and The Black. The Red, sometimes called the Hunger, is the destructive force of the desert. It seeks endlessly to consume the lands on the edges of the Great Desert that constitutes the heart of Africa. It is a force of chaos inimical to mankind by its very nature and that promotes sterility and destruction. The Red has servants and allies among hostile creatures, spirits, faeries, and jinn. One of its chief servants was a giant called The Kom, but it was slain and seeks to reconstitute itself (see Chapter 7: Pakhoras). The Cult of Dedun (see Chapter 7) indirectly serves the Red by accumulating power through death and decay.

The Black, or the Hope, is best expressed as the spirit of the Nile. The lands described in this book are awash with fertility and abundance, located as they are within the stronghold of the Black. This power is beneficial to humankind, but only by accident - the Black is too vast to notice the humans that thrive under its auspices. The Black has its servants much like the Red, including the lector priests who served as magicians to the pharaohs. Wesir, the human who first discovered how to become a Daimon (see Chapter 4: The Akh), became a powerful servant of the Black and is more commonly known under his Greek name of Osiris.

More about the Red and the Black can be found in *Between Sand and Sea*, Chapter 2.

### Egypt Just Grows Marvels

The vast number of tombs found in Egypt is a puzzle. Muslim scholars are keenly aware that Herodotus, writer of the *Histories*, did not agree with the age of the world as calculated from Scripture, and that his list of pharaohs is far longer than possible. They are also aware that if they look for physical evidence of the pharaohs Herodotus names, they can find it: their tombs are where he says they are, and their names appear on lists written by the ancients. This contradiction is meditated upon by Sufis and Christian mystics alike, who have come up with a variety of conclusions, most of which have little bearing on the daily life of people. It is, however, considered good for every person, whose path on the Hajj goes through Egypt, to see the monuments, as they are part of the shared accomplishment of humanity.

It is generally believed that God put all these monuments in Egypt so that people would look at them and become wiser. There are more tombs than historically possible because God has made the lands of the Nile as a storehouse of wonders. By seeking out these monuments and digging up their treasures they are not diminished in any way, for God will make sure there are enough for all to appreciate the wonders. This is another aspect of the superabundance and fertility that is characteristic of The Black.

Every place along the Nile has an undiscovered treasure. This is a belief so firmly held by Egyptians that there is a government department which licenses a guild of treasure hunters, and takes a cut of their finds (see the Guild of Seekers in Chapter 4). For decades, during droughts, the Egyptian government subsisted almost entirely on treasure taxes. Treasure is everywhere, and if there is a place without a treasure, a faerie is likely to put one

there and then help you find it, or help you suffer in failing to do so.

## Secrets and Mysteries

Egypt is frequently visited by Westerners keen to trade in gold, spices, ointments and lectuaries, precious stones, and silks. Merchants from various European nations have *fondachi*, or trading stations, in Alexandria. Papal injunctions on the export of wood and iron - both vital to the Saracen war efforts - to Egypt are largely ignored in the pursuit of profit. However, few westerners have bothered to leave the Lower Nile, and many have penetrated no further south than Cairo. Most of Egypt is a mystery to them. The lands to the south of Egypt - the Nubian kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria, and Alodia, and the Ethiopian Empire beyond that - are even less

well-known in the west. The Great King of Makuria has forbidden all foreign trade, and this has rendered Ethiopia Orientalis (as Europeans call the land south of Egypt) a mystery.

The Red is a devourer of secrets, and many mysteries are buried under the sands. As an agent of oblivion, some of these mysteries no longer have answers; their explanations have been consumed and lost for all time. Other mysteries never had answers; they are simply marvels created by God. Player characters who are used to uncovering secrets might find this lack of explanation frustrating, but that is the nature of the land.

Of course, not all mysteries lack or even need explanations. Egypt in particular is seen as a storehouse of ancient knowledge just waiting to be uncovered, and some within the Order of Hermes wonder if the secrets of the first magicians can be found hidden in its tombs. Mystery and lost knowledge is great motivation for stories.

## A Note for Troupes Doing Their Own Research

This book reflects 13th century Egyptian folklore, and deliberately includes some features that contradict modern knowledge of ancient Egypt.

### LEGIBLE SCRIPTS

The most learned of Copts can read hieroglyphics, because hieroglyphics are just another way of writing an ancient form of the Coptic language called Demotic. In the real world, this is partially true: some later hieroglyphic inscriptions are in a Coptic language. In period it was believed that the oldest and wisest Copts could freely translate the writings of the ancients. This makes some of them great healers, oracles, and magicians since they can read the spells encoded by ancient priests, while others can read the language but pursue the will of the Divine instead.

Key hieroglyphs denoting warnings and curses are taught at the Seekers' Guild (see Chapter 4: Tombs) by rote rather than as a language, and the gist of a text can be understood with an Intelligence + Profession: Seeker stress roll against an Ease Factor related to the age and complexity of the text (common curses are Ease Factor 6, typical texts are Ease Factor 9). A botch indicates a tragic misunderstanding of the content.

### TOMB TRAPS

Hundreds of books were written for medieval, Egyptian treasure hunters. Books that described realistic tombs were not as popular as those that claimed to provide the secret methods of disarming intricate traps and pacifying guardian spirits. The more exaggerated a book's claims, the more comprehensive it was seen to be, and so the more popular it was. In the setting, tombs are filled with bizarre traps, strange creatures and logic puzzles, because people in the thirteenth century believed they were. It was a way of explaining why the omnipresent treasures had not been taken already.

### ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MAGIC WAS RELATIVELY WEAK

Hermetic magic is far more offensively powerful than the Biblical account of Egyptian magic. There are a handful of magicians who were stronger than the Pharaonic magicians described in the Bible, but they were not tomb builders. The priest-magicians excelled at healing magic and commanding spirits.

## Endlessness

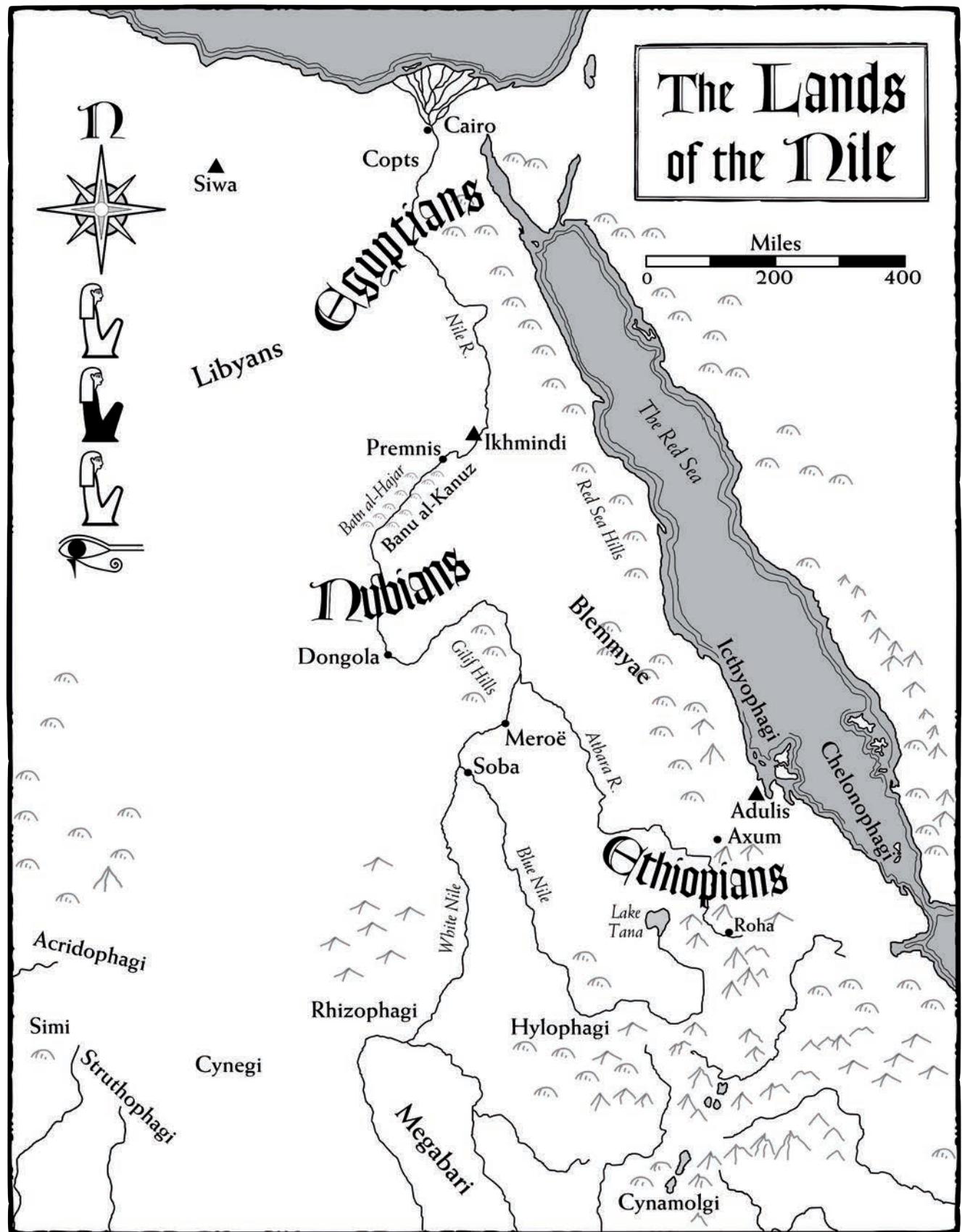
There is an endless quality to the Nile Valley, a feeling of perpetuity that can be disquieting to those not used to it. Every day is the same as the previous one; the weather is largely unvarying from day to day, and there is little change in day length with the season. Crops grow all year round, and there is no clear season of new life or harvest as there is in more temperate climes. The only true marker of the turning of the year is the annual flooding of the Nile, and this only affects Lower Egypt to any great extent.

Ancient religious practices focused on another aspect of endlessness: immortality. The elaborate ritual of death was geared toward the apotheosis of the ghosts of the favored dead, granting immortality as a Daimon. As a consequence of these rites, ghosts would become cleansed of the negative influences of the Red and become pow-

## Dating Pharaonic Egypt

In Mythic Africa, the time of the pharaohs in Egypt lasted, at most, 2070 years, followed by another 302 years of Ptolemaic rule. The Earth was, according to the scholar Maimonides, created 5278 years ago (4058 BC). The flood survived by Noah occurred 1656 years after Creation (2402 BC). Misr, son of Ham, son of Noah, was the first king of Egypt, and his sons founded many of the cities, which still bear their names. Within six hundred years their civilization was thriving and powerful, because Joseph was sold into Egyptian slavery in 1842 BC. Local folklore holds he was a skilled magician, possibly even Imhotep under another name, so Egyptian magic was also established at this time. The Exodus occurred in 1610 BC, and some thinkers suggest monument building became less prolific after the loss of the Jewish slaves. Alexander conquered Egypt in 332 BC leading to the Ptolemaic Dynasty, which ended in 30 BC. The Muslims completed their conquest of Egypt in 641 AD. Despite this, every monument which was found in Medieval Africa is found in Mythic Africa, along with many more.

# The Lands of the Nile



erful allies of the Black. However, servitors of the Red sought - and still seek - immortality through mastery of decrepitude and decay within the Cult of Dedun. It is no coincidence that Herodotus put the site of the death and resurrection of the phoenix in Heliopolis (now a suburb of Cairo).

## Geography

The dominant feature of the region covered by this book is the River Nile. Through most of its length it flows through desert, and there is little in the way of significant uplands until Ethiopia.

## The Nile Valley

*The land is so burned and sterile that it supports no herb and no manner of tree, except where the river Nile waters the ground when it is flood; in these parts alone a great abundance of wheat can grow.*

— William of Tyre

The Nile is generally accepted to be the same as the River Gihon, one of the four rivers of Paradise. Its source is shrouded in mystery, the subject of scholastic debate, and the goal of several expeditions into Ethiopia Orientalis (for more on this issue, see *Between Sand and Sea*).

The Nile Valley is hemmed in on both sides by desert. The only habitable land is a narrow fertile strip which floods each year between June and September, depositing a rich layer of black silt. The river is lined with palm gardens and orchards, and broad fields beyond that. The Nile is the only source of water for much of Egypt and Nubia, where no rain falls at all in many years. The flood of the Nile is known to result from an abundance of rain in the Abyssinian Highlands.

## Abyssinian Highlands

Between Nubia and Ethiopia are the Abyssinian Highlands, sometimes known as the Land of Havilah. This region incorporates the Semien Mountains that form the eastern border of the Ethiopian Empire, and is home to the island-studded Lake Tana.

## Deserts

Three deserts enclose and surround the regions covered in this book. The mighty Libyan Desert forms the western border of Egypt and Nubia. The Nubian Desert lies between the Upper Nile and the Red Sea. Finally, the Danakil Desert separates the Nubian Kingdom of Atbara from the Ethiopian Empire. The most common terrain in all three deserts is *ergs*: rolling windswept sand dunes.

them safe from the threat of invasion in return for a yearly payment of slaves.

## Ethiopians

The Ethiopians are related to the Nubians, and share a similar appearance, although culturally they are quite different. They have lived in the region since the dawn of time; the ancestors of the current Empire traded with the ancient Greek city-states, with Pharaonic Egypt, and with the Empire of Kush.

## Mythic Aithiopes

The Mythic Aithiopes (singular Aithiops) should not be confused with the Ethiopians, although they are clearly related to them, and to the Nubians. There are numerous tribes of Mythic Aithiopes scattered to the southeast of Nubia and east of Ethiopia, where they eke a living from the fetid swamps and dry grasslands. The sad truth is that these people are regularly raided by organized Egyptian and Nubian expeditions in search of slaves and livestock. The Aithiopes' tribalands provide most of the slaves sold in Qus and Cairo; from there they are distributed throughout the Ayyubid Caliphate.

## Other People

In the Nubian Desert live a race of Magic Humans called the Blemmyae, who have no

## Upper Versus Lower

Perhaps confusing to the modern reader used to maps oriented with north in the upper quadrant, the terms 'upper' and 'lower' when applied to the nations along the Nile refer to the direction of its flow. Thus Lower Egypt is the most northerly region about the Nile Delta, Upper Egypt is centered around Qus, although in ancient times Upper Egypt extended deep into Nubia. Lower Nubia is now considered to start at the first cataract and end at the third, and Upper Nubia extends south as far as the Abyssinian Highlands.

## Nubians

The Nubian people are descended from a tribe called the Nobatae who entered the Nile Valley about the time of the collapse of the Empire of Kush. They are a black-skinned Christian people who have borrowed heavily from Greek culture. The Nubians have a unique treaty with Muslim Egypt that keeps

heads but rather faces in their chests. The five tribes of Blemmyae are vital to the economies of both Nubia and Egypt, as only they know the location of the gold deposits in the desert that made Egypt so rich in ancient times.

South of the Ethiopian Empire are several sultanates inhabited by colonists from Yemen, across the Red Sea.

## Languages

The following languages are spoken in this region. Most characters should take the appropriate dialect as a specialty but Educated or well-traveled speakers will have tried hard to rid themselves of their dialect and may have standard specialties (see ArM5, page 66).

Amharic (Agaw, Amhara, Tigray)  
 Arabic (Masri, Khaliji, Maghrebi)  
 Beja (no dialects)  
 Coptic (Boharic, Sahidic)  
 Nubian (Alwa, Dongolawi, Kenzi, Mahasi)  
 Oromigna  
 Romaic Greek (Nubian)  
 Tamazight (Siwi)  
 Tigrinya (Dahlak)  
 Various tribal tongues of the Mythic  
 Aithiopians

### LANGUAGES OF EGYPT

Arabic is the principle tongue of Egypt, in the local dialect of Masri, or Egyptian Arabic. The Maghrebi dialect is used by travelers from North Africa, and the Khaliji dialect is used in the Arabian Peninsula. Arabic has its own script which is shared between all dialects.

Coptic is the descendent of Demotic (see later), and is the language of the aboriginal Egyptians. The language has been in decline since the Muslim conquest of Egypt, although up until a century ago it was the spoken language of the native population outside the capital. The Boharic dialect of Coptic is the form spoken in Lower Egypt, the Sahidic dialect of Upper Egypt having entirely died out except among the Nubian clergy (see later). Coptic uses a script derived from the Greek alphabet with the addition of letters from Demotic.

The Siwi dialect of Tamazight (the language spoken by Berber tribes) is native to the Siwa Oasis.

## Hazards of the Desert

Deserts present a range of hazards that must be overcome if characters are to travel safely within them.

The sun burns hot in the deserts, meaning that characters need to take precautions against heat and sunstroke. This includes covering their skin to avoid sunburn and carrying adequate supplies of water to stave off dehydration. The Deprivation check time for lack of water is reduced in the deserts to 4 hours, while the sunlight does +1 non-combat damage if skin is left exposed (see ArM5, pages 180–181).

Another (usually natural) hazard of the ergs is dry quicksands, which can swallow a man and his mount in seconds. If a character steps on one of these, he begins to sink immediately and is pulled under within two rounds. Death from suffocation follows if he is not rescued (again, see ArM5, pages 180–181). A character who is caught in an area of dry quicksand may make a Strength or Quickness stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9 in the first round to leap or pull himself free before he sinks a significant distance, with a botch indicating that his arms are trapped in the following round. Thereafter it is up to his companions to help him escape its clutches, though if his arms are free he may assist in the second round, reducing any further Ease Factors that he may have to roll against by 3. Thereafter he has been pulled under and is not able to help.

Characters also must be wary of brigands, who prey on caravans crossing the deserts. They are likely to avoid a caravan that is clearly well guarded, but this depends on how desperate they are for goods to support themselves.

Sandstorms and dust storms may suffocate travelers or even strip the flesh from their bones. These may be natural, created by the magic of malevolent sorcerers, or the manifestations of elemental *jinn*. Some may even be witches in disguise.

Various other desert *jinn* and demons seek to harm unwary travelers. In some cases they may use powers that affect the mind or conjure illusions, presenting travelers with visions of lush, palm-filled oases where they may quench their thirsts. A character may only realize that she has been deceived when she takes her first long draught of water, only to find her mouth full of sand.

## Varieties of Christianity

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria is distinct from and in schism with both the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman churches. It is monophysite in belief, holding that following the Incarnation, Christ has just one nature which is either divine or a synthesis of divine and human. The opposing position (dyophysitism), held by the Roman and Eastern Churches, is that Christ maintained two natures, one divine and one human, after the Incarnation.

The Coptic Church was founded by Saint Mark the Evangelist in the first century after Christ. The see of Alexandria had a strong influence on the development of Christianity as a whole, being the birthplace of the monastic tradition, and its catechetical school produced many important scholars, not least Origen, who is called "the father of theology." At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 the dyophysite position was adopted as doctrine, and was accepted by the sees of Rome, Constantinople, and Antioch, but rejected by the see of Alexandria. The Coptic Church thereby entered into schism with the "Chalcedonian" congregations. They elected their own patriarch of Alexandria in opposition to the Melkite or Imperial patriarch elected by the see of Constantinople. Naturally, the Melkite patriarch had the support of the Byzantine governors of Egypt, and the Coptic Church was persecuted as heretical, and its followers driven underground. Upon the Muslim conquest of Egypt the Melkite Church was driven out along with the Greek rulers, and the Coptic Church experienced a minor renaissance. Despite gradual conversion from Christianity to Islam in the six centuries since the invasion, the Coptic people and the Coptic Church are still a significant presence in Egypt.

The Nubian Church is in full communion with the Coptic Church, and receives appointment to its bishoprics from Alexandria. The Kingdom of Makuria was originally converted to Christianity by Melkite missionaries; while the church in Makuria is now part of the Coptic hierarchy, there is still a significant Melkite minority in Makuria that practices the Greek rite under authority from the Patriarch of Constantinople.

The Ethiopian Church is monophysite in belief, but is not part of the Coptic congregation.

## LANGUAGES OF NUBIA

The language of the three Nubian kingdoms is Nubian, descended from the language of the ancient Nobatae. Mahasi, Dongolawi, and Alwa are the dialects spoken in Nobatia, Makuria, and Alodia respectively, whereas Kenzi is spoken by the Banu al Kanz. Mahasi is on the verge of separating into a separate language, and those who know this dialect have a larger penalty than usual when talking to speakers of the other Nubian dialects. Nubian uses the Coptic alphabetic script, but extended to include sounds not used by Coptic.

Familiarity with Masri Arabic is common in Nobatia, which trades extensively with Egypt.

Religious documents are mostly written Nubian Greek, a dialect considered barbaric by most native Greek speakers. The indigenous clergy use Greek for the liturgy as well, although the numerous Egyptian clergymen and monks use the Sahidic dialect of Coptic.

## LANGUAGES OF ETHIOPIA

The three highland kingdoms of Ethiopia speak Amharic, descended from the language of the Ge'ez with a Semitic base. Agaw, Amhara, and Tigray are the dialects of the Agaw and Shewa, Bet Amhara, and parts of Medri Bahri along the escarpment, respectively. Tigrinya is spoken by the lowlands people of Medri Bahri, with a distinct dialect in the Dahlak Archipelago. The Oromigna language is a Nubian-derived language also used in the southern sultanates of Ethiopia and the pagan tribes toward the Torrid Zone. Amharic, Tigrinya, and Oromigna are all written using the Ge'ez script (see later).

Khaliji Arabic (the dialect spoken in Arabia) is spoken by merchants in Medri Bahri, who trade extensively in the Red Sea, Yemen, and throughout the southern sultanates of Adal, Ifat, Hadiya, and Deward. It uses the standard Arabic script.

## OTHER LANGUAGES

Beja, spoken by the Blemmyae, is the only extant descendent of Meroitic (see later). The Blemmyae have no written form of their language, and therefore cannot translate the script on Kushitic monuments.

The slaves captured from the southern regions of Nubia speak a number of different

languages; each tribe should be considered to speak a different language, although the core vocabulary is similar, and someone who knows one language can make himself understood in any of the others. Slaves are discouraged from speaking their own language, and tend to be taught Arabic by Nubian slaves in order to increase their value in Egypt.

LANGUAGES	PENALTY TO BOTH SPEAKERS
Same language, different dialects	-1
Mahasi and any other Nubian dialect	-2
Oromigna and any Nubian dialect	-2
Amharic and Ge'ez	-2
Beja and Meroitic	-2
Ancient Egyptian and Demotic	-2
Demotic and Coptic	-2
any two Aithiopean languages	-2

## DEAD LANGUAGES

Ancient Egyptian
Demotic
Meroitic
Ge'ez

Ancient Egyptian is the language of the pyramid-builders. Over the long history of the Egyptian people this language gradually changed; these versions would be considered different dialects if enough about them was known. It was written using hieroglyphs and later hieratic, a cursive alphabet deriving from them. Eventually Ancient Egyptian evolved into Demotic, which was used up until Roman times. This language used the Demotic alphabet, derived from hieratic. The Demotic language gave rise to Coptic, and is still understood by scholars today.

Meroitic is the language of Kush, it is en-

tirely unrelated to either the Ancient Egyptian that preceded it, or the Nubian that followed it. It was written using two scripts, a hieroglyphic and an alphabetic script, although there are few left alive today who know either of these, even if they speak Meroitic.

Ge'ez is the forebear of Amharic. It is the ancient language of Axum and still used in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's liturgy. Ge'ez and Ethiopia's current languages are written in a unique script of two hundred characters which represent syllables and compound sounds rather than individual letters.

## Glossary

**Akh:** a new soul formed from the fusion of the ba, ka, and khu. Akhu are Daimons that dwell in the Magic Realm.

**Ba:** the traveling soul of a dead person, constantly in search of the khu.

**Baqt:** agreement between Muslim Egypt and Christian Nubia that keeps the latter safe from attempts at conquest.

**Cataract:** a wide waterfall of the Nile. These are not navigable, although some can be negotiated via portage of boats across land.

**Domestikos:** One of thirteen kings who pay fealty to the megabasilikos.

**Field of Reeds:** a paradise within the Magic Realm where ka live out their days.

**Ka:** the ghost of a deceased person that travels between the mundane world and the Field of Reeds.

**Kentake:** the mother of a Kushitic king or qore, who shares power with her son.

**Khu:** the Divine soul that flees the body at the time of death.

**Megabasilikos:** 'Great King', overall ruler of Makuria and Nobatia.

**Mut:** the ghost of a person with unfinished business, equivalent to a shade.

**Qore:** a Kushitic king, the term is still used in Alodia.

**Sahir:** magician who works through the summoning of *jinn*. They are members of the Order of Solomon; for more details see *The Cradle and the Crescent*, Chapter 3.

**Serdab:** part of an Egyptian tomb which the dead person's ghost inhabits when in the mundane world.

**Ushabi:** a statue carved to represent a person or animal that will serve a dead person in the afterlife. Egyptian ghosts can possess these statues.

**Wadi:** a seasonal stream or river.

## Too Many Languages

In truth, Ethiopia is awash in dialects, subdialects, and variants of spoken languages. In the 18th century, one linguist noted over fifty distinct spoken languages spread across the country. Rather than attempt to simulate this rich and immense diversity, which would result in an excessive amount of experience points spent on Living Languages, we have chosen to consolidate the situation and use only the most widely used languages. No disrespect is intended and more dialects could be added if your troupe desires.

## Chapter Two

# Playing Egyptian Characters

Egypt is a center of travel and trade. This chapter assists players in designing characters who fit this cosmopolitan setting.

## Pick A Religion

Of all the Muslim-ruled nations described in *Ars Magica* supplements, in Egypt, religion matters the least. It is still an important part of every individual's life, but the constraints on non-Muslims are laxest in this country. The Muslims of Egypt also have a less restrictive interpretation of their faith than either the communities closer to Mecca, or the west African dynasties.

### SOME VIRTUES OF A GOOD MUSLIM

Islam has five key activities, referred to as Pillars, which demonstrate the submission of the worshiper to the will of Allah.

**Profession of Faith and Attempt to Follow The Faith's Laws:** To become a Muslim, a person must make the statement that there is no God but God, and that Mohammed is His Prophet, in the presence of Muslims. This serves a vaguely similar role in Islam to baptism in Christianity, in that it brings the person into the community of the religion. The religious instructions given to Mohammed are recorded in the Qur'an. In addition to this, Muslim jurists consult a series of sayings and exemplary actions which have passed down from the Prophet.

**Regular Prayer:** A good Muslim prays at five specified times each day, while facing Mecca. These times are between dawn

and sunrise (preferably well before sunrise), slightly after noon, in the afternoon, after sunset but before dusk, and after dusk (preferably before midnight). Before prayer, the worshiper washes certain parts of the body. A Muslim need not go to a mosque to pray, but many find it convenient to do so. A mosque provides water for cleansing, and has a niche to mark the correct direction to pray toward. Friday is the holiest day, and many Muslims make a particular effort to get to the mosque at midday.

**Giving Alms:** Characters are expected to give alms. Some rulers also collect taxes for redistribution as alms. The idea that wealth is a reward for virtue, or conversely that the poor somehow deserve to be poor, is foreign to Egyptian thought. Egyptians believe in Fate instead, and Fate is not something you deserve due to your actions.

**Fasting:** Particularly during the month of Ramadan, a character is required to fast, unless a child, elderly, pregnant, ill, or traveling. Fasting includes not drinking water, so it can be difficult to adjust to the fast when it occurs in hotter times of the year. During the evenings of Ramadan, people often break their fasts with lavish feasts, taking turns to host their friends and neighbors. There are certain other dietary taboos in Islam, like pork and alcohol, which are observed with varying degrees of stringency.

**Pilgrimage:** Every Muslim, particularly every man, should try to visit Mecca, and preferably also Medina, at least once in his lifetime. A character who returns from pilgrimage is honored with the title of Haji (masculine) or Hajja (feminine) and many wear green head coverings to mark their status. Poorer people often go on pilgrimages to other places: Cairo, for example, has many popular pilgrimage sites.

### Non-Muslim Characters: The Dhimmi Flaw

The Roman Empire, or the leaders of their Coptic subjects, surrendered Egypt to the invading Muslims, and this makes its territories different from those which were taken by force. The agreement under which the country was surrendered is binding not just in mortal courts but, to a pious Muslim, before the eyes of God. This means that non-Muslims permitted to live in Egypt (who are called dhimmis in Arabic) are treated far better here than in many other places.

All dhimmis are theoretically Peoples of the Book. Most Dhimmis are Coptic Christians, the descendants of the people who lived in Egypt when the Arabic invasion took place. Jews from the Maghrib (North Africa west of Egypt) also make up a large contingent. The leader of a large community in Kairoun fled to Egypt to avoid persecution when a dynasty with a very strict interpretation of Islam came to power in the West. There are very few Zoroastrians in

### This Is Not Real Islam

Real-world Islam is too complex to be described in a role-playing sourcebook. This book instead contains simple guidelines to allow non-Muslims to play characters who are superficially suitable for telling stories similar to traditional folktales. In these tales wealthy, urban people are less stringent in their observance than poor or rural people. No offense is intended by this. Players are encouraged to learn more about Islam, to enrich their game experience.

## Lands of the Nile

Egypt, but a group who claim to be Sabians, and therefore People of the Book, have communities in Egypt, and practice a superficially-similar fire religion. They are particularly noticeable in Cairo, as they venerate the Keeper of the Dead (what modern players would call the Sphinx of Giza – a term no Mythic African would use). Some dhimmis are freed slaves from the interior of Africa. Technically these people must convert, and there incentives to do so, but many retain various "pagan" religious practices.

Dhimmis are allowed to remain provided they are usefully contributing to society. Their duties and proscriptions are reflected in the Dhimmi Flaw, which is a Minor General Flaw. Characters from Europe might use Outsider instead. In Egypt, many of the prohibitions are softened by custom.

### Dhimmis must not:

- be disruptive, by praying or ringing bells, or having lavish funerals. This is not enforced in some areas, the Coptic parts of Old Cairo for example, because if you move there you are expected to know what you are letting yourself in for.
- create new places of worship, or repair current ones without permission. Many new churches are founded in Egypt. The Islamic authorities permit this because they accept that these are not "new" places of worship, just revivals of the places of worship which existed in various communities before the Muslim invasion. At its most extreme, they have accepted that new churches are replacements for churches from unnamed villages which presumably existed before the invasion, which have been swallowed by the desert.
- publicly do things Muslims find unsightly, like eating pork or drinking alcohol. Except, of course, if a lot of Muslims are doing the same thing at the same time, when it's still illegal but not enforced.
- ride horses or camels. In urban Egypt, dhimmis do ride, but dismount and walk their beasts past mosques and the homes of powerful Muslims. This is permitted, in part, because it is seen as a greater demonstration of deference than simply walking. A Muslim can tell he has become a major player in his town when the dhimmis start dismounting before his house.
- react badly to expressions of contempt, by Muslims, for their low status.

## Slightly Disreputable Professions For Dhimmis

Dhimmis, as people officially outside of polite society, have opportunities to make money in professions forbidden to upper-class Muslims.

### MERCHANTS WHO DEAL WITH IFRANJ

International trade is seen as slightly unsavory, and some Muslims leave it to the dhimmis, who have the language skills and lack of morals required to flourish in it. Christian and Jewish merchants form en-

claves in many of the coastal cities of Egypt, but they are particularly prevalent in Alexandria, as its residents pay fewer taxes than even Muslims in Cairo. Trade to Christian Europe is common. Sicily, in particular, is a major market for African goods. Players with merchant characters may find the *City and Guild* supplement useful.

## MONEYLENDERS

Muslims are prohibited from lending each other money for interest, but are not prohibited from paying interest to those whom they owe. Christians and Jews act as usurers in Egypt. Moneylenders are thought badly of, much like in Europe, and the people paying them are seen as their victims. A slight difference to European practice is

## Knows People (Minor General Virtue)

This Virtue takes an Egyptian approach to social usefulness. Social contacts are not important for what they give you directly: they are important because they allow you to match up the desires of your various friends. A skilled socialite is a middleman, who is owed gratitude for bringing opportunities to his friends, not someone who demands favors based on friendship.

Once per story or session, a character with this Virtue may ask for a bait for a non-player character. A bait is the beginning of a scene or short, secondary story, outside the main story being told, which if completed allows the character to gain aid from the nominated target. For example, if the player characters are unable to gain the assistance of a nobleman, a player may demand a bait. In the game, this means the character uses his social skills to determine the needs of the nobleman, and to hint that he may know a third person with a solution. If the troupe then plays out a brief scene in which the nobleman's problem is sorted out, he becomes more biddable.

Troupes may veto any use of these connections which spoils the tension and pace of the game.

that some Muslims feel that it is fine to lend money to Christians or Jews, who are basically damned anyway. This means its legal, although tawdry, for a Muslim to lend money to another Muslim provided that there is a dhimmi in the middle, soaking up the sin for the Muslims on either side.

## BOOTLEGGERS

Muslims are forbidden to make, transport, drink or sell alcohol, but many drink it regularly. All Christians are meant to know a priest, and all priests require wine for their sacramental functions. Many Muslims have a Christian contact who is their supplier. Most wine is imported, but some is made in Egypt. Virtually all of it comes from Christian monasteries.

## Hiding the Ashamed

Characters attempting to expiate shame may seek the aid of the magi and their companions, to make the task easier. Given that directly asking for favors may cause shame, these requests may come as suggestions through mutual friends or redcaps. Examples include:

A nobleman whose polo party trampled people in the market needs help to find all of the people he injured, to make restitution.

An heiress whose father has died on a trading expedition needs to find his remains, so that he can be buried decently, and his goods distributed to his heirs.

A merchant whose ship has sunk is hounded by his creditors, and asks the magi to raise his cargo from the bottom of the sea.

A wealthy adulterer has convinced a Sicilian sailor to take the blame for his wrongdoing, but needs to smuggle the sailor out of town, once he has boasted of his conquests.

A noble drunkard needs a doctor of high standing to pronounce his actions due to sunstroke, not inebriation. Can they find a suitable expert?

## Speech

Egyptian characters speak in a more formal way than equivalent European characters. This makes them distinctive, and can lead to enjoyable roleplaying.

## DIGNITY

Maintaining the dignity of those to whom a character speaks is of great importance in Egyptian culture. Politeness requires a certain formality, even between friends and family members. If a character is unsure of the station and situation of the person to whom they are speaking, the honorific *sidi* for a man, or *lella* for a woman, can be used. It implies higher political status, greater wealth, being older, or being wiser. This politeness is only required in private or formal settings; people in the street are surprisingly rude to each other given the formality of conversation. Calling faeries or demons *sidi* is dangerous, because it accords them a commanding status.

## DIRECT REQUESTS

A character must meet any reasonable request made of him. To fail to do so is a disgrace both to himself, and to the person who embarrassed him by making the request. To avoid this, two methods are used. Many requests are carefully worded as opinions or suggestions. Other requests are carried as news or gossip by an intermediary. The Egyptian view of what constitutes a reasonable request is broader than the European view. Crucially it includes requests for information. A character asked about something important loses face if he cannot answer, as does whoever asked such an impertinent question.

## The Gift

Although being Gifted is not, of itself, shameful, it makes people distrust magi. This makes it easy for magi to develop negative Reputations, which are shameful.

## THE FUTURE

Respect to God is demonstrated by the use of the phrase "if God wills it" when speaking about intended actions. By using this phrase, the character is signaling his acceptance of his unalterable fate. Some people think that curses are more easily laid on those who boast foolishly. This is represented as a +6 bonus on Hex rolls, to destroy the circumstance discussed, by any character who envies the speaker. A character using the protective phrase nullifies this bonus.

## How to Act

Egyptian culture is more formal than European culture, particularly in the interactions of masters and servants. Players are encouraged to portray their characters as speaking in an elaborate, and tangential, way.

## The Social Mindset

Players with Egyptian characters may find the following rule of thumb useful: whenever a character is doing anything alone, the character is probably being played badly. A player should seriously consider whether the character could have bought a friend along, or thrown a party, or had a gossip circle with other people doing the same thing. A character who bathes at home, or prepares food alone, is wasting the chance to exchange news with his or her social network.

The home is the center of social life. Even major religious rituals, like circumcisions, marriages and funerals, are performed in the home. All of these rituals are marked by festivities. A locked sanctum, where a magus hides for months, may be interpreted as a sign that the character is doing shameful things, is insane, or is attempting to withdraw from the world to seek a form of transcendental holiness.

# Shame

In Egypt it is considered wrong to be known a disreputable person. A person who is disreputable reflects badly on the trustworthiness of his family members. A family with a shameful member can repudiate him, to restore the family's good name. Banishment from the family is considered a terrible thing in Egyptian culture, so this is a last resort for a flagrant abuser of the family's name. Egyptians are used to the idea that people make mistakes, and then need to publicly atone for their shameful acts.

## REPUTATIONS AND SHAME

If a character has a negative Local Reputation, the usual method of removing it is to deliberately do contrary things, so that a rival Reputation is formed. Once the competing Reputation equals the undesired Reputation, new experience gained in the second Reputation can instead be used to buy down the first

## Dark Secrets?

Female characters are often restricted by the social mores of the Egyptian setting. Some female characters pretend to be male. This may be represented by various Flaws, depending on how serious the group thinks discovery should be. If it will ruin the character's life, it is a Dark Secret. If there are regular opportunities for discovery, but this merely causes inconvenience, the Transvestite Flaw is appropriate. If a player simply wants to keep the group together, but doesn't want the ruse to generate potential stories, then the character may still pretend to be a boy, but this isn't a Flaw.

Travel, while accompanied, is permitted to married women, so a character might pretend that one of the other characters is her husband. This is a Dark Secret if its exposure and the consequences are likely to draw the troupe into grave difficulty. If the troupe does not care to explore that sort of story, then the ruse may still be used, but it isn't a Flaw.



(rules for this are found on page 167 of ArM5). This culture has such a strong emphasis on shame that other characters expect and accept that characters with a shameful Reputation will counter it in this way. It is not seen as cynical; attempting to reconcile with society is both morally right and the obvious course.

The epitome of removing shame is to go on the Haj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Haj is, from a game perspective, a series of scenes. Each of these grants Reputation experience to erode negative Reputations and grant a positive Reputation as a Haji +1. It also provides other benefits, depending on the events which take place during the character's travels. Shorter pilgrimages can also remove negative Reputations but because they contain fewer events, they may not provide as much experience. This is why, in game terms, some pilgrimages are described on the basis that "five (or three, or whatever) pilgrimages to here are equal to a pilgrimage to Mecca."

Beyond its social role, in mediating shame, the Haj also grants religious insight. The Haj may be simulated using the rules for pilgrimages given in *The Church* (page 15 onward). A character can undergo both enlightenment and social rehabilitation simul-

taneously, but these are different processes. Shame removal through pilgrimage is a social, not a supernatural, tradition.

## Act as a Member of Your Social Class

Wealthy or educated characters must reinforce their place in society by commanding those with less status. Characters socialize within their own class. If your character has an education, or wealth, he must not do physical labor. The country is full of slaves, or people who can be employed for virtually nothing. To fail to employ people is to fail one's community.

## DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR YOUR WEALTH

Male dress in Egypt is usually simple. Loose trousers meet the standards of modesty required by Islam, but to wear only trousers is a symbol of poverty or menial work, so other garments are added. A long,

often hooded, robe and a head covering, tough slippers and a jacket usually complete an Egyptian man's wardrobe.

Women in the presence of men not closely related to them are required to cover their bodies and arms in garments loose enough to be unprovocative, but not so loose as to make them indistinguishable from each other. They must also cover their hair. Styles of clothing vary widely, particularly in those areas where merchants bring contact with other civilizations.

Clothes are a useful way to express social distinction. The clothing of rich people is brighter and has finer embroidery than that of the poor. Rich people have larger and more expensive accessories. In a deliberate reversal of this, characters on pilgrimage all wear white, unadorned clothing.

## Separation of Women To The Private Sphere

Strict sexual segregation gives female characters useful opportunities when gathering information or exploring the homes of non-player characters. Women often socialize at the baths or while performing chores, either in their homes or on their rooftops. They are expected to exchange useful information with each other; failure to gossip is odd, and probably rude.

### HARAM

It is forbidden (Arabic: *haram*) to breach the privacy of the women of a house. Their quarters are called "haram." (The term *harem*, and the use of the word to refer to the people who live in the *harem*, occurs after 1220 and is Turkish.) The *haram*'s residents include all of the women of the household, such as

relatives, children, wives, concubines and servants. Political rivalry between the women of a household appears in many folktales.

Men are permitted four wives, provided they treat them all equally well, and can afford to maintain them. Men are effectively permitted as many concubines as they can afford, although it is not pious to keep concubines. A slave-concubine who bears a Muslim's child is automatically freed, and must be maintained, so offering marriage is usual.

## A Note on Playing Copts

All of the earlier notes on playing Egyptian characters, save those which are noted as specifically Muslim, are suitable for Coptic characters. The following additions are small cultural differences that the companions of magi might note.

Copts are even more curious about foreigners than Muslims are. The more a Copt can learn about foreigners, the more likely it is that he can arrange for their needs to be met by someone of his acquaintance. Copts trade with outsiders more than Muslims, so the social circle of any given Copt is more likely to contain people who can aid, and be paid by, foreigners, than a Muslim of equal status. This benefits the Copt, as it makes him a man who knows people who can get things done. Such approaches are usually made to the servants of great men, companions or grogs, because great men have servants to deal with practical matters.

Rude people are almost always forgiven by Copts. Under the dhimmi law, they need to allow Muslims to berate them at will, and in some areas even spit on them. This training means that if a foreigner causes them to be shamed, they are more willing to assume that in the distant land from which this person comes, their actions are polite.

If a shaming action does occur, although a character will be forgiven, an intermediary will still be sent to explain the mistake, so that the character can remove the shame on both by a rectifying act.

Coptic priests have more influence on individuals than Muslim clerics. This is so for two reasons. Copts use membership of their faith as a way of identifying themselves as a separate group, which gives them a social life and legal protection if their dhimmihood is ever challenged. Christians also have geographically-hierarchical priesthoods, whereas Muslim can swap mosques and teachers more easily, particularly in the large cities.

Although Muslims are very family-oriented, the Copts are even more so. Difficult, embarrassing matters are best dealt with inside the community.

Copts host regular festivals at the tombs of local saints, and during these festivals, the world does not work in its usual way. For example during the moolid (festival) for Sitt Dimiana, no thief can successfully steal anything, and any man who looks on a woman with the intent to harm her is wounded in his eyes or...other parts. These miracles always work: there is no record of a clever sorcerer ever stealing or raping during the festival. During the Festival of Saint George, no person may remain possessed by evil spirits. Similarly, although there are stories of people being tricked into possession immediately after the festival ends, there is no record of a demon managing to avoid being forced out. This sort of guaranteed miracle is considered theologically problematic by the Western Church, but not by Copts. Muslims and Christians tend to attend each other's festivals, and on years where the Nile's inundation seems poor the Sultan orders combined religious processions.

## Chapter Three

# An Ethiopian Bestiary

The following animals are found throughout Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia. These creatures are documented in the bestiaries of Mythic Europe. Region-specific beasts can be found in their respective chapters. Other animals native to the region can be found in *Between Sand & Sea*. Another notable animal found in this region is the lion: statistics for a mundane lion can be found in *The Book of Mundane Beasts*, a free supplement for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* that can be found on Atlas Game's website. A magical version of the lion is presented in *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 60, along with a description of the panther or pard (page 61), who also frequents these lands.

### Asp (Aspis)

The asp or cobra is a fearsome serpent found throughout the lands of the Nile. It can grow to ten feet long, and spread an awe-inspiring hood from the sides of its head. Asp venom is so potent that the snake keeps its mouth wide open when moving, and the venom steams out wilting nearby vegetation. Asps are particularly vulnerable to Enchanting Music; anyone with this Virtue can automatically enchant them without a roll. To avoid this, if asps see anyone with a musical instrument they press one ear to the ground and plug the other with the tip of their tail.

For the statistics of the asp, start with the statistics of the adder from the free online supplement *Book of Mundane Beasts* (or the Appendix of *Realms of Power: Magic*), and increase Size to -3 (which adds 2 to Strength and Damage, and subtracts 1 from Quickness, Initiative, and Defense). Asp venom is very potent; the Stamina roll to avoid its effects has an Ease Factor of 9, and failure results in an Incapaci-

tating Wound. Medicine rather than Chirurgy is required to assist recovery from this wound.

### Catoblepas

The catoblepas (plural catoblepones) is a bull-sized creature that lives around the upper reaches of the Nile Valley, in Alodia and Ethiopia. It is rumored that in the Slavelands they congregate in vast migratory herds. It has a downward-hanging face on its over-sized head; a fact for which one should be grateful, since its gaze is fatal. The creature is so slow that it takes a round for it to lift its head, and it must make eye contact to slay. The catoblepas's eyes are so large that it is difficult to avoid its gaze, even in combat. Fortunately for magi, the Penetration of this power is weak. The breath of the catoblepas is noxious, and it exhales clouds of vapor upon vegetation, making them horribly poisonous before consuming them. Characters might first encounter a catoblepas while investigating why a crop has become toxic overnight. The scales that cover a catoblepas are impervious to metal and wood, making the creature difficult to kill.

Despite its deadly abilities, the catoblepas is a relatively docile animal, although disinclined to move due to the ponderous weight of its head. It can barely stagger more than a few paces before needing rest and food; needless to say it can be a nuisance once it finds a patch of good forage.

### Crocodile

The crocodile or corkendrile is a feared killer of the Nile River and its tributaries. The enemy it fears is the mongoose, who not only seeks out its nest to destroy its

young, but will even crawl down its throat and eat it from the inside out. The crocodile described here is a modest fifteen feet long; there are reports of specimens reaching thirty feet (Size +5) or more.

### Elephant

An elephant's nature is that once it falls over it cannot get back up again; they lean against trees rather than lie down to sleep. Cunning hunters in Africa chop part of the way through an elephant's favorite leaning post, so that it breaks when he uses it. Elephants are preyed upon by dragons and by immense serpents that live near the Nile River, yet they are terrified by the sound of a pig squealing, which can do them no harm.

The elephant is a creature that has no desire to copulate. If they wish to conceive, an elephant and his mate must both eat of the same mandragora root. The female remains pregnant for two years, and has just one baby at a time. The elephant can live for three hundred years.

### Hippopotamus

These huge creatures are a familiar sight to the people who dwell near the Nile. They seem docile when wallowing in the mud at the river's edge, but hippopotamuses are aggressive and territorial, and do not tolerate other users of the river. They reluctantly make way for any boat bigger than themselves, but smaller vessels are liable to be capsized by the sudden emergence of a submerged hippopotamus. They emerge from the river at night to graze, and fatalities can occur if the creatures believe that their retreat back to the river's safety



has been cut off. Hippopotamuses walk backwards when breaking into fields to feast on crops in order to fool those who would track them.

## Hyena

In the thirteenth century hyenas (Arabic *dbubba*) are found throughout the Levant, North Africa, Iraq, Persia, and lands beyond. These striped hyenas can be trained and tamed like dogs, even to the extent of becoming part of a dog pack if raised with hounds. Although not sacred to the ancient Egyptians, hyenas were used in hunting desert game. Some greater African specimens (Size +1) may be significantly larger than the standard sized versions detailed here and their Middle Eastern cousins (also Size -1). These fell beasts are often ridden by *jinn* or witches. The hyena is also a common animal form for *ghul* to assume.

### HYENA OF VIRTUE (CROCOTTA)

The Hyena of Virtue, known as the *crocotta* or *kynolykos* (Greek: "dog-wolf"), hails from Ethiopia and is believed to be the product of a hyena and a lion. These spotted hyenas are larger (at least Size +1), appear to shift sexes readily (as per the Sex Shift Virtue) and are comparatively much stronger and faster (Strength +4, Quickness +3, and Tough Hide Quality) than their mundane cousins. Add the Improved Characteristics Virtue, the Tough Virtue and the Tainted by Evil Flaw. They are also both more violent (add the Aggressive Quality and increase their Brawl score to 5) and less cowardly (replace Cowardly with Fierce +3 Personality Trait). Unlike their lesser cousins, the *crocotta* has real Intelligence (Int +2) and a laughing human-like cackle with improved powers of mimicry (equivalent to speaking Arabic 3) that they use to trick human prey. All *crocotta* possess the Greater Immunity: Steel Virtue and many have the ability to enthrall their victims as per the Entrancement Ability. Some *crocotta* can strike dogs dumb if their shadow falls across them, and can paralyse any creature they look at thrice.

A stone found in the body of a Hyena of

## Hippopotamus

**Characteristics:** Cun -1, Per 0, Pre -4, Com -5, Str +8, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik -4

**Size:** +4

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Ferocity (against those in the way), Obese, Poor Eyesight

**Mundane Qualities:** Aggressive, Amphibious, Extra Natural Weapons, Herd Animal, Large Teeth, Tough Hide

**Personality Traits:** Bad Tempered +3, Territorial +2

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init -4, Attack +10, Defense +4, Damage +13

**Stomp:** Init -5, Attack +9, Defense 0, Damage +11

**Soak:** +6

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-9), -3 (10-18), -5 (19-27), Incapacitated (28-36), Dead (37+)

**Abilities:** Awareness 3 (intruders), Athletics 4 (running), Brawl 5 (tusks), Survival 3 (rivers), Swim 4 (rivers)

**Powers:**

**Overrun** (non magical): This effect only applies if the creature has charged into combat, exerting itself for this attack. If the attack is successful, the opponent must make a Dexterity + Athletics stress roll against an Ease Factor equal to (Damage Total (before soak) + hippopotamus's Size - opponent's Size). If the roll fails, the opponent lands on the ground a number of feet away equal to the hippopotamus's Size, taking falling damage in the process. He must spend his next action regaining his feet, although the creature normally follows up with a trample. Prone characters cannot parry, but must use Brawl to defend themselves.

**Natural Weapons:** A hippopotamus's weapons has the following combat characteristics: **Stomp:** Init -1, Attack +3, Defense -1, Damage +3. **Tusks:** Init 0, Attack +4, Defense +2, Damage +5.

**Appearance:** A huge pig-like animal with a wide mouth filled with long, peg-like tusks. They stand about five feet at the shoulder, can be twelve feet long, and weigh over 5000 pounds.

## Catoblepas

**Magic Might:** 12 (Animal)  
**Season:** Spring  
**Characteristics:** Cun -2, Per 0, Pre -4, Com -4, Str +5, Sta +5, Dex 0, Qik -1  
**Size:** +2  
**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Animal, Magical Monster, Greater Immunity to Wood, Greater Immunity to Metal, Great Stamina x2, Strong-Willed, Enfeebled, Depressed, Hunchback, Infamous  
**Mundane Qualities:** Large Horns, Thick Scales, Tough Hide  
**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:** Greater Powers, Improved Might x4, Improved Powers, Improved Soak, Lesser Powers x2, Susceptible to Deprivation  
**Personality Traits:** Melancholy +3, Passive +2, Ponderous +2  
**Reputations:** Deadly 4 (local)  
**Combat:**  
*Horns:* Init +1, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +8  
*Soak:* +12  
**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious  
**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14),

-5 (15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Home 3 (grazing), Athletics 3 (charging), Awareness 3 (hunters), Brawl 3 (horns)

### Powers:

*Gaze of Death*, 2 points, Init -5, Corpus and Animal: If the catoblepas raises its head and makes eye contact, those who meet its gaze drop dead. PeCo(An) 40 (Base 30, +1 Eye, +1 Requisite) Greater Power (40 levels, -2 Might cost and +2 Init with 20 mastery points from Improved Powers)

*Noxious Breath*, 0 points, Init -7, Herbam: Any plants upon which the catoblepas breathes become poisonous to both humans and animals. They are streaked with black, and anyone eating them must make a Stamina stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9 or take a Light Wound and be violently ill for a day. Botching the roll makes this a Medium Wound instead. This damage is treated with Medicine rather than Chirurgy. PeHe 15 (Base 3, +2 Voice, +2 Group) Lesser Power (15 levels, -3 Might cost using 5 mastery points from Improved Powers)

*Paralyzing Stench*, 0 points, Init -9, Corpus and Animal: The catoblepas exhales a foul choking cloud, in the following round any human or animal smelling this breath is robbed of all bodily movement. This paralysis lasts until the catoblepas ceases to huff out this cloud or moves away. It can affect any target within 3 paces of the beast capable of smelling it. ReCo(An) 25 (Base 5, +1 Conc, +2 Scent, +1 requisite) Lesser Power (25 levels, -2 Might cost and +2 Init with 20 mastery points from Improved Powers)

**Natural Weapons:** A catoblepas's weapon statistics are as follows: Large Horns: Init +2, Attack +3, Defense +2, Damage +3.

**Vis:** 3 pawns of Perdo, in eyes

**Appearance:** The size of a bull, the catoblepas has a huge head which it carries with difficulty, its eyes hanging downwards and partly hidden by a shaggy reddish mane that falls over its face. Its eyes are huge and bloodshot. Its body is covered with overlapping black scales, and it has a white horse-like tail. Its horns sweep downwards above its eyes.

## Crocodile (Cocodryllus)

**Characteristics:** Cun +1, Per 0, Pre -2, Com -5, Str +6, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik +1  
**Size:** +3  
**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)  
**Virtues and Flaws:** Great Quickness, Ferocity (Ambush), Improved Abilities, Tough, Enemies, Infamous  
**Mundane Qualities:** Aggressive, Ambush Predator, Amphibious, Camouflage, Crushing Jaws, Thick Scales, Tough Hide  
**Personality Traits:** Phlegmatic +3, Patient +3  
**Reputation:** Killer 4 (local)  
**Combat:**  
*Bite:* Init +2, Attack +10, Defense +7, Damage +12  
*Soak:* +12  
**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious  
**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)  
**Abilities:** Athletics 2 (short sprints and lunges), Awareness 3 (food), Brawl 5 (in water), Hunt 4 (prey), Stealth 4 (stalking prey), Survival 3 (river), Swim 2 (rivers)  
**Powers:**  
*Death Roll* (non magical): A crocodile that has

successfully bitten a foe may roll in the following round. When a crocodile rolls, it can twist away a chunk of the flesh of its victim, doing +6 damage without an attack roll, although the victim gets a Soak roll ignoring Protection from armor, since the crocodile's teeth have already penetrated. More often however, the death roll is not used to inflict damage. Rather, it is used to drag the victim beneath the surface of the water. The crocodile then uses its Amphibious Quality to wait for the victim to drown. If a character is being drowned by a crocodile, the character may attempt to break free of the crocodile's jaws each round. This requires the character to overcome a successful Grapple attack with a Grapple Strength of 10. If the character does break free, the crocodile is likely to bite again.

**Natural Weapons:** A crocodile's jaws have the following combat characteristics: Init 0, Attack +4, Defense +1, Damage +3. This excludes the Crushing Jaws Quality (see later). Its scales are legendarily tough, so it has been assumed

to have Protection 5 in addition to its Virtues and Qualities.

**Appearance:** Fifteen to eighteen feet long, this immense beast is covered in thick scales that can be colored in shades of yellow, green, and brown; indeed, its name is said to come from the yellow color of the crocus. However, these scales provide perfect camouflage both in the water and out.

A crocodile can hold its breath for half an hour if moderately active, and two hours if inactive. Crocodiles are camouflaged when in the water, and receive a +3 to all Stealth rolls made when stationary or moving slowly. They automatically win Initiative and receive a +3 to Attack totals on the first round of combat if they take their victim by surprise. A crocodile's Crushing Jaws Quality adds +3 to damage; however, the muscles that open a crocodile's jaws are quite weak and they can be held closed with a successful Grapple.

This crocodile is more challenging than the one that first appeared in *Magi of Hermes*, page 11.

## Lands of the Nile

Virtue can be enriched to make a charm of protection for whoever wears it on his upper arm (Personal Power (Ward Against Faeries of the Desert)) or alternatively grants ability to see the future (Premonition and/or Visions). In some cultures it is the eyes of the *crocotta* grant similar powers. A charm made from the genitalia and anus grants the Venus's Blessing Virtue to the wearer according to Persian sources.

## Mongoose

The mongoose, or ichneumon, is the bane of all snakes. Egyptians encourage them to dwell in their houses and grain stores, for they are fearsome predators of mice and rats as well as all reptiles. Whenever they encounter an asp, their ferocity comes to the fore, and they leap into battle against the larger creature and attack

until it is dead. Pliny the Elder reports that the ichneumon rolls itself in mud that then dries to a stone-like consistency, protecting it against the fangs of the serpent.

There is a type of mongoose called the *en-hydrus*, which reserves its ferocity for crocodiles. It waits until the mighty creature falls asleep with its mouth open, and then crawls inside and starts to eat the crocodile from the inside outwards.

## Elephant (*Elephantus*)

**Characteristics:** Cun 0, Per +1, Pre +1, Com -4, Str +12, Sta +3, Dex 0, Qik -3

**Size:** +5

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Improved Characteristics, Ferocity (defense of family), Tough, Fear (the squeal of a pig).

**Qualities:** Aggressive, Amphibious, Crafty, Defensive Fighter, Extra Natural Weapons, Grapple, Herd Animal/Leader, Imposing Appearance x2, Large Horns (Tusks), Sharp Ears, Thick Skin, Tough Hide.

**Personality Traits:** Lustful -3, Wise +2

**Combat:**

**Tusks:** Init -3, Attack +12, Defense +6, Damage +15

**Stomp:** Init -3, Attack +8, Defense +2, Damage +15

**Trunk (grapple):** Init -2, Attack +5, Defense +2, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +10

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-10), -3 (11-20), -5 (21-30), Incapacitated (31-40), Dead (41+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (food), Brawl 5 (tusks), Leadership\* 5 (elephants), Survival 3 (forests or plains), Swim 4 (rivers).

\*herd leader only

**Powers:**

**Trunk (non magical):** The elephant's trunk can be used to manipulate objects like a human hand, although tasks requiring two hands suffer a -3 penalty.

**Overrun (non magical):** This effect only applies if the creature has charged into combat, exerting itself into this attack. If the attack is successful, the opponent must make a Dexterity + Athletics stress roll against an Ease Factor equal to (Damage Total (before soak) + elephant's Size - opponent's

Size). If the roll fails, the opponent lands on the ground a number of feet away equal to the elephant's Size, taking falling damage in the process. He must spend his next action regaining his feet, although the creature normally follows up with a trample. Prone characters cannot parry, but must use Brawl to defend themselves.

**Natural Weapons:** An elephant's weapons has the following combat characteristics: **Stomp:** Init -1, Attack +3, Defense -1, Damage +3. **Tusks:** Init 0, Attack +6, Defense +4, Damage +3. The trunk is only effective as a grapple.

**Appearance:** The African elephant stands up to 12 feet tall, measures 22 feet long and weighs up to 14,000 pounds. These statistics represent the more aggressive male; the female can be half the weight of the male, and has insignificant tusks that make poor weapons.

Elephants have excellent hearing and vibration sense through the trunk, gaining a +3 on all rolls involving hearing.

**Female elephant:** Reduce Size to +4, this takes 2 from Strength but adds 1 to Quickness. Remove the Aggressive, Extra Natural Weapons, Large Horns (Tusks), Qualities and the Ferocity Virtue. Change to Brawl 4 (dodge), and remove the Tusk attack. Reduce Communication to -5.

**Old Man of the Forest:** As elephants age, they become exceptionally wise, sages on all knowledge under the sun. Tribesmen say that such elephants are also able to make themselves invisible whenever they wish. They develop a human-level of reasoning and become Magic Animals. The Old Man of the Forest should be treated as an elephant except as detailed below:

## THE OLD MAN OF THE FOREST

**Magic Might:** 11 (Animal)

**Season:** Autumn

**Characteristics:** Int +2, Per +1, Pre +1, Com -4, Str +12, Sta +3, Dex 0, Qik -3

**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Animal, Improved Characteristics, Ferocity (defense of family), Tough, Fear (the squeal of a pig).

**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:** Greater Power; Gift of Speech, Improved Abilities x3, Improved Characteristics, Minor Virtue (Arcane Lore), Minor Virtue (Educated), Minor Virtue (Well Traveled)

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Nubia 6 (inhabitants), Area Lore: Slavelands 5 (landscape), Artes Liberales 3 (debate), Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (food), Brawl 5 (tusks), Chirurgy 5 (spear wounds), Dominion Lore 3 (saints), Faerie Lore 6 (legends), Infernal Lore 3 (wilderness demons), Leadership 5 (elephants), Living Language: Cynegi 5 (eavesdropping), Living Language: Nubian 3 (debate), Magic Lore 5 (creatures), Medicine 4 (healing diseases), Philosophiae 5 (metaphysics), Profession: Apothecary 4 (healing herbs), Survival 3 (forests or plains), Swim 4 (rivers).

**Powers:**

**Trunk (non magical):** As earlier

**Overrun (non magical):** As earlier

**Invisibility of the Standing Elephant:** 0 points, Init -5, Imaginem: The elephant is invisible while he remains immobile, but becomes visible whenever he moves. Pelm 25 (Base 4, +2 Sun, +2 Size, +1 constant effect) Greater Power (25 levels, -3 Might cost, +2 Init)

**Appearance:** The Old Man of the Forest is an ancient creature; his skin is even more deeply wrinkled than is normal for elephants, and hangs off his thin frame. His most noticeable feature is his immense tusks, which touch the ground and then curl upwards at the tip.

## Monkeys

There are a number of different monkeys in the region described by this book, of which the most prominent is the baboon. All monkeys are group animals, and if threatened fight as a trained group in order to save themselves and each other. Only baboons attack using such strategies, and even use group fighting as a hunting strategy.

Monkeys always give birth to twins, and the mother loves one (hugging it close to her chest) and neglects the other (making it ride on her back). However, when a predator threatens she discards the child she loves in order to climb to safety.

## Ethiopian Pegasus

According to Pliny the Elder, one of the monstrosities found in "Ethiopia" was the Pegasus Aethiopicum. This creature was perhaps a descendent of the fabled Pegasus ridden by the ancient hero Bellerophon. That Pegasus was the child of Medusa and Poseidon, begotten illicitly in Athena's Libyan temple where Medusa was a priestess, but not born until she was beheaded by Perseus. As Perseus flew to rescue Andromeda from the dragon Ceto (see Chapter 8: Ethiopia), further drops of blood flew out of Medusa's head, and falling onto the sand they gave rise to more pegasi.

The Ethiopian Pegasus is a winged horse, bearing a pair of long horns on its head. Apart from these distinctive un-horselike features, the beast should be considered to have the same statistics as a courser (see *The Book of Mundane Beasts* or *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 142), its horns have the following weapon statistics: Init +2, Atk +3, Def +2, Dam +3.

## Ostrich

Ostriches are common in Nubia and Ethiopia, and a smaller variety can be found in North Africa, Egypt and Arabia. The statistics here reflect the larger African ostrich. Valued for their feathers, leather, and eggs, and less so for their meat, they roam the semi-arid plains in great flocks but avoid the deep desert. Ostrich hunting remains a favorite pastime



## Mongoose (Ichneumon)

**Characteristics:** Cun +1, Per 0, Pre -2, Com -5, Str -5, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik +4

**Size:** -4

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Berserk, Ferocity (against serpents), Immunity to Venom, Improved Characteristics, Reckless

**Mundane Qualities:** Crafty, Pursuit Predator, Skilled Climber, Tireless

**Personality Traits:** Fearless +5, Curious +3

**Combat:**

**Teeth:** Init +4, Attack +8, Defense +9, Damage -4

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1), -3 (2), -5 (3), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5+)

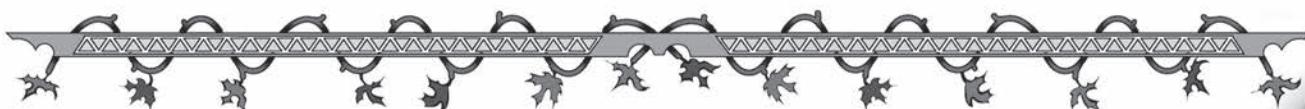
**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (chasing), Awareness 3 (rodents), Brawl 3 (bite), Hunt 4 (snakes), Survival 3 (riverbanks)

**Natural Weapons:** A mongoose's teeth have the following combat characteristics: Init 0, Attack +3, Defense +1, Damage +1.

**Appearance:** An elongated animal with grizzled gray fur and a black tail tuft. It is about 3 1/2 feet long nose to tail, and weighs eight pounds.

Mongooses receive a +3 bonus to all rolls involving climbing. A mongoose covered in dried mud benefits from +5 Protection; it takes at least three hours for the mud to dry, and the benefit starts to decline with vigorous activity, decreasing by one every three rounds of combat.

If an enhydrus manages to get inside a crocodile, its opponent automatically has a zero Defense and Soak Total against the mongoose's attacks.



of nobles. African ostriches are notorious for their habit of hurling stones using their feet with great accuracy and strength.

Ostriches have a natural inclination to hide their heads in bushes as a response to any threats. However, they can be trained against this habit, and may be ridden as mounts by lightweight riders.

## Serpent, Elephant-Eating

These immense serpents live in the ravines at the base of hills, and in deep caves that can take their bulk. When it is time for them to feed, they congregate at rivers where elephants are known to gather. Often, several serpents attack the same elephant, fighting as an untrained group; several can grapple at the same time, but only one can use the Constriction power. They are not averse to attacking other suitable prey.

When attacking an elephant, the serpent attempts to lasso its victim's legs in a knot of its tail and then suffocate it. If possible, a giant serpent attacks from ambush. It aims to subdue its prey as quickly as possible. It expends a Fatigue level on its initial bite attack, and again in its next action

**Characteristics:** Cun +1, Per +2, Pre -4, Com -1, Str -1, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik +2

**Size:** -1

**Confidence Score:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Improved Characteristics, Keen Vision, Puissant Guile; Social Handicap (unpleasant odour), Nocturnal

**Qualities:** Crafty, Crushing Jaws, Keen Eyesight, Large Teeth, Mimicry, Pursuit Predator, Thick Fur.

**Personality Traits:** Cowardly +3, Sly +2

**Reputations:** Treacherous 2 (local)

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +2, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage +5\*

**Dodge:** Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +5, Damage n/a

\* Includes a +3 bonus from Crushing Jaws

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16), Dead (17+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (food), Brawl 3 (bite), Guile 1+2 (feign dead), Hunt 4 (tracking),

Survival 3 (desert),

**Natural Weapons:** The weapon statistics for a hyena's bite are Init 0, Atk +4, Def +1, Dam +3. The damage bonus is increased to +6 as noted due to the Crushing Jaws Quality (see below).

**Appearance:** The striped hyena has a comparatively massive torso with shortened hind legs, causing their back to slope down. Their short muzzles are borne by a large head and long thick immobile neck.

## NEW QUALITY

**Crushing Jaws:** This quality reflects situations in which, although the animal is not particularly strong compared to humans, the muscles with which they bite down are tremendously powerful. The muscles which open its mouth are comparatively weak. A human may hold closed the animal's jaws with a successful Grapple. This Quality adds +3 Damage to any bite attack.

**Characteristics:** Cun +2, Per 0, Pre -3, Com 0, Str -4, Sta 0, Dex +2, Qik +1

**Size:** -2

**Virtues and Flaws:** Berserk, Learn Athletics from Mistakes; Oversensitive to Threats, Short Attention Span

**Mundane Qualities:** Crafty, Defensive Fighter, Pack Animal/Pack Leader, Skilled Climber

**Personality Traits:** Mischievous +2, Brave +2

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +2, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage -3

**Evasion:** Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +7, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-3), -3 (4-6), -5 (7-9), Incapacitated (10-12), Dead (13+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 5 (climbing), Awareness 4 (predators), Brawl 3 (bite), Leadership\* 5 (monkeys) Stealth 3 (hiding), Survival 3 (foraging)

**Natural Weapons:** The weapon statistics for a monkey's bite are Init +1, Atk

## Baboon (Hamadryas)

+3, Def +2, Dam +1

\*troop leaders only

**Appearance:** A fierce monkey with a dog-like face. They are olive brown, the males have a silvery-gray cape and mane of longer hair.

### MONKEY VARIETIES

The statistics given above reflect the hamadryas, also known as a cynocephalus or 'dog head'. It is the most aggressive of African monkeys. Other monkeys found throughout the region can be simulated with the following adjustments:

**Cercopithecus:** Smallest of the monkeys and an incorrigible thief, the cercopithecus has a shaggy reddish-brown coat and a long tail. It has white legs and underparts, a cap of brighter red, and black lines from face to ear. Grey-furred versions with black faces are found in forests close to the Torrid Zone. Adjustments: Size -4 (change Str to -8 and Qik to +4), exchange Berserk for Light Touch, and Oversensitive for Carefree. The

cercopithecus also has the Fast Runner and Timid Mundane Qualities (subtract 1 from Presence, increase Stealth to 4). (Patas monkeys, velvet monkeys, and similar)

**Callithrix:** This monkey has a long white beard on its face, a long shawl of white fur over its back, and a white tuft on its tail; the callithrix is otherwise a black monkey. Unlike other monkeys, the callithrix lacks a thumb (represented by the Palsied Hands Flaw). The callithrix is naturally found in the Horn of Africa, and is an occasional pet among Egyptians. Adjustments: Size -3 (change Str to -6 and Qik to +3), exchange Berserk for Perfect Balance, and Oversensitive for Palsied Hands. (colobus monkey)

**Sphinx:** A docile beast with shaggy hair and a long tail, the males have an impressive lion-like mane and a colorful face — a red median stripe, blue muzzle, and yellow beard. The sphinx is native to the far south, but is occasionally found in Ethiopia and beyond. Adjustments: exchange Berserk for Piercing Gaze, and Oversensitive for Non-combatant (mandrill)

## Ostrich, African (Struthio)

**Characteristics:** Cun -2, Per +2, Pre -1, Com -2, Str +2, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik +2

**Size:** +1

**Confidence Score:** 0 (0)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Improved Characteristics, Keen Vision, Perfect Balance, Sharp Ears; Fragile Constitution

**Qualities:** Camouflage, Defensive Fighter, Fast Runner, Hardy, Herd Animal, Keen Eyesight, Thick Feathers

**Reputations:** None

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** +3, Attack na, Defense +5, Damage na

**Kick (as hoof):** Init +4, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +2

**Thrown Stone:** Init -1, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage +6

**Soak:** +4

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-6), -3 (7-12), -5 (13-18), Incapacitated (19-24), Dead (25+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 4 (predators), Brawl 4 (dodging), Survival 5 (home terrain), Thrown Weapons 4 (stones)

**Natural Weapons:** The weapon statistics for an ostrich's kick are Init +2, Atk +2, Def +0, Dam +0. Its ability to hurl rocks with its feet is treated as a sling, but with a range increment of 15 paces.

**Appearance:** This large bird has a long neck and legs with huge eyes. Males are typically black with white tail plumage and wing fringes whereas females are a more discreet gray color.

An ostrich gets a +3 to all rolls involving running.

when it initiates a grapple (and constriction) by throwing the thick coils of its body around its prey. If it succeeds, it can continue to constrict while biting its victim, gaining a bonus to its bite Attack Total equal to its grapple strength.

## Elephant-Eating Serpent

**Characteristics:** Cun 0, Per -2, Pre -6, Com -6, Str +8, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik 0

**Size:** +4

**Virtues and Flaws:** Great Quickness, Improved Characteristics, Poor Eyesight

**Mundane Qualities:** Aggressive, Ambush Predator, Camouflage, Grapple, Keen Sense of Smell, Slippery, Tireless

**Personality Traits:** Dispassionate +3

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init 0, Attack +10, Defense +6, Damage +9

**Grapple:** Init 0, Attack +8, Defense +12\*, Damage n/a

\*includes +6 for the Slippery Quality

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-9), -3 (10-18), -5 (19-27), Incapacitated (28-36), Dead (37+)

**Abilities:** Awareness 2 (avoiding being trodden on), Brawl 5 (grapple), Hunt 4 (elephants), Stealth 4 (among rocks), Survival 3 (ravines), Swim 3 (rivers)

**Natural Weapons:** The weapon statistics for the snake's bite are Init 0, Atk +3, Def +1, Dam +1.

**Powers:**

**Constriction (non-magical):** The serpent can only use this attack on a victim of Size +5 or

less. Constriction is based on the grappling rules (see Non-Lethal Combat, ArM5, page 174). As long as the serpent maintains the grapple, its opponent is considered deprived of air (see ArM5, page 180). The victim must make a Stamina check every five rounds, or suffer the normal effects of deprivation. Once the serpent has successfully grappled an opponent (and begun constricting), on subsequent rounds it can continue constricting and still attack with its bite. These attacks may be directed at the grappled victim (in which case the Grapple Strength adds to the Attack Total), or at another opponent. The serpent can usually only constrict a single creature at a time.

**Swallow Whole (non-magical):** The serpent can swallow whole any creature of Size -1 or smaller. If the creature has not first been subdued with a Constriction attack (see above) it can struggle to escape, but it continues to be affected by constriction while swallowed. It is impossible to breathe inside the serpent, requiring deprivation rolls (ArM5, page 180) even if the victim escapes the grapple. Three rounds after being swallowed, the victim reaches the stomach. The powerful acids inflict +9 damage every round, complete immersion quadruples this to +36

(ArM5, page 181). A character may be able to brace himself and avoid complete immersion: make a Strength + Athletics roll each round; Ease Factor 6 results in only half immersion (triple damage), Ease Factor 9 results in immersion of a limb (double damage), and Ease Factor 12 means just a splash (normal damage). The serpent cannot swallow a second creature until the previous one has reached the stomach.

**Appearance:** A snake over 45 feet long, with a diameter of nearly two feet at its thickest point. They are mostly mottled brown in coloration, but have patches and swirls of olive green, black, and yellow.

These giant elephant eating snakes are capable of swallowing creatures up to Size +5, but it takes hours to accomplish this, gradually inching its articulated jaws around the dead creature's body. The Swallow Whole power represents its ability to swallow smaller prey items alive. The serpents automatically win Initiative and receive a +3 to Attack totals on the first round of combat if they take their victim by surprise. They have a +3 to all Stealth rolls when they are remaining still, and a +3 to all Perception rolls involving their sense of smell.

## Chapter Four

# Pagan Monuments (Birbah)

Egypt is famous for its many monuments, and as a local proverb avers, for every place there is a treasure.

## The Seekers' Guild (Al-Majalibeen)

For centuries out of mind, brave explorers have been recovering riches from the monuments of Egypt. Many adventurers, too old or too wealthy to risk their lives seeking new plunder, encourage others to take to the trade. They write books, which are so popular they are available in most towns, or train apprentices, who always pay in advance. Even untrained men, made desperate by personal circumstances, try their hand at grave robbing; it's often fatal or futile, but there's always the chance that fate will smile. In some areas, digging for treasure is a popular sport, considered a plague by those who seek to preserve monuments.

Hundreds of years ago, during a time of drought or war, Egypt's impoverished rulers formalized this industry. Every person who wishes to ransack tombs must belong to the Guild of Seekers. Membership is purchased with an annual fee and a slice of the recovered treasure. This is currently 20% of all valuables found.

Membership has many benefits. Members have access to the guildhall in Cairo. It has an extensive library of seeker texts, which describe methods of disabling tomb defenses, give charms to ward off curses, give rote translations of important hieroglyphs, and describe common decoys and hiding places. This knowledge is covered by the Profession: Seeker Ability. Other texts, covering Area Lore, sug-

gest locations, both cleared out (and thus ready for new residents) and not thoroughly looted. Older members of the guild train younger ones in useful skills. Members of repute can recruit teams of specialists to attempt noteworthy sites that have defeated earlier attempts at robbery. The guild is led by an emir, appointed by the sultan, often from among the most powerful of his councilors. Characters who regularly contribute money to the royal treasury have the ear of the emir, giving comparatively humble people access to the sultan's inner circle. They may also be selected as agents when the emir, or his allies, need tasks performed.

In high-fantasy sagas, the seekers have additional resources. Members may hire magical items recovered from tombs. The guild has supernatural allies, or even mystical members.

### Yes Really: A Guild of Adventurers

Medieval Egyptians had an adventurers' guild, with a guildhall and licenses. They had a library of scrolls listing sites for members to loot, and books describing the beasts and traps found within. They trained each other, exchanged rumors about local sites, and constructed parties of specialists. Players new to Ars Magica, but familiar with other fantasy games may find the Guildhall of the Seekers a familiar environment from which to explore Mythic Africa. Old hands at the game may enjoy a refreshing change of pace.

## Gourneh: Village of the Tomb Robbers

Many people take up tomb robbing outside the guild system. Poorer people, for example, cannot usually afford the annual fee before they begin prospecting. Others simply do not wish to pay 20% of their finds to the sultan. This supports a black market, which intertwines with the legitimate trade to ship artifacts out of the country, often by sale to wealthy pilgrims.

The finest tomb thieves come from a village called Gourneh, which is at Luxor. Its residents have been looting tombs since ancient times, when they were building them by day and emptying them at night. Older Gournehs train their grandchildren in excavation, tunneling, bargaining and disarming traps. They are not often skilled at combat, but can usually hire mercenaries to face guardians. When these mercenaries die, as they often do, it's considered a sign of skill to recover their corpses, and steal back the money already paid.

The families of Gourneh often infiltrate legitimate expeditions to tombs, seeking hire as laborers. A Gourneh summons his family if the tomb's excavation is complete and it is likely to be left unattended. The Gournehs consider themselves good Muslims, and so they do not kill tomb guards, but they may distract them from their duty, or drug their food. Gourneh families are extremely loyal to each other, and to their community as a whole, and could make interesting allies for a group of magi wealthy enough to keep their minds off theft.

# Story Seeds For Treasure Hunters

Since every place has a treasure, every Egyptian knows there's gold to be had near treasure hunters.

## CONMAN

A rich man seeks out the covenant for aid. A poor man of his acquaintance came to him with a handful of small gold amulets. The poor man told the rich one that he had uncovered a treasure, but needed money to purchase supplies and hire laborers to excavate it. The rich man gave the poor one a great deal of money, in exchange for half the treasure. The poor man has since disappeared.

The rich man is too embarrassed to go to the authorities, and asks the player characters to return his stolen money. The rich man has social status, and might make a useful ally, pawn, or front man, if aided.

## THE DESTRUCTIVE JEST

An enemy of the player characters has forged an ancient document which says a treasure is hidden under the covenant. Gangs of people try to sneak into the covenant to dig in the cellars. Neighbors begin tunneling under the buildings. Mobs form and try to storm the gates. Random people strike the walls of the covenant with picks as they walk past, in the hopes of striking a hollow in which gold lies. This particular trick has been used many times, and is famous in the country's ruling class, so it's difficult to work out who is responsible for it. Perhaps the player characters can seek out the forger?

## GOVERNMENT AGENT

When digging for treasure, a government agent must be present. These clerks are not themselves always adventurers. In this story seed, a clerk who is unpopular with a nobleman is assigned to the characters when they visit a tomb known to be dangerous. Can they keep the terrified, unskilled man safe while they navigate the horrors of the tomb?

## MONASTERY OR MOSQUE

The characters have found an ancient scroll, which describes the location of a temple which they have not seen listed anywhere else. This increases the odds that it has not been disturbed. Like many temples, however, this one has been built over by either a monastery or a mosque. If the player characters approach the modern keepers of the site, either

- they are welcomed, because the supernatural beings of the temple are still occasionally troublesome, and the modern inhabitants would like them destroyed.
- they are banned from the site, and the player characters must find ways to sneak into the area, tunnel from neighboring buildings, or discredit the current keeper of the site, so that a more malleable one replaces him.

## NAQEEB AL-MATALIBEEN (THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MATALIBEEN)

The chairman of the Seekers Guild is elected by its members, subject to the approval of the emir. The player characters, if famous adventurers, are useful allies for any candidate for the role. Although elections are generally civil, sometimes the candidates attempt to thin the field with assassination. The members of the guild have access to strange poisons, ancient magic items, and can use their training in trap disarmament to construct devices that deal death. A player character who becomes chairman has access to all of the resources of the guild, provided he can keep the emir ignorant of his activities. A player character covenant that secretly rules the Guild of Adventurers is a potential saga seed.

## ROMAN NOTES

It is believed by many Egyptians that the Romans hid treasures before their armies withdrew from Egypt. They expected to return, retake the country, and recover their treasures, so they took detailed notes

about the locations of their caches. They also carried away many Coptic, Greek and Chaldean books concerning the location of treasures. The Romans stored these books in the safest place they could imagine: the cathedral of Constantinople.

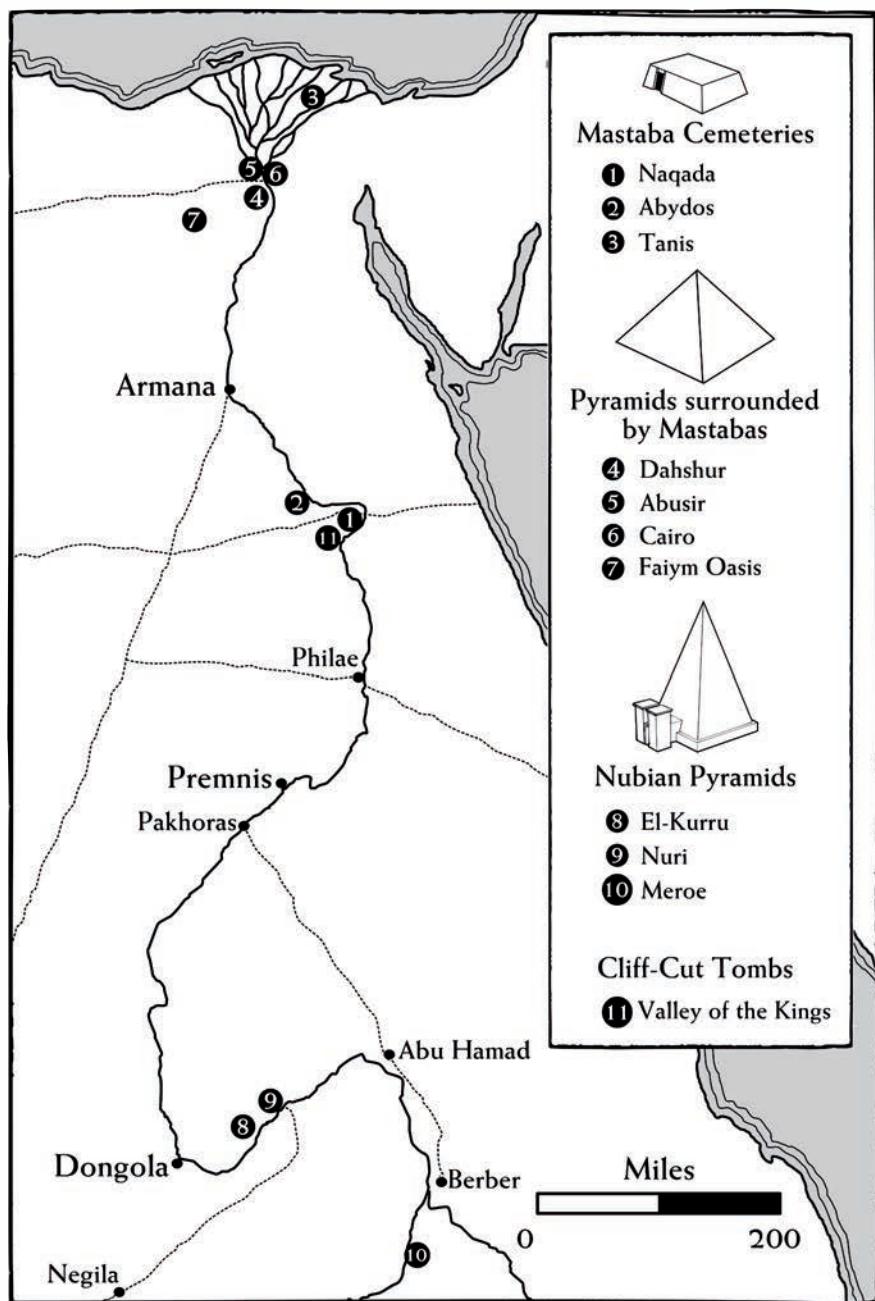
In 1204, this building was sacked by crusaders. Most of the Arabs who know this believe the notes were stolen by the Franks. They are sure that, eventually, the people who now possess the books will try to use them. Common people might aid the new owners, in the hope of keeping some of the treasure. Officials want to steal the books, for the good of the realm, and to save the thief from dangers he cannot comprehend.

Characters using magic to make gold might be imagined the keepers of the stolen Roman books. This attracts great support from the peasant and merchant class, but offends noblemen.

## THE TREASURE OF QARUN

Qarun was a wealthy man from Moses's time. He was so rich that he built a treasure house, which was so magnificent that he required a train of powerful slaves just to carry its keys. God, finding the pride of the man repulsive, pushed the treasure house deep into the sands. It has never been rediscovered.

This treasure is often spoken of by seekers. It is, from their perspective, perfect. It was buried, but not on the instructions of its owner. Its defenses are likely weak compared to those protecting dead kings. The location of the keys is recorded somewhere in the library. Player characters with some clue as to the location of this treasure find many young seekers eager to help, and many cynical older seekers who chased the treasure while young. God repeated the trick with the treasure house of the pharaoh of Moses. It, similarly, has never been found, even though its precise location is known. This may indicate the presence of a Divine regio.



## Clusters of Tombs

## The Structure of Tombs

Various Egyptian dynasties were buried in different places along the length of Egypt. The exact chronology of the tombs is a little mystifying to even learned Egyptians. It is considered pious to learn this history, and some of the older Coptic monks may have untangled it entirely.

The afterlife of the Egyptians is the Field of Reeds, a part of the Magic Realm where the ghosts (*ka*) of the Egyptian dead dwell in great comfort. Unlike Christian people who go to their Heaven and dwell eternally in bliss, a ghost that travels to the Field of Reeds cannot remain

there indefinitely. It is required to return to the mortal world at least once a year for nourishment, during which time it reminds itself who it used to be through the offerings and inscriptions left behind in the tomb. A ghost that does not do this risks losing its memories and becoming a mut, or else fading away entirely. Each tomb, then, is a machine designed to maintain the integrity of the ghost. Most tombs rest within Magic auras (see insert), which facilitates the passage to and from the Field of Reeds.

Each tomb, at its least elaborate, has two rooms, housing three essential parts. These are: the mortuary chapel, which is where offerings to feed the ghost are left by its descendants; the serdab, which is the home of the ghost on Earth; and the sepulcher, where the body is kept. In the simplest tombs, the serdab is included in either the sepulcher or the chapel. The chapel is designed for mortal access, but the other two elements are defended by barriers, wards, traps and guardians.

## Mortuary Chapel

At least once a year, the ghost is required to return to the mortal realm and partake of mortal food, to restore its strength in the Field of Reeds, so a small room at the front of most tombs is set aside for this purpose. This is the only room which is easily entered by mortals. These are usually priests or descendants, who bring offerings for the sustenance of the dead. The spirit of the dead person enters this room, after the visitors have gone, to consume the spiritual energy of their offerings.

In later tombs, a desire for greater security for the grave goods altered the chapel's form. In some tombs it is merely a niche at the entry, with an offering table. The niche stands in front of a symbolic door, which cannot be opened. In others, the chapel is detached from the tomb.

The chapel always includes a statue of the tomb's inhabitant. A popular depiction is of the person, standing upright, walking out of a false door, into the chapel. In other chapels the dead person is seated in state. This is a convenience for the ghost: when the supplicants leave, it can animate that particular statue, as consuming the spiritual sustenance it requires is easier in material form.

In later tombs, a couple of changes occurred which made life easier for the descendants. A method was discovered of feeding

ghosts using representations of food. Initially these were placed as statues in the chapel, then later they were represented by paintings in the sepulcher, where they were less likely to be disturbed by tomb robbers. A method of simplifying prayers to the dead was also devised. In early tombs, descendants would give sacrifices to gods on the basis that the gods would pass on some portion of the sacrifice to the ancestor. In later tombs, stelae were placed outside the tomb, commanding gods to provide certain, often exorbitant, provisions for the dead. These were triggered when passers-by read them.

## A Note on Tombs

Sagas vary in their tone, so this chapter presents a guide for the construction of simple, realistic tombs, and for the labyrinthine necropolises of treasure seeker manuals. Troupes may include tombs of various types within a single saga. Assume the simpler tombs were constructed earlier, when the technologies of tomb defense were less developed, as the resting places of less wealthy individuals, or after Egypt had suffered a long drought.

## Serdab

The second room is a private space for the dead person's spirit to inhabit. The serdab is often buried in the masonry of the tomb, with no passage of human size permitting access. It is filled with grave goods. These include either real objects or representations of everything the dead person needs in the afterlife. Except in early serdabs, made before this technology was developed, the walls of this area are covered with depictions of useful things. An Egyptian ghost can manifest, as part of its ethereal form, any item found in its grave goods or depicted on its tomb walls, provided they have not been stolen or defaced. These items can, at the ghost's discretion, affect mortals. After the idea of depiction became popular, it was taken to extremes. Many walls show fields full of agricultural laborers, growing food and drink for their dead master.

## STELE

The serdab also contains a doorway (a *stele*) to Duat, the afterlife which contains the Field of Reeds. The stele is a vestige, usually aligned

to the Form of Mentem. The stele takes the form of a linteled door facing west. Generally the stele is merely the representation of a door, the ghost walks through it in a spiritual rather than physical sense. In some tombs, the stelae are tiny representations, because the ghost does not need to physically enter and so their size does not matter. In the very early tombs, this is instead a narrow passage, a few inches wide, punched through the western wall of the tomb from the serdab outward.

In early tombs the stele is unadorned. In slightly later tombs the name of the person appears on the stele, perhaps to prevent ghosts using each other's stelae to steal grave goods. Over time the decoration became more complicated. Late stelae include the name and biography of the dead person, and hints for them about how to live in the afterlife. These hints sometimes include spells, or, at least, incantations that the creatures of the Field of Reeds accept as binding them to act in certain ways.

## STATUES

Egyptian ghosts in the mundane world prefer to be incarnate. While material they

## Guardians of Graveyards

Traditional Ward (Removal of the medallions – see accompanying story hook).

\* Included in statistics given below.

**Personality Traits:** Hates defilers +5

**Reputations:** Homicidally Territorial 5 (General)

**Combat\*:**

2 *knives*\*\*: Init +5, Attack +11, Defense +8, Damage +12\*\*\*

*Bite*: Init +7, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage +8\*\*\*

\* If a pack of these creatures gather to defend a graveyard they fight as a trained group.

\*\* These knives are large enough to use the statistics for shortswords, for smaller characters, but are still a Brawling weapon in the hands of the huge guardians of graveyards.

\*\*\* Does not include +5 for Damaging Effect

**Soak:** +6 (Light Egyptian armor – boots, pectoral, greaves)

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5 (15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

**Pretenses\*:** Athletics 5 (chasing), Aware-

ness 5 (intruders), Brawl 5 (knives), Hunt 5 (in graveyards)

\*See *Realms of Power: Faerie* or just use equivalent Abilities.

**Powers:**

**Chilling Howl:** 4 points, Init +1, Corpus: Completely paralyses characters who hear the creature's war cry. Some report the cry sounds like the howl of a wolf, others that it sounds like the mocking laughter of the hyena, others that it sounds like the chitter of a setbeast. (Base 5, +2 Voice, +2 Sun, +2 Group)

**Damaging Effect**, 2 points, Init -2, By weapon. Causes all of the creatures weapons to become exceptionally sharp for the next two minutes. Damage +5. (Base 5, +1 Part, +1 Diameter) Base is lower than Hermetic level, as per *Realms of Power: Faerie* page 58.

**Decapitate**, 4 points, Init -2, Corpus: Cleanly removes the head of a victim struck in combat. (Base 40 (instant death) +1 Touch, 5 levels on cost)

Some creatures guard an entire graveyard, not a specific tomb. Characters are less likely to meet these beings than the guardians of the particular tomb they are attempting to enter. The use of powerful magic in the graveyard may draw them to the entrance of the tomb in which the player characters are active, to ambush the characters as they emerge.

### CANOCEPHALUS DECAPITATORS

These are the spirits which dissuade most people from tomb robbing. Decapitators are more active at night, and often appear in pairs.

**Faerie Might:** 25 (Animal)

**Characteristics:** Cun +5, Per +3\*, Pre 0, Com n/a, Str +7, Sta Tireless, Dex +2, Qik +3

**Size:** +2

**Virtues and Flaws:** Greater Powers x 2 (Chilling Laugh or Howl, Damaging Effect, Decapitate), Huge, Feast of the Dead (recovers 2 Might when it inflicts a Heavy Wound or greater), Hybrid Form, Improved Initiative x2 \*; Incognizant,

## Guardians of Graveyards (Cont'd)

**Equipment:** Knives of obsidian or alchemically-toughened bronze. Armor or clothes in the Egyptian style, jewelry.

**Vis:** 5 pawns in the skull of a dog or hyena, found after the body disintegrates at death.

**Appearance:** This is a medieval interpretation of seals showing the god Anubis. Imagine a fit warrior, with the head of a jackal and a savage expression, surrounded by the corpses of his decapitated enemies.

### STORY SEED: MEDALLION REMOVAL

Many of the statues in each graveyard have medallions around their necks. Each medallion shows one of these creatures surrounded by bound and decapitated victims. Seals with the same design are also found on tomb doors, and other architectural features. The absence of these seals almost entirely prevents attack by the decapitators, while skulking around at night in graveyards is substantially more dangerous near these medallions. A character wanting to rob a tomb may visit the graveyard during the day, when the decapitators are less active, and try to remove or deface these medallions, without the humans who watch over the graveyard discovering their vandalism.

### GREAT GUARDIAN OF THE TOMBS

Each of the great Egyptian necropolises has a protective spirit, which is extremely powerful but rarely intervenes. Magi using spells in the graveyard might draw a guardian from its sleep. The most powerful is the guardian for Gizeh, called the Father of Dread. This great effigy of Harmachis, Horus at Dawn, is called the Sphinx by Greek scholars. The statue faces the opposite direction to that reported by Herodotus, but no-one recalls when it changed position, or why. Between the statue's forepaws is a small Divine aura, which appeared when Mary laid the infant Christ in the shadows here, as they rested. It may be this Divine aura which has locked the Father of Dread in place. It no longer grants predictions to the common person, or moves to give warnings of grave worldly events, but it has found a subtle way to continue protecting the tombs.

The Father of Dread is not designed as a player character.

### THE FATHER OF DREAD

**Faerie Might:** 65 (Animal)

**Characteristics:** Cun +3, Per +2, Pre -3, Com -3, Str +26, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik -9

**Size:** +10 (75 feet tall)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Ferocity, Huge, Immune to Fire, Sovereign Ward (The Divine), Hybrid Form, Personal Power (Extend Glamour), Time of Power (adds 10 Might while the Sun touches the horizon); Incognizant.

**Personality Traits:** Ferocity +5, Guardian of the dead +5

**Reputations:** Almost forgotten god 2 (scholars)

**Combat:**

2 *Large Claws*: Init -9, Attack +17\*, Defense +4\*, Damage +27

*Bite*: Init -9, Attack +14\*, Defense +1\*, Damage +24

\* Does not include Ferocity bonus.

**Soak:** +8

**Wound Penalties\***: -1 (1-21), -3 (22-32), -5 (33-43), Incapacitated (44-54), Dead (55+)

\* Adjusted for stone body and size.

**Pretenses\*:** Athletics 5 (pouncing), Awareness 5 (victims), Brawl 9 (claws), Hunt (people) 5

\* See *Realms of Power: Faerie* or just use Abilities.

**Powers:**

*Chilling Howl*: 4 points, Init -13, Animal: Completely paralyzes characters who hear the creature's hunting roar. It sounds like a tremendous lion, whose roar is so deep it rattles the bones. (Base 5, +2 Voice, +2 Sun, +2 Group)

*Spirit Away*: variable points, n/a, Vim: Spirit Away is a special power described in detail in Chapter 2 of *Realms of Power: Faerie*. It allows a creature to sweep mortals into Faerie. As characters transgress sacred spaces, or moral boundaries, they become easier to remove from the world. The Father of Dread uses this power to draw mortals into Faerie. Its lands look much like Giza at dawn. It then hunts its victims and eats them. Remember that in Faerie the creature has +10 Might.

*Extend Glamour*: 0 points, constant, Mentem. This creature is a God of Dawn, and when in Faerie it can cause it to be dawn whenever it wishes, at which time it has an added 10 Might. The creature knows

many magical effects end at dawn, and uses cascading dawns to strip magical defenses from its enemies. As the Sun bob ups and down at the horizon, magi must either allow their Parmae Magicae to fail, or spend every round performing the ritual that maintains the shield. It also means that the creature knows where its quarry is. This power needs to penetrate magical defenses, but the creature's Might is so great that few can resist it.

**Vis:** 13, the skull of a pharaoh built into the Father of Dread.

**Appearance:** The Father of Dread used to act in the world by possessing the great statue that guards the tombs at Giza; an immense statue of a lion with the head of a human complete with headdress. It has a less weather-worn appearance in Faerie. It also has a ceremonial beard, which has been lost from the mundane statue.

### THE MUT: THE ENEMIES FROM THE WEST

The ghosts of the Ancient Egyptians differ a little from those of modern Europeans.

**Magic Might:** 6 (Mentem)

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per +1, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +1, Sta +1\*, Dex 0, Qik +1

\* Tireless

**Size:** 0, but immaterial

**Season:** Summer

**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Spirit, Lesser Power (Ghost Touch), Cautious with Profession, Magical Monster

**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:** Greater power: Possession, Lesser powers (Cause Mastitis, Eidolon, Dream Manipulation).

**Personality Traits:** Vary, but include Ghost +3 and Jealous of the Living of at least +2

**Combat:**

*One of*

*Brawl*: Init +1, Attack +5, Defense +6, Damage +3

*or*

*Agricultural or craft tool\**: Init +2, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +6

\* The ghost's weapon reappears in its hand whenever needed.

**Soak:** +1, when material. Some soldier ghosts wear armor.

## Guardians of Graveyards (Cont'd)

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Brawl 6 (club) or Great Weapon 6 (large rural implement) or Single Weapon 5 (spear) and Thrown weapon 3 (throwing stick – treat as a stone)), Area Lore: grave site 4 (stories about the dead), Athletics 4 (running), Awareness 4 (living things), Profession: varies 6 (varies),

**Powers:**

*Cause Mastitis*, 2 points, Init -3, Corpus: Prevents mothers from generating milk for their babies.

(ReCo 3: (cause the symptoms of a minor illness without the underlying illness. *Art and Academe*, Page 57) +1 touch, +2 Sun. Lesser Power, Lesser Power. As per *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102)

*Dream Manipulation*, 1 point, Init +1, Mentem: Allows the mut to enter the dreams of a victim. The mut cannot create instant changes, but can make the dream more ominous, and add frightening elements. (Based on the weaker form of the Envisioning power in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 32.)

*Ghost Touch*, Variable cost, Init equal to (Qik – Might spent), Terram: Moves objects not held by another or fastened down. For 1 point, five pounds may be moved, with each additional point doubling this limit. If the item is hurled, the mut uses its Thrown Weapon Ability, and damage is +5 per point spent. If the mut has a Martial Ability, it may fight using this power. Determine its combat totals using its Abilities and Characteristics. Physical attacks with this power must Penetrate Magic Resistance. The power lasts until the mut discards the object. (Focus power, ReTe25, *Realms of Power: Magic* page 102.)

*Lesser Eidolon*, 3 points, Init -5, Imaginem: Creates an immaterial, illusionary form, allowing the ghost to interact with mortals. The form lasts until the spirit has no further use for it. Mut appear as translucent versions of the "best" version of the person they once were. For men, particularly, this can make them look a little unusual, as they have wise face filled with age, but great abdominal muscles, like a twenty year old. CrIm15 (Base 2, +1 Touch, +2 Conc, +2 move

at command+, 1 intricacy), Lesser Power. As per *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102, redesigned as a Lesser Power.)

*Possession*, 1 or more points, Init +3, Mentem: If this power penetrates, the victim is possessed by the mut and is under its direct control. Any attempt to force the victim to act contrary to her nature, or to use any of the host's own magical powers requires the mut to spend Might. A supernatural power (including spell-casting) requires 1 Might point per magnitude to produce. A questionable action that is contrary to the nature of the host requires the mut to exceed the possessed being's Personality Trait roll on a stress die + Might points spent. The storyguide may give a modifier to the Personality Trait roll based on the nature of the command (see the Entrance power, ArM5, page 65, for suggestions). Both Might costs must be met if the use of a supernatural power is also contrary to the victim's nature. If the mut is in direct control of its host's actions, the host acquires the mut's Magic Resistance, but is also affected by wards that would normally exclude the host. If the host is acting under her own free will, then she does not benefit from the mut's Magic Resistance, but may also walk through wards with impunity. (Power originally appeared in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 71.)

**Equipment:** Clothes, grave goods  
**Vis:** 2 pawns Mentem, prized possession  
**Appearance:** The mut appear as the ghostly doubles of humans, translucent, but colored.

The mut are believed to be spirits unable to pass on, stuck in the world due to something done incorrectly during their interment, or due to a piece of unfinished business. They are thus akin to shades (*Realms of Power: Magic* page 115). Unlike ka, the mut do not remember who they are, nor can they travel to the Field of Reeds. Lacking tombs, they are forced to wander the mundane world. They are jealous of the living, and seek to harm them, particularly pregnant women and newborn children. Mut, for example, can cause mastitis. They are capable of possession, moving objects, and causing nightmares. Their focus on nursing mothers is rather faerie-like, so some of

these creatures are likely faerie impostors, but malevolence toward newborns may reflect the value that children had in Ancient Egyptian society. A man without family was far more likely to be forgotten, which was the most permanent sort of death.

Some sorcerers used the mut to attack their enemies. As an example, tying the hair of a victim to the hair of a dead man and then both to the body of a hawk could cause nightmares, possession and insanity. The dead hawk makes this working difficult to dispel using Egyptian incantations, as it is a sign of Horus, the warrior god of light and goodness. The ancient spell to dismiss a mut to the Afterlife is called *The Making of an Akh*, which forces the mut to the Magic Realm. It is odd for a banishing spell, in that, given sufficient time, a past mut could return to his family as an akh, and aid them.

### MUT STORY SEEDS

An archmage unwilling to travel far from his concerns in Italy offers to pay anyone who can capture a mut for him. If the player characters lack the ability to create spells or item which can capture a mut, he may be persuaded to lend them a mirror which can capture ghosts. He has a theory that the Faerie and Magic realms had not separated when the mut were made, which is why they seem so faerie-like in some respects. How can the player characters make sure they capture a mut, and not a more recent ghost, or faerie impostor?

If characters are themselves necromancers, they may notice something odd about the mut: they are never black, like ghosts described by Roman and Greek sources, or white, like those now seen in Mythic Europe. House Criamon says the shift from black to white ghosts occurred when the Axis Magica was moved to the Cave of Twisting Shadows, and cite as evidence that the ghosts which predate Criamon there are all black. If this is a true explanation, then what spiritual cataclysm drained all of the color out of ghosts in the Classical world? Perhaps the mut of an ancient sorcerer might know.



may maintain their tombs, consume offerings, and project their presence from the grave. This allows the ghost to magically smite those who have wronged it. The ghost can animate its body, but this is incalculably precious and is sealed in the sepulcher, to avoid damage. A ghost instead animates a statue.

Egyptian ghosts find it difficult to animate statues which do not resonate with them emotionally as good likenesses of their dead body. Many physical flaws are, therefore, carried by the representations. Most famously, the serdab statues of a courtier with the Dwarf Flaw all have the height of his living form, and reproduce his crippled foot. Although they may have older faces, most of the statues of men have rippling abdominal muscles, like those of a warrior in his twenties. Women are generally depicted as rather younger than men, and they seem, with a couple of notable exceptions, to be attractive.

Multiple statues are present so that if one is damaged, the ghost has spares. Tomb robbers often smash statues. Defacement prevents a ghost animating a statue from ambushing the thieves, and deanimates those already possessed, so it is a simple precaution to

shatter every statue discovered with a mallet. There's also a treasure-seeking motive for this vandalism. Many common statues are held together with copper dovetail clamps which are valuable. Some statues are hollow, and treasures are hidden in their cavities.

Family tombs may contain statues of a man, his wife, their servants, and sometimes their animals. The statues of the servants are usually smaller than life size, because they were not, when made, intended to be animated in the real world. These servants are ushabtis, literally 'answerers', and their job is to take the nobleman's turn when he is called to labor in the Fields of Reeds. These wicked little dolls can, however, be animated in the real world, and sent forth on the business of their master. They also explain why the mechanical traps in tombs never seem to break down through lack of maintenance. Family pets often have statues, although they usually have fewer duplicates than the humans.

Sometimes the serdab and the chapel communicate via a small tunnel, perhaps a few inches across. This is to allow incense and sound to travel from the chapel to the serdab. This does not appear in treasure hunting

guides, because it is of little value to mundane thieves. Hermetic magi, able to change shape, or use Intellego magic, may make use of this architectural quirk, if they notice it.

## Sepulcher

The burial chamber or sepulcher stores the body, and is for the refreshment of the traveling soul (called the "ba"), much as the serdab is for the re-invigoration of the ghost (or "ka"). Ancient Egyptian myths claimed that the ba regularly left the heavenly boat of the sun god and instead visited the body to recharge itself, perhaps as often as nightly. The body is carefully prepared to retain its appearance, so that the ba can recognize it. The corpse is treated with various alchemical techniques, bound with talismans, and encased in coffins. On the inside of these coffins, or the walls of the sepulcher, are mystical words of power which assist the ba on the arduous adventure into the afterlife. Hermetic magic, perhaps because of the Limit of the Soul, cannot sense the ba, or make use of the many spells designed to allow the ba safe passage on its nightly journeys.

According to these coffin texts, the ba makes many journeys in search of the khu. The khu is the spark of animating Divine presence that flees the body at death. The ba is judged on the weight of its sins. It travels through fearful places, to the abode of the Solar gods, and explores there, facing further obstacles. Some people, aided by their talismans and coffin texts, overcome these Mystagogic ordeals. When the ba finds the khu, it carries it back to the ka and the body. The ka, ba, and khu merge into a new being called an akh, and drain the body of mystical power. More information on akhu is given later in this chapter.

The body is highly prized by grave robbers, because its is preserved using *mummia*. This almost magical bitumen is treasured for its medicinal properties in Egyptian Alchemy. This is described in more detail later.

## Changes In Tomb Design Over Time

Over Egypt's long history, many different structures have been used to inter the dead. The earliest graves were covered with a vast

tumulus of soil or sand. This left the warlord ordering the tomb with the difficult decision of whether to be buried in a town, where people could keep an eye on his tomb, or far out in the desert, where fewer people would be tempted to buy a shovel. In later tombs this tumulus was replaced with a platform (or *mastaba*) of limestone blocks, containing rooms. In the case of the pyramids, the limestone blocks which form the pyramid were jacketed in smooth stone, so that it was difficult to find the door. In some cases the jacket was of granite, so that even exploratory digging (with stone and bronze tools) would take so long that the thief was likely to be caught, even if he knew where the entrance was.

After the priests of Egypt found ways to offer an afterlife to noblemen as well as kings, and during periods of drought or foreign invasion, smaller, cheaper tombs were needed. There are two main types of lesser tomb. The simplest is made of black clay bricks, and is a small mastaba with a pyramidion (little pyramid) on top of it, which

### Tombs, Temples, and Auras

Ancient tombs often have Magic auras because of the preternatural tether that forms from their ancient use and because they tend to be built in places of natural beauty (*Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 8–10). The stele within the tomb's serdab is a vestige to the Magic Realm with a level equal to the Magic aura within the tomb. This vestige allows the tomb's ka to travel to and from the Field of Reeds (for more information on vestiges and travel to and from the Magic Realm, see *Realms of Power: Magic* pages 20–24). If the mummified corpse of the ghost is still present intact in its tomb, then this acts as an Arcane Connection to the mundane world and its home in the Field of Reeds, granting a Familiarity Bonus to the Vestige Travel Total of 15. Mortals wishing to use the vestige gain no such advantage.

Ancient temples (other than the mortuary chapels found in tombs) may have Faerie auras because of their association with pagan worship. Since most temples are long abandoned by their congregations, these Faerie auras are often weak if they still exist at all.

contains a single chamber for the sepulcher, and a niche for the serdab. This sometimes has an exterior chapel, or a perimeter wall.

As another alternative to building a pyramid, many tombs were cut into the sides of limestone cliffs. This is a laborious process, so the serdab was often combined either with the chapel, as a sort of niche in which statues of the dead sat in state, or with the sepulcher. In rock cut tombs, the preferred design was to have the sepulcher directly below the chapel, connected by a long shaft that could be filled with rubble. This design was sometimes adjusted, however, to suit the seam of limestone being quarried, or to avoid breaking in to adjoining tombs.

### Story Hook: Following the Dead

There is a secret valley, filled with rock-cut tombs, which lies close to Alexandria. To hide the location of these tombs, the mortuary chapel of each was placed near the banks of the Nile. The ghosts of the dead regularly ride to their chapels, to gather supplies from among the offerings, or to scrounge from the garbage in the street if their chapels are destroyed or unattended. Characters with Second Sight may be able to follow the ghosts back to their tombs, but if they are spotted while doing this, the ghosts will attack – their spectral weapons entirely solid on the Paths of the Dead.

### Carving Equipment

In a very few tombs, the most valuable goods left for ghosts are carving tools. These allow the ghost to make representations of objects, and these representations become real, for the ghost's purposes. A ghost who needs a chariot, for example, but was not buried with one, can simply carve a small model of a chariot, and it becomes part of his grave goods.

A ghost with carving tools is a difficult foe to face. Given a little time, the spirit can create reinforcements to thwart grave robbers. For example, simply carving a rough representation of archers into a nearby wall allows the ghost to summon faerie reinforcements.

The carvings don't need to be terribly accurate in later tombs, so the ghost can create a new object by drawing it in a single round. In earlier tombs, the carving needs to closely ap-

### Treasures

In Mythic Europe, there are two contradictory sets of beliefs about tomb contents, and each is attested with evidence by seekers, allowing troupes to vary tomb contents between stories. The first is that tombs are filled with gold, jewels, and valuable medicines. Other seekers suggest that this is true only of early tombs, and that later people merely buried representations of treasures. These, although valuable, are not worth as much as might be imagined by a tomb's excavator. An early pharaoh might be buried with a throne of solid gold, but his later successor might have

### Story Seed: Ramaseum

Most Egyptian ghosts cannot possess statues which are far larger than the person was in life, because they do not feel, to the ghost, like accurate representations. Rameses II, the pharaoh of the Bible, built some enormous images of himself to decorate his tomb. Rameses, who was an epitome of Pride, saw himself as a world-striding colossus. He might, therefore, be able to animate the vast images that adorn the Ramaseum. Other pharaohs, who share his Personality Flaw, might also be able to manifest in through huge statues.



been buried with a wooden chair covered with sheets of gold leaf, since the representation becomes the real thing in the Field of Reeds. Three classes of treasures are never replaced with representations, and so can dependably be found in many tombs: writing, personal possessions, and items that preserve the body.

Mystical writings are representations of greater things, such as invocations to gods. They cannot be replaced with simplified versions. When the ba needs to invoke the protection of spirits against the Great Serpents of the Hours, it needs the actual words, not a picture of a scroll. Imhotep, who invented medicine and architecture, took every scroll he owned to the grave, and his grave has never been found.

Favorite items are buried with their owners. A nobleman who wants his favorite chariot in the Afterlife is buried with that exact chariot, not a generic model of a chariot crafted by

### The Field of Reeds

The Field of Reeds is located within the Magic Realm. Described by sources as the ka of the Nile Delta, the Field of Reeds consists of numerous islands, each one the paradise of a different ka. These kau rule as they did in life, attended by the servants who accompanied them into death. Each island has a stele, a copy of the one in the ghost's tomb. A ghost could travel to a different island and use the stele there to enter the mundane world at a different tomb, but this is considered a gross breach of etiquette.

The Field of Reeds is ruled by Wesir (the Egyptian name for Osiris), a powerful Daimon who is a powerful ally of the Black. It was his ordeals that provided the formula for other ka to follow, and he is revered as the originator of this form of immortality, and possibly the first human ever to undergo apotheosis and become a Daimon. He has made the path available to others in the hope of recruiting more friends of the Black.

Euhemerized stories of Wesir may have been the origin of the Osiris myth, or else the stories of that Faerie god may have instead inspired Wesir; none really know which came first. Either way, there is a copy of the Field of Reeds in the Faerie Realm ruled over by the god Osiris and populated by faerie ka.

his goldsmith. This extends to many personal items but, oddly, no actual crown of Egypt has ever been found, in any tomb. Its appearance is known only from paintings and statues.

The items which protect the body need to be real: they can't be representations. Gold doesn't rust, so it is used to make some of the coffins which contain the mummy. The talismans that protect the mummy are made of valuable materials and create mystical wards. The medicines that preserve the flesh are extractable and reusable. Extra medicine is often stored in tombs, presumably so that the ka can perform maintenance on the body.

### Defenses

Tombs filled with grave goods are obviously tempting to thieves, and so the ancient architects lavished care on the defense of each tomb's contents.

### Physical Barriers

The simplest way of keeping non-magical thieves out of tombs is to bar their way. Iron was rare in ancient Egypt, so passageways within tombs are often barred with rubble. In wealthier tombs, granite blocks bar passageways. These are so large and hard that treasure hunting manuals advise patiently quarrying through the limestone that surrounds them. Pits, placed not as traps but simply to deter entrance, are common. Some passages, particularly those sloping downward, were filled with a mixture of sand and lime, then soaked with water. This mixture sets into a loose cement, which is time consuming to break apart even with iron tools.

### Architectural Trickery

Architects can make robbing a tomb more difficult with little flourishes of design. As described earlier, some tombs have jackets of stone which hide the entrances. Many tombs contain unfinished chambers, which are designed to convince the tomb robber to stop looking for treasure in this particular place. Tombs with false chambers usually have a section of false

wall or floor, behind which a sealed passage leads to the functional rooms of the tomb.

### Mechanical Traps

Ancient mechanisms are made with exceptional cunning and skill. Treasure-seeker manuals often discuss the cunning devices used by the ancients, and give instructions for making these machines safe. Ancient devices made of bronze and clockwork power traps that reload projectiles, reset between victims, move large objects, and respond to pressure plates or hidden levers. These mechanisms may be hidden in the walls, floors or ceilings of tombs, or may be contained in an ark or statue in the room where the trap lies. Destruction of the mechanism can cause a trap to seize in its current position. Spells that detect metal can help pinpoint the mechanism's location, allowing magi, or strong characters with mining tools, to break through the intervening stonework.

Traps serve a different purpose in Egyptian tombs stories than in many other role-playing games: they give player characters a chance to show how skilled and powerful they are, by overcoming the obstacle in interesting ways.

As an example, a maga and her retinue are proceeding cautiously along a passageway in a tomb. The lead character, a grog, breaks through a layer of plaster over a pit, and begins to fall. Each player needs to frame an interesting thing for his character to do, and each rolls only for that thing.

The player with the grog says "I notice the sound of the plaster cracking and then vault clear to the other side" or "I hear the sound and smash the tip of my sword so hard into the wall that I can hang off it" or "I do a flip backward so I can grab the solid edge of the pit, that I just stepped off onto the weak area."

The player of the companion standing behind the grog says "I throw myself flat on the ground and reach out for him if he falls. I hold him up until other people can haul us in. My heavy armor should stop him pulling me into the pit with him, right?" or "I run at him and catch him in a tackle which sends us both sprawling to the other side of the pit" or "I grab him and make sure I'm under him when we hit bottom, because I'm really tough, and he's a weedy little guy."

In each of these cases, the player suggests to the troupe what the appropriate roll is and

if the troupe finds it plausible, the storyguide provides an Ease Factor for the roll. Each trap is assigned a base Ease Factor, indicating the complexity of its construction. The storyguide should feel free to adjust these base Ease Factors by three, six, or more points either way for each character in turn, depending upon the difficulty of the attempted action. The table on page 7 of *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* can be used as a guide. A maga using magic to respond to a trap must use a Fast-Cast spell; the success of her actions is not affected by the trap's Ease Factor but adjudicated normally. One magus might turn the falling grog into a bat so that he flies free, another may fill the pit with human hair, to provide a cushioning surface, and so on.

The actions are resolved in order of Quickness, but with the character actually in danger always being treated as fastest, and the trap always going last. Quick characters can therefore affect or even interfere with the actions of slower ones. If a conflict between character actions takes place, then an Action Priority Roll might be appropriate (each character rolls Quickness + an appropriate Ability; the one with the highest total acts first; fast-casting magi use Finesse in this roll). Those characters affected by the trap who failed their rolls and were not assisted by the other characters then suffer the consequences of the trap's mechanism.

Examples of traps and their Ease Factors are given later in this section.

## Puzzles

Some tombs contain rooms which can only be passed by completing a puzzle. These are a sort of complicated locking mechanism, mixed with a trap. In Ancient Egypt, the leisured class was small, and the literate class even smaller. Puzzles based on board game movements excluded those who did not have the leisure to

### Minigame

If you think your troupe is interested, have them play a historical game to pass through a puzzle room. If they like combat, have the player characters take a place on the board and fight the pieces they take, or that attempt to take them. If the player characters use magic, let them cheat.



master boardgames. Those based on touching the right hieroglyphs in sequence limited access to literate people who knew the codeword, and a memory prompt in the form of a sign or riddle is often found somewhere before the lock.

The most popular board game for puzzles in Egyptian tombs was called senet and is no longer played in Mythic Africa. Treasure seekers occasionally overcome locks with blind luck, and a dedicated magus might collect these accounts and determine the rules. Alternatively, some ancient Egyptian ghosts know the game. Many treasure hunters report backgammon-themed rooms, although people familiar with the history of this game question their presence. Some suggest these have been placed in tombs by faeries.

Puzzle rooms often force the entrant to cross the room before attempting the test. The architect can plan all kinds of horrible things for the thief if the test is failed. Hermetic magi can subvert the traps in such rooms, for example by performing the test using Rego magic, while standing outside the entry door.

## Magical Defenses

The combat magic of the ancient Egyptians was poor. Moses and the finest magi of the court of the richest of the pharaohs performed a sort of primitive certamen, which is recorded in the Bible. Each performed their mostly flashy Ritual spells, and challenged the rival to copy the effects. The most powerful spell effects created by the Egyptians are weak by the standards of the spirit masters of modern Arabia, and seem simple enough, in many cases, for Hermetic apprentices to replicate them.

There are rare exceptions, a scant handful for the thousands of years of Egyptian power. In particular, their ability to create lasting enchantments in the form of curses, talismans, and wards was exceptional in some cases. These were created using a lost form of magical craftwork described in Chapter 5, and can be studied as a source of insight by characters wishing to restore or adapt this art. It is unusual for the magical defenses of tombs to have been entrusted to one-use objects such as seals or temporary amulets. For the most part, Egyptian curses, talismans, and

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wards should be designed using the rules for Hermetic magic items, but some might be more suited to Learned Magic (in *Hedge Magic Revised Edition*) with the provisos noted in the next chapter regarding magical craftwork. Egyptian enchanters always used opulent materials. This countered their weaker ability to force magic into material objects.

## CURSES

Curses are a special variety of tomb enchantments (see later). Most tombs have at least one curse, and some may have many multi-clause maledictions that promise a number of horrible fates to anyone who defiles the tomb. These curses were designed and enchanted by lector priests using long-forgotten magic. A curse is written, usually in hieroglyphs but sometimes in Demotic, in a prominent location.

All curses have two parts: a **condition** and one or more **excoriations**. The condition lists the circumstances by which targets will incur the curse. Typical formulae include the following:

"As for him who shall destroy this inscription..."  
"They that break the seal of this tomb..."  
"As for anyone who shall enter this tomb in their impurity..."  
"They that disturb the rest of this pharaoh..."

How literal these conditions should be taken is up to the storyguide: what precisely constitutes disturbing a corpse's rest? What type of purity is required to avoid the curse?

The excoriation is the magical part of the curse, describing the penalty that will be incurred if the warning is ignored. Examples are given later in this section.

## Examples

### KA OF A TOMB ROBBER.

A reworking of the Rogue (ArM5 page 23).

**Magic Might:** 15 (Mentem)

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per +1, Pre 0, Com +1, Str -1, Sta 0, Dex +4, Qik +4

**Size:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Spirit, Magical Monster, Great Dexterity, Great Quickness, Improved Characteristics (x2), Light Touch, Perfect Balance, Puissant Legerdemain, Puissant Stealth, Avaricious (Major), Dark Secret, Ability Block (Illiterate), Compulsion.

**Personality Traits:** Avaricious +3, Defend the Tomb +3, Daring +2, Sociable +2

**Magical Qualities:** Increased Damage x2, Improved Powers, Lesser Powers x2, Personal Powers

**Combat:**

**Fist:** Init +4, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +5\*

\* Includes +6 Increased Damage.

**Soak:** 0

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** As per ArM5, page 23. Includes Legerdemain 5 (picking pockets) and Stealth 5 (being quiet).

**Powers:**

**Possess statue:** 0 points, Init +3, Terram: Allows the ghost to take a statue of itself as a body. ReTe 25. Personal Power (25 levels, -3 Might cost, +2 Init from Improved Powers)

**Thief after death:** 1 point, Init 0, Terram: Allows

the thief to carry material objects in his hands (Base 3, +1 Touch, +1 Conc) Lesser Power (10 levels, -1 Might cost)

**Strangler:** 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: Allows the thief to wrap his hands around the neck of a victim and choke him. This causes the loss of a Fatigue level. PeCo 15 (Base 10, +1 Touch) Lesser Power (15 levels, -3 Might cost, +1 Init)

**Equipment:** None of note

**Vis:** 3 pawns, Mentem, hand.

**Appearance:** The ghost of a young tomb robber, killed by the guardians of the dead.

After the thief's death, the tomb's owner humiliated him further by carving a diminutive soapstone ushabti, and forcing the thief to animate it. While possessing the ushabti, his statistics are:

**Characteristics:** Str -9, Qik +8

**Size:** -4

**Magical Qualities:** Increased Damage (x2)

**Combat:**

**Fist:** Init +8, Attack +7, Defense +11, Damage -2\*

\* Includes +6 Increased Damage.

**Soak:** +15 (soft stone)

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1), -3 (2), -5 (3), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5+)

### ANIMATED STATUE OF A MINOR PALACE GUARD

A reworking of the Grizzled Veteran (ArM5 page 21). The ghost remains in constant possession of the statue.

**Magic Might:** 10 (Mentem)

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

**Size:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Thing, Magical Monster, Warrior, Weakness (talking back to superiors).

**Magical Qualities:** Improved Initiative x2, Improved Attack x2, Improved Damage x4, Personal Powers x2

**Personality Traits:** Defend the Tomb +3, Loyal +3, Cheeky +2, Brave +1.

**Combat:**

**Axe\* and Large Shield:** Init +1\*\*, Attack +17\*\*, Defense +14, Damage +12\*\*.

**Kick:** Init -1\*, Attack +8\*, Defense +5, Damage +11\*\*.

\* In play the Storyguide would describe this as something more Egyptian, like a kopesh (curved sword) and a large hide shield.

\*\* Includes Increased Initiative, Attack and Damage.

**Soak:** +21 (hardened bronze statue)

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** As per ArM5, page 21. Adjust unsuitable entries, like Order of Hermes Lore.

**Powers:**

**Possess statue:** 0 points, Init 0, Terram: ReTe30. Personal Powers x2 (30 levels, -3 Might cost, +1 Init)

**Equipment:** Axe, breastplate (the Egyptians didn't use full scale armor)

**Vis:** 2 pawns, Mentem, axe.

**Appearance:** The ghost of an older soldier, possessing a statue with his face.

## TALISMANS

A talisman, in this sense, is a small magic item which is triggered by a predicted action. For example, if a person opens a door and steps through it, the talisman on the lintel pours fire on their head. Talismans quite often control the gross elements rather than more subtle manipulations of emotions or luck.

Ancient Egyptian people did not have general Magic Resistance; only creatures did. This is reflected in the design of many talismans, which, if designed to affect humans, have no Penetration bonus. This allows even young Hermetic magi to ignore them, although too lax an attitude can lead to the loss of grogs, companions, and valuable equipment.

Ancient Egyptian magicians designed their talismans so that they could be temporarily deactivated. This allowed the talismans to be safely installed in tombs, as the magicians were not, themselves, able to resist the powers of the talismans they created. Each talisman is usually rendered inert until sunset when struck by a particular spell effect. A magus who takes a talisman into a laboratory can discover which spell effect allows passage either by trial and error, or by investigation equivalent to discovering the triggers of a magical item (ArM5, page 100).

Talismans often act as traps, in which

## Possess Statue (Minor Power)

3 points, Init Qik-3, Terram or Herbam

This power allows a ghost to step into a statue and animate it at Range: Personal; it cannot animate multiple statues with this power simultaneously. The Improved Powers Magic Quality is often taken to reduce Might cost to zero. Note that the physical attacks of an animated statue have to Penetrate the Magic Resistance of any opponents struck.

Wooden Statue: ReHe 25 (Base 10, +2 Sun, +1 constant effect)

Stone Statue: ReTe 25 (Base 3, +2 Sun, +1 affect stone, +1 constant effect, +2 intricacy)

Metal Statue: ReTe 30 (Base 3, +2 Sun, +2 affect metal, +1 constant effect, +2 intricacy)

case they can be resolved using the narrative rules described earlier. The base Ease Factor for bypassing a magical trap is equal to  $(6 + \text{the magnitude of its effect})$ . Example talismans are provided later.

## WARDS

The most popular wards in Egypt are those that hide tombs from sight, or subtly nudge people away from them. As with many other Egyptian talismans, these wards usually have a method of temporary deactivation. These methods are a popular subject for books by treasure hunters. The formula is generally that to find a ruin, you must stand at a specified place, perhaps at a specified time, and do a specified thing. So, "Be standing on this particular rock at dawn, while wearing a headdress of red feathers" is possible. Egyptian Wards are more likely to have Penetration Totals than other talismans, as they are often directed against spiritual beings.

The strongest wards are not so simply avoided. The books that describe bypassing these Wards are Initiation Scripts for Mystery Virtues. These Virtues occasionally allow a character access only to a single site. More commonly, they provide a mystical advantage which could be used on many hidden sites, but neglect to mention this is the case. For example, some of these scripts grant the Second Sight Virtue and describe how to find and cross regio boundaries. Others provide magical resistance against Egyptian talismans made of a certain substance, or by a certain school of practitioners.

Wards can sometimes be avoided or overcome, much like talismans or mechanical traps. A ward is not actively trying to harm or entrap interlopers, just repel them. There may be a scant few seconds to act before a ward turns sand into glass to create a seal on the tomb, or else a concealing illusion may be imperfect, and various tricks might reveal its presence. In such cases, the ward should be defeated using the narrative rules mentioned earlier. The base Ease Factor for such actions is  $(9 + \text{the magnitude of effect})$ . Example wards are provided later.

## Creatures of The Tombs

Egyptian graves have many varieties of defender. Some are the guardians of cemeteries, mentioned earlier in this chapter, or are creatures bound to the tombs by talismans. These creatures are usually faeries, created or summoned by long-dead lector priests and feeding still on the vitality of the stories that surround them. Tombs may also be occupied by ghosts or kau, which belong to the Magic Realm. Each tomb has a principal ka, the person for whom the tomb was built. It may also be populated by the ghosts of those who were buried with the tomb owner, in order to guard his precious corpse or serve him in the Field of Reeds.

## Ka, Egyptian Ghosts

*Realms of Power: Magic* contains detailed rules to create a wide variety of magical creatures. Rather than repeat them here, this section includes kits which you can use to alter other characters, for example those from ArM5, to make them suit Egyptian stories.

Muslim writers in period saw the ka as a ghostly double of the body. In play, this means that characters encounter particularly resilient, well-resourced, and dangerous ghosts who have easy access to the Magic Realm, quite unlike the specters, apparitions, or shades of the West. Ka look slightly different from medieval European ghosts: they are transparent but fully colored, with increasing opacity as their Might increases.

## QUICK GHOST CONVERSION NOTES

Take a mortal character, such as a grog or companion described in ArM5.

Give the character a Magic Might score of between 5 and 25, depending on how challenging you want the encounter to be, and how many times you want the spirit to be able to use its powers.

All Characteristics remain the same as in life, although the character cannot fail Fatigue rolls now.

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Remove all of the Virtues or Flaws based on social role, or the character's body. It does not matter if the Virtues and Flaws no longer balance. Most will take on the Magical Monster Major Social Status Flaw, although some could be Magical Friends (a Minor Social Status Flaw).

Add the Magic Spirit Virtue. This represents the character's spiritual nature and powers, ability to sense strong spiritual forces, and the eerie, magical air that makes Gifted magi untrustworthy.

All Abilities remain the same, although many will be practically useless.

Ghosts are intangible and cannot be harmed by material things like weapons or fire. Against magic, its Protection and Soak totals work normally. Ghosts are vulnerable to Mentem magic.

Add a Personality Trait of +3 tied to some piece of mortal business, like "defending the tomb."

Many ancient Egyptian ghosts can possess statues of themselves (see insert). If a ghost possesses a statue, see the details later for Animated Statue.

Few Egyptian ghosts have the ability to take material form (through the *Donning the Corporeal Veil* Power, which costs 5 points and allows the ghost to take material form until it releases its materiality; the ghost's personal equipment also becomes material).

Add any new power you like. Base it on Hermetic spells, and assume it costs 1 temporary Might per 5 spell levels to use, or 1 Might per 10 levels for powers which only affect the ghost. The power has an Initiative of (Qik – magnitude/2).

Add vis, usually Mentem, equal to the Might score divided by 5.

### QUICK ANIMATED STATUE CONVERSION NOTES

Take a mortal character, like a grog or companion described in ArM5.

Give the statue a Magic Might score of between 5 and 25, depending on how challenging you want the encounter to be, and how many times you want the spirit to be able to use its powers. A ghost possessing a statue has the same Might as when disembodied.

All Characteristics remain the same as in life, although the character cannot fail Fatigue rolls now.

It is rare for Egyptian ghosts to be able

to possess statues which are not life-sized, but if it has occurred, adjust the Strength and Quickness of the character and the derived combat statistics. Characters lose 2 Strength and gain 1 Quickness per Size lost, or conversely gain 2 Strength and lose 1 Quickness per Size gained.

Remove all of the Virtues or Flaws based on social role. Replace with the Magical Monster Major Social Status Flaw.

Add the Magic Thing Virtue. This makes the character aware of its spiritual nature and powers, and able to sense strong spiritual force.

All Abilities remain the same, although many will be practically useless.

The creature's Wound levels are suitable for a creature of the same Size, but the creature's Soak is high, to simulate the difficulty of damaging things not merely clad in armor, but made of the same substances as armor. Wood grants +9 Soak. Ceramic, soft stone, or soft metal grants +15 Soak. Hard stone grants +18 Soak. Hard metal grants +21 Soak. These might seem high, but this is not the same as armor; statues are solid. A statue gains no Protection from wearing armor, unless that armor is harder than the substance from which the statue is made.

To destroy the face of a statue, forcing a ghost from it, requires the attacking character to announce that he is trying to do so, and then inflict a Medium Wound on the statue.

The damage of the statue's weapons is reduced by the materials from which it is made. Many wooden statues are equipped with real bronze weapons. Alchemically hardened bronze is as dangerous as steel. Weapons made of stone or bronze have a -1 damage penalty. Weapons which usually have striking surfaces of metal, but are instead made of gilded wood have a -2 damage penalty.

A Brawling statue has unadjusted damage if it is using a brawling weapon, like a gauntlet or dagger, but fists and kicks do +1 damage for wood or stone statues, and +2 damage for metal statues.

Add any new power you like. Base it on Hermetic spells, and assume it costs 1 temporary Might per 5 spell levels to use, or 1 Might per 10 levels for powers which only affect the statue. The power has an Initiative of (Qik – magnitude/2).

Many supernatural creatures have Qualities (which are things like Virtues, but they don't balance Flaws) which improve combat statistics. Boost the character's combat statis-

tics sufficiently to make it formidable enough for its role in the story.

Add vis, usually the form of the statue's material, equal to the Might score divided by 5.

Al-jazari, what Hermetic magi would call automata, can also be generated using these rules. Take any monster and simply rework its physical features. Automata do not have Might scores.

## Detailed Design for Royal Pharaonic Ghosts

The ghosts of Egyptian royalty differ from each other due to the different origins and life experiences of, and death rituals performed on each ghost.

### BLOOD VIRTUES

Many different families ruled Egypt over the centuries, and these had various

#### New Virtue: Blood of the Old Gods

Major or Minor Supernatural Virtue

As a Minor Virtue, this is a variety of Faerie Blood. This Virtue also grants the character a Sympathy Trait of +1. As a Major Virtue, this is a variety of Strong Faerie Blood with the same benefit. A Sympathy Trait can replace the character's speciality on any applicable Ability roll, but doing so always makes the roll a stress roll. Any botches when using Sympathy Traits give the character Warping Points equal to the number of zeros. A Sympathy Trait can be raised with experience as if it were an Ability, and has a maximum value equal to the character's Warping Score +1 (for the Minor Virtue) or +2 (for the Major Virtue). At character creation, the player can choose a Warping Score for her character and raise the Sympathy Trait up to its maximum using experience points acquired from her age.

Scions of pharaohs most often had a Sympathy Trait of Royalty. Other dynasties had links to specific gods, and had Sympathy Traits applicable to their purview (warfare, scholarship, healing, and so forth).

relationships with the Realms expressed in their blood. The commonest story is that the Faerie god to which the dynasty was dedicated invested the body of the pharaoh while he conceived his heir, which grants the child the Blood of the Old Gods Virtue. Anyone descended from a pharaoh who was not, at that time, filled with the spirit of a Faerie god instead gained a Minor version of the Virtue. The last dynasty of all, the Ptolomies, constructed their own god instead, named Serapis, who was a supernatural ally but not an ancestor.

### POWERS OF THE PHARAOH IN LIFE

A pharaoh whose rule was just by Egyptian standards kept the world in balance so that the floods came, food was plentiful, and people lived well. A pharaoh might make people richer or poorer simply by ruling that it should be so. All pharaohs were thought able to command spirits, but in many cases this was power at one remove: the pharaoh asked his divine patron to punish the spirit if it did not obey.

As wealthy men of great influence, many pharaohs were able to fulfill Mystery quests, and had access to unique sources of training. Any particular pharaonic ghost might have an odd power based on a life experience. Sometimes biographers like Herodotus indicate what these powers were. For example, one of the pharaohs apparently had the ability to slow the passage of time, so that those in his company aged less quickly than other people, and spells did not reach their Duration at the normal rate.

The death rituals offered to Egyptians varied over time, and with social status. The death rituals and coffin texts were of greater length for people with greater wealth and status. This allows their ghosts to undergo Transformation after death (*Realms of Power: Magic* page 52), which allows greater Might and a wider variety of powers. Tombs were occasionally stocked with vis for the very purpose of feeding Transformation.

### THE AKH

The Akh is the final stage in the spiritual development of the most powerful of the Egyptian dead, formed from the fusion of the ba, ka, and khu. The akh is a Daimon, described in more detail in *The Mysteries: Revised Edition* (pages 82–86). In brief, a Daimon is an indestructible spiritual being that interacts with the world by projecting an Aspect into it. Although the Aspect may change or die, the Daimon it embodies remains unharmed, and, for the most part, unchanged. Aspects are self-sustaining and do not require food or prayer to survive. Becoming an akh can take centuries. Imhotep, the inventor of architecture and medicine, is thought to have taken two thousand years to complete the process, but this is not typical: the greater the final Magic Might, the longer it takes. Once the transformation to akh has been achieved there is no further need for a tomb to be maintained, although some akhu enjoy the access between worlds that it offers.

Each akh is unique and has powers

which reflect the virtues of life, and the Mysteries of a particular path through the Egyptian underworld. Many can take an animal shape. All texts affirm that all akhu can have children, although this might cause their offspring to have Mythic or Magical Blood. Akhu tend to have virtuous Personality Traits, since part of the transformation process requires being judged by Thoth, and those with hearts weighed down with evil are fed to the Devourer of Souls. As intended by Wesir, those who follow his path and achieve the status of an akh become potential recruits for the Black, although none are forced to take up the fight against the Red.

Akhu may be created using the rules for Magic Spirits given in *Realms of Power: Magic*. Assume a Magic Might Score of 20 for noblemen who have the simplest coffin texts, up to 60 for the greatest pharaohs who were the children of gods and were personally guided through the afterlife by a potent parent. Akhu do not have or need cults of mundane worshipers like modern apotheosized humans. Instead, the name of the dead person is placed at the chapel entrance and on significant monuments. The akh slowly gains power as these are read. All akhu have, in the centuries since the last one was buried, taken this process as far as possible, so they are designed as Winter creatures. Akhu may still be summoned by name, or by using relics, as described for apotheosized humans in *Realms of Power: Magic*.

### Story Seeds: Famous Missing Tombs

There are two tombs, in particular, that Hermetic wizards wish to find. They are arguably the first and last of the distinctive, Egyptian kind.

#### THE TOMB OF IMHOTEP, PROBABLY AT SAQQARA

Imhotep was a priest of Thoth, who lived in the reign of Djoser, the first king to have a pyramid. Imhotep himself is said to have invented architecture, but what this means is that he developed many of the features now common in architecture, to allow such a large building to be constructed. The column and lintel, for example, are based on his designs. His healers were trained

### Example Akh: Sethos

Sethos was an early king of Egypt. He antagonized the warrior caste by taking the crop lands they had been given as personal demesnes away from them. When his kingdom was invaded, the warriors refused to muster, so Sethos led an army of peasants and shopkeepers against his enemies. The gods favored him, and the night before the battle a plague of mice poured silently through the camp of the sleeping enemy, eating their bowstrings and provisions, and fouling or spilling their water. Sethos defeated the enemy, and then had statues of himself raised. These statues show him holding a mouse, and are inscribed: "Let him

who looks on me learn to fear the gods." His life is described in Herodotus's *History*.

In Mythic Europe, Sethos travels and studies as suits his whim. He knows full well that the days of Pharaonic Egypt have passed, but he maintains the dignity and virtue of his former status. He often pretends to be a Coptic priest. He is a foe of those who despoil monuments other than tombs, but prefers not to fight his enemies directly. He is subtle, skilled at spying, absolutely convincing, has the patience of an immortal, and is able to manufacture natural-seeming obstacles and problems for his foes. He is also interesting as an ally or parent.

## Example Akh: Sethos (Cont'd)

Magic Might: 50 (Mentem)

Characteristics: Int +5, Per +5, Pre +3, Com +4, Str +2, Sta +1, Dex +2, Qik +2

Confidence Score: 5 (5 points)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Human, Daimon, Transformed Spirit, Wealthy, Inspirational, Self-Confident, Well-Traveled

**Magical Qualities:** Focus Powers (Lord of the Black\* (x2), Lord of the Red (x2)), Greater Power (Aid of the Gods), Greater Virtue (Way of the Black\*), Greater Virtue (Not Monstrous)\*\*, Improved Attack (Mace) x2, Improved Damage (Mace) x2, Improved Initiative (Mace, x2), Minor Virtues (Faerie Sympathy x2, Gentle Air, Great Communication (x2), Great Perception (x2), Great Intelligence (x2), Improved Characteristics (x8), Perfect Eye for Antiquities\*\*\*, Puissant Charm, Puissant Leadership, Social Contacts (x2, Coptic priests, Criminals), Tomb Regio Network\*\*\*\*, Tough\*\*\*\*\*), Personal Powers (Immateriality, Invisibility, Soundless Motion)

\* The Black, in this sense, is the fertile land either side of the Nile.

\*\* Most Magic Humans are Monstrous, but Sethos isn't because preserving his human appearance is part of the point of the mummification ritual. This is treated as a Major Virtue.

\*\*\* A Virtue introduced in City and Guild, page 109. Sethos always knows the precisely what an antiquity is, if it is genuine, and how much it is worth.

\*\*\*\* Can enter the Field of Reeds through the stele in any tomb, and depart it from any tomb. Can also enter the Field of Reeds through some places sacred to the Osirian Trinity.

\*\*\*\*\* Akh, like Egyptian gods, have bones made, literally, out of iron

**Personality Traits:** Akh +5, Dislikes warriors +3, Curious +2

**Reputations:** Obscure Early King 2 (Local) Combat:

**Mace and Shield:** Init +9\*, Attack +12\*, Defense +11, Damage +16

**Bow:** Init +1, Attack +8, Defense +4, Damage +8

\* Includes +6 Improved Initiative, +4 Improved Attack and +6 Improved Damage. Sethos generally carries the mace

he manifests with hooked invisibly on his belt

**Soak:** 8 +3 (Tough) Egyptians usually do not wear armor, but Sethos is immune to heat and fatigue, and likes annoying warriors, so he wears a full set of heavy armor when he feels like it.

**Fatigue Levels:** Supernaturally Tireless (in-nate to Aspects)

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dispelled (21+)

**Abilities:** Ancient Egyptian 5 (orders), Arabic 5 (to common people), Area Lore: Egypt 3 (Delta region), Artes Liberales 3 (hieroglyphs), Athletics 3 (noble sports), Awareness 5 (names), Bargain 3 (criminals), Bow 3 (short bow), Brawl 3 (defensive), Carouse 3 (noblemen), Charm 5+2 (common people), Coptic 5 (to priests), Dominion Lore 3 (Coptic), Etiquette 3 (religious), Faerie Lore 5 (Egyptian deities), Folk Ken 4 (Egyptians), Guile 5 (people who think he is a priest), Infernal Lore 3 (Egyptian), Intrigue 5 (noblemen), Leadership 5+2 (commoners), Legerdemain 3 (forgery), Magic Lore 5 (Daimons), Penetration 5 (Animal), Profession: kingship 5 (ceremonies), Ride 3 (charioteering), Single Weapon 5 (Mace), Stealth 3 (burglary), Swim 2 (pretending to need to breathe).

**Powers:**

**Aid of the Gods**, 5 points, Init -3, Animal: Creates a swarm of mice, under Sethos's complete control. Base 15, +2 Sun, +2 Group (60 000 mice), +1 control (as a Rego requisite), +2 mice can become immaterial to ignore barriers (as Muto Mentem Requisites)

**Immateriality**, 4 points, Init -2, Corpus: Makes Sethos immaterial until sunrise or night-fall. Costs 40 spell levels. (Base 30, +2 Sun)

**Invisibility**, 1 points, Init -0, Corpus: A personal version of Veil of Invisibility as per ArM5 page 146. Costs 15 spell levels. (Base 4, +2 Sun, +1 for moving image, 5 extra levels spent to reduce cost)

**Lord of the Black**, variable points, Init -8, Aquam: Duplicates any of a range of non-ritual Creo or Rego spells pertaining to the Magic of the Black, at a cost of 1 Might per Hermetic magnitude. The Magic of the Black includes fresh water, rain, the fertility of living earth, and thematically related things.

**Lord of the Red**, variable points, Init -8, Aquam:

Duplicates any of a range of non-ritual Creo or Rego spells pertaining to the Magic of the Red, at a cost of 1 Might per Hermetic magnitude. The Magic of the Red affects infertile Terram, desiccating winds, and similar thematic things.

**Silent Motion**, 0 points, constant, Imaginem: Allows the character to move noiselessly. Costs 10 spell levels. (Base 3, +2 Sun, +1 constant, 5 extra levels spent to reduce cost)

**Equipment:** Palace in Field of Reeds, mace, robes, vast amounts of money.

**Vis:** 10 pawns Rego, in small mouse statuette found implausibly within the brain.

**Appearance:** A middle-aged man, free of all infirmities. Sethos tours the world as a human, because he finds it interesting, and to make this easier he adopts the dress of nearby human cultures. He often pretends to be a priest, because he prefers to be a person of status and dislikes warriors.

The character as expressed by these statistics is an Aspect. This means that any change short of death is reversed mystically within a day, and even if the character dies, a new Aspect can be generated. Although he now has Magic Human as his background, Sethos was originally a priest, then a king, and so has many Abilities usually restricted to those with appropriate Virtues. The Wealthy Virtue usually makes a character wealthy compared to the rest of his social class, and makes the character spend one season a year on his business. In this case, it just means Sethos has more money than most kings, and he has no particular need to maintain his business except as a sort of hobby.

Sethos's symbol is the mouse, and occasionally this Daimon has manifested itself in mouse Aspect. The mouse Aspect still has 50 Might, but channels many more of its Qualities into combat. It then hides within the swarm created by the *Aid of the Gods* Power, and becomes a tiny, cute whirlwind of embarrassing death.

in a temple of Thoth called the House of Life, and descriptions of this temple are the first accounts of a library of magical books. Other, similar, temples followed. No House of Life has ever been uncovered. Similarly, the tomb of Imhotep, which is mentioned in classical sources, has not been traced.

Finding the Tomb of Imhotep would answer one of the great philosophical questions within the Order: is modern magic more powerful than ancient magic? Some magi think Bonisagus was a genius who built his theory on the foundations of the magical traditions who predated the Order. All of the Original Research the Order has done, they conclude, make its magic more potent than that which came before. Others counter that the world in general is in a state of decline, and that there were golden ages of magic before the current era. They point out that much original research is actually the incorporation of artifacts of ancient wisdom into Hermetic Theory. The defenses of Imhotep's tomb and the writings it contains will either prove his magic superior or inferior, ending the dispute.

Imhotep's tomb has not been found. Coptic magicians believe this is because he has spent considerable effort in ensuring no trace of it remains. Some Hermetic magi believe that Imhotep was also Asclepius and Hermes Trismegistus, and hope research into

these aliases will yield clues to the tomb. Others dispute this identification.

### THE TOMB OF MARCUS ANTONIUS, PROBABLY NEAR ALEXANDRIA

The final queen of Egypt was Cleopatra. Players are likely only familiar with the Roman accounts of this ruler. Mythic Egyptians believe these were lies spread by her political and military foes. Their own tales suggest she was a just and wise ruler, that she held salons for the wisest men in her country and was acknowledged their peer in debates, and that she wrote a book of alchemy which collated much of the wisdom of her predecessors, and included her own contributions to the art of medicine. Her body was stolen, and placed in her tomb, but none can find it.

Cleopatra had at least two tombs prepared, but none of them have ever been found. Her final resting place is described later in this chapter, but her intended tomb was far closer to Alexandria. Her wish was to be buried next to her Roman lover Marcus Antonius, a plan which was forestalled by the Roman invasion of Egypt and her subsequent suicide in captivity. The Romans never could find Antonius's Tomb, despite concerted searching and the assistance of thousands of witnesses who watched his funeral procession, or helped construct the building.

Cleopatra's resting places are of interest to Hermetic wizards for several reasons. Cleopatra's Book is reputed to be the apex of the alchemical arts, and no Egyptian library acknowledges owning a copy. Further, some magi suggest that the fire at the Great Library was used as cover to hide many books from the invading Romans. This includes not only the books of the Great Library of Alexandria, a priceless treasure in themselves, but also the 200,000 books of its rival, the Library of Pergamon. Antonius took these by force and gave them to his beloved as a wedding present.

Cleopatra is the youngest possible Akh, and so might not have completed the process. Her ka may seek Hermetic aid, removing obstacles to her ba's spiritual journey, which makes her well disposed toward magi. If she is available, she's a remarkably skilled communicator, and this may make her a peerless teacher or Egyptian mysteries. Her death companion, Marcus Antonius, is the only Roman known to have undergone Egyptian burial rituals. He was familiar with the Order of Mercury while



### Tombs As Lairs for the Cult of Dedun

A tomb may become a significant part of a saga containing an important presence of the Cult of Dedun (see later). Temple Priests and Undying Ones use ancient tombs as both homes and temples to Dedun. These tombs are the font of their power, acquired during their Initiation into the rank of temple priest, and the home to their ghoulish court. On holy days once per month, adherents gather at the temple to offer worship to the god of the dead. You may wish to detail a tomb's resources when a player character first embarks on Initiation to the rank of temple priest; alternatively, an Undying One could be a villain or important ally of the player characters, and determining the game statistics for the tomb are a useful way of knowing what resources he may draw upon.

acting as governor of Italy on behalf of Julius Cesar, and so may have some useful insights into their magic. Caesaron, the son of Cleopatra and Antonius, might be the progenitor of a secret society centered around Egyptian rites.

# Designing Tombs and Mortuaries

This section presents a method for designing ancient tombs using Boons, Hooks, and Build Points as if it were a covenant. It is not necessary to determine the statistics for a tomb unless it is going to be an ongoing part of a saga, although the following sections may still be useful for planning expeditions into the tombs of the ancient dead.

## Basic Tomb Features

Tombs are typically marked with an ancient monument, pyramids being very popular in certain eras of both Egyptian and Nubian history. However, pyramids are not the only form of monument; the emperors of Kush built rock-cut tombs into mountainsides (such as Dju Wa'ab), their successors built massive grave mounds, and Christian kings had impressive marble palaces built in their honor. The sites are often further enhanced by statues, temples, columns, and other monuments.

These ancient monuments form preternatural tethers that cause the formation of a Magic aura (*Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 8–10). For every century that a grave site (which could be a series of pyramids, or a number of individual tombs) was in use, it generates a tether score of 1, up to a maximum of 5. The Magic aura is equal to the tether score, but auras can be higher than the preternatural tether score through impressive natural features. The Magic aura is often lower than the tether score might suggest if the monuments have decayed substantially

following centuries of neglect.

Each tomb can have up to 10 points of Hooks, which can be used to purchase Boons.

- **Tomb of a major monarch:** base Magic aura of 5, and 500 build points
- **Tomb of a royal consort or minor monarch:** base Magic aura of 4, and 250 build points
- **Tomb of a lesser royal or high priest:** base Magic aura of 3, and 100 build points
- **Tomb of a non-royal dignitary:** base Magic aura of 3, and 50 build points

## Resources

Tombs may have the following resources. Unless stated otherwise, the costs can be found in Chapter 6 of *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*.

### CURSES

Curses are a special variety of enchantment created by lector priests. Most tombs have at least one curse, and some may have many multi-clause maledictions that promise a number of horrible fates to anyone who defiles the tomb. These were created using magical craftwork described in Chapter 5.

A curse's exorcitation should be described as a Hermetic enchantment within the following guidelines. Most curses are Range: Touch and Target: Room. Each curse is triggered when the condition is broken. The condition can describe situations that could not normally be triggers of effects in Hermetic devices without further magic; for example, the trigger could require the target to be ritually pure, but the enchantment need not have an effect that determines purity. An exorcitation is also triggered if someone tries to destroy the text of the curse. Once a curse has been triggered a number of times equal to its uses per day, the text can be safely destroyed to prevent anyone else from being affected. Most curses are designed with just one use per day. Exorcitations may be designed with Penetration Totals in the usual manner for enchantments, but this is rare — these were intended to protect against mundane rather than magical intruders.

Some exorcitations cannot be duplicated with Hermetic Magic, and these should instead be treated as the Greater or Lesser Malediction Flaw. Curses of this variety have a Special Duration (which adds no magnitudes to the level):

## Example Wards

Several methods were used to keep people away from tombs.

### NOTHING BUT SKY AND SAND

Pen 0, constant effect  
Muto Imaginem 39  
R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Str

The structure targeted by this effect appears to be a sand-dune in all respects. This ward has an Ease Factor of 17 to avoid; for example, to spot an anomalous shadow, or calculate the precise position of the stars that will reveal the temple.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +3 Structure, +3 environmental trigger, +1 2/day)

### TURN THE INTERLOPER

Pen 0, unlimited/day  
Rego Corpus 30

Anyone triggering this effect is spun 180 degrees so that she faces in the opposite direction. This effect is usually

triggered whenever someone tries to pass through a doorway. This ward has an Ease Factor of 15 to avoid; for example, a character might try to brace himself to avoid being turned around.

(Base 10, +2 Voice, +10 unlimited uses per day)

### A SOVEREIGN WARD AGAINST ROBBERS

Pen 0, constant effect  
Rego Corpus 49

The structure targeted by this effect is warded against human beings. They find it nigh-impossible to enter, and cannot damage it from outside. The ward has an Ease Factor of 19 to overcome; for example, a character might try to force her way through the ward, or throw a stone to dislodge the amulet suspected of producing the effect.

(Base 15, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +3 Structure, +3 environmental trigger, +1 2/day)

they are permanent but may be dispelled with appropriate magic. Maledictions can be of any appropriate Technique or Form, and have a base level of 10 for a Lesser Malediction, and level 30 for a Greater Malediction. To add insult to injury, those under a Malediction suffer Warping.

Not all curses are actually effective. It costs no Build Points to have a dire curse written on one's tomb that has no magical force. Furthermore, some individuals (or their duplicitous architects) may have saved costs by having a lector

priest write a false curse instead of a real one (see *Hollow Promise of a Swift Death* in the nearby insert).

A curse costs two Build Points for every five levels of effects.

## ENCHANTED ITEMS (TALISMANS AND WARDS)

Enchantments other than curses found in tombs usually take the form of talismans

or wards. These cost two Build Points for every five levels of effects. Note that anything left in a strong Magic aura will accrue Warping; the aura may have faded since, but the enchantments remain Warped.

Although magical traps may be designed as if they were Hermetic effects to get an idea of the Build Points, Hermetic magic was not actually used in their construction, and they need not have the same features or restrictions. Specifically, most talismans can be

The following are examples of real curses found in Egyptian tombs. Levels of effects are included here for the purposes of breaking the curses, as well as determining Build Points.

### A CROCODILE SHALL BE AGAINST HIM IN WATER, A SNAKE ON LAND

ReAn 45; 1/day, Pen 0; R: Touch, D: Special, T: Room: This Greater Malediction causes the afflicted to be dogged by a crocodile or a venomous snake until the curse is broken. If he spends more than one night in a location close to water, a large crocodile arrives there. If he spends more than one night in a location far from water, a venomous snake turns up. Apart from the manner of its arrival, the creature acts as a normal member of its kind. If the creature is killed, another will arrive. (Base 30, +1 Touch, +2 Room)

### HE SHALL BE DESTROYED BY SEKHMET

Crlg 25; 1/day, Pen 0; R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Room: The targets of this curse are targeted by arrows of fire, much like those of the goddess Sekhmet. Each afflicted individual is automatically hit, and suffers +15 damage (Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Room)

### HE SHALL CAPSIZE AND DROWN AT SEA

ReAq 45; 1/day, Pen 0; R: Touch, D: Special, T: Room: This Greater Malediction causes any boat on which the afflicted set foot to sink. Furthermore, whenever they are in more than a foot's depth of water, they are unable to keep their heads

## Example Curses

above the surface, and begin to drown. (Base 30, +1 Touch, +2 Room)

### HE SHALL HAVE NO SUCCESSORS

PeCo 35; 1/day, Pen 0; R: Touch, D: Special, T: Room: Those affected have their organs of generation destroyed, leaving them incapable of sexual intercourse or procreation. Other interpretations of this curse could drive off apprentices or proteges as a Lesser Malediction. (Base 20, +1 Touch, +2 Room)

### HE SHALL MEET DEATH BY A DISEASE THAT NO DOCTOR CAN DIAGNOSE

PeCo 35; 1/day, Pen 0; R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Room: This curse strikes the victims with a major disease (inflicting a Disease Penalty of -5). Mundane medicine cannot help with Disease Recovery rolls; only magical aid is effective. (Base 20, +1 Touch, +2 Room)

### HE SHALL NOT REACH HIS HOME, NOR EMBRACE HIS CHILDREN

CrMe 25; 1/day, Pen 0; R: Touch, D: Special, T: Room: This Lesser Malediction is the equivalent of the No Sense of Direction Flaw, guaranteeing that those afflicted will get lost. In the desert, this can be a death sentence. (Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Room)

### I SHALL CAST THE FEAR OF MYSELF INTO HIM

CrMe 25; 1/day, Pen 0; R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Room: All those affected are filled

with an overwhelming dread of the tomb itself or the deceased occupant, and must flee immediately from its vicinity. (Base 4, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +2 Room)

### I SHALL WRING HIS NECK LIKE A BIRD

PeCo 55; 1/day, Pen 0; R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Room: Everyone afflicted by the curse feels spectral hands crushing their throat and cutting off their air. Everyone immediately starts to choke. Use the rules for deprivation of air (ArM5, page 180) until the curse is canceled or everyone is dead. An unaffected person can attempt a surgical intervention, making a hole further down the neck allowing the character to breathe. This requires a Dexterity + Chirurgy stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9, and inflicts the Mute Flaw whether it succeeds or fails. If the surgical intervention roll is botched, the patient dies. If a person can escape from the affected room and make a successful Deprivation roll, then the curse is broken. (Base 30, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +2 Room)

### THE HOLLOW PROMISE OF A SWIFT DEATH

CrVi 9; constant effect, Pen 0; R: Per, D: Sun, T: Ind: This is not a curse, instead it is an enchantment made to look like a dire curse to magical detection. This effect appears to be a curse of 30th level to any magical detection, although it can be designed at other levels; every magnitude higher or lower of the base effect appears to be a spell of two magnitudes higher or lower, respectively (Base 3 (taint something with magic), +2 Sun, +3 environmental trigger, +1 2/day)

bypassed or avoided, for example it is possible to dodge out of the way of a blast of fire generated by a *Destroying Uraeus* (see Example Talismans); whereas if this was a Hermetic enchantment that would not be the case. Similarly, the illusion created by the *Nothing But Sky and Sand* ward (see Example Wards) might be incomplete from a certain viewpoint, or might not react appropriately if sprinkled with water. As mentioned earlier, the Ease Factor to overcome a magical trap through mundane means should begin at a base of (6+magnitude) for a talisman that imprisons or harms, and (9+magnitude) for a ward that repels or obscures. Characters whose Magic Resistance is equal or greater than the Penetration of an enchantment may overcome the challenge automatically.

## LIBRARY

Tombs rarely contain actual books, although some might have a stash of ancient scrolls carefully preserved in sealed jars that have withstood the ravages of time. The inside of most tombs is covered with inscriptions, however, often painted in vibrant colors that may have faded with time. These texts are usually scribed in Ancient Egyptian or Demotic (depending on their age) and may use hieroglyphs or the hieratic script.

The subject of these texts is often a history of the deceased, represented by an Area Lore or Organization Lore depending on the occupant. However, ancient priests often provided their kings with spells that they would need in the next life, and so there may be details of Magic Lore or relevant Supernatural Abilities.

## SPECIALISTS

A Temple Priest of Dedun or an Undying One who lives in a tomb may have altar priests or adherents of the cult at their beck and call. These cost build points just like any other specialist. However, a tomb can have more unusual inhabitants, such as walking cadavers as tomb guardians, or the ghosts of long-dead viziers who offer advice from beyond the grave. If these characters are not intended to be player characters, then they should be purchased as specialists. Tomb guardians usually cost Build Points equal to their highest Martial Ability or Brawl, as applicable. Ghosts can be specialists or teachers, and cost Build Points appropriately.

## TRAPS

A tomb is often built with a variety of traps intended to guard the contents against interlopers and robbers. A tomb may also

## Example Talismans

Many talismans merely injure or entrap, but a few magical effects are famous with seekers, as they are surprisingly common.

### APEDEMAK'S STRENGTH

Muto (Rego) Terram 40 (16 Build Points)  
Pen 0, unlimited uses per day  
R: Per, D: Conc, T: Ind

Animates an immense statue of a lion. The statue obeys to the best of its ability a single verbal command of whoever activated it; it has since been Warped from being left in a strong Magic aura, and now requires a Communication + Leadership roll against an Ease Factor of 9 to prevent it from carrying out the last order it was given many hundreds of years ago — attack anyone who crosses the tomb's threshold. It is dogged and nigh indestructible, but an unskilled fighter. See earlier for details of tomb guardians. While it can be fought as normal, as an obstacle or trap, this enchantment has a base Ease Factor of 14. For example, characters trying to hide or run away from the tomb guardian roll against this number.

The guideline used is based on the making the target statue into highly unnatural stone, with a Rego requisite to permit it to move.

(Base 5, +1 Conc, +1 affect stone, +1 size, +1 requisite; +5 maintains concen-

tration, +10 unlimited uses)

### THE DESTROYING URAEUS

Creo Ignem 20 (8 Build Points)  
Pen 0, 24/day  
R: Voice, D: Mom, T: Ind

This statue of a rearing cobra spews a jet of fire on anyone passing in front of it without intoning the name of the tomb's recipient. The flames engulf one person, and inflict +10 damage. As a trap, the *Destroying Uraeus* has a base Ease Factor of 10 to avoid, for example, to dive out of the way.

(Base 5, +2 Voice; +5 24/day)

### ON THE PRESENTATION OF FACE OF LOST COMPANIONS

Creo (Intellego) Imaginem 15 (6 Build Points)  
Pen 0, 1/day  
R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind

This enchantment is commonly activated following the triggering of a fatal trap. It creates an illusion of an ochre-red version of the deceased individual's face, coming out of a wall near to the trap. One widely-known version has the image shout in an ancient language,

which if translated means: "Such is the fate of those who disturb the kings in their homes!" This talisman is designed to scare rather than injure, and need not be defended against.

More sinister enchantments might instead enslave the trapped person's ghost as a tomb-guardian.

(Base 2, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +1 legible words and moving image, +1 requisite to perceive the face; +5 maintain concentration)

### ON LOWERING THE WATERS

Rego Aquam 28 (12 Build Points)  
Pen 16, 1/day  
R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

Many tombs contain magical water which acts as a living thing, straining to drown intruders. This unnatural liquid is generated by a talisman, but is effectively a water elemental, as described in *Realms of Power: Magic*. This talisman controls a Might 15 water elemental using the guideline given in Chapter 8 of that book; when triggered, it commands the dormant elemental to attack. The talisman has an Ease Factor of 12 if characters attempt to avoid its effects; for example, trick the elemental into accepting a new command.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +8 Penetration 16)

## Example Traps

A group of rocks that, in total, weigh more than the character do +21 damage

A group of rocks that, in total, weigh about the same as a character do +18 damage.

For smaller rockfalls, a rule of thumb is +1 damage per 10 pounds of rocks.

This damage may be increased, by making the falling objects more dangerous than rocks (spiked metal balls, for example) or decreased, by making the falling objects softer (sand, the bones of earlier treasure hunters, the bodies of the characters left to guard the horses.)

### LABYRINTH

Build Cost 4

The tomb contains a confusing maze of branching tunnels, empty rooms, and identical passages. Retracing one's steps is easy (Intelligence + Concentration against an Ease Factor of 6), but takes three times as long as the time taken to penetrate the labyrinth.

### PRISON ROOM

Build Cost 7

A chamber with no other exits, often containing treasures or inscriptions. Upon entering, there is a delay as the mechanism engages, and characters have a chance to hear the workings on a Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 6. If no-one succeeds this roll, the door drops, sealing the characters in. The door is far too heavy to lift by mundane means. Needless to say, any treasures are painted wood and inscriptions nonsensical (or taunting).

### ROCK FALL

Build Cost 9

Rockfall traps do impact damage, which is described on page 181 of ArM5. The damage a character suffers varies with the weight of material which lands upon them.

A section of ceiling collapses to allow several boulders to roll out and fall on those climbing the slope. Characters jumping free should make a Quickness + Athletics – Encumbrance stress roll against an Ease Factor 9, or suffer +10 damage from a tumbling boulder.

Larger rockfalls, with higher Build costs, are common.

An avalanche that covers the character with stones does +24 Damage, and may cause suffocation (see page 180 of the core book for Air Deprivation rules).

### HEAD WIRES

Build Cost: 15

Thin wires strung across a passageway at neck height. These are generally very difficult to see (Perception + Awareness against an Ease Factor of 15), and inflict +9 damage on anyone walking into them; most armor does not provide its Protection against this damage. Head wires are particularly dangerous when combined with other traps: for example, an easily-spotted pit which must be jumped over, with head wires strung on the other side so that the victim jumps into them. In this situation, the damage is increased to +18, and this combination trap has a Build Cost of 21

### DEAD DROP

Build Cost 18

A character has a chance to spot the trigger, a slightly less-worn paving stone; this requires a Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 12. Failure opens a gaping hole beneath the unfortunate's feet onto a ten pace drop to a stone surface (+30 damage).

### PITS

Build cost varies

A character who hits the ground in a pit suffers falling damage (as per page 181 of ArM5). Further, if the floor of the pit is designed to cause extra harm, then add the closest Weapon Damage modifier to the Damage modifier is added to the falling damage before Soak.

For example, a character falls into a 20 feet deep pit lined with sharpened stakes. The Damage Total is stress die + 20 (for the fall) +5 (the stakes are treated as short spears). This is resisted with a roll of stress die + Soak total. Storyguides wanting pits which are more dangerous may add to the Damage as a sort of Attack advantage, reflecting the architect knowing exactly where the character would fall.

## Hooks and Boons

Most of the Hooks and Boons in *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* (pages 72 – 74) and in *Covenants* (pages 6 – 27) are suitable for a tomb, although some may require interpretation by the troupe. A tomb with the Wealth Boon is one with all its grave goods still intact; this Boon may be Unknown if the treasure room remains undiscovered by its inhabitants. In Nubia, all tombs should purchase the Seclusion Boon due to the superstitious avoidance of all things to do with the dead.

FEATURE	BUILD POINT COST
Non-damaging, delay or scare tactics	3
Minor injury (maximum + 10 damage), or imprisonment	6
Serious injury (maximum + 15 damage)	9
Often fatal (at least +20 damage)	12

Traps can be avoided in a number of different ways: spotting the pressure plate before triggering it; leaping out of the way of the swinging blade; figuring out the puzzle of which bricks to press; resisting the venomous needle; and so on. Each character has an opportunity to react to the challenge presented by the trap, as discussed earlier. The ease of avoiding a trap modifies the Build Point cost.

DETAILS	BUILD POINT MODIFIER
Simple to avoid (Ease Factor 3)	0
Easy to avoid (Ease Factor 6)	+1
Average to avoid (Ease Factor 9)	+3
Hard to avoid (Ease Factor 12)	+6
Very hard to avoid (Ease Factor 15)	+9

## Vis

In an undisturbed tomb, vis might have been left with other grave goods, for the deceased to use in the next world; this is especially true if the honored dead was a magician in life. Vis is useful for an akh, since it can ameliorate the penalty for high Might scores on Study Totals for Transformation. Vis as a grave good should be paid for as a vis stock if the tomb subsequently becomes the home of a character.

Tombs may also be sources of vis, particularly those that have a supernatural aura of some description. Corpus is the most common flavor of vis found in tombs, although any Art is possible.

Treasure hunters have sought high and low for the tomb and many plundered pyramids have been claimed to have belonged to the doomed queen. Cleopatra famously surrounded herself with fabulous wealth, and her court was a place of magic and wonder; these riches were never recovered by the conquering Romans, and are believed to have been buried with her.

In reality, everyone has been looking in the wrong place; Cleopatra was interred, not in a pyramid, but in a walled compound at Taposiris Magna, an isolated bay west of Alexandria and far from any trade routes. An enchantment keeps the tomb from being discovered by the casual visitor (see later). There are only a handful of individuals who know of its location; one is a *jinniyya* called Nahrou, whose Magic Might protected her from the concealing enchantment.

## THE GARDEN

Fifteen foot high walls enclose an opulent temple to Isis. An impressive pylon gate is the only entrance; it is decorated with images of Isis, along with cows, cats, lionesses, vultures, and hippopotamuses, representing the Egyptian goddesses. Within the walls is a lush garden of both edible and medicinal herbs.

Dates and bananas grow in the garden along with smaller amounts of other fruits;

## Means of Avoiding Traps

Traps, regardless of their type, impose their effects last in the combat round. All characters therefore have the opportunity to react to the trap, as described earlier. Some traps do not cause damage in the same round they trigger: for example a room that begins to fill with water may give the characters several minutes in which to find ways of saving themselves, as the water level rises.

### PERCEPTION CHECKS AND TRAPS

A Perception + Awareness roll may allow a character to be aware that a trap is in place without triggering it. This allows the character multiple combat rounds in which to overcome the trap. For example, if the character becomes aware that there is a crossbow behind a tapestry, she can take as much time as she likes coming up with ways to prevent it hurting anyone. It also allows magi to use formulaic or ritual magic to disable the trap.

The Ease Factor for spotting a trigger

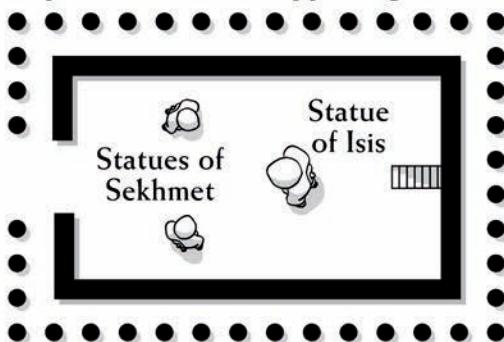
to avoid the trap is modified by the lighting conditions. The Ease Factors for Awareness rolls presented here assume torches and lanterns. Characters able to supply perfect lighting conditions (such as through a spell) decrease the Ease Factor by 3; those using a single flame such as a candle should add 3 to the Ease Factor. Characters foolish enough to risk tombs in near darkness — such as from a distant light or open door — have a +6 increase to such Ease Factors.

### EVADING TRAPS

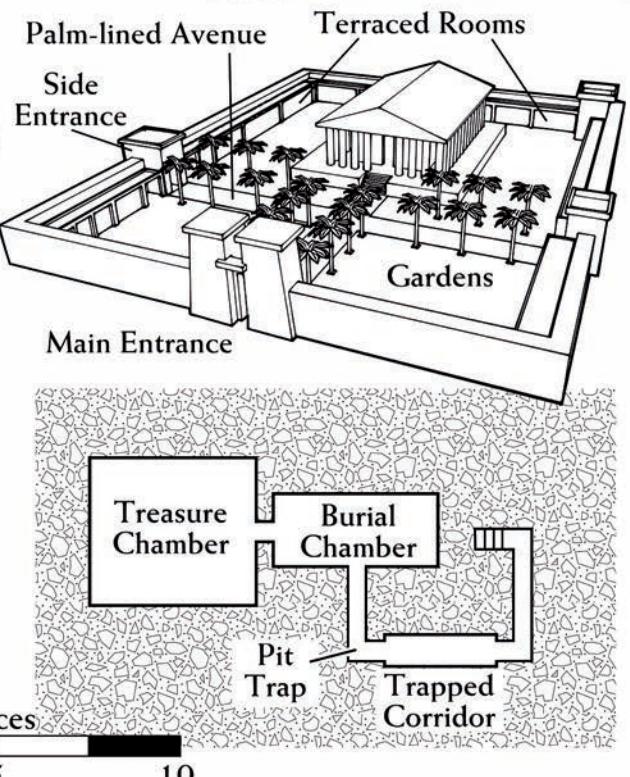
Characters using the optional Combat rules in the *Lords of Men* supplement may prefer to use the Evasion Combat Statistic, described on page 125, to determine if characters dodge attacks from traps. To do this, assume the trap's Attack total is stress die + Intelligence of the trap setter + Profession of the trap setter. Traps that involve weapon-like components also add the Attack modifier of a similar weapon.

# Cleopatra's Tomb

Red-painted columns supporting tiled roof



Paces  
0 5 10



these, and the insects they attract, are enough to feed several families of mongooses that call the regio home. Over the centuries, Warping has caused occasional members of these families to become Magic Animals, and these now rule the rival clans like royals.

The pool in the center of the temple complex is the entrance to a Faerie regio of level 3. Once a year on the eve of the anniversary of Cleopatra's death (12 August), hordes of asps emerge from the regio entrance and spill forth into the temple grounds, each with a small Faerie Might. These do battle with the families of mongooses which dwell within the compound. The bodies that are left behind provide the temple with one of its sources of vis, but these are usually consumed rapidly by the few magical mongooses for the purpose of Transformation.

Anyone intending to remain here for any time might seek a permanent solution to the annual inundation by venomous snakes; however, the regio can only easily be accessed on that one night every year. At other times, a Regio Sight roll against an Ease Factor of 23 is required (ArM5, page 189). What is inside the regio is left for the storyguide to develop.

## THE TEMPLE

The temple stands opposite the entrance across a lush garden. Its roof is supported by columns carved to resemble handmaidens. There are four different faces represented on these statues, each one repeated many times. Inside, the temple walls are covered with inscriptions in Koine Greek and Ancient Egyptian detailing spells of midwifery and healing. Some of these inscriptions can be studied as texts on the Arts of Learned Magicians; they are not precisely the same Arts, and the Quality given is that available to a 13th century magician. The temple contains two mighty statues of the lioness-headed goddess Sekhmet, bows drawn. If the name of Cleopatra is not intoned the statues shoot upon anyone in the temple, loosing a fiery arrow each per round.

Four handmaidens, all dedicated priestesses of Isis, sacrificed their lives to guard Cleopatra in the afterlife. Their ghosts haunt the temple, and their faces adorn its statues. Each one was a powerful sorceress in life and retains some of this power after death. One is skilled in spells of healing, another in life-shriving and destructive magic. The third has the power of transmutation and transforma-

tion; the last is expert with spells of enchantment and control.

## THE TOMB

The underground tomb is reached through an inclined passage entered through the temple. The first section levels off so that its ceiling is level with the ground; this region is trapped with a soporific poison (see later). The turn in the corridor is also trapped, but this pit is only triggered on the way out (again, see later). The tomb, directly underneath the statue of Isis in the temple above, is blocked by a door sealed with a curse. Inside, Cleopatra's body lies draped with a fine net made of pure gold. This is inside a painted wooden coffin carved to resemble the great queen, which in turn is inside a golden sarcophagus, which is itself within a stone sepulcher. The body is surrounded by the statues of four goddesses, with the heads of a vulture, a lioness, a crocodile, and an asp.

There is a hidden entrance on the rear wall of the tomb that leads to a short corridor and a second door. Above this door is another curse. Inside is uncountable wealth, the trea-

sury of Ptolemaic Egypt, buried with its last pharaoh. This wealth represents a legendary source of income, over ten thousand Mythic Pounds worth of gold, gemstones, and ivory. This chamber is trapped, potentially burying this fabulous wealth under tons of sand just after the characters get a view of it.

## DETAILS OF CLEOPATRA'S TOMB

### Magic aura: 6

**Boons:** Wealth (Resources, Major), Aura (Site, Minor), Edifice (Fortifications, Minor), Seclusion (Site, Minor) Vivid Environment (Site, Minor)

**Hooks:** Regio (Site, Major), Crumbling (Fortifications, Minor), Guardians (Surroundings, Minor), Legendary Site (Surroundings, Minor), Dwindling Resources (Resources, Minor)

**Resources:** Curses (38 Build Points). Enchantments (76 Build Points). Library: *Inscription detailing the later history of Roman Egypt* (summa on Area Lore: Egypt in Koine Greek, Level 5, Quality 9), *inscription on medicinal herbs* (tractatus on Medicine in Demotic, Quality 10), *inscription on healing spells* (tractatus on Learned Magician Form of Salutem in Demotic, Quality 11), *inscription on magical wards* (summa on the Learned Magician Technique of Tueor in Demotic, Level 10, Quality 7), *eight inscribed formulae for pharmaceutical theriacs* (in Demotic, 5 Build Points each, see Art & Academe page 77), *inscribed creation myth of ancient Egyptians* (tractatus on Faerie Lore in Demotic, Quality 7), *diaries of the queen's handmaidens written on crumbling papyrus roll* (three tractatus on Charm, Etiquette, and Intrigue in Koine Greek of Quality 5) (141 Build Points). Specialists: Four ghostly priestesses (each has the equivalent of one Hermetic Technique at a score of 20); five mongoose 'monarchs' (Leadership 5) (105 Build Points). Traps (45 Build Points). Vis Sources: 5 pawns of Animal per year (in bodies of slain asps), 2 pawns of Aquam per year (from pool in oasis), 3 pawns of Herbam per year (from exotic fruit), 1 pawn of Ignem per year (shard of pottery exposed to a Destroying Uraeus), 3 pawns of Terram per year (an item worth at least 10 Mythic Pounds that is left within the treasure chamber chamber for at least a year) (70 Build Points). Vis Stocks: 10 pawns of Creo (in various unguents, pastes, and medicines), 5 pawns of Imaginem (in cosmetics and perfumes), 30 pawns of Terram (golden objects in treasure room) (9 Build Points)

484 Build Points total

### Curses:

*Those Romans who shall seek to disturb my rest and defame my name, they shall be inflicted by boils. They shall sicken and medicine will give them no succor. They shall have no issue.* A combination curse with three excoriations. It is triggered by anyone speaking Latin in the burial chamber. The curse of boils leaves its victims hideous but causes no actual harm (PeCo 20 effect; Pen 0, 1/day; Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Room); The sickening effect is a Lesser Malediction equivalent to the Fragile Constitution Flaw (PeCo 25); the curse of barrenness is the same as that mentioned earlier (PeCo 35) (32 Build Points)

*As for anyone who shall break this seal, I shall cast the fear of myself into him.* See earlier for details. This curse is written on a clay seal on the queen's treasure chamber (6 Build Points)

### Enchantments:

*The Shrouded Oasis:* The walls of the compound of Cleopatra's tomb are enchanted with a ward identical to *The Shrouded Glen* (ArM5, page 152). Anyone researching a breakthrough in the enchantment of Hermetic Ritual effects can derive insight from this enchantment. This effect has a zero Penetration, so it is only good for repelling mundane treasure hunters. Non Hermetic effect (50 levels) (Ease Factor 19, 20 Build Points)

*Two Statues of Sekhmet* (enchantment as per *Destroying Uraeuses*, earlier) (Ease Factor 10, 16 Build Points)

*The Djed:* This twenty-foot-tall statue of the god Osiris is made of thirty individual pieces of green stone that cunningly fit together. If burning incense is placed within its hand, it will answer one question posed by the operator. The statue will only ever answer one question from each individual, and the questioner must be personally curious about the answer — it will not answer a question posed on behalf of another. Its knowledge seems unrivaled, but it only actually knows the answer if it is known to someone who is dead (this excludes all questions about the future), answering randomly if it does not know the answer. The statue is currently disassembled and scattered throughout the complex and it takes a certain amount of skill to fit it back together; furthermore, one piece is missing, and its whereabouts unknown. Instructions on its use are helpfully inscribed — in hieroglyphs — on the statue itself. Non Hermetic effect (100 levels) (40 Build Points)

### Traps:

A section of the corridor is closed off by two heavy stone doors. When opened, there is a faint floral smell, and dust can be seen whirling in eddies in the shafts of sunlight let in from above. Within moments, the pharmaceutical powder reaches critical levels, and everyone still within the room must make a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 9 or collapse into unconsciousness. The amount by which the roll was failed determines the number of minutes the character is unconscious. A horde of mongooses swarms through the ground level holes, and start to consume the bodies of the fallen; they are immune to the poison. The swarm initially a Light Wound to each person; this is increased in severity one step every two minutes. (Ease Factor 9, 12 Build Points)

There is a covered pit trap just before the door to the burial chamber. However, this trap is initially safe to walk on (and does not even appear to be a trap), but doing so sets a mechanism into motion that releases the pin holding the pivot of the trap's cover in place. This arming process takes about a minute from the point that the trap is triggered. Characters returning from the burial chamber are liable to fall for the trap, especially since they will not be expecting a trap here, having not encountered it on the way in. A character might hear the mechanism arming itself, requiring a Perception + Awareness roll, although this is very quiet and adds 3 to the base Ease Factor. Leaping off the pit cover as it pivots requires a Dexterity + Athletics – Encumbrance roll, if the character is moving cautiously on the return journey. Those fleeing from the fear curse in the burial chamber might find this much harder to avoid. The pit is twelve feet deep and lined with spikes; they must Soak +12 damage from the fall and +8 damage from each of up to four spikes. (roll a simple die: 1 – 2 = miss all spikes; 3 – 4 = penetrated by 1 spike; 5 – 6 = penetrated by 2 spikes; 7 – 8 = penetrated by 3 spikes; 9 – 10 = penetrated by 4 spikes). (treated as two traps; one inflicts a serious injury, the other a minor injury; Ease Factor 12, 21 Build Points)

The treasure chamber is booby-trapped; anyone stepping on the threshold will cause several tons of sand to flood in from the roof, burying the treasure. The purpose of the trap is to leave the treasure inaccessible and the flow of sand is fast, but can be outrun by those who have not yet entered the treasure chamber. A Perception + Awareness roll is needed to spot the trigger. (Ease Factor 15, 12 Build Points)

## Chapter Five

# The Magical Treasures of the Ancient Egyptians

There are so many ruins in Egypt, and grave robbing so lucrative a profession, that magic items of many types are encountered by player characters. Even people who do not, themselves, raid the monuments must deal with the thousands of minor items available, to those who know who to ask, at any given time in the various markets scattered throughout the country.

## The Copts: Direct Heirs of Ancient Egypt

Copts speak a descendant of the ancient Egyptian language, and Coptic priests speak a purer form, which is used for litur-

gies. Most literate Copts can read Egyptian texts written in the time of the Ptolemies, which used Greek characters. Scholarly Copts can read hieroglyphs, even those from ancient tombs. Superficially, they do surprisingly little with this knowledge. This is because most scholarly Copts are monks.

### Use Whatever You Like

If you have earlier *Ars Magica* supplements, traces of many of the hedge magician types described in them can be found in Egyptian relics. Egypt has such deep history that a roughly parallel version, weaker in some aspects and more potent in others, to virtually every other magical tradition listed in preceding *Ars Magica* supplements, can be found somewhere in the ruins that line the Nile. Even groups like the troll-blooded magi of the frozen North seem to have parallels. In that case, there were similar mages among the servants of the ancient desert spirits.

### Coptic Monasteries and Libraries

Coptic monks keep libraries of secret, ancient knowledge. The most famous near Cairo is Al-Quisir (on the Maqatam Mountain near Tura). The monks can read and understand ancient Egyptian spells, but they do not, generally, practice them. Christian prayer is simpler to learn, more powerful in an ultimate sense, and does not endanger the immortal soul through prayer to false gods. Monks have little desire to command Egyptian deities or dig up treasure. There are a few Copts who practice Egyptian magic with the saints or the Holy Family swapped in for Egyptian gods. These are Holy Magicians (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*).

### COLLECTIONS OF MAGIC ITEMS

Although they do not practice spellcasting, Coptic monks have access to many powerful magical items. Some of these are found when churches are established on older sites. Others are donated to the Church by believers. The churchmen are faithful and pacifistic, but they have seen pogroms before and always have a few tricks ready for self-defense.

### COPTIC ALCHEMISTS

It's debatable whether the most studious of Coptic monks or the personal alchemists of the sultan are the most skilled in the world. Each side claims the other is superior, citing the thousands of books of magic to which their theoretical rivals have access. Hermetic magi interested in Alchemy may compare the Copts to the Learned Magicians of Europe, who have access to a single, excellent book of Egyptian alchemical formulae.

### LEARNING COPTIC

Non-Coptic characters wishing to learn spoken Coptic can do so easily: there are many Copts who are happy to teach their language to outsiders. Characters do not even need to travel to Egypt to do this: Copts can be found in many of the trading ports around the Mediterranean, and on pilgrimage in the Holy Land. Some of the monks have also produced grammars to help Arabic speakers to understand their language. Characters wishing to learn how to read hieroglyphs must seek out a skilled, likely ancient, Coptic monk and convince him to take sufficient time to act as a tutor.

### A Note On Hieroglyphs

The term "hieroglyphs," meaning "sacred carvings," is from Plutarch, is Greek and is, to Egyptians, sacrilegious. Locals call this script a variety of names, such as The Pen of Copts, The Pen of the Temples, The Pen of Talismans, The Pen of South Arabia, The Pen of Priests, and The Pen of Hermes.



## The Treasures of the Ancient Priesthoods

In Ancient Egyptian religious magic, the powerful practitioners were the lector (that is, "reader") priests who performed the Faerie Rites recorded in the sacred books during religious services. Most priests had a limited repertoire of Faerie Rites. Egyptian gods, in conventional services, could only be asked to do certain things, at certain times, by people who had followed strict preparatory rituals. Egyptian gods did not perform miracles on demand for anyone who had the temerity to bother them.

The chief lector priests were the librarians. They kept the books between religious services and had access to books of Rites used more rarely, and in emergencies. An Ancient Egyptian ghost asked about "magicians" will assume the character means chief lector priests, as their title

is the generic word for workers of potent magic. These leaders of individual temples were appointed by the pharaoh, who was high priest of Egypt. They were served by a caste of artisans, who used Magical powers to create amulets, medicines, other magical items. The creations of this servant caste are the most common magical treasures recovered from tombs.

### Books of The Lector Priests

These priests were usually Faerie Rite Wizards, who are described in more detail in chapter 6 of *Realms of Power: Faerie*. Different temples specialized in various effects, but Evocation (page 122), Grant (page 127), Weal (page 128), Ware (page 128), and Woe (page 130) were all popular, and all priests had the Ceremony Special Ability (page 115). Egyptian society was polytheistic, so books of rites usually contain only closely-related effects. The lector priests for the god of war could not, and

were not expected to, grant bountiful crops, or make people fall in love. An Egyptian seeking such rites would ask at the temple of an entirely different god. Some gods provided only one single effect, and their book of rites contains only that effect.

### Even Ancient Egyptians Thought Monumental Tombs Were Weird

The artefacts described in this section differ from those described in the Tombs Chapter. The Tombs chapter assumes Magic-aligned practitioners, and this chapter describes Faerie-aligned priests served by a caste of Magic-aligned artisans. Artefacts designed under either system should be used in a troupe's saga, as suits their stories.

Most Egyptian religion was based on the worship of faeries. The Osirian Hero Cult, although it had faeries flitting about its edges and claiming individual congregations as worshippers, was tied to the Magic realm. The Ancient Egyptians noticed this difference. They thought the Osirian Cult, which created monumental tombs, was unusual, and exclusive. The oldest akh all claim blood kinship to the pre-ascendant Osiris. That is, their cult is for a single family. Later it was broadened to admit some of the wealthiest nobles and merchants.

Common people, who did not have monumental tombs, had no expectation of becoming akh. They expected, if they were good, to toil on forever in the Field of Reeds as farmers. Being anything other than a farmer in the afterlife required enormous amounts of money for burial rituals which common people had no hope of earning. Most Egyptian magic was religious, but most Egyptian religion wasn't about death, and so wasn't tied to the Osirian Magical Hero Cult. The artefacts of the Osirian cult, because they were put into storage in graves, have survived into the 13th century more often than those of all of the other cults.

## READING THE BOOKS OF RITUAL

A Hermetic magus who reads this type of Egyptian ritual is likely unable to perform it. A character already trained in the correct Faerie Methods can use the text to create a Hermetic equivalent. Rules for this are found in *Realms of Power: Faerie* (page 121). Characters with books of Ancient Egyptian rites may need to seek the favor of powerful Merinita magi, as those best able to convert the works.

Most of these spells are designed to be used with the Ceremony Supernatural Ability. If this is the case, the Ceremony must be performed exactly as described. This may require a Communication + Leadership roll against a target of 3 + 1 per required follower. It may also involve lengthy preparations to create ritual purity. Common forms

WISDOM FROM IGNORANCE  
(MINOR VIRTUE)

One school of Sufis found in Egypt is particularly interested in calligraphy, and the aesthetics of the enigma. By this, they mean that pondering texts which have been structured as meaningful, but which the viewer cannot read, can be used as a form of meditation which brings enlightenment. They are able to use books as sources of training provided they are *unable* to read the language they are written in.

The sufis use this ability to gain understanding of spiritual matters, so players should create Ability books normally, and when sufis use this Virtue, switch the Ability learned from the book to Theology, Organisation Lore: Sufis or similarly uplifting subjects. A sufi using this Virtue may occasionally gain experience in materially practical Abilities, but this only occurs in the context of overcoming specific challenges on spiritual journeys. Directly applicable learning like this is considered a miracle by the sufi, and troupes should police this like any other miracle.

This group is also interested in Alchemy, but only in materials which alter mood and physical condition, and thus make meditation and channelling the Divine easier. The schools of mysticism in Egypt (called *kanqahs*) are often set in graveyards, which gives them a Divine aura.

## Coptic Saga Arc

Egyptian magicians often speculate about the ultimate goals of the monks. They do not, apparently, use magical texts, so why collect them? If they simply seek to keep the world safe from their contents, why not just burn them? The monks keep stockpiles of magical equipment, including terrible weapons. Many monasteries also have Nilometers, which they claim to use for the administering of taxes, but their role in ancient religion makes them suspicious, in the eyes of many.

In this saga arc, the Copts are allies of the Black, and use their magical powers and items to fight the servants of the Red. Characters aiding the Black may be given quests by monks, rest within the protection of the Dominion, seek healing, or be given training. The saga concludes with the characters taking the relics of Saint Simon the Shoemaker to the mountain in the heart of the Sahara which is the stronghold of the Red. Saint Simon is famous for his miraculous moving of a mountain. The player characters move the home of the Red to the depths of the sea, decisively swinging the war toward the Black.

There is Always  
Another Temple.  
There is Always  
Another Treasure

In Egypt, the number and variety of temples is so large that, for a magus in 1220, it is virtually inexhaustible. If a troupe desires it, Guaranteed Insight can be found about almost anything. Conversely, if a troupe prefers it, Egyptian magic was so thoroughly incorporated into Mercurian magic that there is little strikingly new to be found in the ruins, but treasure doesn't need to be novel to be valuable.

of purification include the shaving of all body and head hair, smoke bathing, washing out the mouth with natron salts, drawing figures of the gods on the skin, dressing in new clothes made of the highest quality linen, and abstaining from intercourse for at least a day, and perhaps far longer.

The space may also need to be purified with incense, figures of the gods drawn on the ground, or Nile water. Many spells require items which must be previously unused, like clothes, furniture, parchments, quills, and fresh herbal ingredients, which makes recasting failed spells inconvenient. Others require expensive, but reusable items, such as wands of ivory that are scraped across the ground to create protective circles, and elaborate masks, which identify the caster, or target, with a god whose actions in a sacred story are similar to the desired spell effect. Many spells need to be said four times in succession to work.

A Note On  
Egyptian Alchemy

The entire thrust of Hermetic Alchemy makes no sense to either the practitioners of the sultan's court, or the Coptic monks who guard the secrets of the ancients. The Mystery of Hermetic Alchemy is, at its core, about making the practitioner immortal. It takes decades of work, but at the end of it, the character can live on as a magical being. The counterpoint to this, which is obvious to either of the practitioner groups, is that sincere followers of the Divine get to live forever anyway. Characters who go to Paradise or Heaven don't need to worry that Judgement is still inevitable, and although the details vary between sects, everyone agrees that followers of the Divine live on in the greatest possible bliss. The Great Elixir is basically worthless to religiously devout people.

Egyptian Alchemy is eminently practical and mechanical. It arose from generations of practice of magical medicine. The greatest cache of alchemical texts, the library of the first hospital, known as the House of Life, has never been found. Alchemical medicines found in Egyptian tombs can be designed as single-use, Hermetic magic items.

This is Faerie, not Hermetic, spell casting, so these steps, which a magus drawing from the disinterested Magic realm could ignore, must be followed precisely. Once any preparation is complete, the character must make a Communication + Coptic roll of 3 + (1 per 5 levels of effect). Some spells are written in a complex, symbolic language, which makes the Ease Factor higher. A character must know, for example, that when a spell calls for the heart of a baboon

it means oil of lilies, that Ethiopian soil is crocodile dung and that the semen of Amun is a type of houseleek. A character who botches this reading may suffer the effects of a misfired spell, or may be persecuted by a faerie, claiming to serve the god slighted by the character's boorish invocation.

The most common reason for Ancient Egyptian spells to fail is that the writer assumes that the reader will perform the rite in the presence of the god. Such rites must

be performed in a powerful Faerie aura. This is rarely explicitly mentioned in the text, and even when included, it is often an inaccurate warning that the spell will only work in a particular temple, or in the temples of a particular god, at a designated time. Characters who, for example, discover the text of a blessing where water is consecrated in the temple then sprinkled on a crop might deduce that this spell requires a greater Faerie aura than a similar rite which is performed at a temporary altar in the field itself.

There are several other reasons for rite failure. The mystical landscape may have

## Story Seeds: Apparently UnGifted Magicians

The most powerful Faerie Wizards are always Gifted. Egyptian accounts of lector priests do not mention a social effect similar to that caused by The Gift. Stories which contain the followers of dark gods do, however, describe them in ways which are similar to the descriptions of Blatantly Gifted magi. There might be several reasons for the apparent Gentle Giftedness of ancient priests.

### FAERIES STRIPPED OF VOLITION

Some faeries perform tricks on demand, even if the person making the demand is not rewarding them either with magical force or emotionally-charged attention. Faeries so narrowly constrained by their roles that they are little more than machines are known to the Order, but they are thought of as the weakest creatures from their realm. The Egyptians may have found a way to completely strip their faerie gods of personal volition, so that a "priest" was anyone mouthing the right noises in the right robe. If this is true, some of these volitionless faeries are still stuck in their statues, unable to desire to flee.

### ENGINEERED HEIGHTENED EMOTIONAL STATES IN PRIESTS

If a person offers the right type of attention in a heightened emotional state, faeries might reward him with a mystical effect, regardless of his lack of magical power. These sorts of ecstatic cults were known to, but considered uncivilized by, the Egyptians. Some of the darkest magic that they forbade, which called up the things from beyond Duat that were inimical to all life, was conducted this way.

Such creatures may be dark faeries, but may be Infernal demons. If this is true, then anyone doing the abhorrent things in these books may be able to call up dark beings, regardless of magical talent.

### A SOURCE FOR THE GENTLE GIFT

All the pharaonic priesthoods seem to have Gently Gifted members. It's possible that the Gentle Gift was granted to pharaonic priests by a Mystery Initiation. Characters who can find the ghosts of priests, or the Initiation site, may be able to self-Initiate. Houses like Jerbiton and Mercere that value Gently Gifted members may support the scheme. If the Gentle Gift becomes readily available in the saga, the troupe may consider offering a new Virtue to any player characters who have already selected that Virtue.

### A CASTE OF SERVANTS

The true wizards may have cast magic from a distance, and used mortal proxies. If this is true, the symbols of office for these proxies are magic items that allow magi to cast spells from a distance, perhaps at less than Arcane Connection range.

### MYSTERY INITIATIONS

Priests may have developed individual powers as Virtues earned via Ordeal. The scripts of these Ordeals may be known to faeries, retrieved from the dead, or found in ancient inscriptions.

## Vis

The Egyptians were aware that heka took solid form. They thought it was found in rare, expensive and exotic objects. Resin, for example, was thought to contain heka that could be used for preservation magic, and gold was thought to be able to contain a great deal of heka when making amulets. Iron was very rare in early Egyptian history, but was good for harming demons (dark faeries from the afterlife) due to its strange heka. Deformed things were also thought to contain heka, which is why many tomb robbers find jars of pickled double-tailed lizards. They throw these away because they do not understand that they are jars of vis.

## Heka

The ancient Egyptians recognized a mystical force flowing through all things. Hermetic magi call this force vis. The Egyptians called this substance *heka*, a term they also used for written spells. Egyptian religious magic differed from Hermetic magic in that it is primarily based on the Faerie, not Magical, realm. This means that flourishes which amuse the faeries, like spellcasting at dawn and sacrificing animals, were not optional for Ancient Egyptian magicians. Note that Egyptian artefacts are usually tied to the Magic realm, created by a separate caste subservient to the lectors.

changed between the recording of the rite and the present. Spells which accurately and precisely foretold the future were nullified by the Silencing of the Oracles. The Egyptians themselves said that some of their spells no longer worked because their gods, though long-lived, could weaken and die with age, making their rituals void. The rubric (ceremony of performance) in some spells is not written in detail because the priests observed purity at all times, and so did not need to be told what that entailed. Faeries interested in the role and able to complete the bargain it contains may simply not notice the caster, or be nearby.

### TROUPES NOT USING REALMS OF POWER: FAERIE

Troupes not using the Faerie Rite rules could instead use the Hermetic system, under the following rules.

A character using Egyptian writings does not understand the underlying powers he is invoking, and so cannot change any of the decisions made by the original author. The spell's Range, Target, and Duration are therefore fixed. Once any required preparation is complete, the character must make a Communication + Coptic roll against an Ease factor of 3 + (1 per 5 levels of effect).

The speaker's casting total is: Stamina + closest Form + closest Technique + Aura + stress dice (modified by Virtues and Flaws)

CASTING TOTAL	SPELL LEVEL, RESULT
0 or more	Spell cast, lose one Fatigue level.
-1 to -10	Spell cast, lose 2 Fatigue levels.
-11 to -20	Spell cast, lose 3 Fatigue levels.
-21 to -30	Spell cast. Lose 4 Fatigue levels and gain a Warping point.
-31 or less	Spell not cast. Lose 5 Fatigue levels. Gain Warping points equal to Magnitude. If more than 2 points gained, check for Twilight.

Remember that an Egyptian book is a series of related scrolls kept together; assume each scroll contains a single effect.

These are being treated as casting tablets, for those troupes who use the Covenants supplement.

## Transitory Magic Items

Transitory magic items are not actually enchanted at all. They are a way for Faerie-aligned magicians, like those described in this section, to create items similar to those available to Magically-aligned talisman makers. A transitory magic item is an object which has supernatural properties, but only for a single use, and, in many cases, for a particular user designated at the moment of the item's creation. The two most common forms of this in Ancient Egypt were temporary amulets, and liquid which affected the drinker.

### TEMPORARY AMULETS

A temporary amulet is not actually enchanted – rather it is an object on which a spell with the Until Duration has been cast. This Duration, only available to Faerie Magicians, allows an effect to continue indefinitely until a condition is met. In this case, the spell continues Until the amulet has been worn and discarded. Unworn amulets are often found in tombs. Some of the more skilled grave robbers can compare their contents and inscriptions to temporary amulets previously used, and determine their likely effect. Unlike modern items with Until durations, Egyptian talismans do not lose their power when their creator dies: this may be because many are created by faeries on behalf of mortals, or are mocked up by faeries slightly before their modern discoverers arrive.

Most temporary amulets are small, linen bags filled with magical ingredients, then painted with mystical words. At their simplest, the spells enhanced the medicinal properties of the objects within the bags, but temporary amulets offering protection from spirits, healthy childbirth and fortune in war are all regularly retrieved. The contents of the bags are sometimes understandable in Hermetic terms, due to sympathetic magic. More often the contents are reflections of Egyptian beliefs, given power by faeries.

Many temporary talismans contain un-

clean things, in the belief that this will scare spirits away. Pieces of preserved dog, various types of dung, and menstrual blood are used to keep away faeries with Ward flaws. The demons of the underworld live backward to normal people, and have mouths in their anuses and anuses in their faces. Honey, which is sweet to the living, is bitter to them, and can be used to scare them away. They are also repelled by garlic, the name of which sounds similar to the word "harm" in ancient Coptic, and the similarity of individual cloves to monstrous teeth threatens them.

### THE STATUES JUST HOLD FAERIES, THEY ARE NOT ENCHANTED

Merinitia magi argue that the statue is, of itself, not magical. Consider a typical magical statue of this type: a cippus of Horus. When water is poured on this statue, and collected as it trickles off, it becomes a powerful medicine. From the perspective of a Hermetic Faerie Magus, the statue of Horus isn't really a magic item: it's a clever way of making an open offer to nearby faeries.

The bargain works like this: if the faerie transforms the water into a powerful medicine (using a power with an Until duration) then that faerie may feed on the fear, hope and worship of the family whose member desperately needs healing. If the faerie has expended so much Might it can't make the deal, then some other faerie can and so for that family, the new faerie acts as the god. If no faerie wants the deal, then the person just gets water. When he dies, people say he was shunned by Horus for some secret and dreadful sin, and faith in the water is maintained by the survivors who have been cured.

Although the priests creating the statues often gave them cosmetic powers using Faerie Rites, a statue might be completely mundane. The humans coming to pour water over it have a narrative in their minds which the faeries can read and respond to. If the narrative dies out, a faerie which wanted to rekindle it might use its powers to send dreams, or make the statue talk.

## SEALS

Seals are a form of temporary magic item. They either maintain a spell, by being the focus of an Until Duration (that, like Egyptian talismans, does not end at the deal of the caster), or they act as wards. Egyptian seals of this type are remarkably similar to Watching Wards. A spell is contained inside, and maintained by, a ritual cast upon the seal. When a precondition named at the casting of the ritual is met, the spell is cast. In most cases, this is the breaking of the seal, but sometimes touching, moving, or illuminating a seal is sufficient to trigger its effect.

Touch played an important part in sealing. Some Egyptian wizards carried ivory staves with hands on the ends, to allow them to touch things more conveniently. In some cults, these devices were talismans, in others a new way of extending the Touch range, and in yet others, a symbolic hand for the Faerie god, so that it did not have to leave its temple to touch things and manifest its powers.

## TEMPORARY POTIONS

Most temporary potions were made by pouring either water or beer over a statue which housed a faerie, in the belief that magic would infuse the fluid. The most powerful objects for this purpose were specially-designed statues of the god Horus, which are called cippuses. Each statue provided a single effect. Other gods could similarly assist their followers, and different gods, with different spheres of divine influence, provided a range of effects.

Some magicians preferred to paint or carve the words into a bowl, and then pour water over these words. In some instances this is the creation of a temporary potion, and bowls of this type still work if nearby faeries understand the deal on offer. For others it was simply a form of ceremonial spell casting, at Touch Range, and these bowls can't function without a Gifted user casting a spell.

## Animated Statues

Classical authors mention that the Egyptians had a strange art, not recorded elsewhere, of bringing the statues in their temples to life, and of using the statues to create transitory magic items. To secular magi, this entails convincing a faerie to enter into a statue and stay there, performing various tasks. In exchange it is fed vitality by the effect it has on the lives of the people it affects, and through their worship. Technically, the statues are not magical at all: they are just matter the faerie spirit has sheathed itself in.

## STATUE CONSECRATION MYSTERY

The lectors performing this task often had no theoretical framework for their actions. Those in larger temples often followed a detailed series of written instructions. Those in smaller sects were guided by a highly cognizant faerie, repeating steps taken by priests in the larger temples. The method of consecration is currently lost to humans, but could be found if a temple li-

## Tongue Magic

Egyptian spellcasters thought that magic radiated from the spoken word, and therefore was, for a time, powerfully concentrated in the tongue. They developed odd little techniques which might aid magi, if incorporated into Hermetic theory. These tricks are described in rare texts, which a character must journey to find.

## THE DRAWING OF MAAT

Some priesthoods, aware of how touchy their gods were, found a way to protect themselves. It involves drawing a skilled portrait of the Goddess of Truth on the tongue. This prevents the character from lying, but it also prevents the character saying false words. A faerie god weaker than Maat, who was considered to embody one of the foundational principles of the universe, was required to play along, and take no offence, if the magician mispronounced words.

A character able to discover how the Mystery of Maat was performed can create a little possessing faerie that sits in the mind of the magus while he casts spells. The faerie checks his words for mispronun-

cations and corrects them, so that so that botches are less likely. Being possessed by a tiny faerie may, however, have personality altering effects.

## SALIVA AND BREATH RANGES

When heka is spoken, magic is created, and flows through and over the tongue. This makes anything in contact with the tongue powerfully magical. Egyptian wizards could cast spells more easily if they spat or breathed upon the target than if they touched them. Treat this as equivalent to Personal range, but without circumventing Magic resistance as Personal spells do. This was less powerful than it initially appears, because people were aware of this and so shielded themselves. Even in Mythic Europe it's believed that saliva and breath can carry curses (because some faeries can use shared fluid or breath to create Arcane connections). It would, however, make some Spontaneous Hermetic spells markedly easier. There is no record of the magicians bottling their breath or saliva to delay the activation of spells.

## Examples of Animated Models

There are two famous examples of this power, known even to the storytellers in the streets. A magician-prince once made a miniature boat and crew out of wax, then breathed life into them, and sailed up the Nile to fight an enemy. A different magician, whose wife was unfaithful, left a wax crocodile with his steward. When the steward saw the wife and her lover meeting by the lake, he threw the crocodile into the water, and it dragged the lover away. When questioned by the pharaoh, the magician had the lover dragged back from the afterlife by his crocodile, then turned the crocodile back into wax. When the pharaoh had questioned the lover and was certain of his guilt, he bade the magician turn the figure into a crocodile once again, and it dragged the lover to the Egyptian version of hell a second time.

brary is uncovered intact. Some faeries may, alternatively, recall it. Statues of gods made in this way may attract the attention of demons, who seek to force out and replace the faerie, or the wrath of the Divine, which prohibits the worship of false gods.

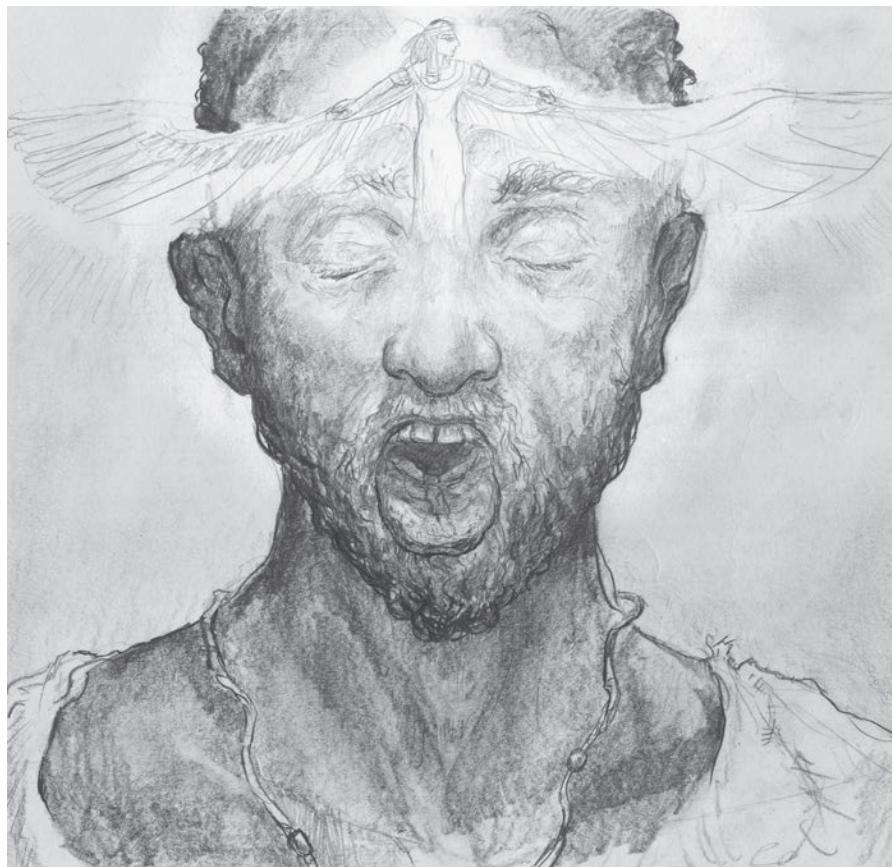
Some few chief lectors, beloved of the gods and therefore privy to their secret need for humans, created new consecration rituals. Each ritual creates a narrative, and if the priest convincingly performs it, so that a faerie may feed on the emotions of the congregation, the new statue is functional. This requires a Communication + Folk Ken roll against a target of 18. The texts that describe the consecration of new statues are

## Playing Powerful Faeries Against One Another

One way to force a faerie into performing a service, often used by these magicians, is to offer an alternative bargain to a second faerie. The best described form of this is "If you do not do what I say, I will turn the world upside down and drag the afterlife into the world of the living." When this has actually occurred, an area is filled with ethereal faeries who kill humans, or drag them off to be tortured in Faerie.

What the magician thinks he is doing is saying to a faerie god "Do what I want, or I'll let this other god do it, and pay him back by letting his creatures eat your followers." The presence of two powerful gods creates a weakness in the world, which touches Duat and allows easy Spiriting Away. The magician then tips the scales in favor either of the initial god, or of the ethereal beings, by influencing nearby people.

Hermetic magi, who doubt faeries have consistent roles, suggest that in this case, the magician is creating a very powerful narrative. They believe, however, that the faerie god grants or declines the agreement based on the unspoken, or perhaps even unconsidered, desires of the magician. The consuming, ethereal faeries may be the initial god and his court, merely shifted into the roles which the magician has, himself, given them.



actually choreographies for rituals which aid the character making the Communication roll. Performing the ritual in a temple with a Faerie aura, or while miraculous things are occurring due to faerie rites read by other priests, also aids the roll.

### INTERMEDIARY STATUES

Some of these priests also consecrated temple statues for themselves. The ghost of the priest is bound to, and may animate, the statue after death. In exchange for offerings from supplicants, it agrees to take prayers to the gods in their homes. Other servants, like guards and spies, might have similarly been honoured with statues to anchor their ghosts while in this world.

### WHERE DID ALL THE MAGICAL STATUES GO?

Two great events destroyed many of the active statues, leaving only those locked in tombs and lost monuments intact. The first of these was the Roman invasion in 30 BC. The Romans knew they could banish these gods merely by smashing their statues, and so they destroyed as many as they could. Player characters menaced by a faerie god can similarly seek out and deface its image. The second occurred in 2 AD, when Christ and his family fled to Egypt to avoid the purge of Herod. Some writings say that when he entered the country, there was a great shaking of the earth, and all of the statues fell down and were destroyed. The veracity of these accounts is questionable, as some statues, like the Father of Dread, clearly survived. It may be that only those statues currently inhabited by faerie gods were destroyed.

Some of the statues may simply have been used up. Making statues move causes wear and defaces them, as they do not heal like living things. There was also a medi-

## Unusual Amulets

Certain types of ancient amulets are considered particularly promising by Hermetic researchers.

### Ib Scarab

These amulets do not act at Touch range, despite being worn. The Ib Scarab was designed to allow the dead person to lie undetectably to the gods at the final judgment. From a mystical perspective, it replaces the heart, and so can create effects at Personal Range. If the Ib Scarab is lost, it acts as an Arcane Connection to the owner.

### Seals With Royal Names

The name of a god, which includes dead pharaohs, is a sort of emanation of their power. This is why, after a palace coup, it was important to destroy all of the inscriptions of the name of the ousted rival. These royal names have a little Magic Resistance, perhaps as high as 5 points. Some people carry these royal names because they think curses may be deflected if they catch the name in their area of effect. The royal name grants the wearers no resistance, but may accidentally protect them while protecting itself.

Experienced folk magicians are aware of this, and so choose their curses carefully. A well-designed curse harms the wearer but not the seal. For example, a man cursed to die when his boat turns over may be protected by a royal name, since it resists being defaced by the water. The name will not, however, prevent the man being stung to death by a scorpion, or murdered by a street thug, because these do not damage the seal.

The term "cartouche" does not occur in Mythic Africa. It's French for "cartridge" and was given to the royal names by Napoleonic soldiers who thought the rings looked like their ammunition. To the Copts, the cartouche is a sort of *shen*, that is, a representation of a rope laid out to create a magical protective circle.

cal tradition that could pass injuries from a person to a holy statue. Once the statue was too damaged to continue to house the god, the presence was moved to a newer statue. After the kingdom fell and the methods of making new statues were lost, many of the old statues were destroyed by healers. Ruined statues which embodied faeries often contain vis.

## Temporary Objects From Models

One of the more unusual forms of Egyptian magic is the creation of temporary objects out of models of those objects. The Egyptians believed that when they died, the things that were, in model form, in their tombs would be available to them in the afterlife. Some of the more powerful magicians were able to perform the same trick in the mortal world. These grave goods still work, when found in tombs. A faerie enters the object, and aids the user in his adventure, thereby gaining vitality.

Troupes using *Realms of Power: Faerie* should design a faerie that has the enlarged form, and give it a shapeshifting power, allowing it to become a model. Groups using only the core rules should design a magic item with a shapeshifting effect.

## Threatening the Gods

The lectors usually behaved like faerie enchanters in 1220: they attempted to please, flatter and convince the faeries they were attempting to control. There was, however, an alternative version of the Enchantment Faerie Rite Method practiced by lectors on gods they did not serve, and by unscrupulous magicians outside the temples. The spell-caster threatened to destroy not only the faerie, but the entire world, unless given what was demanded. Most magicians who threatened the gods had a faerie ally, and a gateway to that creature's place in Arcadia, so that they could avoid reprisal if their spells failed spectacularly.

Egyptian stories cite rare examples where a magician of this sort went through with his threats. The Sun, for example, is said

## The Weakest and Commonest Ancient Magicians

The most common magicians were priests who served small, local spirits, and had a role similar to that now played in Christian Europe by the village witch or blacksmith. These priests were not necessarily Gifted, and had little power. This is the only form of Ancient Egyptian magic that still thrives in 1220, although it has changed name and form, and aligned itself with Islam. Faerie-aided Murabits may claim to venerate the bones of inspiring mortals, but they are really the servants of faeries with strong local stories.

### THE TREASURES OF ANCIENT LOCAL PRIESTS

Troupes with earlier supplements might design these remnants in several ways. The simplest have Virtues like Faerie Friend. Some of these priests of local gods could be designed as Faerie Doctors (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 118). If designed as Faerie wizards, they specialize in Weal Rites (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 129). If they are designed as Faerie Bargainers, they specialize in Bonding (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 132). The grave goods of ancient Murabits can serve as goals for Mystery Quests. The ghosts of dead local priests can act as mystagogues, often fading away once they have prevented the extinction of their priesthood.

## The Most Popular Egyptian Amulets Protected Against...

- Diseases caused by the dead, demons or the gods.
- Spells from demons pretending to be foreign sorcerers.
- Accidents while quarrying stone
- Drowning and other accidents while working on boats.
- Being eaten by crocodiles
- Combat fatalities

to have stood still for three days, stuck like a boat on a sandbank, so that none could sleep and the crops withered. Such miracles are beyond the scope of any save the Divine, so they cannot have occurred. Either faerie gods pretended they could occur, because the fear of the populace is so delicious, or they conspired with the magician to cause people to either experience the events through glamor, or to remember that they occurred.

### THE WRITINGS OF THOSE WHO THREATENED THE GODS

The writings that can be recovered from these magicians come in three types. The first are detailed scripts, like those which have been left by by lectors, but which Enchant rather than Evoke. Groups not using *Realms of Power: Faerie* should use the rules in the earlier insert. The troupe should model a spell which gives the final effect, not the control of the faerie providing that effect. The second type of writings are merely detailed scripts for the threat, to attract the faerie's attention. These grant a bonus to the casting total of a particular Rite. The final variety are texts which Initiate characters in Mysteries. These provide Virtues which improve their capacity to enchant faeries. These may include Special Circumstances, Puissant Enchantment or Magical Focus.

## Magical Craftwork

The priests who read services in the temples of Ancient Egypt were supported by a caste of magical crafters who created enchanted items. Roman and Greek authors noted that the Egyptians had a strange facility with the manufacture of amulets and talismans. They were the focus of a major export industry during Ptolemaic times. Tomb robbers often recover magic items. A formal process for their sale exists, described in the section on the guild of tomb explorers. A black market for amulets also thrives.

The writings of these crafters have also

been recovered. These books can be used and understood by those who speak Coptic. One book of Egyptian magic, describing this group's work, has been circulated in Europe, and created the Learned Magician tradition (see *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition*).

### RELATIONSHIP TO LEARNED MAGIC

Ancient Egyptian craft magic, at its simplest, focused on the creation of three types of objects: amulets, talismans, and curses. An amulet protected the wearer, a talisman made life easier for the wearer, and a curse hurt something else. This is very similar to the Learned Magic tradition, which has three Techniques, for protection, assistance, and harm. The Learned Magic tradition has Luck, Magic, and Health forms. These can be used to simulate a wide variety of Ancient Egyptian effects, but individual priesthoods may have had other forms or techniques. Learned magic can be boosted by aid from spirits from the Four Realms. In Egypt, the ready access to powerful faeries and magical spirits may have made this easier. Learned Magic has a limited series of Ranges, Target and Durations: Egyptian magic does not have these limitations. Learned Magic also has Difficult Arts: this was not the case for Egyptian Magicians, and is a relic of the origin of the Learned Magic tradition: a single book intended to be studied as part of a wider corpus.

Troupes using the Learned Magician rules to create Egyptian spells should assume that the Egyptians had very high casting and laboratory totals, reflecting their generations of accumulated learning, and access to potent lab texts.

### GRAVE WEAPONS

Egyptian demons and ghosts were thought, in some sense, to resemble birds. People were buried with weapons that were used to snare birds, to allow them to fight off demons on their trip through the underworld. The most common of these weapons is a throwing stick with an effect similar to *Faerie's Eternal Oblivion* upon it. Others had nets, which have ReVi effects which immobilize the demons, allowing their victims to flee, or stab the defenseless enemy.

## Perpetual Amulets

Troupes not using *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition* should just design amulets as Hermetic items.

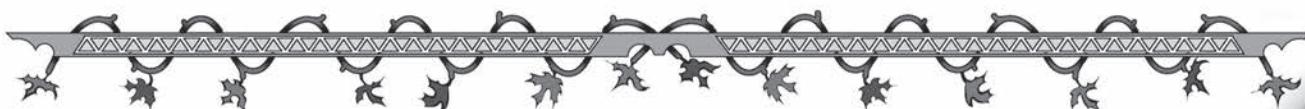
### COLOR

The color of amulets is significant in Egyptian magic. The color of magic is black, but green is also widely used, presumably because it attracts faeries. The color blue is used for invoking gods, due to its heavenly associations. Yellow, orange, and some shades of red are all the same color to an Egyptian magician, and they are excellent for fire magic.

Red is used for evil magic: the names of Apes and Seth are always written in red. Spells to conjure the servants of Seth, or to ask for favors from the god of chaos, sterility and foreigners, are always written in red. Amulets of red stone are used to control and ward against these creatures. Red is also used for curses, as it is the color of destruction.

## Faeries in Boxes

The priests of Egypt, who drew their power from the Faerie Realm, also used to trap spirits in boxes. The faeries involved in this process are not still in their containers. Egyptian cosmology stated that the trapped beings, generally Apes or his followers, found their way out of the boxes. Clearly this was the case; otherwise the celestial drama of solar rebirth would cease. Also, since the peasants who dig up these boxes are now Muslims, faeries who are nearby when the boxes are found prefer to take the forms of trapped djinn or efrets. Characters who have learned the stories of Ancient Egypt, however, may tempt a faerie back into the role of a servant of Apes. See the animal-headed demons in the Tombs chapter for ideas, or just use the statistics of any dragon in a previous supplement.



## SHAPE

Many amulets were made in one of a limited variety of shapes. The most popular is a representation, in precious metal, of the linen bags used to make temporary talismans. Many other charms portray a thing from which the wearer borrows a Virtue or other quality while the item is worn. Most charms have the symbol of the Wedjat eye upon them. Thoth, the Lord of Amulets, is often evoked in inscriptions on the sides of amulets.

## Magic Outside The Priesthoods

Outside the system of religious service, Egyptian tales, and funereal goods, reveal two rare, and very powerful, varieties of magician.

### Those Who Commanded Spirits

This group of wizards was considerably scarcer, and more powerful, than the Keepers of the Books. They were religious, but used their status with powerful faeries to bully lesser Magical spirits into obeying their commands. Their magic was similar to that of spirit masters, and they are an ancestral tradition to the sihr, the modern wizards of Egypt, described in *The Cradle and the Crescent*, a Hermetic variant of whom are found in *Houses of Hermes: Societates*.

### CONTAINED SPIRITS

The most durable of the treasures left by the commanders of spirits are creatures trapped in mystical containers. These creatures, who may be either faeries or magical creatures, can communicate with whom-ever holds their container. A bargain struck with these beings is binding, but only the

specific words, not the intent, need to be adhered to. Most trapped creatures are found in tombs, but in Ancient times most were buried in religious precincts. It was thought that the gods would watch over the prisoners and prevent their escape.

Some creatures, who are grateful for rescue and like their rescuers, forgo opportunities to cause harm. A rescued spirit may be converted into a permanent ally by performing a series of favors for it. These favors are similar in nature and difficulty to the Ordeals of a Mystery (see *The Mysteries*) but do not require Occult Lore. The adventure in which the player character rescues the creature may also be taken into account, if it was suitably difficult.

Most rescued creatures resent their loss of freedom, first to their container, and then to the human they must serve, however briefly, before they are liberated. If the captured being is a faerie, some magi suggest, it is best to just give the creature its freedom immediately and unconditionally. This is a gift, and many faeries are required, by their nature, to give a gift in exchange. Their gift must be worth as much as to the human, from the faerie's odd perspective, as its freedom. Although the player character has little control over what gift is given, or what trouble accepting it may cause, the character does not need to deal with a truculent faerie. A character similarly liberating a magical creature should expect no reward, and unconditional freedom does not prevent the being attacking its benefactor.

### INSIGHT AND ORDEALS SUITED TO HERMETIC MAGI

This tradition, which used the Magic Realm as its main source of mystical power, is the most directly suited to Hermetic adaptation. The writings of Egyptian magicians of this type are valuable as sources of research insight and new Mystery initiations, but are also treasured by the Sahir, who wish to learn them, and the Coptic monks, who want to stop them falling into undeserving hands.

## A NOTE ON TRUE NAMES

Many kinds of spirit magic are made easier if the caster knows the true name of the target. Ancient Egyptians were very casual about True Names. In many tombs, a list of the Ka names of the owner, and all his servants, can be found. The owners had these rolls made because it was considered undignified to wander about the Fields of Turquoise calling out for your table-steward as if he was a lost dog. If you had his true name (also called a ka name or a ren), he answered a summons immediately, and you wouldn't get any of the millions of other men called "Moses."

The owner's true name was included to make sure that he, and not someone else, was given his just rewards. This was not considered particularly insecure. The owner had shabtis, little statue servants, who answered his True Name for him. This was primarily to avoid agricultural labor in the afterlife, but also switched the targets of any curses hurled using his name.

### Those Who Have Read the Book of Thoth

All authorities agree that the most powerful magicians described in Ancient Egyptian folklore are the handful who have read the Book of Thoth. This magical text contains all of the spells of the first great magician. All characters who manage to find the Book may read it, and afterward have the ability to effortlessly cast the equivalent of almost any Hermetic spell. Within one day, however, they either die or fade into Twilight. There is no way for a character who has read the Book to remain in the world, and after the character's death or dissolution, the Book is hidden again by mystical forces that reach into the world from the depths of the Magical Realm.

## Chapter Six

# Egypt

The most surprising feature of Egypt, for travelers from outside the region, is that its largest cities are so young. Three of the four largest cities, Cairo, Damietta, and Qus, have only had their current size and prominence for a handful of decades. Egypt may be an old land on an eternal river, but its society is in constant flux. This is reflected in cities that have ancient landmarks surrounded by new suburbs, and where the local nobleman may have spent his teenage years as a street thief or mercenary.

### A NOTE ON AURAS IN EGYPT

The Dominion aura of the holiest places and pilgrimage sites might reach as high as 10, but generally places of worship have a Dominion aura of 4, the cemeteries and homes of the People of the Book have an aura of 3, the places of work of monotheists have an aura of 2, and land from which the call to prayer can be heard has an aura of 1.

Faerie auras are equal to (Might of the most powerful faerie in the area /5) unless two faeries are contesting control of an area, in which case the aura may be higher. The most powerful Faerie in an area is not necessarily the most powerful the characters engage in a given story.

Magic auras are found in awesome natural places, and tethered to human artifice. Many ancient tombs have an aura, the strength of which is determined using the rules found in the Tomb Creation section in chapter 4.

Infernal auras are found in places of great sin. These are usually small pockets, which are eventually worn away by the Dominion, but places dedicated to sin may have powerful, apparently permanent auras. The customs house where pilgrims were once routinely hung by their testicles is notoriously known as such a place, and most

of the city of 'Aydhab seems to be falling under the sway of evil.

### The Nile

The Nile is the greatest river on Mythic Earth. It rises in the Atlas Mountains, before sweeping south, through the desert and to the very edge of the habitable world. It turns east, through the countries of the Plinian races, until it nears the east coast of Africa. Then it turns north again, through the lands of gold and black men. It floods Egypt annually, leaving farming soil almost magical in its fertility, before disgorging into the Mediterranean. Even tiny creeks in Mythic Europe may have elementals: the Nile's Spirit is so vastly powerful it needs to create avatars or invest emissaries, simply so humans can comprehend it.

The great mystical presence which is embodied in these waters has had many names over the centuries. The Copts, who know its ancient Egyptian name, call it *Kheme*, which is also the word for the color black, and the land of Egypt itself. The Black is not the same as Isis, the Faerie goddess of the river, but she, perhaps, served the Black and was nurtured by its vitality. The Blemmyae of Philae, who worshiped Isis in ancient times, are often agents of the Black. In the west of Africa the Black is served by a tribe of seven-headed rain serpents. Their physical form may mirror the river's, with its delta of seven mouths. Elsewhere in Egypt the Black calls up horus-beasts, the ascended dead, Coptic alchemists, jinn, and faeries for its ceaseless war with the Red.

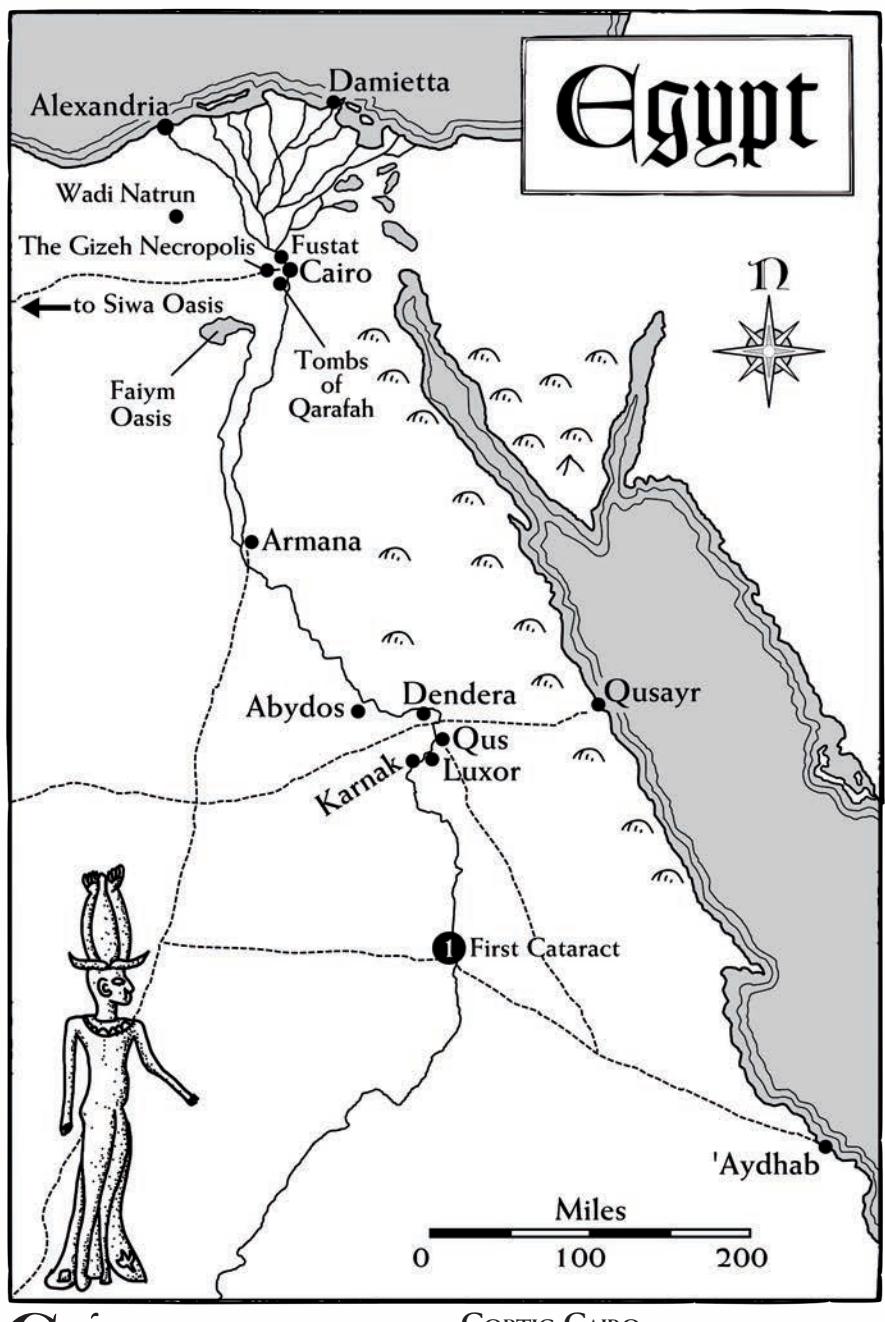
The Red is a great force of desiccation and sterility, which is most powerful in the

center of the Sahara. The Black encircles it with the Nile, and prevents its ravenous appetite from consuming Africa. Its servants are detailed in *Between Sand and Sea*, but include hedge magi who draw power from the decay of the natural environment, the set beasts, tribes of werehyenas, and great afrits of smokeless flame. Some say that every lie makes the Sahara a grain bigger, so every liar serves the Red. Others say that if you don't want the Black to notice you, you must never drink the water.

### The Seven Heads of the Nile

Pliny listed seven heads for the Nile, but not all of these can be used in 1220. Some are silted up, and some are simply not where he implies them to be. The main distributary is the Phatmetic Mouth, which disgorges at Damietta, in the eastern Delta. This has been the main port in Egypt, used by merchants wishing to trade along the Nile, for decades. The Christian invasion of Damietta has diverted pilgrims and traders from North Africa and Iberia toward Alexandria. Alexandria is the main port on the western edge of the Delta. It does not link directly to the Nile, and so it is less convenient as a port, despite its excellent harbor.

Some of the silted, or missing, mouths of the Nile have been withdrawn from the mortal world by the Black. Some have been recoiled as reflections of injuries suffered in its skirmishes with the Red. One, the Pelusiac Mouth, has been hidden, to provide a secure base for the Servants of the Black.



## Cairo

Cairo is the capital of Egypt, but has only had that role for just over 50 years. It is a new and wonderful city, praised by pilgrims from all over the world. Many locals call Cairo "Misr," which is the Arabic name for all of Egypt. It is believed to be the name of a son of Noah, who was the first king of the country after the Flood. Misr's sons went on to found many of the great cities of Egypt.

## COPTIC CAIRO

Cairo retains a large and prosperous Coptic community. The Christian community in Egypt is treated better than in most other parts of the Muslim world. There are several reasons for this. Egypt surrendered to Islam rather than being taken by force, which made the Copts dhimmi, and gently restrains the legal options for exploitation available to the ruler. There are hadiths (sayings) from the Prophet granting Copts a special status as the "instruments and

help" of the Muslims. Ismail ibn Ibrahim, the patriarch of the Arabs, had a Coptic mother, and the Prophet had a Coptic wife. The previous, Fatimid, period was largely one of tolerance for the Copts, and this has continued into the current dynasty.

Copts in Egypt have some advantages over dhimmis elsewhere. Those who live in Alexandria pay no taxes except a sort of compulsory charitable giving for the poor. In many other areas, new churches are forbidden, but in Egypt they are often built. Islamic legal scholars allow this on the basis that presumably little towns had churches before the Arabs took power, and so the new buildings are in some sense merely continuations and enlargements of old places of worship. Dhimmis are not permit-

## Delta?

Referring to the fertile headwaters of the Nile as a "delta" is one of Herodotus's ideas. It refers to the triangular shape of the land, on certain maps. A "delta" is a triangular Greek letter. The Egyptians in ancient times, and the Copts who speak the old language, called this region Ta-Mehu, which means "Land of the Papyrus." This is notably similar to the Field of Reeds in Duat, the ancient afterlife, which is described in more detail in Chapter 4: Tombs. There are many gates to Faerie and the Magic Realm hidden in Ta Mehu.

## Story Seed: No Papa

The position of Patriarch of Alexandria has been vacant since 1216. There is a particular priest, Cyril ibn Laqlaq, who has such wealth and political influence that it is impossible to elect anyone else, but whom a core group oppose. If your version of Mythic Europe echoes real life, Cyril III will be ordained in 1235, and will be a notorious simoniac: possibly the reason the opposition to him was so zealous. The lack of a formal leader weakens Coptic influence, and player characters able to break the deadlock might gain the gratitude of the successful side.

ted to ride horses, but in Egypt they often do, being careful to dismount when passing the houses of Islamic noblemen and legal officers if when necessary.

Copts are still third class citizens (behind Muslims and new converts to Islam) and so are not permitted to carry weapons. This is important to the rulers, and is enforced stringently. In part this is because a hadith from the Prophet says that Egyp-

tians are the finest soldiers in the world. If, as this seems to imply, Egyptians have an innate talent for war, this means that the average Egyptian peasant mob is far more dangerous than a group of rebellious farmers elsewhere. Coptic revolts have been put down, with some difficulty, in various places, and the sultans have countered by raising Egyptian children as Muslims, separate from their Christian parents, as slave

soldiers. This cadre are called the mamluks.

The Coptic community is led, in a moral sense, by the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria. Following the relocation of the capital, it has been more convenient for the patriarch to live in the older part of Cairo than in Alexandria, where his official see lies. He believes himself to be the spiritual custodian of all Christians in Africa, but travel is so difficult that many of the Churches in communion with him act with great independence, and there is a Greek claimant to the See of Mark who actually still lives in Alexandria. The Hanging Church, the patriarch's cathedral, is located above the gatehouse of Babylon Fortress. Babylon Fortress was a Roman strongpoint. It is from here, it can be argued, that the Empire withdrew from Egypt, passing the territory, and the Copts, into the keeping of Islam.

### FUSTAT

Fustat was the capital of Egypt until its destruction in 1168. Prior to 1168, Shawar, the vizier of Egypt, had kept the country's Syrian and Christian neighbors at bay by playing them against each other. In 1168 Amalric of Jerusalem invaded. Shawar or-

## What is a Naphtha Pot? What is a Lighting Bomb?

A naphtha pot is a ceramic hand grenade, in which white water naphtha (petroleum) is held in a gel. The simplest are incendiaries, and catch fire when the ceramic casing cracks and the contents are exposed to air. A more complex version is explosive, and these are often made in an aerodynamic shape, so that they travel greater distances when launched by siege engines. A lighting bomb is a naphtha pot used as a fuse for other bombs, for example if they are set as a demolition charge. The can also be used to set fire to flammable objects, like thatch, crops, and furniture.

An incendiary naphtha pot is a thrown weapon. The damage it does depends on the viscosity of the fuel within it. Most pots contain a thick gel that burns for several minutes, doing +10 damage each turn to whatever the fuel touches. The fuel can instead be runnier, so that after it lands it spreads in a pool of flame that does +5 damage to every flammable thing it touches. The fuel can also be left as liquid petroleum, so that it becomes a brief ball of fire when the ceramic case cracks. This does (+5 – 1 per pace from the pot) Damage, for one round, but may start other fires.

An explosive naphtha pot does +10 Damage if it strikes a target, diminishing by 1 per foot. This damage is caused primarily by the fuel of the pot igniting. Naphtha pots are relatively weak explosives, and shrapnel from the ceramic jacket of the grenade may cause minor injuries, but high velocity explosions or metal jackets are beyond the usual level of skill found in bazaar-trading Egyptian alchemist. They are only encountered as special items in stories, or if made by player characters.

A poison pot releases toxic smoke. As poison is expensive, these grenades do not burst until they hit something, and as it is difficult to disperse a toxin in sufficient concentration over a large enough area, they are rarely preferable as an armament to an explosive grenade. They are, however, useful for sabotage, assassination, and perhaps, in large enough numbers, for dictating the movement of enemy forces on the battlefield. Player characters may also find them handy when confronting tomb spirits repelled by various types of incense.

Most professional Egyptian soldiers have seen naphtha bombs, and so do not panic when they are deployed. Untrained troops, mercenaries from other parts of the world, and horses, often break formation, and may flee, if attacked with explosives or incendiaries. Characters may face the naphtha with a Brave Personality trait roll against an Ease Factor of 5.

Rare specialists can create more potent effects than those listed above. The finest alchemists in Egypt, excepting perhaps those who serve the household of the sultan, are, however, Christian monks. They have little interest in experimenting with better grenade designs.

### MAKING NAPHTHA WITH MAGIC

Naphtha can be created with Creo Aquam spells, and is a processed natural liquid. This gives Creo Aquam spells a Base level of 3, and the Base Individual target is a pool one foot across and six inches deep, regardless of the viscosity of the naphtha. This is about one and a half gallons. naphtha created outside a container ignites immediately, due to contact with air.

## Plot Hook: Ancient Works Of Magic or Trickery?

This mosque was built on the site of the magical duel between Moses and the magicians of pharaoh. Player characters can call up the ghosts of these magicians, with the right assistance or Hermetic Virtues. Lacking any relic of the magicians, the characters must make an Arcane Connection to the spirits of the dead. Fortunately, the names of the two magicians are recorded, and one died during the Plague of the Death of the First Born Sons. Leadworkers (see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*) or those who practice defixiones (*Ancient Magic*) can use names to create Arcane Connections to the dead, and so can summon a pharaonic wizard here. Sadly, some of their magic was performed by trickery.

dered Fustat to be abandoned and burned, so that it could not be used as a base by the invaders. His forces used 20,000 naphtha pots and 10,000 lighting bombs to destroy the city. The Christian invasion was halted, and the Syrians then invaded, sweeping away the Christian forces and claiming Egypt for themselves.

The people of Fustat, one of the largest and most prosperous cities in Mythic Africa, were not permitted to take their property or riches with them as they fled. Many of the nobles of Fustat buried their wealth, or stayed to chance the Christian invasion, dying in the vizier's inferno. These treasures are still often found by treasure hunters, but they are also used by faeries and demons to tempt and reward humans caught up in their schemes.

Under the reign of Saladin and his immediate successors Fustat and Cairo were encircled by a single defensive wall. This is still under construction by innumerable Christian slaves, preferably from the Eastern Empire, because Byzantines are attributed with unparalleled skill as builders by the Egyptians. Although the single wall has made Fustat part of the capital, the ruined city has never been systematically rebuilt. It is a part of town where noxious trades are carried on, and waste is dumped.

## THE MARISTANS

The Cairo Hospital, supported by the Sultan, is one of the finest in the world. It is a center not only for medical treatment, but for research and teaching. Students travel from across the world to serve in the hospital. The building itself was originally a royal palace, and was given to the sick as an act of charity. The palace opposite was then turned into a women's hospital. Finally, a third building was constructed, for the treatment of the insane.

## MOSQUE OF IBN TULUN

This is the oldest mosque in Cairo, and one of the finest. It was originally built as a personal mosque by Ibn Tulun, the governor of Egypt, and adjoined his palace. His capital city, called Al-Qatta'i, has been completely demolished, with only this build-

ing left standing as successive capitals have grown about the site. It was constructed with treasure found by Ibn Tulun, reported to be over four tons of gold, on a single excavation. This mosque is reserved for the free use of students and travelers from the Maghreb, and supported by a subsidy from the sultan.

## THE NILOMETER

A nilometer is a device to measure the height of the floodwaters of the Nile. The nilometer at Cairo is, in a legal sense, the

official one, but many people keep their own nilometers as well. A suspiciously large number of old Coptic monks keep nilometers, and those who believe they retain some of the magic of the Ancient Egyptians consider these ritual objects. The monks gently mock this superstition.

The Cairo nilometer is a white, octagonal marble column kept in a square well near the city. It is divided into 22 cubits, called "fingers." When the annual flood reaches 16 cubits, this is called "full water." A festival begins immediately, and carries on for several days. The sultan is legally entitled to his land

## Story Seeds For the Maristans

As one of the most effective hospitals in the world, these buildings are a great place for player characters to recuperate after traumatic events. The hospitals cure the sick, but also have bath-houses, an excellent library, and free lectures where the interested, including recuperating patients, can develop their Medicine skill. Alchemists, paid for by the sultan, dispense basic cures, and can refer patients to more specialized care.

## PERFECT INGREDIENT

A plague has broken out in Egypt. The characters discover that it was last seen three hundred years ago, and that a particular scholar cured it somehow. An account by one of his students is found in the library of the Maristan. It says that a peculiar talisman was used to seal the illness into the pit where the final victims were laid. It also gives accidental clues to the location of the pit. The head of the Maristan, on becoming aware of this, sends an expedition.

The pit has been opened by grave robbers, who have carried off the talismans as spoils. While they own the distinctive talismans, they will not become ill, but can carry the sickness to others. The Maristan and the Guild of Seekers combine to track down these men, examine the talismans and find a way of replicating them. Each requires a rare ingredient, which the player characters are encouraged to fetch. A rival group has discovered the Maristan's plan, and wish-

es to harvest as much of the ingredient as they can, then destroy the source, so that their stores are of incalculable value.

## THE MAGICAL AIR

In Barcelona, previously normal people have begun developing the Magical Air Flaw. This is causing great strife, and some churchmen who have noticed the similarity between this affliction and the Gifted are blaming the Order. A local member of House Criamon has suggested that the Air is caused by an environmental contaminant, but how to find or treat it is beyond his knowledge. The Tribunal decides to try as many strategies as possible, and sends a delegation to the Maristan, to see if a similar problem occurs in their records.

## THE RETURNEE

A young woman in the Maristan for the mentally unwell has begun making ridiculous claims, which would be ignored if they were not in an archaic form of Latin. A Coptic monk suggests that the only time he has heard similar phrases was from a particular scholar, who is a member of the Order of Hermes. The girl claims to be Lucia of the line of Trianoma, returned from Twilight. The girl's parents swear this is not true, that she is the daughter of their bodies and they have raised her since her birth. How then does she know the Parma Magica?

taxes and tributes in any year that full water is reached, and the average height is 17 cubits. The festival involves dousing people with Nile water for luck, and dates back to pharaonic times. It's strikingly similar, in some ways, to the European feast of fools, where social conventions are turned on their head.

If full water is not reached, the sultan's almost-magical ability to pay for things begins to fail. This is rare: it happens perhaps every twenty years. Sometimes, perhaps to express the displeasure of the Divine, the flood fails for several years in a row. During these times famine is rife and, in the words of ibn-Jabyr,

the only hope is God. Some theorize that the Sultan's almost-magical ability to pay for things is somehow based on ancient Nile magic. Coptic monks insist that this is not the case, and that crop failure due to lack of water is a far better explanation for the severity of famine when full water is not reached.

## New Virtues: Child of the House and Teacher of the House

The House is a school, said to be in the grounds of the citadel, that prepares agents for the sultan's service. The House does not appear to take many students, perhaps as few as twelve at a time, and it is unclear what its students learn. It is known that the finest smith in Egypt is trained in the House, then retained as a teacher for his successor. An alchemist seems to be trained similarly, although his claim to being the greatest might be contested by some of the Coptic monks. Various diplomats and, if rumors are true, assassins have been trained by the House. Some have theorized that the curriculum of the House changes, depending on the problems the sultan's advisers can foresee, and the skill of the agents who have already been trained.

### TEACHER OF THE HOUSE (MYSTERY INITIATION PATH)

The House is, effectively, a machine to allow intense teaching. It houses excellent teachers, but more than this, it trains specialists in other skills how to teach them. It even provides Initiations that grant Virtues to aid teaching. The Initiation Scripts for teachers of the House require a mystagogue who has a new Ability called Lore of the House, which is an Organization Lore for the Cult. Beyond its ritual use, the Lore of the House includes information about its history, students, missions, and resources.

Mystery Initiations are simply easier for Gifted People than unGifted ones (compare *The Mysteries: Revised Edition* page 14 for Gifted and *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition* page 14 for unGifted initiates). The House may have faster paths of Initiation for the Gifted, but most students use those below.

**Good Teacher (Minor Virtue):** The mystagogue must have a (Presence + Lore of the House) total of at least 6. The candidate undergoes a ritual Ordeal, using magi-

cal items taken from the ancient House, and gains a Major Personality Flaw that makes the character loyal to the goals of the House (Vow or Code of Honor, as examples). Note that this is not the same thing as loyalty either to the sultan or the current leader of the House. This provides a script bonus of 9, for the required total of 15.

**Affinity with Teaching:** The mystagogue must have a (Presence + Lore of the House) total of at least 8. The character must make a pilgrimage, and find a great and charismatic teacher. She must then perform a difficult task that aids that teacher to spread his message. Script bonus (Special place and time (+3), Quest (+3) Loss of Time (+1), for the required total of 15.

**Improved or Great Communication:** The mystagogue must have a (Presence + Lore of the House) total of at least 8. The character and mystagogue travel to the site of an ancient library site and perform a ritual, which seems to invoke the Goddess Seshat. The character debates with Seshat, and if the character successfully persuades her to grant the character influence to teach, he is allowed to leave. (This requires a Communication + Charm roll against an Ease factor of 12). A character who argues with Seshat and fails to convince her is Spirited Away to her realm in Faerie, and forced to maintain her library until the next solar eclipse in Egypt (which happens at the discretion of the troupe, but is predictable by characters with astrological skills). Some humans who are Spirited Away age and develop new skills while in Faerie: others do not. Troupes should use whichever best suits their saga. A character who successfully persuades Seshat, or escapes her realm, is granted 3 Characteristic points which must be spent on Communication. If the character already has a score of 3, she gains the Great Characteristic Virtue. If she already has this Virtue, discuss alternatives with the Troupe.

This ritual has script bonus of +7 (Special place and Time (+3), Quest (+3), Loss of Time (+1)) for the required total of 15.

Some suggest that leaders of the House have undergone, or at least know scripts for, further Initiations, designed for the priesthood from which they descend.

### CHILD OF THE HOUSE (MAJOR GENERAL VIRTUE)

A child raised by the House is able to study four seasons a year, under some of the finest teachers in Europe, until becoming an active agent. During advanced character creation, in the Later Life stage, the character may spend 30 experience points per year, and may spend these points on any Ability that does not require a Supernatural Virtue.

Children of the House are fanatically loyal to the sultan, although they are able to hide this when necessary. Some suggest that this is because they are not loyal to the sultan, but merely to the House itself. To represent this, Children of the House are required to take the Code of Honor Major Flaw.

### AGENT OF THE SULTAN (MAJOR GENERAL VIRTUE)

An Agent of the Sultan has whatever resources the Sultan's advisors deem necessary. Provided work is not necessary to maintain a cover identity, this allows them to train constantly between assignments, for a total of three seasons per year. Agents in Cairo may continue to access the facilities at the House, if the sultan's advisors consider this the best use of the House's resources. This Virtue is, in a sense, an equivalent of the Wealthy Virtue.

An Agent of the Sultan may not leave the sultan's service. A character who has, for example, successfully faked his own death has the Dark Secret Flaw.

## Story Seeds for the Gizeh Plateau

The mastabas and pyramids of the Gizeh plateau are of little interest to most Egyptians, because it is thought particularly dangerous, even for a necropolis. It is rumored haunted, particularly at night. Its greatest guardian is the Lady of the Tombs. This seems, on the basis of limited accounts collected by Alexander of Jerbiton, to be a potent faerie once worshipped as Isis, that has slowly changed its role as its story has evolved. She seems to be able to call all of the other faeries in the area, and, most terribly, to rouse a faerie variant of the Father of Dread.

### PYRAMIDIANS

Of the three main pyramids here, only one has its capstone (called a pyramidion). The other two have, with great difficulty, been stolen and hidden. Pyramidions are powerful tethers, so they create Magical auras, but they are small enough that a spell or a cart can carry them. Who needs a mobile aura, and what have they been using it for over the last few hundred years?

### ARISTOTLE

The tomb of Aristotle is a pilgrimage site for scholars from across the remnants of Alexander's Empire. His philosophy lies at the root of much of Western philosophy, theology and magic theory. The strange thing is that only about one third of Aristotle's known works are available in Mythic Europe. Aristotle divided his writings into the exoteric, which were meant for publication, and the esoteric, which were personal musings, lecture notes and private correspondence. The third available seem to be mostly esoterica.

There's a chance that copies of the missing books, particularly those polished for publication, were buried with Aristotle. If a complete set is recovered these books provide a better understanding of how the world works, and provide a great deal of Insight over a wide range of projects. They also revolutionize many Abilities, rescaling them. All readers gain a +3 bonus on all Artes Liberales rolls, and others depending on what Aristotle wrote about. Incomplete sets also provide Insight, and act as books

of very high level in their appropriate Abilities. The temptation to dig into the side of his pyramid is strong. Fear of the defenses has, however, proven stronger.

### WHERE IS ALEXANDER?

The biggest pyramid in Egypt, according to most of the guides talking to those seeing the ruins, was designed for Alexander the Great, but he was never placed inside. According to ancient Egyptian custom, whoever buried pharaoh was the next pharaoh, so Ptolemy stole Alexander's corpse, and buried it in secret. For a long time, people thought he was in a particular sarcophagus, but this was a diversion, and really belonged to the final king of the dynasty before the Ptolemies. Hermetic magi actually know Alexander was buried in Memphis, and then Alexandria, and even have some idea of where. None of the local faeries care, and so treasure hunters keep coming back to Cairo with coins, amulets and papyri that hint they come from Alexander's tomb.

### HERODOTUS: THREE PYRAMIDS

Herodotus and Manetho, two historians widely read in Egypt, have a different set of inhabitants for each of the pyramids. The large pyramid belonged to King Cheops, who closed the temples, and forced everyone in Egypt to aid in its building for ten years, and when he ran short of money prostituted his daughter to finish the project. His brother, Chephren, likewise kept the temples closed and oppressed the people. The third king, Cheops's son Mykerinos, gave just rulings, reopened the temples, and allowed the people to go back to their professions. Since Egypt had been cursed to 150 years of suffering, he was opposing the will of the gods, who killed his only child and cut his life short. He responded to the message he had only six years to live with a concerted attempt to develop magical items which slowed time. Some suggest he was successful, and his magical lamps create a room-sized Faerie regio in which time travels more slowly. The location of his lamps is, however, unknown.

### THE ISLE OF GOLD AT GIZEH

The throne of the pharaoh who abused Moses was sunk deep into the Nile by God. It is still there, and becomes visible in famine years when the Nile is low. Strangely, no one has ever attempted to recover it.

### SAND OF HERMES

It is widely reported by pilgrims that the sand of the plateau, if carried as a talisman, increases Intelligence. This effect may be due to the presence of faeries which use the Grant Virtue Power to grant Improved Characteristics to some of the scholars who come to the tombs. These faeries withdraw their gift if the characters cease to study the ruins. Characters with unfortunate personal weaknesses can be manipulated by this into spending their lives looking at one confected tomb after another, discovering ultimately meaningless things while feeding the faeries' need for attention.

### THE CROCODILES OF GIZEH

At the highest point of Gizeh are statues of marble crocodiles. These keep real crocodiles out of their line of sight, protecting the river for three miles in each direction. Some say they were created by the Third Hermes himself. They have never been assessed in a laboratory by Hermetic magi, so their exact function is unknown.

There are many stories about *Abu'l-Ahwa*, "the Father of Dread." The Greeks call it "the strangler" or *sphinx* due to a vague similarity to a female, winged monster which used to strangle people in the Theban Tribunal if they couldn't answer a riddle. It is considered, by some, to represent a solar god. He appeared to Menkheperure (Thutmose IV), to ask that his statue be excavated from the desert sands which had almost buried it, according to a stela said to be between its paws. Mary laid the Christ child between its paws while resting on her flight into Egypt. It said by some to be the grave of Prophet Idris, or the God Thoth, or both. Perhaps if it were excavated, so that one could again perform rituals between its paws, answers might be found.

## Story Seeds for Alexandria

The city of Alexander has fallen far from its days as the center of learning for Mythic Africa, and yet some fragments of its time of prominence remain.

### FOREIGN PEOPLE

If the player characters want to mount an expedition into the east, Alexandria may be a convenient starting point. Alexandria is still relatively open to outsiders, not merely pilgrims from Iberia and North Africa, but also traders from France and Italy. This means it is one of the easier places to reach where magi may hire servants who speak eastern languages, and can give information about traveling there.

### LIBRARY

The Library of Alexander has been burned by so many people that the stories conflict, but many local stories agree on one point: part of the library has survived. Local Egyptians remember Queen Cleopatra not, in the Roman tradition, as a seductress who used her wealth and body to enslave men, but as a scholar and alchemist who, when the kingdom was threatened, took wise precautions. Many think that her grave, which has never been found, may give clues to the location of a secret repository of books from the Library of Alexandria.

Others say that the land the library was founded upon slid into the sea. The Egyptian habit of writing by carving in stone means that if any of the walls remain intact, magi with suitable spells might salvage their teachings from the depths.

### LIGHTHOUSE MIRROR

The Lighthouse (or Pharos) is one of the remaining wonders of the world. It has suffered repeated damage and reconstruction, so its tower is now abbreviated, and capped with a mosque. Some magi claim that there is a powerful aura on the whole island on which the Lighthouse rests, while say that they have tested this claim, and no aura was discernible.

The mirror that was once found at the

apex of the Lighthouse is an extraordinary object. It is made of Serican iron, and so cunningly crafted that a man staring into it, when it was still in place, could identify ships many hours before the unaided eye could discern them. At night the fire of the Lighthouse could be seen for many miles. During war, the mirror could be used to incinerate enemy ships in the harbor.

The mirror went missing some time ago. A Byzantine spy spread rumors of treasure within the Pharos, which led to a sort of riot. During the disturbance he stole the mirror and, unable to destroy it, had it cast into the sea. Why he was unable to destroy the mirror is unclear: some magi hypothesize that it embodies a potent spirit of artifice which defends it from harm.

- A sedentary Verditus magus offers to pay the player characters to locate the mirror. Can the player characters find a way to search the seabed? Can they find ghosts who recall the casting of the mirror into the sea? Can an Arcane Connection to the mirror be procured?
- A powerful magus in the early stages of planning an Alexandrian covenant has been distracted by the Christians feuding in Damietta, and wants to remain there for the time being. He pays the player characters to live on the island for a year, and discover the reason for the inconsistent reports concerning its aura.
- The side of the Lighthouse has an inscription to the memory of the architect, which only became visible centuries after his death. The inscription originally flattered the king who sponsored the Lighthouse's construction, but the masons carved this into a thin layer of lime plaster, which in time cracked away, revealing the final inscription underneath. Another sheet of lime plaster has fallen away, and was concealing a detailed prediction concerning future events in the Order. Is it a hoax? If it is genuine, are there any other messages hidden on the building? Can whoever wrote them be trusted?

### THE MYSTERY OF THE OIL

Pilgrims who visit Alexandria often remark on a strange habit of the people of this city: they are as active at night as during the day. This perhaps stems from the port: cargoes are unloaded unceasingly, night and day. Workers need food and other supplies at night, so traders seeking their custom stay open very late. Their suppliers in turn stay open late, until the whole city has a vibrant culture which never stops, and indeed barely slows down. No one has noticed that this doesn't make economic sense.

The reason other ports don't operate around the clock is that oil, for lamps, is expensive. No one knows where the tremendous amount of oil used to light the city every night comes from. Pilgrims imagine it is one of the bounties of the sultan, and the sultan's servants assume that oil is just produced cheaply on surrounding farms. They don't investigate because Alexandrians, by ancient right, pay no taxes beyond a minor poll tax, so it wouldn't matter, legally, if the Alexandrian people were growing diamonds on trees.

There is no satisfactory explanation for the cheap oil in Alexandria. If Alexandria was on the other side of the Mediterranean, the Quaesidores would be checking for Hermetic magi making oil using Creo magic. If Alexandria is settled by a covenant, the Quaesidores ask for this matter to be thoroughly investigated, and if unsatisfied with the answers, send a team of Quaesidores and hoplites, as a clear message that the remit of Hermetic law now extends to North Africa.

### TOURISM

Wealthy people of classical education come from across the world to wander the ruins of Alexandria, a copy of Diodorus or Arrian in one hand and a helpful guide tugging the other. The Jerbiton rite of passage known as the Itinerarium, which is a form of extended holiday to places of great artistic significance, does not generally come this far south, but a suitably skilled Jerbiton might lead a band of apprentices here. The players can either act as guards for the apprentices, or rescuers when unexpected obstacles arise.



## SALADIN'S CITADEL

As part of his project to encircle Old and New Cairo in a defensive wall, Saladin created a central strong point, the citadel. The citadel is incomplete in 1220, but it has been the center of government for decades, and as construction continues the bureaucracy of Egypt keeps centralizing in this complex.

The citadel contains the sultan's living quarters. Among his innumerable treasures is the library. The last great census of the library occurred in the time of the previous, Fatimid, dynasty. It contained 600,000 books, 18,000 specifically on magic, astrology and alchemy.

## TOMBS OF QARAFAH

This cemetery is filled with the tombs of relatives of the Prophet, and his companions. It fills a large area, and includes four great congregational mosques, with many smaller mosques and theological colleges. The poor, scholars and travelers are welcome to stay in the smaller mosques. The sultan pays for the upkeep of these places, and the living costs of many of the inhabitants. This costs him a couple of thousand dinars a month, and is considered a marvel by pilgrims. Magi might be either scholars, if they are staying here, or travelers if they are passing through, and so can live here, supported by the generosity of the sultan, if they wish.

## THE GIZEH NECROPOLIS

The Gizeh Necropolis lies about a day's travel south of Cairo and contains three great pyramids, and a colossal statue of a lion with the head of a man. The contents of these structures has been the matter of some debate. Travelers report many strange local beliefs. Some say that Aristotle is under one of the Pyramids, and that the largest was prepared for Alexander, but that he was buried in secret instead. Some say they were built by a pharaoh to save the wisdom of his people from the Flood of Noah. Others say that, much like the impossible number of tombs found elsewhere, the buildings were miraculously created by Allah, or a false god, like Hermes. Saladin's son attempted to demolish the pyramid closest to the great statue, and it shows damage to this day. He was following the most widely

held of beliefs: that there is treasure everywhere, even in those places where other people have already removed the treasure.

The Hirranian Sabeans also have stories about the statue. These Sabeans are treated as People of the Book by the sultan, possibly because they have been confused with the Sabians. The Hirranian Sabeans say the statue represents the god Horon. It it is, according to them, the tomb of one of the three great scholars named Hermes, whom they conflate with the Prophet Idris (Enoch). The Sabeans practice urn burial around the statue, and sacrifice white roosters to it.

## Why All of the History?

The battles and personalities involved in the Fifth Crusade are presented here in rather more detail than is usual. This is to assist troupes who start their saga a few years earlier than the usual 1220 starting date, so as to play the crusade through. It also aids players whose characters are veterans of the war, displaced into Hermetic service.

## Bezant?

This is an Italian term for the gold coins of Constantinople (Byzantium). Venetians, particularly, also used the term for other gold coins, so the coins on offer were probably gold dinars. By Islamic law, a dinar weighs the same as 72 average grains of barley, but their weight in practice varies. That the sultan has 30,000 of them readily to hand demonstrates his wealth, and the luctrativeness of a raid on his treasury. Characters who favor the crusade could aid it immensely by discovering where these bezants are, and making off with them.

# Alexandria

Alexandria is an ancient city, much faded with time, but recently resurgent. Since the end of Roman rule in Egypt, Alexandria has been dwindling, its prestige and wealth stolen by Fustat, then Cairo. In the ninth century the city's walls were rebuilt, and they surrounded about half of the ancient city. The city continued to shrink until 1181, when Saladin refortified Alexandria, and founded new suburbs to the east and south of the walls. The city is currently enjoying a period of comparative prosperity.

The loss of Damietta to the Fifth Crusade, just last year, has made this the prime port for the court in Cairo. Pilgrims wishing to avoid pillage by the Christians land at Alexandria, and then cross the land to the Nile, before continuing south. Alexandria is now also the main fleet base for the sultan, which has bought work and money to the city. The sultan's largesse, always tremendous in this city, flows in at an unprecedented rate. There's money to be made, and the city is full of the sharp, the ambitious, and the connected.

# Almost Magic

Although Alexandria's people pay no taxes save the awqaf (a small poll tax), the sultan pours out riches through the town. The sultan's benefactions to this city are too great to count. They are so numerous that, if a storyguide ever needs to come up with a justification for virtually any practice, she can just say "The sultan pays for it." As examples, Alexandria has more mosques than any other city in the world. There are estimated to be between 8,000 and 12,000 mosques in the city, each with an imam who is paid a stipend of 5 dinars by the sultan. The sultan gives away 2,000 loaves of bread each day in Alexandria. This custom was set up by Saladin, who said that people who crossed the desert should have this bread, even if they were carrying their own weight in gold and silver. The loaves of bread must be taken, even if travelers neither need nor want them, and many are passed on to the less fortunate of the city. So long as the Nile is high and he is rich, the sultan has so much money that highly unlikely things happen in his name.

# Damietta

The city of Damietta was a port in ancient times, but lost its importance when Alexandria was constructed, stealing much of its trade. In Arabic times, Damietta retained some importance as a naval base, but did not grow to prominence again until Fustat, the capital of Egypt before Cairo, became a large city. This was a gradual process, but by the 13th century Damietta had grown to become the most important port on the Nile. The leaders of the Fifth Crusade decided to seize it, and return it in exchange for Jerusalem. That, upon its loss in 1219, the sultan offered to trade away Jerusalem, before the Christians even asked for it, demonstrates Damietta's strategic and economic value.

## The Fifth Crusade

After the disaster of the Fourth Crusade, Pope Innocent III attempted to preach a new armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem, led not by kings but by the Church itself. This was met with little enthusiasm from the kings, who were still asked to attend, just not control anything. It was also in part sabotaged by Innocent's success in inspiring crusades in southern France, against the Cathars, and in Iberia, against the Moors. These conflicts were closer and seemed more lucrative to nobles in Western courts.

Innocent's successor, Honorius III, did eventually muster an army, mostly from lesser nobles, and a fleet from Frisia to carry them. In 1217 the army gathered in Italy, but the Frisian fleet was delayed, so in 1218 part of the army landed in Acre. After some discussion with the leaders of the various states in Outremer, it was decided that Jerusalem, even if taken, could not be kept while Egypt remained a power. The crusaders re-embarked, and landed near Damietta. Their plan was to take this city, and use it as a base to prepare an attack on Cairo.

A relief force, led by Al-Kamil, the vizier of Egypt, was able to keep the Christians on the defensive for six months, until February 1219. Shortly after the Christians landed, the old sultan had died, and this vizier took his place. The Christians were only able to defeat the relief force in odd

circumstances (see Story Seeds, later). The camp of the Egyptian army was sacked and Cardinal Pelagius, the Pope's representative, was able to take credit. He became the de facto leader of the crusaders.

Al-Kamil wanted to clear Egypt of the crusaders, so that he would be free to consolidate his rulership of his own territories. He offered the crusaders a deal: in exchange for their immediate departure and thirty years of truce, he would give them Jerusalem and all surrounding territory, save two castles. This fractured the leadership of the Crusaders. John of Brienne, the titular King of Jerusalem, and the barons of Outremer, wanted to accept the deal. Cardinal Pelagius put John in his place and turned it down, with the support of the Italian nobles. Pelagius also had the support of the masters of the Templars and Hospitallers, who were the de facto leaders of the French nobles. Al-Kamil sweetened the deal by offering an extra 30,000 bezants paid immediately in coin. Pelagius once again refused.

Pelagius ordered a series of attacks on Damietta, and had to counter sorties from within the city. Al-Kamil returned with a fresh army, to harass the Christians. Hoping for a decisive blow, the Christians massed against the sultan's fortified position in August 1219. Al-Kamil retreated, and then the Christians forces lost cohesion as various leaders ordered pursuit, looting, or returning to their positions surrounding Damietta in case of a sortie. Al-Kamil noticed this, and attacked. The professional core of the Christian army, led by John of Brienne and the military orders, prevented complete rout, but the defeat was heavy.

Al-Kamil, still wanting the Christians gone, offered them a fresh deal. The offer was: thirty years truce, all of the land except the two castles, 30,000 bezants, the True Cross, money to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (which his brother had pulled down in January) and all of the prisoners he'd just taken in the battle. Again, John of Jerusalem was strongly in favor, but the Italians and French were against. The Italians believed the Holy Roman Emperor was about to arrive, and that this would tip the strategic balance. Al-Kamil continued raiding, hoping to resupply and re-garrison Damietta, but the Christians repelled his attacks.

In November 1219, some crusaders noticed one of the towers of the town was



not garrisoned. A small group climbed over an unguarded wall, opened an undefended gate, and the city fell. Of the 80,000 inhabitants when the siege began in February, only 3,000 were still alive, and of these, only 100 were healthy. The city was looted, against the orders of the leaders of the Crusade, but the remaining defenders were so few that they could be defended by the personal retinues of the leadership group, and so they were kept from harm.

Al-Kamil could see no way to retake Damietta. The city had fallen without damage to its defenses, and the crusaders controlled the sea approaches, so it could be resupplied. As he had the option of neither assault or siege, he retired twenty miles south, to Mansourah. Al-Kamil knew his army was demoralized and that the crusaders had the momentum of the war on their side. The Nile inundation failed in 1219, so his almost-magical ability to pay for things could not be used. Al-Kamil waited out the winter, expecting an immediate assault. He hastily threw together defensive fortifications, and braced himself for a final battle. Loss of Mansourah, and his army there, would leave nothing between the crusaders and Cairo.

## Story Seeds from the Fifth Crusade

There are many little side stories from the history of the Fifth Crusade that offer story seeds for troupes.

### BREAKING THE CHAIN

The approaches to Damietta are protected by water, and a stout chain, strung across the Nile, prevented troops landing on the firmer ground behind the city. The chain ran from the city walls, across the navigable channel of the river, to a small tower on an island. Destroying this chain took a month. Two groups of people are absolutely certain that they destroyed the chain.

A group of French soldiers are perfectly certain they laid siege to the small tower on the island. They attacked it from boats until they wore down the defenders, then they rushed the tower with scaling ladders, many of their comrades dying in the process. Many carry small pieces of the chain, as mementoes of the battle.

A group of Dutch soldiers are equally cer-

tain they created a ship with a massive saw beneath it, like the ram of a galley. They rammed the saw against the chain, then backed water and rammed again, eventually cutting the chain in half. They have commissioned church bells, which will be rung annually in celebration of their victory. The Dutch warriors also often carry bits of the chain, drawn from the water by the fixed ends once the city had fallen.

The odd thing is that some of the leaders of the crusade believe that both stories are true, without noticing that this isn't possible. It's not that they have thought the matter through and attributed a share of the victory to each group: when talking to the Dutch they absolutely believe the Dutch story, and when talking to the French they completely believe the French story. If they are ever confronted with the incompatibility of the stories, they can't see what the problem is, and soon after forget the conversation.

Is this a miracle, hidden by Divine power, or the machinations of two powerful faeries, contesting for the vitality of the crusaders?

### THE DEFEAT OF THE KURDS

The Christians were able to destroy the first Egyptian army due to infighting. The Sultan heard rumors that the general of his largest contingent of warriors, the Kurds, was preparing a coup against him. With a great deal of dramatic flair, the sultan burst into the tent where the conspirators were meeting, and at the precise moment they all had their hands on a copy of the Qur'an making oaths to depose him. Taking them all prisoner, he returned to Cairo, to consolidate his position, in case conspirators were also active there. His army scattered when they woke, as their leader was gone and his general was a prisoner.

Is the conspiracy to overthrow the sultan a mundane plot? It might have been generated within the army, or by Christian agents. Alternatively, is it a form of contagious madness caused by a demon, the result of a faerie whispering promises of rule to the general, or a battle between the puppets of the Order of Suleiman?

## DAMIETTA IN JANUARY 1220

The Christians were able to keep their rivalries in check while there were no spoils from the war. Now that Damietta and much of the surrounding land has been conquered, the leaders have fallen out completely. John of Brienne assumed that Damietta was to be part of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, but Pelagius has said this is not the case, although he has not said to whom it should belong. Somehow, Pelagius has also offended both crusading orders, so they now support John of Brienne.

Soldiers partisan to various lords have fought minor skirmishes, so for their own protection crusaders now keep together in squads of countrymen. In the last month, some of these squads have fought fatal battles in the streets, and the Italians have made a concerted push to force all Frenchmen from the city. The crusading orders, who had stayed serenely above what they see as little more than an argument over booty, have in turn routed the Italians. All the while Pelagius keeps waiting for the Holy Roman Emperor, and he continues not to arrive.

## Qus and Southern Egypt

Qus is an ancient city, called Apolloinopolis by the Greek historians, which fell from prominence but has risen in the last century to be the second largest city in Egypt. Its rise is due to three main factors. The Fifth Crusade has blocked traditional pilgrimage routes, diverting them across the Red Sea; Qus is considered the last civilized place in Egypt on the new route. The city of Qift, which used to serve as the gateway for foreign merchants into southern Egypt, was the site of a Christian uprising, and the sultan's brother put 3,000 of the inhabitants to the sword, allowing Qus to steal Qift's role as a market. Finally, there is a gold rush at nearby Wadi Allaqi, and Qus serves as the main center for the production of mining supplies. Many new families have risen to power in Qus, propelled by trade and mining.

Merchants from Egypt meet their equiva-

## Story Seeds from the Fifth Crusade (Cont'd)

### PULLING IT ALL DOWN

In real world history, the Egyptians decided that the loss of Damietta could never again be permitted. To prevent this they pulled Damietta down, and replaced it with a new city, also called Damietta. The new site, a mile and a half away, was better defended by both by expensive fortifications and by its geography. As Damietta's buildings are pulled down, to provide building material for the new city, treasures and secrets are revealed. Ghosts are disturbed, and the hidden cesspits of the servants of the Infernal are exposed.

The selection of the new site, if carefully manipulated by magi, might include ancient tombs, with Magic auras, creating lacunae in the city's Dominion.

### PELAGIUS'S DESTINY

Pelagius was lifted to the leadership in part because, in Damietta, a prophecy was found which predicted his victory. The prophecy is written in an ancient book, in Arabic, but no one is sure who wrote it, or how it came to be found by a crusader. If the characters can find a clearer version of *Pelagius's Destiny*, as the book has come to be called, they can trade it to either side for valuable concessions. Alternatively, they can use the material it contains to manipulate events themselves.

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

In the real world, the Fifth Crusade failed. This might not happen in Mythic Africa, so here are some key events to hang stories on. The player characters may alter the flow of these events at any time, sometimes with quite subtle manipulation.

In February 1220, the various factions agree to redivide the spoils from the sack of Damietta. This brings peace between the warriors, although their leaders still can't stand each other. John of Brienne is given permission by the Pope to leave the crusade, to attempt to claim the throne of Armenia. This leaves Pelagius in sole charge of the Crusade, but he's not a noble and so has little practical experience commanding on the battlefield. He decides to

wait for Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor, to arrive. This will give him both reinforcements and a skilled general. Frederick II never arrives, although in May 1221, 25,000 of his soldiers do, commanded by Louis of Bavaria. Louis strongly suggests an immediate attack and preparations begin. John of Brienne returns in July, and counsels against an immediate attack, but is, again, unable to affect Pelagius's policies.

The Egyptians, who had spent the last year wondering why the Christians were giving them so much time to rearm, march out to meet the invaders. Shocked by the size of the enemy host they retreat to the military city which had grown up at Mansourah, behind a tributary of the Nile. The Christians pursue them and fortify a position opposite the city, at Sharimshah. In August, the Nile floods, and a dry canal the Christians had crossed in pursuit of the Egyptians begins to fill. The Egyptians get ships into the canal, cutting off the army's path of retreat and resupply. Pelagius orders a retreat back to Damietta.

This goes spectacularly wrong. The Teutonic Knights set fire to most of the supplies, to deny them to the Egyptians. They are unable to burn the wine, so to keep it from Muslim hands, many crusaders get drunk. The Egyptians, watching the Christians burn their camp, are forewarned that a retreat is imminent. As the Christians begin to flee, Al-Kamil orders the wall lining the canal smashed open. This transforms the land through which the Christian army is marching into thick mud. The Egyptians wait for nightfall, then attack from firm ground. The Christians rally about John of Brienne and the masters of the crusading orders and retreat to their camp, but as there are no supplies there, they are forced to surrender or starve. Pelagius finds his way onto a boat and runs the Egyptian blockade of the canal, but even he sees that all is lost. He accepts an offer from the sultan in which Damietta is handed back and the Christians leave Egypt for at least eight years. In return, all prisoners from either side are freed, and the return of the True Cross is promised. Oddly, the Sultan's servants cannot find the True Cross; it has been stolen. On 8 September 1221, the Egyptians re-enter Damietta.

## Story Seeds From Qus

As it is the second city of Egypt, there are many stories which may begin in Qus.

### AKHMIM

Pilgrims traveling south to Qus usually pass through a city called Akhmim, which is likely to be of interest to Hermetic magi. Arabic writers say that wizards live in a temple there, and are served by moving statues, or perhaps moving reliefs on the walls. The travelers' reports say that the statues fulfill the desires of the magicians, and yet these magicians have no political power. They do not, for example, politically dominate the town surrounding their temple.

There are many theories as to why these wizards have not taken control of the surrounding area. Some magi, who note that the town is named for a god who in classical times was seen as equivalent to Pan, suggest their magic is weak outside the Faerie aura of the temple. Some Christians call them worshippers of Asmodeus, and say they are kept down by the imminent wrath of God. Some Muslims counter that they serve a Divine being, and avoid contact with the outside world for pious reasons.

### ESCORT

A redcap or magus wanting to explore Ethiopia or Arabia asks for an escort to Qus. The character wants to contact the merchants who come here. She hopes to learn the language of the distant country in which she is interested, and learn the dangers on the route she must travel.

### KEEPERS OF THE ROADS

In emergencies merchants leave their goods by the sides of the road. These are guarded by faeries, who enforce the boundaries of the road, and the moral boundary concerning theft. These creatures do not need to attack their victims; they can simply disorientate them and hide the road, so that the thief dies of exposure or thirst. Characters may be asked to find the bodies of lost merchants, for burial, or to save a merchant who has angered a keeper by theft, but had the good fortune not to die of thirst.

### LUXOR

Qus is the closest large settlement to the ancient capital at Thebes, its necropo-

lis, and the temples of Luxor and Karnak. The tombs near Thebes are rock-cut, and likely include those for rulers directly following the odd period under the heretical, monotheistic Pharaohs of the lost city of Armarna.

### QIFT

The town of Qift is full of Coptic Christians who have been impoverished by the failure of their rebellion. Magi seeking grogs, companions who speak Coptic, and people influential with the Coptic clergy may seek hirelings in Qift.

### SMUGGLING

The Qusian authorities stringently enforce taxes on merchants, but smuggling is difficult because the narrowness of the Nile Valley acts as a choke point for travel. Magi or their servants, able to travel through the desert, can make a great deal of money smuggling. Shipping goods to the gold miners at Wadi Allaq, and carrying away untaxed gold in return, might be particularly lucrative.

### INFERNAL SITE?

Sultans no longer charge pilgrims to cross Egypt, but the previous dynasty, the Fatimids did. Everyone entering Egypt via 'Aydhab owed a fine of seven and a half dinars. Those who did not pay were hung by the testicles. The names of offenders were then sent on to Qus, and some other places, where, if they were found without proof of payment, the tax agents would do something which medieval travelers refer only to as "worse." The House of Torturers retains an Infernal aura, and minor demons, which encourage locals to rob or murder pilgrims, dwell there.

## Story Seeds Near 'Aydhab

### PEARLS

Characters wanting to make money in this region in an entirely legal way might seek out the nearby islands. Surrounding them are seabeds which teem with a silver bivalve. Its flesh tastes like sea turtle, its shells are mother of pearl, and pearls are often found in the brief pearl season, in June each year. Pearls are recovered by divers, but every ton of shellfish gives only approximately four pearls. Some divers pass out as they surface, and these seem to sate the creatures who guard the pearls. If magi make diving safer, these creatures may cease slumbering.

### BUJAT

Sailing from Jiddah back to 'Aydhab is dangerous, as winds blow people south into the lands of the Bujat, called the Blemmyae by the Romans. According to some travelers, the Bujat rent camels to people and lead them north, but under-supply each caravan. The Bujat then claim the goods and possessions of the people who die of hunger and thirst on the trip.

The al-Bujat originally lived around Philae, and were Isis worshippers. They fought the Romans, forcing them to move Egypt's border north and garrison it. Their sultan lives in the mountains near Philae. Some travelers report the family are morally corrupt and nudists, who never wear more than a loincloth, and often less. It is not clear if these are the Bujat, or acephalous faeries who have adopted their name and story.

lents from Yemen, Ethiopia, and beyond in Qus. Many complain that in Qus the taxes are levied unfairly. Common complaints are: that goods are assessed for annual taxes, even if they have not been owned for a year; that the assessors do not take into account the minimum possessions and tools of trade which should be exempt; and that the assessors check for smuggling by piercing the bags of good with sharpened sticks. On the other hand, merchants in this area feel extremely safe: a merchant whose camels become ill will often drop loads of pepper, cinnamon or other spices on the roadside, and return in the expectation that these riches will have been left untouched by other passersby.

### AYDHAB

'Aydhab, on the Red Sea, has existed as a seedy port for pirates and smugglers for centuries. It has recently become very wealthy, because it is the port by which pilgrims leave Egypt for Jiddah. Travel narratives advise pilgrims to stay in trusted groups here, perhaps with others from the same town or region, for the locals are more like beasts than men, and will rob and murder pilgrims if there is money in it.

There are no natural resources in the desert around 'Aydhab. No crops are harvested by locals. Even drinking water needs to be imported. Most of the older buildings are made of woven reeds, every reed shipped in from the Nile. A few of the newer and fancier buildings are made of plaster. The town's wealth comes, officially, from merchants, pilgrims and fishing. The merchants are pirates, the pilgrims are victims, the fishing is poor.

The merchants of the town deliberately pander to the vices of the pilgrims. Some, believing that the pilgrimage in some way washes out their sins, take the opportunity of the journey to enjoy forbidden acts. Most of these experiences can be had, at exorbitant prices, in Aydhab.

Pilgrims passing through the town are fleeced in three legal ways. The prices for necessities are notorious, even given the shortages in the town. Pilgrims are forced to pay a portion of their food as a tax. This is a relatively light imposition. Finally pilgrims must rent jilabs, the local variety of ship, if they wish to continue their journey.

A jilab is a rickety wooden boat. Its planks are sewn together with coconut fibre, caulked with palm tree shavings, rigged with sails made of Theban palm leaves, and

the hull is greased with castor or shark oil. There are so many reefs in the Red Sea that these boats, which flex when they strike submerged obstacles, are considered far safer than boats nailed into a rigid shape. The cost of renting the boat is extremely high, so that if it sinks and the pilgrims die, the owner is not out of pocket. There is a local saying is "Ours to produce the ships: the pilgrims to protect their lives." Boats are often lost: they are packed full of pilgrims, and the Red Sea is notorious for shipwrecks and sharks. Every person from the town who is not poor has at least two boats.

### Rural Life: The Iqta' System

Most Egyptians live along the length of the Nile, and depend for their livelihood on agriculture. In the Iqta' system, the sultan divides his land between his powerful supporters, through a series of contracts. In these contracts the right to the produce of particular territories is exchanged for military service and taxes. The Egyptian system differs from the European in that these lands are deliberately not hereditary, to prevent

## Story Seeds: Sugar Cane

Cane sugar is a new crop in Egypt, still found in relatively few areas. If Mythic history follows actual history, it will rapidly expand to be one of the main crops in certain areas of southern Egypt. The rulers of Egypt like growing sugar because, although it needs land which has long been fallow, requires tremendous amounts of water, and is a pain to press for its juice, it is avidly sought by European merchants. Europeans are strangely addicted to sugar, and treat it like a spice. They pay enormous amounts of money for what is, when you have the finances to overcome the setup costs, a relatively easy crop to grow.

### PEASANT REVOLT

Sugar requires far fewer workers to maintain than wheat or barley. In some areas, nobles who are residents of the capital and have no emotional connection

to their territories have demanded the people grow as much sugar as is possible, at the expense of other crops. This creates widespread unemployment, and may even create famine if several nobles in a region all try this simultaneously, counting on their profits to buy wheat from their neighbors. When a horde of starving peasants threaten the interests of the magi, can they deflect their ire?

### A WHEEL FOR THE VERDITIUS

Sugar cane is crushed with waterwheels, and a Verditus magus has become interested in their mechanisms. He lives in Greater Alps, and has sent a messenger by redcap, asking the player characters to carefully disassemble the most efficient wheel they can find, and ship it to him. Can the player characters procure such a

wheel without disturbing the mundanes, pull it apart without breaking it, and ship it away? Would it be easier just to find the finest maker of waterwheels in Egypt, and send him to the Alps? Do the player characters accompany the shipment through Italy? How do they cope with the nobles attracted by the rumors of a Saracen siege engine?

### THE SOURCE OF THE CANE

Sugar cane appears very suddenly in Egypt, and there are rumors it was given to the first farmers by supernatural powers. Did a demon of gluttony first offer the canes to humans? Are there really faeries that can possess the bodies of children who eat sugar, and make them run madcap?

nobles developing regional bases of power. Once the sultans used to order the entire class of landholders (called *mutqas*) to move domains, on a regular timetable, but this has ceased because the last time it was tried the wealthy nobles threatened to revolt. Now each family moves when its leader dies, and his heir is sent to some other place.

After the land floods, a servant of the *muqta* arrives in each village to assess how high the flood water has risen. He classifies land by how well irrigated and fertile it

is. He then assigns different fields to different cultivators, through a series of written contracts. These contracts usually include a loan of seed, tools, or money, and they state a required return at harvest, specifying the crops to be grown, and also regular, small, payments in money. Most contracts go to settled farmers, but may include itinerant farmers. These are particularly common if land that is generally unflooded has been inundated this year, if a lot of inundated land is to be farmed, or if they are skilled in

tending a new and desired crop, like sugar cane. All of these contracts are witnessed, and the head men of villages are given responsibility for making sure that the agreed things are done.

Note that in this system, the nobles move and the farmers have no legal connection with a specific piece of land. Magi from Europe, where many covenants are agrarian, may find it difficult to maintain their power using familiar tricks, like a tame nobleman.

## The Farming Year

The calendar of Egypt differs from that of Europe, but for convenience, modern months are used here as approximations:

### SEPTEMBER

Quince, winter grapes and dates are picked. Citrus begins to be harvested.

Balsam is teared out.

Irrigation canals opened. Loan seed is distributed.

### OCTOBER

Rice harvested.

Trefoil and turnips are planted.

Myrtle and nenuphar pressed for oil.

The Nile reaches its height.

### NOVEMBER

Wallflower, violet, narcissus and horseradish are harvested.

Water is drained from flax fields, seeds are sown.

### DECEMBER

Sugar cane in its second year is harvested and pressed. Other crops harvested include narcissus, carrots, citrus, green broad beans, and white leeks.

Trefoil is sown.

### JANUARY

Young sugar cane is harvested.

Trees are transplanted.

Waterwheels for pressing cane are set up.

Fields are weeded and plowed. Irrigation dykes are breached.

### FEBRUARY

Almonds, grapes, lotus fruit, and turnips are harvested.

Fields are plowed again, twice more by preference.

Summer crops are planted.

### MARCH

Broad beans, lentils and flax are purchased.

Ships from Africa sail to Mediterranean ports.

Summer crops cultivated.

Sugar cane is planted in a field that has been left fallow for years.

### APRIL

Broad beans, barley, cereals, cucumbers and roses are harvested.

Flax seeds threshed.

### MAY

Balsam, sesame and rice sown.

Crops threshed.

### JUNE

Figs, peaches, pears, prunes, mulberries, dates and sour grapes harvested.

18th: Festival of Saint Michael, when the Nile begins to rise.

Flax is soaked. Indigo is planted, and harvested after one hundred days.

Honey is gathered.

### JULY

Flax is drained and dried.

### AUGUST

Unripe dates are harvested.

Summary: Common Crops Along the Nile

Agriculture along the Nile benefits from Egypt's role as a nexus of trade. Crops from all corners of the globe travel here, and are rapidly adopted.

### SUMMER CROPS

Cabbage, caraway, cotton, cumin, eggplant, green beans, indigo, lettuce, melons, nile sesame, onion, radishes, sesame, sugar cane, taro, and turnips.

### WINTER CROPS

Barley, broad beans, chickpeas, flax, garlic, grass peas, lentils, lupine, onions, trefoil, and wheat.

## Chapter Seven

# Nubia

The name of Nubia belongs to that part of the Nile Valley where the floodplain is narrow and discontinuous, and where the river's six cataracts can be found. In the days of ancient Egypt, Nubia was occupied by the legendary Empire of Kush, which met its end in the fourth century. When Christian missionaries first entered Nubia in the sixth century, they found three kingdoms flourishing in the ruins of Kush: Nobatia, Makuria, and Alodia. These three nations persist to this day.

The region is called the *bled es-Sudan*, Land of the Blacks, by the Arabs. Geographically, it is divided into Lower Nubia, covering the first two cataracts, and Upper Nubia south of that. Lower Nubia is characterized mostly by desert; there is an almost total absence of rainfall and, apart from a narrow strip alongside the river, it is an extremely hostile environment. Agriculture is possible only through extensive irrigation using mule-driven waterwheels. In contrast, Upper Nubia has significant seasonal rainfall and extensive vegetation. Where a river meets the Nile, the area within the confluence is usually highly productive, and population clusters in these 'islands'. The rich agricultural land of Upper Nubia is buffered from the desert by savannah. In the far south, Upper Nubia blends into the Ethiopian Highlands.

## History

The upper reaches of the Nile River have been occupied since the time of ancient Egypt, although little is known of this time. There were a series of kingdoms, one centered around Ballana (near Pakhoras) and another further upriver at Kerma. These smaller kingdoms were conquered

and absorbed into a single state under one emperor, under the name of Kush.

### THE EMPIRE OF KUSH

Roman Egypt's southern neighbor, the Empire of Kush was ruled by monarchs called *qores*, the descendants of a line of Nubian pharaohs of Egypt long after their reign ended in Egypt itself. The Kushite people were descended from Cush son of Ham son of Noah, and Kush gained its independence from Egypt a thousand years before the birth of Christ. The capital of the Kushite Empire was originally Napata, close to the fourth cataract, but Emperor Aspelta moved his palace to Meroë in 591 BC, partly to escape from the controlling influence of the priesthood. The priests were the arbiters of *ma'at*, a concept of righteousness and order. *Ma'at* determined the laws of the empire, and through *ma'at* they elected the king and made him a god. Yet, if the priests decided that the emperor had defied *ma'at*, they could issue an order that he commit suicide. Such was their power — at least through most of the empire's existence — that the emperor would obey.

Despite the move to Meroë, most emperors were still little more than puppets of the priests, who still had custody of the generations of deceased royalty, interred at the necropolis near their stronghold at Napata. Around 300 BC the Emperor Arqamani finally broke free from theocratic dominance and had all the Napatan priests slaughtered. The capital of the empire was formally moved to Meroë, and a new royal cemetery was built to house the royal dead, free from priestly control. Henceforth the emperors ruled in fact, not just in name, but, without a royal priesthood, were no longer accorded the divine status of their forebears.

### THE COLLAPSE OF KUSH

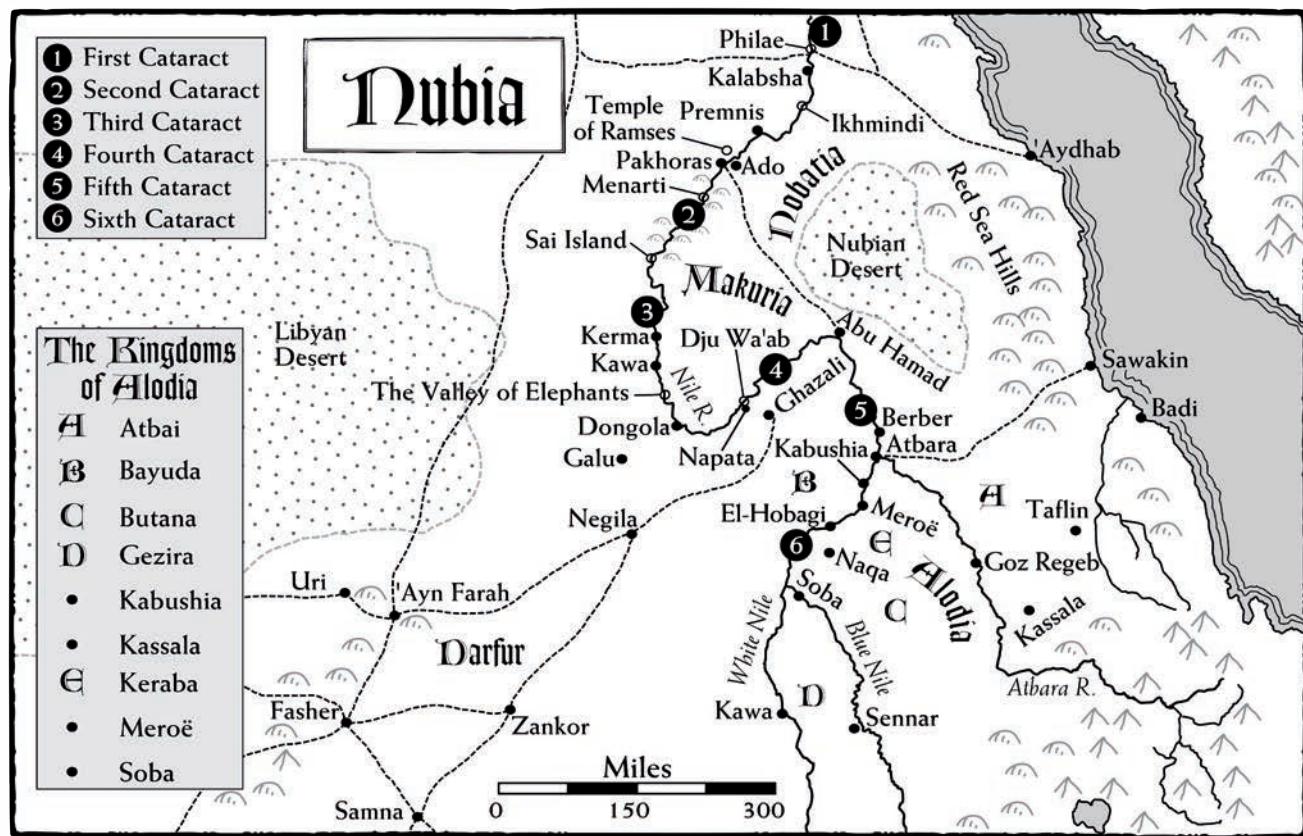
Weakened by war with Roman Egypt and Axum, and wracked by internal rebellion, Kush eventually faded into obscurity. The Roman Emperor Diocletian employed a desert people called the Nobatae to defend the southern frontier of his empire against the Blemmyae of the Red Sea hills in 297. The Nobatae settled in the lush riverine valleys of the Nile and established petty kingdoms that treated with Rome.

There was a brief renaissance of Kush in the fifth century when Blemmyae tribesmen captured Meroë and attempted to revive the empire, but this was crushed by the Kingdom of Axum from the south and by the Nobatae in the north. The Nobatae extracted a succession of oaths of submission from the defeated Blemmyae. Eventually, three kingdoms emerged along the Nile: Nobatia in Lower Nubia; and Makuria and Alodia in Upper Nubia. Upper Nubia was conquered by Axum (see Chapter 8: Ethiopia) in the early sixth century, and was its vassal state for nearly a century.

### THE CONVERSION OF NUBIA

In 540, two missions were sent from Constantinople to bring the word of Christ to Nubia: one representing the orthodox or Melkite party under the patronage of Emperor Justinian, the other sent by the Empress Theodora and representing the Monophysite theology, despite it being declared heretical by the Council of Chalcedon some hundred years earlier. Theodora was able to have the Melkites delayed in Egypt, and Julian, the leader of the Monophysite mission, spent two years in Nubia and achieved some success. His successor was Longinus, who did not manage to re-

## Lands of the Nile



turn until 567, by which time the Kingdom of Makuria had been converted to orthodoxy. Longinus spent six years in Nobatia, then, following an exile to Arabia due to politics within the Coptic church, he returned to Nobatia in 580 and resolved to bring the Word of Christ to Alodia as well. He was unable to travel directly there from Nobatia due to the hostility of Makuria toward Longinus "the heresiarch..". Instead, he struck out through the eastern desert into the land of the Blemmyae, and after many adventures made it to Alodia where he was met by the king himself. The conversion of Alodia was a total success.

Following their conquest of Egypt, the Umayyads twice tried to annex the Kingdom of Makuria, in 642 and 652. The result of these resounding defeats of the invaders was the negotiation of the Baqt (see insert). This treaty permitted all the Nubian kingdoms to flourish without fear of invasion or forced conversion to Islam, and provided five centuries of accord.

Following the Arab conquest of Egypt, the formerly dominant Melkite Church was considered a puppet of the outgoing Byzantine regime, and the Monophysite Coptic

Church was favored by Egypt's new rulers. As a consequence there were no Melkite bishops appointed for Makuria for over a hundred years, a misfortune of which the Monophysite clergy took advantage under King Merkurios of Makuria, who adopted Monophysitism for his kingdom. Merkurios was also responsible for building the mighty city of Dongola that became Makuria's capital, and some called him the "New Constantine." During his reign, Nobatia was suspected of allying with the Muslims of Egypt in order to gain dominance over its Makurian rivals, and Merkurios invaded Nobatia and subjugated the kingdom, a situation that remains unto this day.

Especially profitable relations existed during the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt (969 – 1171), which relied heavily on the Nubians for economic and military support. Part of this success derived from the discovery of gold in the Red Sea hills, which led to a flourishing of Nubian culture in all three kingdoms, and the establishment of ports to trade the new-found wealth across the sea.

SALAH ED-DIN

Upon the downfall of the Fatimids in 1171, the new Ayyubid ruler Salah ed-Din immediately sent his brother Shams ed-Dawla Turan Shah to invade Nubia, to cut off any reprisals in support of Fatimid allies. Nobatia in particular suffered massive destruction, and the city of Premnis was occupied for several years. It is reported that an Ayyubid emissary visited Makuria to see if it was worth conquering, but he reported that the land was too poor, and the Ayyubids withdrew from Nubia and have not returned. This emissary was clearly lying, for Makuria was then and still is at the zenith of its prosperity, nevertheless, his word was considered good, and the Arabs soon retreated north.

Peaceful relations and trade were restored with Egypt but trust has been lost. The Baqt is defaulted in more years than it is paid, and demands for arrears for the missed years go unheeded. Meanwhile, the Nobatian populace is being relocated from rural communities into defensible walled towns, particularly on islands in the Nile.

### A new threat to the Nubian kingdoms

is the arrival in the area of Bedouin nomads from both Egypt and Arabia. These tribes have been driven out by the Ayyubids, and have traveled south into Upper Nubia. Makuria and Alodia have both lost territory to the nomads, who have established independent warring principalities called *meks* to the east of the Nile. Nobatia has avoided such depredations thus far due to its desert climate, which makes it undesirable as grazing land.

## Nubian Culture

Nubians are a black-skinned people, with wavy black hair; curly hair is considered to be a sign of slave-stock. They tend to be taller than the average European or Arab. Nubians wear light trousers and loose smock-like garments made of cotton; they often have clothes that are brightly dyed in contrasting colors in geometric shapes that are worn to church or on festival days. Important citizens wear a short tunic stiffened with reeds or ivory so

that it flares out sharply at the waist; they may wear several layers of these garments, each of a different length and color. Men and women wear gold and copper jewelry: bangles on the wrist and ankle, and hoops around the neck. Strings of beads made from ostrich eggshell, glass, cowrie shells, and wood are common, as are finger rings carved from stone, sometimes with a decorated bezel. Parasols and walking sticks are common, the latter even among the young and hale. Hair is often arranged into elaborate coiffures in both sexes: plaited into rows of tresses or held into topknots by long-tined ivory combs.

### WARRIOR AND THE ARMY

Nubia is famous for its archers; the Arabs know them as "pupil-smiters" and "archers of the eyes" because of their accuracy. Nubian warriors use not only the self bow (which is also used for hunting), but also a complex compound bow with a bone core. Nubians also use expensive iron arrowheads that can punch through thick

armor. Melee weapons include spears (both short and long), and short swords. Nubian swords typically have just one sharpened edge. Shields and armor are made of thick oxhide molded and decorated into patterns of raised bosses and ribbed surfaces; most commonly a breastplate and leather skirt suffices, sometimes with vambraces and greaves. Cavalry is an important component of the army, mounted on either light-bodied horses or war camels.

The army is under the command of *exarchs*, each in control of either a division of the royal guard or a frontier garrison. As well as this permanent army, there is also a levy in times of war. Makuria also maintains a small navy on the Nile under the command of two *nauarchs*; the navy's prime purpose is water transport of troops and supplies, although they are trained in ship-to-ship combat.

### ATTITUDES TOWARD THE DEAD

Nubians are deeply superstitious about the dead. They attach no elaborate ceremonies to funerals, although by no means do they skimp on the formal burial according to Church doctrine. Covering the face of the dead with a mask or plate is important, to stop death from infecting those who see the corpse. It is unusual for the family or friends of the deceased to attend a funeral, leaving the process to a priest and hired

## The Baqt

The Baqt was originally negotiated in 652 by the Umayyad governor of Egypt and the king of Makuria after an unsuccessful Muslim invasion of Nubia. The name derives from the Greek *pakton* ("agreement"), and is a unique bilateral agreement that guaranteed the Nubian kingdoms freedom from further invasions or forced conversion to Islam. In the text of the Baqt, the Egyptians and Nubians promised not to make war on one another, and each guaranteed safe conduct of the other's citizens when traveling. The Nubians were to return any runaway slaves or Egyptian outlaws, and furnish an annual tribute of 365 slaves to the treasury, 40 slaves to the emir of Egypt, 20 slaves to the governor of Aswan, five slaves to the judge of Aswan, and one slave to each of the twelve guarantors of the Baqt. In return, the Egyptians undertook to provide wheat, barley, wine, and fancy cloth.

After its signing, the Egyptians made no attempts to invade Nubia for over 500 years, despite frequent lapses in

the tribute of slaves. In 835, the tribute was overdue for fourteen years, and the caliph sent an urgent demand to King Zacharias of Makuria. Zacharias's son George traveled to Baghdad and managed to renegotiate the Baqt, making the quota of slaves payable every three years instead. The advent of Fatimid rule in Egypt once again brought a renewal of demands for arrears in the tribute; this time an Egyptian envoy traveled to Dongola for renegotiation, but once more the Baqt was renewed.

Copies of the Baqt can be found in every city of Nobatia and Makuria; the original 652 and 835 documents are both stored in Dongola Cathedral. Copies of the Baqt that have been signed under relevant authorization from the King of Makuria and the Fatimid governor contain a pawn of Rego vis. The two original documents are sources of Rego vis, but it is infused with the Divine. Furthermore, the vis is only produced in years in which the Egyptians do not attack and the Nubian tribute is not in arrears.

### Story Seed: Theft by the Dead

A group of robbers (probably of foreign origin) are exploiting the Nubian reluctance to acknowledge the dead by faking their own deaths and then masquerading as their own walking corpses to commit their crimes. No one will report that they were robbed, and no one follows them back to their graveyard haunt. Unfortunately, their activities have attracted the attention of faeries (or demons) who take on the mien of real corpses and copy their crimes. The characters get involved when they become a target of the faeries, and are robbed by someone they know to be dead.



pallbearers. Graves are marked purely to show their location, not to identify the occupant. Nubian houses have no windows from which a burial site can be seen, and graveyards do not have roads or paths near them. This reluctance to catch even a cursory glance of a place of interment extends to the numerous ancient monuments of Kush; those unfortunate enough to live close to a pyramid will not look directly at it if they can avoid doing so.

Alodians take this superstitious dread one stage further. They do not even speak of a deceased individual by name, and prefer not to even refer to their deeds. The kingdom has a mortuary society that deals with all aspects of death on the people's behalf, but this irrevocably renders them social pariahs.

### NAMES

Nubian names are generally simple, consisting of a given name and perhaps a patronymic (e.g. Abraam son of Kosma) or toponymic (e.g. Dawud of Dongola).

Women tend to use a marital name (e.g. Eionngoka wife of Abraam).

**Nubian Names (Male):** Abraam, Adama, Anastasios, Athanasios, Chael, Dauti, Dawud. Douddil, Georgios, Iakobi, Iesou, Ioannes, Ioasse, Kosma, Mashshouda, Merkourios, Orinourla, Petros, Pisroel, Tapara, Tirsakouni

**Nubian Names (Female):** Anthelia, Anna, Eionngoka, Eirene, Ekkir, Genseoua, Iannia, Maria, Mariham, Mena, Petrosinta, Songoja, Sophora, Theodora

The multisyllabic names of the Kushitic people are rarely heard; most Nubians think they sound ridiculous. However, the higher classes of Meroë still occasionally employ these names, which can be found inscribed on various Kushitic monuments in the Meroitic script.

**Meroitic Names (Male):** Amanikhabale, Aspelta, Atakhebasken, Malewiebamani, Piye, Senkamanisken, Shabaka, Taharqa, Tanwetamai

**Meroitic Names (Female):** Amanitore, Aqaluqa, Gerarheni, Henuttakhebit, Kasaqa, Pebatjma, Qalhata, Shanakdakhet, Tabiry, Yuterow

### Story Seed: Six Hundred and Eighty Nine

A crazed old man has been making clay amulets with the chi-pi-theta cryptogram for many years. He sells them to passers-by, and uses the money to buy used swords from soldiers. He has gathered over six hundred of these swords, each one attached to the outside wall of his house, which has become a local landmark. One day, the characters notice all the swords have gone. If they track down the old man, they will find him hiding swords all over the city, muttering in Aramaic. He thinks that once he has placed all 689 swords in precise locations, he will summon Michael, archangel of the sword, who will cast out all evil from the city. Will his summoning work? Will it actually summon an archangel? Will Michael abide by the same definition of evil as mankind? After all, Sodom and Gomorrah were the last cities he cleansed...

## Religion

Nubia is overwhelmingly Christian; in fact it is illegal for a subject of either the Makurian or Alodian crown to convert to or profess any other faith.

### CHRISTIANITY

The original evangelism of Nubia was undertaken by rival missionaries; as a result, Nobatia and Alodia were principally Monophysite Christians and Makuria was mostly Melkite. As the power of the Byzantine Melkite Church declined in Egypt, the Monophysite Church became dominant in Nubia, and Makuria was converted.

The Nubian Church is integrated with the Monophysite Coptic Church under the Patriarch of Alexandria. All new bishops are appointed from Alexandria, and many are Egyptians. Unlike the rest of the Coptic Church the Nubian Church uses Greek rather than Coptic as its liturgical language.

## Slavery in a Saga

Stories involving slaves can be difficult for a troupe, with modern-day attitudes clashing with medieval values. These same tensions are present in Nubia itself, which is a slave-taking nation but believes owning a slave to be abhorrent. Addressing the hypocrisy of the Nubian slave trade through slave, slave-owning, or slave-taking characters can be rewarding if addressed with due care to modern sensibilities.

### A SLAVE CHARACTER AND HIS OWNER

Players may wish to take on the challenge of playing a slave. This usually means playing a Mythic Aithiops (see later). This is a viable option if the character's owner is another player character or the covenant as a whole: whereas being a slave is an atrocious existence where life and death is dependent on the whim of another, most slave characters owned by another player character have an atypical master who abjures the lash and most severe punitive measures for whatever reason, and cannot or will not sell the player character to another. The character instead may have a lax or permissive master who allows the character a greater freedom than a slave is normally permitted.

Reasons of this sort of relationship include:

- The owner may have inherited the slave from a relative and cannot free him without causing insult;
- The slave might be the latest in a long line of loyal house slaves;
- The slave might have a vital skill that he uses on his master's behalf for more lenient treatment;
- The slave may have sold himself into slavery (or been sold by his parents) in order to avert some terrible fate.
- These characters should take the Favored Slave Flaw.

### AN ENSLAVED CHARACTER

Players wishing to run stories involving their character's status as a slave should

design him or her with the Chattel Slave Flaw. As a Major Story Flaw, this is not suitable for grog characters; individuals with this Flaw take center stage in stories to do with the circumstances of their slavery, and that is not a role given to grogs.

Some examples of how being a slave could generate stories include:

- You have escaped from your owner and are trying to avoid recapture, or find a way home;
- Your family were captured at the same time and you are trying to find them;
- Your master has died, and no one knows about it yet;
- You are involved in criminal activities unbeknownst to your master;
- Your master is a criminal and he forces you to assist him;
- You are a favored slave who attracts the jealousy of your fellows;
- Your master's enemies are trying to get at him through you.

### A FREE AITHIOPIAN CHARACTER

Not all Mythic Aithiopians are slaves, but their appearance immediately sets them apart from the rest of the populace. Free Aithiopians should take either the Outsider or Outcast Social Status Flaw in any saga set outside of the Slavelands. Outcast is suitable for a character who has adopted local customs but is still clearly exotic; whereas Outsider is appropriate for characters who overtly keep to their traditional tribal ways - for example, a character newly arrived from further south. The physical appearance of an Aithiopian character automatically marks him as a slave in any Arab nation, especially Egypt, but without an accompanying Story Flaw this misunderstanding can usually be sorted out.

A free Aithiopian character may have a Story Flaw related to his presence in Nubia. Dependents or a True Love might have been sold into slavery and he is striving to retrieve them. A character with Close Family Ties could strive to keep his clan from the hands of slavers. The character may be a former slave, and now has his previous owner as an Enemy; or he

may be conducting a Feud with the slaver who captured him in the first place.

### A SLAVE OWNER CHARACTER

Unlike European slave owners (such as in the Rhine Tribunal), in Egypt and Nubia it is not necessary for owners of slaves to have a Virtue to represent this; anyone may have a number of slaves suitable to their wealth and status. A Christian slave owner in a Christian kingdom has a Local Reputation at a score of 1, representing the social disapproval that this practice engenders.

### A SLAVER CHARACTER

Characters who are slavers should take the Merchant Social Status Virtue if they are mostly involved in the transport of slaves, or the Mercenary Captain Social Status Virtue if they are captors. Either type of character is likely to be Well-Traveled. Being a slaver lends itself to stories of exploration in an exotic and hostile land, although the ethical dimension of the slave trade should not be glossed over.

### A CAMPAIGNER AGAINST SLAVERY

A character may be sufficiently opposed to the slave trade to attempt to stop it. Such a character is likely to have the Driven Personality Flaw if he is determined to follow this ambitious course, and appropriate social influence (perhaps through the Temporal Influence or Social Contacts Virtues) would prove very useful. The character could well have the Enemies Flaw to represent the activities of those who oppose him.

To be successful in abolishing slavery, the Baqt would have to be re-negotiated or abandoned altogether. This may be an achievable goal or a hopeless dream, depending on the demands of the saga. Petitioning the Nubian Church to speak out against slavery would be an excellent start in a campaign, and the *quid pro quo* demanded by the bishops could be the source of many stories.

### New Flaws for Slaves

Note that these Flaws are different from those in *Guardians of the Forests* (page 102), reflecting a different cultural attitude toward slaves.

#### FAVORED SLAVE

##### *Minor Social Status Flaw*

You are a slave who has a privileged existence compared to most of your kind. As a possession of your master, you are beholden to his or her will completely, and are only likely to earn your freedom through some exceptional act of service, if ever. Disobedience, on the other hand, can earn you severe punishment. You have no belongings of consequence, except that which is given to you by your master. You probably will never need to worry about where your next meal is coming from, and will be housed in decent accommodation, although this in no way compensates for your status.

#### CHATTEL SLAVE

##### *Major Story and Social Status Flaw*

You are a slave, and as such have the effects of the Minor Social Status Flaw above; however, you have no special status among your caste and this will be the cause of stories. You should decide upon the source of your tension with your owner when you take this Flaw. Examples are given in a nearby insert. You must also explain how you are able to have regular contact with the other player characters. A likely explanation for this is that you are on loan from your master who is a friend of the other characters, but other explanations may result from the relationship between yourself and your master. Note that this Flaw is suitable for escaped slaves who are being actively pursued; those who have truly escaped their master's influence should be treated like free Aithiopians (and probably have the Outcast Flaw instead).

There are seven episcopal sees in the combined Kingdom of Makuria and Nobatia (at Kalabsha, Premnis, Pakhoras, Sai, Dongola, Shanqir, and Kallama), and another six in Alodia (at Soba, Meroë, Kabushia, Kawa, Sennar, Goz Regeb). The church hierarchy is complex, with many layers and title including bishops (*papas*), great priests (*soro daoul*), priests (*soro*), archimandrites, archdeacons, epideacons, deacons, liturgists, and elders (*gort*). The basic rank is the priest or *presbyteros*, assigned to a single church. A typical Nubian church is a rectangular building with a flat roof supported by timbers; larger churches may be cruciform or bear one or more domes atop its roof.

Monasticism is a minor part of the Nubian Coptic Church. Most monasteries were founded and are currently populated by Egyptians. There are also unofficial monastic communities called *lawra*, which have no official recognition.

The archangel Michael is extremely popular throughout the Nubian Church, and figures prominently in invocations, inscriptions, and dedications. A cryptogram of the Greek letters chi-pi-theta is common, based on numerology: this cryptogram represents 689, the numerical equivalent of Michael's name in Greek.

#### ISLAM

Under the Baqt, freedom of Nubia from conversion to Islam was guaranteed. With the coming of the Ayyubids, the Baqt has less force, and the city of Pakhoras (see later) now has a mosque, principally for use by Egyptian traders. The Bedouin tribes who threaten the eastern borders, plus the settled Banu al-Kanz (see later) are Muslim; there is also an enclave of Arabs in the city of Soba. Should these populations continue to grow, Islam may become a real presence in Nubia.

#### PAGANISM

The ancient Kushitic religion still persists in isolated pockets of Nubia, although paganism is not tolerated by the Nubian Church. The Kushites believed that before creation, the world was covered in water. Then a mound of earth rose out of the

water, on top of which Atum the first god was born. From this vantage point — Dju Wa'ab in Makuria (see later) — Atum created the world.

Atum is depicted as an old man, sometimes with a ram's head. The pantheon included many Egyptian gods, but also some uniquely Kushitic ones. Anhur and Menhit were deities of war that Egypt adopted from Kush. Anhur was depicted as a bearded man wearing a kilt and a headdress with four feathers; his weapon was the spear. He was patron of soldiers and the army, and mock battles were held in his honor. Menhit, whose name means 'she who massacres', rained fiery arrows on her enemies. She was depicted with the head of a lioness. Mandulis was the god of the sun, and wore an elaborate headdress of ram's horns, cobras, and plumes surmounted by sun discs. Sometimes he has the body of a hawk with a human head. Dedun was the god of incense, and by association, the god of prosperity and wealth. He was the guardian of the royal dead, and the especial patron of the Kushitic priesthood. Apedemak was perhaps the most important god as the patron of royalty, and of Meroë in particular. He was depicted as a man with four arms and three lion-heads, or occasionally with just a single leonine head, or as a lion killing serpents (an allegory for the triumph of Arqamani over the Napatan priesthood). As well as possessing the regality, strength, and courage of the lion, he also represented truth, light, and fertility. His wife was Amesemi, goddess of protection and the moon.

## Economy and Trade

The Nubian kingdoms grow several crops of sorghum, millet, barley, and dates each year. In Nobatia, most suitable agricultural land is close to the river and requires heavy irrigation; further south, the river valley is more lush and water is less limited. Other crops include lentils, olives, sesame, vines, bananas, wheat, and cotton. As well as being made into a type of bread, sorghum is also used to make *mizr*, a beer that forms an important part of the diet; dates are also fermented to make an alcoholic drink, and vines yield grapes for wine. Nubians employ an oxen-driven wa-

ter wheel to increase yield due to better irrigation. Sheep, goats, cattle, and pigs are all raised as livestock; of these, pigs provide the bulk of the meat.

Most of the population lives in houses made of sun-dried bricks. Important industries include pottery (particularly in Pakhoras) and weaving (particularly in Dongola). Smaller local industries include leatherworking, metalworking, and the production of palm fiber products such as baskets and mats. Gold is mined in the Red Sea Hills, and emeralds are found in the same location. Cotton provides fiber for textiles, wool comes mainly from camels and goats; both are dyed a wide range of colors — Nubians cultivate indigo and are capable of providing light-fast blues which are the envy of northern nations.

Exports from the Nubian Kingdoms include glass, ivory, ostrich feathers, cattle, emeralds, gold, and (most importantly) slaves. Imports from Egypt include wheat, linen, and wine. There is also trade with the Ethiopians to the south and east.

## TRANSPORT

The suitability of the Nile for transport of goods and people varies along its length. While downstream travel is always possible by boat, upstream movement is more limited. Boats under sail cannot travel upstream between Dongola to Abu Hamad, where the north-east course of the river is directly against the prevailing south-westerly wind. The cataracts are passable under sail only during high water. Owing to these problems, land transport by camel and donkey is an important alternative.

## THE SLAVE TRADE

The principle export of all the Nubian kingdoms is slaves. The source of their slaves is a vast expanse of pasture land to the south and west of Alodia, where there are plenty of peaceful pastoralist societies with no central organization. This region is called the Slavelands by Nubians. The slavers trek many hundreds of miles to procure slaves and their cattle, and then transport them north to Egypt. Details of these populations can be found later in this chapter.

Some might find it unusual that the Christian kingdoms of Nubia promote the taking and trading of slaves, all the while abhorring the practice of keeping slaves themselves. Most of the bishops consider slavery to be unbecoming of Christians, but they do not exert their substantial political power to put an end to it. The reasons are many and varied, but the strongest argument is the Baqt. This treaty — unique among Christian relations with Islam — has protected Nubia from invasion and forced conversion, while the Christian kingdoms of North Africa, Sicily, and Iberia have succumbed. Since the invasion of 1172, this argument in favor of slavery has become weaker, but it is still the dominant one. However, this argument conveniently forgets that the Baqt quota constitutes only a third of the total number of slaves passing through Nubia each year; the rest have nothing to do with peace and everything to do with profit. Promoters of slavery are fond of highlighting the savagery of the captives: some, they say, are barely better than animals, lacking language or any sense of morals. A

less racist but equally condescending argument is that slavery actually offers them a better life than living in constant fear for one's life from the wild beasts and cannibalistic humans that haunt the Slavelands.

The frequent defaulting on the Baqt by Makuria and Alodia is used to deflect arguments on the immorality of slavery. However, failure to pay the Baqt only rarely has anything to do with the conscience of the kings and their councilors. Most often it is down to the refusal of the governments to pay the exorbitant prices demanded by the slavers, and a lack of political will to attempt to regulate the trade. There are few opportunities to undercut the slavers, who have centuries of experience of the Slavelands, its perils and its geography. Occasionally it is a genuine dearth of slaves that leads to a default; famine and disease both haunt the Slavelands. More rarely, an entire expedition is lost, never to be seen again.

Governmental support of the slave trade has little impact on the average Nubian. Owning slaves is legal but not acceptable in any of the Nubian kingdoms. The slavers are rarely even seen (with or without their commodity), since slaves are transported past all major cities on the Nile by using the Darb al-Arba'in, a road stretching from the Slavelands to the remote trading town of Uri, and on to the slave markets in Egypt. It is easy for the Nubians to pretend that the slave trade does not exist at all.

## Nobatia

Nobatia formed as a splinter kingdom of Kush in the last days of the empire. It worshiped the Kushite gods, and followed Kushite customs. For the last four hundred years or so Nobatia has ceased to be an independent kingdom, and has instead been under the suzerainty of Makuria. A viceroy called the Eparch of Nobatia rules from Premnis in lieu of an independent ruler. Thus far, Nobatia has remained culturally distinct from its southerly neighbor, and has resisted all attempts to become a mere province of Makuria. Like ancient Kush, Nobatia practices state-mandated redistribution of wealth: all excess produce is collected by inspectors, and then given out to those who

## The Eparch of Nobatia

Also styled "The Lord of the Mountain," the eparch of Nobatia has supplanted its king. He is appointed directly by the King of Makuria and has judicial and financial control of the territory. He also can found churches and celebrate Mass. Each eparch is anointed the king of Dotawo, a vassal kingdom of Makuria centered at Ado; this appointment serves to support the eparch financially. A key role of the eparch is to conduct relations with Muslim Egypt, and goods destined for the king of Makuria are delivered into the hands of the eparch. The eparch is responsible for delivering the slave tribute of the Baqt to Egyptian authorities, or, as has been more common in recent years, making excuses for its failure to arrive.

The emblem of the eparch's office is a distinctive double-horned headdress worn at all formal occasions; his agents throughout the kingdom bear this symbol embossed on an iron badge.



need it. Priority is given to those who have made contributions in former years. There is little poverty in Nobatia as a result.

Nobatia is a free trade zone, unlike Makuria. All cargo destined for further up-river must be delivered into the hands of Nobatian factors. Egyptian coinage is legal tender, and Egyptians can trade without restriction. Trade with Alodia cannot pass through Makuria, and so Nobatian towns are departure points for caravans crossing the desert destined for Alodia, bypassing Makuria altogether. This is a risky prospect given the dangers of the desert.

Nobatia extends from the first to the third cataract of the River Nile. It is mostly desert, with the Libyan Desert to the west of the river and the Nubian Desert to the east. The Nobatians do not stray far from the floodplain of the river, and have built all their settlements on its banks. Those on the eastern bank are more heavily fortified, to protect them from the occasional raids of the fierce Blemmyae tribes.

Since the recent threats from Ayyubid forces, and facing aggression from Bedouin nomads, the population of Nobatia has begun to concentrate in hilltop and island walled towns, rather than remain in the more scattered traditional settlements. Houses have been reinforced, and have internal stores for food and valuables.

## Ado

Ado is a hilltop fortress which, along with Premnis and Pakhoras, is one of the three principal towns of Nobatia. Ado is the capital of the subkingdom of Dotawo, a province of Makuria within the subject nation of Nobatia, and the lordship of the eparch. Like Premnis, it suffered under the Abbasid invasion of Nubia in 1172; the Egyptians searched Ado (which they call Jabal 'Adda) for the Eparch of Nobatia, but failed to capture him.

Ado is home to the eparch's personal church, while not a cathedral church, this place of worship is an impressive work of architecture with a complex geometric mosaic floor.

## The Banu al-Kanz

Under the Fatimids, this Arab tribe controlled the Aswan region, and one of their rulers was awarded the title of Kanz al-Dawlah ("treasure of the state") for his services to the caliph; this title subsequently became hereditary.

The Ayyubids that replaced the Fatimids drove out the Banu al-Kanz, and they retreated into the northern territories of Nobatia, where they have established a semi-independent Muslim principality within Nobatian territory.

## Batn al-Hajar

Extending southwards from around the second cataract for eighty miles is the Batn al-Hajar, or "belly of stones." Named by Egyptian traders, the Nile flows through a barren, mountainous landscape. There is no floodplain at all; for much of its length the Nile flows between high cliffs and in some places the river may be no more than twenty paces wide. The river is constantly interrupted by numerous rapids, outcrops, and small islands, and cannot be navigated even at the peak of the Nile flood.

Some of the islands are big enough to house miniature forts, built recently by people fleeing encroachment of the Banu al-Kanz following their expulsion from Egypt. The islands are often built upwards into rocky towers so that the fortress can withstand the yearly floods. Apart from these fortress-dwellers, the Batn al-Hajar is virtually uninhabited, so hostile is this land and so poor in resources.

The Batn al-Hajar marks the division between Lower Nubia where foreigners are welcome, and Upper Nubia where foreign trade is forbidden. The fortress at Akasha has a garrison guarding Nobatia from the Banu al-Kanz.

## Kalabsha

Kalabsha was the capital of the post-Kushitic Blemmyae state, and they raised a temple to Mandulis here which is mostly still standing. Kalabsha today forms the smallest of Nobatia's bishoprics.

## Lost Temple of Ramses

For centuries there have been stories of twin temples carved out of a mountain somewhere upriver of Philae. Buried under millennia of dust and sand, their location is now unknown, but this does not stop treasure hunters from searching the sands of Lower Nubia for clues. It is said that Pharaoh Ramses built these temples in order to intimidate his southern neighbors, whom he claimed to have defeated at Kadesh. The Great Temple was dedicated to Amun, Ra, Ptah, and the deified pharaoh himself; the Small Temple to Hathor and Ramses' wife Nefertari.

Explorers have been unsuccessful in locating the lost temples because they reside

## The Sand of Pakhoras

Pakhoras is built on the Kom, a hill that forms the original island on the Nile. When the pre-Christian Nubians first settled here, they slew the giant who was the embodiment of the Kom and a powerful servant of the Red. Its bones were crushed and fed to livestock and its flesh shredded and fed to birds. These animals were then fed to dogs and lions, who in turn were killed and burned, and the ashes scattered into the wind. Some believe that the sand that blows daily into Pakhoras to be the Kom, trying to reconstitute its disintegrated body. If this is the case, then it is gradually winning; more sand enters Pakhoras each day than can ever be removed, and some claim they have seen the sand piles ripple and move on their own, like muscles preparing to flex.

within a Faerie regio with an aura of 5. The entrance to this regio can be divined from the behavior of a troop of baboons who are descended from animals kept at the temple. There are always twenty two baboons in the troop, and at dawn they raise their arms and worship the rising sun. If a human replaces one of the baboons in this daily ritual, he witnesses the sun penetrating the sand and alighting upon the statues that guard the temple, and may approach.

such quantity that Pakhoras, once built on an island, now stands on a peninsula, since the channel to the mainland has silted up entirely. Even this is not enough, and every few decades the citizens of the city are forced to raise their thresholds to surmount the sand. Past generations have even raised their walls and replaced the roofs.

Most of the city was built during Kushite times, and is still intact and in remarkably good condition. Most notable are the city's enclosing wall and the royal palace. The wall surrounds the city on three sides, with the river providing poor defense on the east. It is ten paces high and three paces thick, and has just three gates. Like other buildings in Pakhoras, periodically the walls and gates are extended upwards due to the accumulation of sand. The palace of the former king now lies empty in the center of the city; it is richly decorated with statues of the lion-headed Kushite gods. As the highest point in the city, sand does not tend to accumulate here. There are two temples built in the days of Ancient Egypt; one is mostly ruins, and the other has been converted into a warehouse for trade goods. Pakhoras is famous for its pottery factories. Owned by the monastery within the town, it produces finely decorated vessels that are exported throughout Nubia and beyond.

Pakhoras has a large and imposing cathedral to house its bishop, and in the immediate vicinity has six other churches. It also boasts a large monastery on a hilltop just outside the city as well as a smaller monastery within the town. There is even a mosque, to service foreign traders, although the call to prayer is not permitted to be proclaimed publicly on the order of the bishop. As well as numerous warehouses, the city has a large marketplace, which sells all manner of exotic goods from Alodia and beyond. Outside the southern gate is a vast tent city of drovers who care for the horses, donkeys, and camels of visitors. Here too can be found escorts and mercenaries from Atbara (see later) who can arrange passage across the river and south to Alodia without entering Makuria.

## Menarti

Menarti is a small island at the foot of the second cataract; the name means "island of Mei," Mei being a name for Saint Michael who is patron, along with Saint Cosmas, of the small monastery on the island. Menarti is the limit of the upriver navigation from Egypt; south from here is the Batn al-Hajar (see earlier) which is impassable by boat.

## TAKOA

A small town on the southernmost tip of Menarti, Takoa is a customs post on the frontier between Lower and Upper Nubia. No foreign merchant is permitted to pass through Takoa; all cargoes must be surrendered to the officials at Takoa, from where they are delivered to the eparch.

## Pakhoras

The name of this city is rendered as Buhkaras in Arabic, and it is occasionally referred to as Faras. Pakhoras is still the religious and cultural center of Nobatia, even though the Makurian-appointed eparch now administers the kingdom from Premnis. The inhabitants of Pakhoras have a daily struggle against the tons of sand blown into the town. Pakhorans employ armies of 'sand-warriors' armed with buckets and spades, whose job is to remove the daily accumulation of sand from the important buildings such as the cathedral and the palace, as well as the properties of those who can afford to pay for the service. This sand is dumped on the west side of the city in

### SERRA

Facing Pakhoras on the opposite bank of the river, this old pharaonic fortress has been refortified, and is occupied by Pakhoras's military. There are plans for evacuation to Serra in the face of an invasion, and the fortress maintains plentiful stores of food and firewood.

### Philae

Philae consists of a pair of islands in the first cataract of the Nile, also known as the Pearl of Egypt. The smaller island, Philae proper, was sacred to Egyptians and Nubians alike as a burial place of the god Osiris, and was dubbed "The Unapproachable" due to the social and religious ban on landing on the island except after completing the appropriate rituals. No birds fly over Philae, nor can fish be caught from its shores. The larger island is known as Senmut or Beghé, and bears monuments to the pharaohs and emperors who claimed Egypt.

In both the pharaonic period and the Graeco-Roman period, Philae received an abundance of buildings, to such an extent that most of the area of both islands bears a monument of one era or another. Most prominent are the temples to Isis, Amun-Osiris, Hathor, and Horus. The region around Philae was called the *Dodekachoenus*, and was considered the estate of Isis. Its revenue was used to sup-

### Tumulus Graves

Throughout Nobatia, on both sides of the Nile, are massive tumuli holding the bodies of kings and princes. Many of these man-made hills enclose palaces or compounds housing the dead royal, along with rich grave goods and the bodies of sacrificed animals, especially dogs. Most of these graves belong to pre-Christian kinglets, although the earliest Nobatian kings also chose to be buried in this manner despite their Christian faith, to maintain continuity with the past. Each intact tumulus (for some have been robbed) has a Magic aura of 1, and may contain a grave guardian such as a mummified dog.

port the priests of the Great Temple.

Philae was one of the original bishoprics of the Nubian Church, although the cathedra was later moved to Kalabsha. The land around Philae that once served the priests of the island is now occupied by the Banu al-Kanuz (see earlier), and the small populace — mostly inhabitants of the small monastery, both regular clergy and lay brothers — feel under siege from the Muslim nomads, although they have made no serious attempt on the well-fortified island as yet.

### Premnis

Premnis (Pedeme in Kushite times, Qasr Ibrim to the Arabs) is a fortified hill-top settlement that serves as the administrative center of Nobatia. It was originally the site of seven temples built by the Nubian pharaohs of Egypt, but the site was occupied by their Ptolemaic and Roman successors. The Ptolemies built a massive girdle wall about the town. It was not until the conversion of Nobatia to Christianity in the seventh century that Premnis became an important domestic rather than religious settlement. Its temples were converted into churches, and an impressive stone cathedral dedicated to Our Lady the Pure Virgin was built for its bishop.

Premnis suffered an invasion by Ayyubid forces in 1172, and the cathedral was damaged. Following their expulsion, Premnis's fortifications were restored and improved, and secular buildings were built among the religious ones. A large, two level piazza that had been built over the remains of one of the temples has now been occupied by irregularly-built stone housing to accommodate the growing population. The eparch of Nobatia moved his administration from Pakhoras to Premnis at the same time.

Premnis is built high above the floor of the Nile Valley. During the inundation it does not need to be abandoned like many sites in Lower Nubia, although it does become an island. Premnis is an administrative capital rather than a mercantile one; foreign merchants usually bypass Premnis in favor of better opportunities at Pakhoras.

### Sai Island

The largest permanent island on the Nile, Sai is six miles long by three miles wide. A large, brick-walled fortress stands on the eastern shore of the island; this ancient structure dates back to pharaonic Egypt. Sai is the seat of one of Nubia's bishops, and a small town surrounds the cathedral.

### A Fortified River

Since the middle of the 12th century the kings of Makuria and Alodia have been building a number of fortresses along the River Nile. There are currently over fifty of these, which stretch from Soba in the south to Kalabsha in the north. Nearly every isolated hill top with an independent water source now bears a fortress big enough to hold the local population, and contains deep crypt-like storage rooms stocked with grain and other food. These fortresses are a response to the increasing aggression of Nubia's Muslim neighbors to the north.

As a preparatory measure, the smaller fortresses are often manned by a minimal garrison, and lie mostly deserted. More than one has been covertly taken over by bandits; sometimes more sinister forces can be found in residence.

#### STORY SEED: FREEDOM FORTRESS

The characters stop for succor at a fortress, but the small garrison are actually escaped slaves masquerading as soldiers. They are desperate to keep their secret, and if it becomes apparent that the characters are aware of their true nature, some of the slaves may wish to make sure the characters never leave. They are warned by another faction within the runaways who do not countenance their murder. This latter group might wish to escape with the characters, or else use them to gain control of the fortress. The characters could use the situation to gain useful allies.

# Makuria

The Kingdom of Makuria is perhaps the most important of Nubia's kingdoms. It extends from the third to the fifth Nile cataract, and encompasses the heartland of lost Kush. Despite this, Makuria has not retained any Kushitic culture, unlike Nobatia to the north, but rather has a distinctive Greek nature. Makuria is a peaceful and prosperous realm with many towns and broad, fertile fields. Like Nobatia, the Makurians have begun to congregate in defensible towns with substantial stores of food, firewood, and water. This is partly due to the rapacious Bedouin tribes who have recently invaded the eastern desert.

Foreign trade is a royal monopoly administered through Nobatia, and as such, there is no money in circulation in Makuria. It is illegal for foreign traders to sell their wares in Makuria. They risk having all trade goods confiscated, even if they do not intend to sell here but are aiming further upriver.

The King of Makuria styles himself as *megalobasilikos* (Greek for 'great king') and his ministers and court share similar Byzantine titles. Each town within the territory of Makuria constitutes its own kingdom; in all thirteen vassal kings (called *domestikoi*; singular *domestikos*) pay tribute to the *megalobasilikos*. All these kings, including the great king, are priests as well as monarchs, and perform Mass for their entire kingdom. Should a king take a life, however, he is no longer able to celebrate the liturgy. The *megalobasilikos* has the power to reduce any of his subjects to the status of slave, regardless of whether the individual is guilty of a crime. Among the host of ministers, the king also takes council from the court of seven bishops. Makurian royalty follow matrilineal succession: male heirs of female relatives have precedence over those of royal males; so a king's sister's son is considered heir before the king's own son. Dynastic crisis is not uncommon when there is no clear heir.

## Abu Hamad

Abu Hamad is a tent-city at the end of the mighty bend that encompasses much of Makuria. Its inhabitants are not Nu-

bian, but Bedouin Arabs of the Ja'alin tribe who have arrived in Upper Nubia over the last fifty years from Arabia and Egypt. The population of this 'city' is constantly in flux; as one band of nomads pack up their tents and leave, another arrives. The tribesmen come here mostly to trade, but also to arrange marriages, hold festivals, and honor their dead. Arabic is the dominant language of the settlement.

Abu Hamad is the only Muslim settlement in Makuria, and is a thorn in the side of the Christian kingdom. The armies of the local *domestikoi* and those of the *megalobasilikos* have tried to dislodge Abu Hamad, but to no avail; the city just reforms from an influx of nomads. The last attempt was five years ago; all the tents were uprooted and burnt, and the population dispersed. That night, the *megalobasilikos* received a nocturnal visitor in his bedchamber, and since then has refused permission to any of his subordinates to repeat the attempt. There is clearly some sinister force at work at the nexus of Abu Hamad; Makurian spies have noticed that one set of tents at the heart of the camp are not affected by the usual ebb and flow of tents, but are a permanent fixture. They have never been able to penetrate this complex, and are ignorant of its inhabitants.

## THE JA'ALIN

The Ja'alin are the tribe of Bedouins who occupy the region between Abu Hamad and Berber on both sides of the Nile. They have established a dozen or so tiny principalities called *meiks*, each founded by one of the princes exiled with Hamad. Each principality now consists of around a hundred families of humans and twenty or so *jinn*. Each prince has an unGifted *sabir* of Hamad's line as a vizier, who also mediates between the *jinn* and the humans. The *jinni* are mostly allied to the Faerie Realm, and like their human neighbors are Muslim.

The Ja'alin are proud descendants of Abbas, the uncle of Mohammed and herald of Islam. Both men and women mark their faces with distinctive scars, taking a form similar to an 'H' or 'T' shape. They are herders of sheep and goats, and constantly on the move within their territory to find scant pasture among the arid land. They

occasionally fight with one another for pasture, but Abu Hamad is neutral territory, and disputes here are forbidden.

## Atbara

A frontier town between the Kingdoms of Makuria and Alodia, Atbara has remained fiercely independent of both and has the commercial success to enforce this neutrality. It sits at the confluence of the Atbara and the Nile Rivers, and controls any river traffic headed for the fifth cataract. Atbara is the terminus of the route from Pakhoras that bypasses Makuria entirely to bring trade to Alodia. It is also the end of the only safe road to the port of Sawakin on the Red Sea.

The Atbarans have a secret deal with the Blemmyae: the savage tribesmen do not attack caravans lead by Atbaran guides (who wear distinctive green turbans); in return the Blemmyae chieftains are informed of the route and the goods of the occasional rich caravan that, mysteriously, cannot be provided with an escort. Likewise, the Atbarans have allied with the Ja'alin at Abu Hamad to ensure that all trade caravans heading for their rivals do not make it to their destination.

## Berber

Due to the uncertain allegiance of Atbara, Berber is considered the last Makurian town before the Kingdom of Alodia. It used to be the terminus of the Pakhoras trade route, but in recent times, caravans heading for Berber have been attacked by the Ja'alin, while those continuing to Atbara have remained untouched. As a result, Berber's fortunes have dwindled to almost nothing, and the population dwindled to match. Berber now has just one tenth of its former population. Many believe that the Atbarans pay the Ja'alin to keep Berber impoverished.

### STORY SEED: THE SOUL EXCHANGE

Seeking a rare or expensive item, the characters travel to a fortress that has a reputation for being a center of trade, particularly for the black market. They find it to be a den of every vice imaginable. The inhabitants of the fortress are actually ghosts, trapped here by the demon that caused their deaths. Each is promised that if they can win a soul for Hell then they can go free, but in fact the demon simply consumes the ghost's essence and traps the spirit of his victim instead. The only way to truly free the ghosts is to slay the demon who haunts the caverns beneath the fort.

### KALLAMA

A town has sprung up around Makuria's smallest cathedral at Kallama, its sole purpose to serve the needs of the bishop and the monastery attached to the bishopric.

## Dju Wa'ab

Dju Wa'ab is a small flat-topped mountain dominating a bend in the Nile. To the Empire of Kush, Dju Wa'ab ("the pure mountain") was at the center of the world; the creator god stood on top to bring the universe into being. A colossal free-standing pinnacle on the south corner was perceived as a natural statue of a god. The region around Dju Wa'ab has numerous royal burial-sites: distinctive steep-sided pyramids of the Nubian pharaohs, Kushitic rock-cut tombs, and tumulus graves of the pre-Christian kings of Makuria.

The sheer cliffs of the mountain form a useful landmark for travelers; it is only a hundred paces high but rises out of an otherwise flat landscape. It signifies one of the few crossing points of the Nile, and opens trade between east and west. Egyptians call it Jebel Barkal. Dju Wa'ab, as an impressive natural feature, has a Magic aura of 3; the various burial sites might have a higher aura. In their heyday the temples of the pagan gods may have had a Faerie aura that exceeded the Magic aura of the mountain, but most have

## The Dark Heart of Abu Hamad

The tents at the center of Abu Hamad are the opulent habitation of a powerful Gifted Bedouin sahir and prince of the Ja'alin named 'Izz el-Afram Hamad. This magician was forced out of his home by the Ayyubids, and he fled to the southern reaches of the Nubian Desert along with his Ja'alin subjects and a host of *jinni*. Hamad is now over eighty years old, and feeling his age despite successes in magically extending his life. His apprentices have brought him rumors of the Cult of Dedun, and he is keen to contact them in hopes of learning the trick of immortality. 'Izz el-Afram Hamad brooks no threats to his power, and is liable to attempt to eliminate other Gifted magicians who could threaten him; he won't even train any Gifted apprentices in fear of raising a rival (although he has several unGifted apprentices). He has a particularly powerful *jinn* as an ally *cum* servant, who chafes at its bonds but cannot escape from the sorcerer's power. It is rumored that he has eyes everywhere, and his agents are mostly Egyptians who have worked their way into administrative roles where they can report back useful information to their master.

'Izz el-Afram Hamad makes an ideal recurring villain for a saga. He is powerful enough (politically and magically) for him to be outside the reach of newly created characters but can still cause them substantial grief, as they increase in power so does he, and they will need powerful allies to deal with him. A sample progression of stories follows; such a story arc should be augmented with other clashes with the Ja'alin and other minions of the Master of Abu Hamad. It is up to the storyguide as to the nature of the pacts Hamad has made with the *jinni*, and the realm to which they belong.

### STORY SEED: THE MAGICAL BASKET

A merchant friend of the characters is being ruined by a business rival, who seems to have an endless supply of the product in which they both trade. The rival has come into possession of a magical reed basket that creates the product in

question, apparently permanently without the use of vis. When investigating the origin of the basket, the trail leads them to Abu Hamad. 'Izz el-Afram Hamad has engineered this situation so that he can meet and assess the characters, and determine whether they pose a threat to him. If they confront Hamad they will find him charming, inquisitive, and sinister in equal measure; he insists that they keep the basket in compensation for the trouble he has caused. The basket works through a bound *jinn*, who is transporting the goods from another place rather than creating them. The *jinn* has a power that makes the basket seem to be a standard enchantment to Hermetic Investigation, similar to a *Shell of False Determination*.

### STORY SEED: ATTEMPTED REGICIDE

As they have met Hamad and survived, the Great King of Makuria takes an interest in the characters - Hamad makes sure of this through his contacts. The characters are summoned to Dongola for an audience, and asked to bring along the magical basket. In Dongola, they run afoul of court politics, amply stirred by Hamad's agents. When they finally get into the king's presence, the secondary (and true) purpose of the basket becomes obvious, as a fearsome *jinn* emerges and attacks the king. Even if they are able to defeat it, the characters may be accused of endangering the Great King's life, and lose any status or favor they may have accrued.

### STORY SEED: THE DEMONS OF SAWAKIN

The characters learn that 'Izz el-Afram Hamad seeks to control the *jinni* of Sawakin (see later), creatures deemed too dangerous by Solomon himself. If successful, this could grant him immeasurable power, sufficient to smash any *Aegis of the Hearth* and bring defeat even to Hermetic magi. They must race to the Coral City and foil his plans in an almighty showdown of Hermetic versus Solomonic magic.

been abandoned by their worshipers and thus the faeries who lurked there.

### NAPATA

The capital of the Empire of Kush was originally at the foot of Dju Wa'ab, a city called Napata. Due to its religious significance, Napata was dominated by the Kushitic priesthood, and boasted over two dozen separate temples dedicated to both single gods and combinations with particular sacerdotal meanings. In centuries gone by, these temples would resonate with the scent of incense and the sound of chanting, feeding the faerie gods with vitality and supporting a Faerie aura. Now the temples lie empty and the priests are long dead, there is no aura to be found. However, the echoes of those gods still linger.

### KURRU

Kurru, in the shadow of Dju Wa'ab, is the site of the first pyramids to hold the rulers of Kush, when Napata was still the capital of the empire. There are the remains

### Story Seed: The Siege of Berber

The characters are hired to break the blockade of Berber; alternatively someone or something they need is trapped inside the town, and they take it upon themselves to reach get it out. Three *meks* of the Ja'alin are involved in the blockade (one per landward approach), each with two score warriors and a dozen *jinni*; if given notice, another three *meks* lie within one day's journey, and a further six within three day's travel. Upon reaching Berber, the characters are the first outsiders here in three years. The town has been transformed; the populace enslaved to Ja'alin overlords and set to work digging beneath the town. The characters must find out what they are looking for, and for whom — Izz el-Afram Hamad is the obvious mastermind behind this operation, but by no means the only possibility.

of over fifty pyramids here, but less than half are still standing. The pyramids of five emperors still remain, along with those of fourteen queens, some of whom were renowned warriors. There is a Magic aura of 2 at Kurru, deriving from the use of this site for two centuries.

### NURI

The later of Napata's pyramid fields, the Nuri Necropolis is on the west bank of the Nile, opposite Napata. The tombs of 21 emperors can be found here, along with those of 52 kings' mothers, kings' wives, and princes. The pyramids are built on two plateaus. The largest and oldest pyramid belongs to Taharqa, who was both king of Kush and pharaoh of Egypt. Taharqa's pyramid stands over fifty paces high, and stands on the western plateau. Also on this plateau are the parallel lines of the pyramids of kings' wives, and the necropolis of the kings' mothers, or *kentakes*. The eastern plateau bears the pyramids of the other twenty emperors. Each of the emperors was interred in a huge sarcophagus weighing a dozen or more tons.

Nuri was in use for about five hundred years, before Arqamani moved the royal cemetery to Meroë, long enough for it to gain a Magic aura of 5.

### Dongola

The capital city of the Kingdom of Makuria, Dongola is on the east bank of the Nile, on top of a bluff overlooking the river at the point where the Wadi Howar enters the Nile. It lies at the southern end of the productive Letti Basin, and within a day's journey in all directions from Dongola there are about thirty villages with beautiful buildings, churches and monasteries, many palm trees, vines, gardens, cultivated fields, and broad pastures. The city dominates any movement along the east bank of the river.

Dongola was originally defended by a high, insurmountable stone wall, but the city quickly grew beyond these limits, forming an extensive suburb to the north of the city. It is now ringed by seven walls, representing successive stages of population growth, and

the impregnable stone wall is the innermost. It is estimated that over ten thousand people live in Dongola. The houses are large and often two stories high, and the streets are wide, a testament to the prosperity of the kingdom in general and the city in particular. There are many churches in Dongola, and a cathedral, known as the Church of the Granite Columns.

Dongola's royal palace is the only structure built of red brick, making it stand out from all other structures. It is several stories higher than any other building in the city, and bears several domes on top.

### THE CHURCH OF THE GRANITE COLUMNS

Dongola's mighty cathedral is a square building containing sixteen columns of highly polished granite arranged in four rows. Aisles separate the rows of columns, and the central nave is wider than the aisles and crossed by a similarly wide narthex, giving a distinct cruciform plan to the inside of the cathedral. A mighty dome is supported by the columns, and there are colorful and vibrant frescoes of Biblical scenes painted by a true maestro that add to the sanctity of the building. There is a Dominion aura of 7 within the cathedral.

### Ancient Auras

In their glory days, the monuments of the ancients found throughout Egypt and Nubia will have had a Faerie aura associated with the worship of pagan gods. As the temples were abandoned, the glamour they were granted by their deities waned. However, centuries of use as cemeteries may have left behind a preternatural tether to the Magic Realm, which persisted once the Faerie aura had faded. These tethers have generated a Magic aura of 1 for every century that they saw continuous use; sites with impressive natural features may have even stronger auras, and sites whose monuments have substantially degraded may have weakened tethers. For more information, see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 8–10.

### Story Seeds for Dju Wa'ab

An ancient capital is a natural site for stories.

#### THE BLIND GOD'S EYES

For centuries treasure hunters have scoured Napata in vain for traces of the fabulous wealth of the Kushitic priesthoods. Legends have it that the missing statues of the gods show the way. Buried under the sand, the priests' last act was to wipe away the paint from the statues' eyes, reverting them from vessels of the gods back into mere carved stone. One of the statues was recently uncovered by the wind. The daughter of a traveling merchant who stopped here for water innocently colored in the eyes of the statue with kohl while she waited for her father. Unaware of anything untoward, they moved on. However, the faerie that once inhabited the statue has been drawn back in, and now it moves, slowly yet inexorably, toward its destination. It is just a shame that there is a town in the way.

#### THE HAWK THAT THOUGHT IT WAS A GOD

A desert hawk circles Dju Wa'ab, crying forlornly. Every day precisely at noon it lands on a temple roof. This is a faerie animal with the merest scrap of Faerie Might, but it remembers the days when it was an emissary of Mandulis, the Kushite sun god. When the characters happen to be close to the temple at midday, it briefly mistakes them for the priests of ancient times, and brings them the last message from Mandulis: "Where the Sun touches the Sea and the waves are stilled, there will you find Anhur's Spear." What can this prophecy mean?

Dongola also boasts an impressive cruciform church called the Church of the Angels, famous for its multicolored stone pavement that ripples like the river when struck by the sun. It has a Dominion aura of 6.

### Galu

A fortress from the time of the Napatan dominance of Kush, Galu now lies in ruins and is partly covered in sand. It stands overlooking the Wadi Howar, an important seasonal spring that once formed an important route to the west, but since it ran dry the former settlements have been abandoned

### Story Seed: Thirty Centuries

A character is visited by the ghost of an ancient warrior wearing a black tabard. This visit might be a vision, an apparition to someone with Second Sight, or a vivid dream. He pleads for help; his unit is trapped, surrounded on all sides, and in sore need of reinforcements. He can lead the characters to Kerma, and on the night of a new moon the battle can be seen.

Kerma was wiped out by a terrible civil war, and the stones mark the graves of those falling in support of each side. Every new moon the ghosts of Kerma rise to fight again. If a black-liveried soldier is killed, then he joins the white side, and *vice versa*; and the color of the stones on his grave change gradually over the course of the year, resulting in dual-colored graves. Should one faction stand unopposed, then the army of ghosts will be united under a single commander and free to leave Kerma's environs.

It has been three millennia since Kerma stood, but its white faction now controls the majority of the graves, and it is gaining more and more converts every year. A temple priest of Dedun is responsible for the recent successes of the white faction, and one can only wonder what he plans to do with 25,000 ghostly warriors under his command.

and the region is now a desolate waste.

The failure of the Wadi Howar is a direct consequence of the establishment of Galu. The fortress was placed on the home of the spirit of the wadi after it was slain by Napatan priests; the priests hoped they could take up the reins of power over the flow of the wadi, but were unable to make this a lasting effect. The Wadi Howar dried up, and the fortress was left to guard a road to nowhere.

### Ghazali

This is one of the largest monasteries in all of Nubia. The structure consists of a large church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, surrounded by residential buildings and a commemorative complex. The whole monastery is enclosed in a high stone wall faced with bricks and whitewashed. The church also has a barrel-vaulted crypt where deceased monks are buried. The monastery has a hospice for the housing of visitors and a hospital for the care and comfort of the sick and dying.

### Nubian Pyramids

Markedly different from Egyptian pyramids in form, Nubian pyramids have much steeper sides — seventy degrees compared to the more typical forty five degrees in Egypt. This results in a much smaller base: a Nubian pyramid which is thirty paces high may be only twenty paces wide, compared to sixty paces wide for an Egyptian pyramid of equivalent height. Each pyramid has a pylon gate and temple at its base. The body was not placed within the pyramid itself, but rather ten or more paces beneath it; a steep set of stairs led down to the tomb. Before the tomb is an antechamber where offerings were left (the same as the serdab in Egyptian pyramids, see Chapter 4, The Structure of Tombs). Apart from these structural differences, the contents of Nubian tombs are similar to those of Egypt.

## Kerma

Kerma was the capital of a kingdom dating back before the Empire of Kush. All that remains of Kerma are the ruins of the circular royal palace and two *deffufa* — solid towers made of mud bricks standing thirty paces high. The remnants of a substantial city wall, over two miles long and protected by towers, encloses an area big enough to house 10,000 inhabitants.

Kerma's cemetery lies next to the remains of the city, over a mile long north to south and containing an estimated 25,000 graves. Most are low mounds covered with thousands of pebbles. Many of these graves consist of clusters of small mounds surrounding a central larger one. Some tumuli are covered in white pebbles, others in black pebbles, and a rare few in a mixture of both colors. The reason for this distinction is unknown. At the southern end of the cemetery are dozens of huge tumuli, the graves of the kings of ancient Kerma. Four of these tumuli are truly enormous, each having a diameter of over a hundred paces. A Magic aura of level 3 lingers around these four tumuli, but weakens to 2 over the rest of the royal cemetery and 1 over the rest of the graves.

## Negila

Negila is a small oasis that is a welcome resting place for caravans traveling to and from Darfur. Negila is claimed by Makuria, although it stands on the border with the Alodian district of Bayuda (see later). For this reason, Negila is home to a Makurian military outpost, including a unit of *Struthophagi* mounted on ostriches. These swift-footed cavalry units are used as messengers and scouts.

## Darfur

The region of Darfur is distant from the Nile valley and yet still firmly under Makurian domination. Occupied by a people called the *Tajuwa*, Darfur thrives on the proceeds of the slave trade.



## 'AYN FARAH

Darfur buildings are made from a distinctive red-colored brick, and built as truncated cones rather than rectangular structures. They have flat tops made of mud brick. These buildings can be immense: fifty paces diameter at the base, narrowing to twenty five paces at the summit, which can be six paces high. The *Tajuwa* live communally in these homes, several families sharing a single roof.

## URI

*Uri* is the royal palace of the chief of the *Tajuwa*, who owes vassalage to the Makurian throne. *Uri* is an important emporium of long-distance trade at the crossroads of the *Darb al-Arba'in*, the road for Arab slavers from Asyut in Egypt south into the Slave-lands, and the *Tarik al-Sudan*, the savannah route across the Great Desert to the west (see *Between Sand and Sea: Mythic Africa*.)

## FASHER

Fasher is the principle starting point for those making expeditions into the Slave-lands. This oasis consists of few permanent buildings, but is instead a camp for slavers, caravan guards, camel and cattle drovers,

and the like. There is a thriving rope-making industry here. Slaves captured further south are kept in pens, much like the livestock that is often captured with them.

### SAMNA

A town built of the distinctive red bricks of the Tajuwa, Samna is the location of one of Makuria's only mosques, built to service the religious needs of the Arabic slave traders.

## The Valley of Elephants

In the midst of a lush region of the Nile Valley is a series of marshes where elephants gather in large numbers. They come here for the abundant food, in particular a sweet rush of which they cannot get enough. The serpents that habitually prey on elephants are not found in this valley, although it would seem a natural place for them to hunt.

### The Tajuwa of Darfur

The Tajuwa resemble the slave races that they capture, particularly their tight curly hair and scant beards, although they generally have the height of Nubians, suggesting an ancient distant blending of the races. Both men and women dress in ankle-length smocks copied from the djellebah of their Arab trading contacts, often in striped linen. Those requiring less restrictive clothing wear loose trousers but go bare chested. Tajuwa warriors — mostly caravan guards — employ a variety of weapons and armor according to personal preference; swords are uncommon.

The Tajuwa are lax Christians at best; settlements in Darfur have churches staffed by Nubian priests, but they are virtually empty for most celebrations of the Eucharist. The Tajuwa have not sought other gods to replace the Christian one; they simply aren't particularly religious.

The herds of elephants despoil any attempts at agriculture here, and the human population has been forced out of this section of the valley, dwelling instead at the fringes of the marshes and raising what crops they can hide or protect from marauding elephants. They live in tents that can be quickly packed up and moved if their sentries spot elephants coming, since the massive animals are prone to trample any signs of human habitation.

## Alodia

Alodia is the most remote of the three Nubian kingdoms. It extends south from the fifth cataract to beyond the confluence of the Blue and White Nile Rivers. The capital of Alodia is Soba. The king of Alodia is a great king, like that of Makuria, who rules over several subkingdoms from his capital at Soba; in Alodia's case, these number nine: Atbai, Bayuda, Butana, Gezira, Kabushia, Kassala, Keraba, Meroë, and Soba.

### Story Seed: Valley of Elephants

An Old Man of the Forest surprises the characters by suddenly appearing in front of them. This magical elephant considers himself the guardian of the Valley of Elephants, and he has become apprised of a plan that threatens the resources of his species. A local king plans to drain the marshes where the sweet rushes grow, making the land available for agriculture, and hopefully driving off the elephants. The Old Man of the Forest tells them that the sweet rush is hateful to the giant serpents of the surrounding gorges; if the king goes through with his plan, then humans and elephants alike will fall victim to the serpents' ravenous hunger. The characters may have to negotiate with the king on behalf of the elephants, but he will be difficult to convince of the alleged threat. Is the Old Man of the Forest telling the truth? Can perhaps a compromise between elephants and humans be reached?

## The Dihi

The Dihi are the offspring of intermarriages between the Blemmyae and humans. They live in the northern portion of Atbai. A first generation Dihi appears similar to his human parent, although like a Blemmyae his ears are located on his upper torso rather than his head. However, when the Dihi first experiences an extreme shock or excitement, his head falls clean off his shoulders. While bizarre, this does not harm the character, and he can reattach his head to his neck, assuming he survives the shocking encounter with both body parts intact (some lions in Atbai have learned to target Dihi by surprising them since the headless bodies make very easy prey). After the initial detachment, the character's head is prone to falling off during any strenuous activity or emotional turmoil.

If a Dihi has been careful and not had his head detach prior to having children, they do not inherit his condition, but an afflicted Dihi has similarly afflicted children. Most Dihi consider their condition to be a curse, but some have managed to find inventive ways in which to take advantage of it.

Dihi characters should take the Lesser Malediction Flaw to simulate the inconvenience of a detachable head, especially if one's enemy knows of the curse. Under situations of physical or emotional stress roll a stress die; if the result is 9 or more then her head detaches. Further, if the character ever botches a roll on a physical activity then her head also falls off and may roll away in addition to any other effects of the botch. The head is completely deaf, and the body is completely blind, but if the head can see her body the character can shout commands to attempt to reunite his disjunct body parts. It takes a round to reattach the head to the body. Dihi characters often also have the Magical Blood Virtue (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 46) to balance their Lesser Malediction.



As a nation, Alodia is considered more powerful than Makuria: it has greater wealth due to rich deposits of gold; the land is more fertile; the territory controlled is larger; and the army is more numerous and better armed.

## Atbai

The easternmost and most arid of Alodia's nine kingdoms, Atbai is also the poorest, having no mineral resources to trade. The Atbaik people are mostly pastoralists, although there are several fishing communities that make a living from the Red Sea.

The northern border of Atbai is contested with the Blemmyae; the king of Atbai has had to compromise with what territory he feels he can afford to defend, and has left the rest of the villages to the mercy of the Blemmyae.

## GOZ REGB

Atbai's only town of substantial size, and the seat of a bishop. Goz Regeb's cathedral is decidedly modest by Alodian standards.

## TAFLIN

A fertile area amidst the arid land of Atbai, Atbaik nomads bring their flocks to

Taflin during the rainy season, and there is a month-long festival as stock is traded and marriages arranged. Ball games are discouraged, in deference to the Dihi (see insert).

powers. For the statistics of the Gilif leopards, use the statistics for the lion (*The Book of Mundane Beasts*), but reduce Size to +1; this also subtracts 2 from Strength and adds 1 to Quickness.

## Bayuda

Unlike the other subkingdoms of Alodia, the Bayuda is not centered around a single city, but instead consists of innumerable small villages scattered through the sandy desert and into the Gilif Hills. These "highlanders" are an unusual people: each village appears to have its own language, which is entirely unrelated to any of its neighbors or to Nubian. Any outsider attempting to learn the language of the highlanders discovers that they all speak the same language, but due to a magical curse, cannot understand another native Bayudan speaking this language. They have no trouble understanding a non-Bayudan speaking this language, regardless of from which village he learned it.

## GILIF HILLS

Consisting of deep ravines between jagged crags, the Gilif Hills are an unforgiving landscape that is reportedly the haunt of leopard spirits. It is true that the region is home to an uncommon number of leopards, and some of them may have supernatural

## Butana

The kingdom of Butana lies in a privileged position, protected by Keraba to the north and Soba to the south. It is the main agricultural region of Alodia, well-watered by the tributaries of both the Nile and the Atbara rivers. The capital of Butana is Naqa. The Butanans have a reputation for hard work and are amply assisted by the alchemists of Soba, who rely on Naqan glass for many of their activities.

## NAQA

Naqa is an ancient city of the same era as Meroë, and at the center of the Butana district. It sits on the Awateib, a seasonal river or *wadi*, at the point where many lesser wadis feed down from the Butana plateau; the Wadi Awateib flows west to the Nile, about thirty miles away. Naqa is an important trading city on the way to Ethiopia, and many of the slaves procured from the southern lands have Naqa as their first taste of civilization before being sent north, ultimately to Egypt.

Naqa is famous for its production of



glass. Particularly clean and pure sand around the Wadi Awateib results in a clear glass with a slight green tinge, which is formed into ingots before being traded northwards. Naqan glassblowers have a well-deserved reputation.

## Gezira

The most southerly of Alodia's nine kingdoms, Gezira lies between the White and the Blue Niles. Gezira is the least Nubian of the Alodian kingdoms, sharing blood with Ethiopians and Aithiopes. Gezira has a reputation for rebellion; they are the most recent kingdom to be added to Alodia, and do not have the wealth of the other nations. Many Gezirans see their vasalage to Alodia as a conquest rather than a mutually-beneficial agreement. The army of Alodia's great king has a substantial presence in Gezira in an attempt to keep the peace, but their presence may actually provoke more riots than are prevented.

## SENNAR

The capital of Gezira is home to a ruling dynasty who are descended from both Nubian and Megabaran stock (see Chapter 9: Mythic Aithiopians). Among the Gezirans, men and women have equal status, and the monarch of Gezira is as often a queen as it is a king. A quarter of Gezira's army consists of warrior women, who are quartered at Sennar.

## Kabushia

Known as The Gates (that is, of Alodia), Kabushia is the northernmost of Alodia's subkingdoms, and one of the most heavily fortified. Responsible for guarding the kingdom from northern aggression, the city of Kabushia has a high proportion of warriors. Its outlying districts grow crops to supply the standing army, and there are whole villages of metalsmiths who turn bars of iron from Meroë into weapons.

Kabushia is no friend to Makuria. During the failed Umayyad invasion of Makuria

in the seventh century, the king and his family were removed south for safety, but were taken into custody by the King of Kabushia, and ransomed back to his kingdom at an extortionate rate. The tiny subkingdom has never allowed its mighty neighbors to the north forget this shaming.

## Kassala

Kassala is home to Alodia's Mortuary Society, although there are offices of the society in every city. No trade routes pass through or near Kassala; just one road crosses the plain to approach the city from the west.

Kassala's business is the dead. The city has more dead inhabitants than living ones, sitting as it does amidst a plethora of tombs, cemeteries, and monuments to the deceased. Some of these graves are ancient, but most are from the Christian Alodia rather than pagan Kush. They belong to kings, patriarchs, noblemen, merchants, anyone who was deemed worthy of being remembered, either through their money or their fame. Those who live in the city make their living through the dead. Other cities pay the Kassalans to dispose of the corpses that the Nubians find so distasteful. A host of morticians' porters gather up the bodies and take them to their masters, who prepare the bodies for interment. Hired pallbearers take the body to its grave, and Kassalan priests perform few ceremonies other than the burial rite. Other residents are associated with the funeral trade: making and weaving linen for shrouds, crafting death masks, preparation of incense, professional mourners, grave guardians, and so on. As there is an insignificant congregation of the faithful, there is no Dominion aura in Kassala; indeed, some areas have developed a weak Magic aura instead.

The mortician's work rarely involves embalming; most Alodian dead are wrapped in simple shrouds and given a clay or metal mask. The shrouds and bandages of the deceased are often inscribed with protective texts which have significance in folk magic as well as religion. For extra cost, the flesh can be removed from the bones before burial. This latter practice has several purposes; it is supposed to speed the soul's journey to redemption, ward against the formation of

ghosts, and prevent sorcerers from exploiting the dead.

## THE MORTUARY SOCIETY OF KASSALA

The Mortuary Society of Kassala is responsible for caring for the Alodian dead. Due to the taboos in Nubian (and especially Alodian) society (see earlier), members of the society are shunned by normal folk as unlucky, but also respected for their courage in performing an undesirable task. They are required by law to wear unpatterned smocks of white linen tied with a black sash so that they may be recognized; most also wear a black fez-like hat and carry a glass bell. All members carry a pouch filled with a special powder which can ward off the dead.

All Alodians are taxed in order to pay for the burial of the dead; this tax must be remitted in gold dust, and is mandatory. Most of this tax goes toward employing the Mortuary Society to carry out their business of preparing and interring the dead. Should a foreigner die within Alodia's bounds, their

## Kushitic Preparation of the Dead

In the practice of the Empire of Kush, a body would be embalmed and then have a heavy coat of molten glass poured all over it. Once the glass had cooled, the body would be placed on a pillar so that the body of the dead man was visible through the glass for all to see. Through some magic, the body would not be burned or disfigured by the process. During the later empire, following the destruction of the priesthood of Dedun, the secret of protecting the corpse from damage was lost, and the body was first preserved inside a hollow statue made in the precise likeness of the deceased before being encased in glass. Kings and queens had their statues made in gold; princes and wealthy citizens used silver. Glass is so abundant that even the poor were preserved in this manner, inside an earthenware statue.

family or friends must pay to gain custody of the body; if they cannot or will not pay then the body is usually left for scavengers. The spirits of the unburied dead are more likely to return to haunt those who did not arrange for their burial.

The upper echelons of the Mortuary Society are aware of the Cult of Dedun; indeed, much of the society's activity is tailored specifically to limit the power of this cult. They provide church burials for all, and bury them in anonymous graves to prevent the identification of famous individuals. They guard the mausoleums against grave robbing, and even practice a form of magic that directly counters that of the cult's sorcerers (see insert).

## Keraba

Following the downfall of the Empire of Kush, the center of power — formerly at Meroë — moved gradually upstream. For a while, Keraba (ruled from el-Hobagi) was preeminent, before Soba became dominant in the sixth century and Keraba became a sub-kingdom in vassalage to Alodia. The kingdom is now ruled from Sufra.

## EL-HOBAGI

The huge tumulus at el-Hobagi is one of the last burials of a pagan king in Alodia, once Soba became the dominant kingdom, they spread their own Christian faith to all vassals. The tumulus is surrounded by other high-status tombs, and accompanied by a temple to the ram-headed creator god Atum, which is in a remarkable state of repair given its age. The Faerie aura of 3 at the temple suggests that the building is still used for worship of the Kushitic gods, although no one has ever been witnessed entering the temple.

The tumulus has never been entered, despite rumors of the fabulous wealth in which the pagan kings of Kush were normally buried. If similar tumuli are anything to go by, the entrance to the artificial hill can be found at its summit, with a vertical shaft leading into the tomb below.

## Meroë

The city of Medewi, which is now known by the Greek name of Meroë, was built by King Aspelta of Kush six hundred years before Christ, and was the site of his chief palace. After King Arqamani seized control of the Empire of Kush from the priesthood around 300 BC, he moved his capital from Napata to Meroë. At the height of its glory, Meroë ruled the entire Upper Nile, but following the downfall of Kush it has devolved into a city-state with-

in the Nubian Kingdom of Alodia. The Island of Meroë is the name given to the vast triangle of land between the Nile and the Atbara Rivers ruled from the city.

Meroë has always been famous for its metalwork, first for iron, and then for gold. The outskirts of the city have almost an industrial appearance due to the bloomeries and blast furnaces involved in liberating pure metal from iron ore, and Meroitic iron and ironwork is valued far and wide for its quality.

The people of Meroë have a reputation for having a superior attitude born from

## Kassalan Exorcists

A Kassalan exorcist is a specially-trained individual who deals with the dead who have not accepted their final place. These characters have the Wise One Social Status Virtue and the Kassalan Exorcism and Second Sight Virtues. They are trained in Penetration, Magic Lore, and Organization Lore: Mortuary Society. Exorcists tend to concentrate on low level, high Penetration effects, and often work in concert to destroy powerful ghosts. A rare few possess the Corpse Magic Virtue, but use it exclusively to lay to rest the unquiet dead and to foil the schemes of necromancers. Others are Learned Magicians (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, Chapter 5) specializing in the Magicam Art.

as a Duration: Ring, Target: Circle spell for level calculations.

To cast a spell you must expend a Fatigue level, whether the spell succeeds or fails. You must also spend at least 5 minutes preparing the spell, during which time you need unbroken concentration and expend one handful of Kassalan Dust. The spell is designed exactly like a Hermetic spell; if affecting a ghost you must be able to sense your target. Your Casting Total is equal to (Stamina + Organization Lore: Mortuary Society + Aura modifier + stress die) / 2. Penetration is calculated in the normal fashion: Casting Total – Spell Level + Penetration modifiers. Kassalan Exorcism is aligned to the Magic Realm.

### NEW VIRTUE: KASSALAN EXORCISM

#### *Minor, Supernatural*

You are capable of performing minor exorcism spells through your knowledge of the rites of the Mortuary Society. You can cast spells in a very limited focus, namely wards against ghosts and the physical dead (using the Rego Corpus or Rego Mentre guidelines), and spells to strip Might from these same beings (using the Perdo Vim guidelines). You cannot create spells that affect other spirits or creatures who are not the walking dead, but your spells are equally effective against creatures from any Realm. Wards created with this Virtue need not be circular, but can instead block the threshold(s) of a room; this is still treated

### KASSALAN DUST

Made by the Mortuary Society of Kassala, this dust has powdered gold as its main component, with myrrh and other spices making up the rest. Twenty handfuls contain about a Mythic Pound's worth of gold dust. Kassalan Dust is necessary for Kassalan Exorcism, but grants no bonus. A handful also adds +3 to uses of the Corpse Magic Supernatural Ability to command a corpse to return to its grave or prevent it from being affected by Corpse Magic. Multiple handfuls provide no additional effect. Kassalan Dust has a Shape & Material bonus of +3 against the dead. The recipe is known to anyone with Organization Lore: Mortuary Society.

their ancient heritage. The city is ruled by a king, or *qore*, and his mother, or *kentake*. Alodian rule has long rankled the royalty of Meroë, and they have been involved in several failed coups and civil actions against Soba. The royal family are widely believed to be pagan worshipers of Apedemek: they still use the lion as their royal symbol, sit on a lion throne, and keep lions as pets.

## BEGARAWIYAH

The royal necropolis just outside Meroë is the most extensive of Kush's three principle necropoli (the other two being Kurru and Nuri, see earlier). Begarawiyah is the haunt of Alodia's most powerful devotees of Dedun, as a result some of the pyramids are occupied, and may have a higher Magic aura than the surrounding necropolis, aligned to the dead.

The southern cemetery is the oldest of

the three at Begarawiyah, it was contemporary with the necropolis of Nuri. Only four of the nine pyramids contain emperors of Kush, the remaining five are princes and queens. There are also 195 other tombs here. These contain non-royal occupants, and are not marked with pyramids. There is a Magic aura of 4 here, representing the preternatural tether of over four hundred years of royal burials.

The northern cemetery was used after Arqamani moved the capital of Kush to Meroë. His pyramid is here, along with those of 29 other kings and 27 kentakes, queens, and other royals. There are just three non-royal tombs here. The preternatural tether of six and a half centuries of royal burials has resulted in a Magic aura of 5.

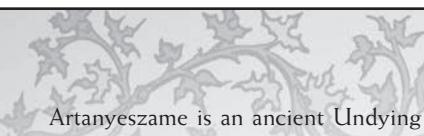
There is also a western cemetery containing 113 tombs, none of which contain a royal occupant and thus lack pyramids. There is no Magic aura here due to the simpler construction and poorer preservation of these tombs.

## TAQASI

The chief residence of the King of Meroë, Taqasi is a palatial building amidst luxurious grounds. It would be unwise to approach uninvited, since a pride of lions roams the carefully-manicured 'jungle'. Live prey is captured and released within the walls of the palace upon which the lions feed. The palace has about twenty rooms on two levels, arranged around a courtyard with a ramp leading up to a podium. Here, the king and kentake of Meroë receive visitors and watch the lions feed — and if the meeting has been unsatisfactory, both functions may be combined.

## Soba

Soba, the capital city of the Kingdom of Alodia, is situated on the east bank of the



Artanyeszame is an ancient Undying One (see later) who has claimed a pyramid in Begarawiyah's southern necropolis as his home. He was born nearly two centuries ago, as a beggar named Georgiu in the town of Atbara. He was apprenticed to a learned magician, and learned of the Cult of Dedun from his master. The latter was killed by assassins sent by the Mortuary Society of Kassala, and Artanyeszame has harbored a hatred for them ever since. Using his master's resources he was able to amass magical power, and undergo the transformation into an Undying One.

Artanyeszame is powerful enough to exclude all other Undying Ones from the south cemetery, although there are two others dwelling in the northern necropolis and a third in the western cemetery. He is indifferent to those searching for the Initiation Script to become an Undying One, as long as they leave him alone. Anyone who persists in annoying him is steered toward a fake script he created a century ago: based on the real one, this inflicts the Ordeal but does not grant the Mystery.

The Undying One has had several lifetimes in which to amass power and further his schemes. He desires to uncover an intact copy of the Book of Thoth (see

## Artanyeszame

Chapter 5: Artefacts), believing — like countless before him — that he is powerful enough to read it without being consumed by it. Until he finds a copy, he is content to amass power and destroy those who might interfere with his schemes. He is content to allow lesser sorcerers to exist, but attempts to dominate or eliminate any powerful worker of magic. The characters could easily get caught between a feud between Artanyeszame and 'Izz el-Afram Hamad (see earlier). If they have had negative dealings with one of these sorcerers, they are courted by his rival; if they have allied with one, then they are targeted instead. Otherwise, the characters find their magical resources are stolen as the two sorcerers vie for the upper hand. This conflict is likely to end in a stalemate.

Artanyeszame might easily become the enemy of a group of characters, if they cross him or interfere with his plans. He could equally become the mentor of any group willing to assist him, although any alliance is likely to be temporary in nature. Compared to a Hermetic magus he is not a powerful sorcerer, but his magic is versatile, and he is cunning in its use. He also has the resources of his tomb to call upon, and the chapter of the Cult of Dedun of

which he is the head. The power of this latter resource should not be underestimated; Artanyeszame has agents spread far and wide along the Nile, carefully chosen for their tasks based on their skills or contacts.

## STORY SEEDS

The characters come into possession of a hand made of green stone. This is the missing part of the Djed in Cleopatra's Tomb, although they have no way of knowing this. Artanyeszame discovers that they have the hand (for example, through an agent who snoops through their belongings), and realizes that the Djed can tell him where to find the Book of Thoth. All he has to do is trick the characters into thinking they want to find Cleopatra's tomb.

A junior member of the Kassalan Mortuary Society asks the characters to help free the ghost of a Kushitic queen and lay her soul to rest. What he neglects to mention is that the ghost, Queen Weteriken (see later), is an ally and tutor of Artanyeszame, and resides within his pyramid. The society is hoping that the characters will weaken or destroy the Undying One on their behalf.



## Artanyeszame, an Undying One

**Magic Might:** 25 (Corpus)

**Season:** Winter

**Characteristics (prior to aging):** Int +2, Per +1, Pre -1, Com +2, Str 0, Sta +1, Dex +1, Qik -1

**Characteristics (current):** Int +1, Per -1(1), Pre -2(1), Com +2, Str -3, Sta 0, Dex -2(1), Qik -3(2)

**Size:** 0

**Decrepitude:** 3 (2)

**Confidence Score:** 2 (5)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Learned Magician, Transformed Human\*\*; Corpse Magic, Strong Verbal Charms, Unnatural Vitality\*\*; Animal Ken, Harnessed Magic\*, Dedun's Blessing\*\*, Self-Confident, Charm Magician, Enemies (Mortuary Society of Kassala), Enfeebled\*\*; Ambitious, No Chartae Making, Tainted with Evil, Vow\*\*

\* Hermetic Virtue, lost when he lost The Gift.

\*\*Gained through Initiation

**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:** Focus Power x2, Greater Powers x2; Corpus Resistance, Improved Abilities, Improved Might x9\*, Improved Powers, Lesser Powers

\*gained through consuming vis (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 52)

**Personality Traits:** Remorseless +3, Scheming +3, Obsessive +3, Amoral +2

**Reputations:** Ruthless 3 (Local)

**Combat:**

**Scepter (Mace):** Init -2, Attack +4, Defense 0, Damage +5

**Soak:** 0

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Animal Ken 3 (hyenas), Area Lore: Meroë 3 (pyramids), Area Lore: Nubia 3 (history), Artes Liberales 4 (astronomy), Corpse Magic 5 (interrogation), Concentration 4 (powers), Corpus Resistance 4 (resisting control), Dead Language: Meroitic 4 (royalty), Folk Ken 1 (magicians), Guile 2 (Nubians), Leadership 4 (bouda), Living Language: Romaic Greek 3 (Nubian), Living Language: Nubian 5 (Alwa), Magic Lore 4 (the dead), Medicine 2 (dry maladies), Organization Lore: Cult of Dedun 6 (Initiation), Penetration 4 (Salutem), Philosophiae 3 (natural phi-

losophy), Profession: Scribe 2 (hieroglyphs), Single Weapon 2 (mace)

**Arts:** Tueor 4, Succuro 5, Vulnro 7, Fortunam 6, Magicam 8, Salutem 12

**Powers:**

*Chariot of the Winds*, 1 point, Init -2, Auram: Conjures a mighty wind which picks him up and carries him wherever he wishes to go at speeds of up to 40 miles per hour. Hovering is difficult, requiring Concentration rolls to remain aloft. Cr(Re)Au 30 (Base 5, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +2 highly unnatural, +1 requisite) Greater Power (30 levels, -2 cost, +2 Init)

*Lord of the Incorporeal*, variable points, Init - (Might cost+1), Mentem: Artanyeszame can duplicate any non-Ritual spell of 50th level or less to do with ghosts, at a cost of 1 Might point per magnitude. Typical effects employed with this power are *Whispers Through the Black Gate* (3 points, ArM5 page 130), *Vision of the Haunting Spirit* (8 Might points, ArM5 page 150), *Lay to Rest the Haunting Spirit* (1-5 Might points, ArM5 page 150), and *Coerce the Spirit of the Night* (4 Might points, ArM5 page 152). He has also made more exotic use of this power, such as restoring memories to ghosts and endowing them with a temporary physical body. Focus Power x2 (Improved Powers to increase maximum level)

*Restore the Faded Tapestry of Youth*, 4 points, Init -6, Corpus. (see later)

*The Dungeon Master*, 1 point, Init -4, Imaginem (see later)

**Equipment:** Robes, scepter

**Encumbrance:** 1 (1)

**Charms Known (casting totals include +9 bonus from the Unnatural Vitality Virtue):**

*Safeguard the Necromantic Spell* (TuFo 15/+21): Eliminates two botch dice from any use of the Corpse Magic Ability. (Base 10, +1 Diam)

*Gift of Atum* (SuFo 25/+22): Grants the Tough Virtue to the target. (Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Sun)

*Gift of Anbur* (SuFo 25/+22): Grants the Puissant Single Weapon Virtue to the target. (Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Sun)

*Gift of Menhit* (SuFo 25/+22): Grants the Puissant Bows Virtue to the target. (Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Sun)

*Gift of Apedemak* (SuFo 25/+22): Grants

the Inspirational Virtue to the target. (Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Sun)

*Sweet Incense of Dedun* (SuMa 5/+24): Reveals the presence of vis within Range. (Base 1, +2 Voice, +2 Sun)

*Gift of Dedun* (SuMa 20/+24): Grants the Second Sight Virtue to the caster, at an Ability score of 4. (Base 10, +2 Sun)

*Sharpen the Magician's Knife* (SuMa 15/+24): Grants a +3 to the caster's next use of the Vulnro Art. (Base 10, +1 Diam)

*Strengthen the Magician's Shield* (SuMa 15/+24): grants a +3 to the caster's next use of the Tueor Art. (Base 10, +1 Diam)

*Fortify the Magician's Balm* (SuMa 15/+24): Grants a +3 to the caster's next use of the Succuro Art. (Base 10, +1 Diam)

*Charm of Alacritous Fortune Against Earth* (TuMa 15/+23): This charm adds +8 to the caster's Defense Total against any magical earth- or stone-based attacks aimed at him. (Base 10, +1 Diam)

*Charm of Magical Fortitude Against Fire* (TuMa 13/+23): This charm adds +16 to the caster's Soak Total against magical fire. (Base 8, +1 Diam)

*Sever the Binding Constraints* (VuMa 20/+26): Hastens the expiry of any spell intended to restrain or hinder its target. If the total of (35+stress die) is at least double the level of the targeted spell, its Duration is reduced by one magnitude. Thus Duration: Sun becomes Duration: Diam, Duration: Diam becomes Duration: Mom, and so on. (Level 20, +1 Touch)

*Charm of Protection Against the Fae* (VuMa 20/+26): Creatures with a Faerie Might of 20 or less cannot affect the target of this spell, as long as the charm Penetrates. (Base effect)

*Charm of Protection Against Spirits* (VuMa 20/+26): Creatures with a Magic Might of 20 or less (not just spirits) cannot affect the target of this spell, as long as the charm Penetrates. (Base effect)

*Ward the Swords Edge* (TuSa 16/+27): Grants the caster a +12 to Soak Totals against slashing melee weapons. (Base 6, +2 Sun)

*Ward the Spear's Thrust* (TuSa 20/+27): Prevents the caster from being harmed by piercing melee weapons. (Base 10, +2 Sun)

*Ward the Club's Blow* (TuSa 20/+27): Prevents the caster from being harmed by bludgeoning melee weapons. (Base 10, +2 Sun)

## Artanyeszame, an Undying One (Cont'd)

**Curse of the Ruptured Ears** (VuSa 35/+30): Strikes an individual deaf with a stab of pain that incapacitates for a round. Heals as a Heavy Wound. (Base 20, +2 Voice, +1 pain)

**Curse of the Milky Eyes** (VuSa 30/+30): Inflicts blindness on the target. Heals as a Heavy Wound. (Base 20, +2 Voice)

**Curse of the Dumb Beast** (VuSa 25/+30): Destroys the victim's tongue, leaving him unable to speak. This heals as a Medium Wound. (Base 15, +2 Voice)

**Vis:** Artanyeszame controls vis sources that produce seven pawns a year; he typically has ten pawns of vis on him at any time. His corpse also contains 5 pawns of Vim vis in his withered heart.

**Appearance:** An ancient desiccated Nubian man, withered and bent. His left cheek lacks flesh, revealing the bones and teeth beneath. He wears the robes of an Egyptian priest, and an elaborate headdress of ostrich feathers. He carries a scepter which he wields as a club, if need be.

Artanyeszame casts his charms in the same way as Hermetic Formulaic spells (using a Casting Score of Communication + Technique + Form + aura bonuses), thanks to his Strong Verbal Charms Virtue. He has many hundreds of spells written into his formularies, which he may cast as Spontaneous spells, dividing (Casting Score + stress die) by 2. It takes him tens of minutes to find the right charm in the formulary. For more details on Learned Magicians and their magic, see *Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, Chapter Five.

When Artanyeszame became an Undying One, his court of the dead bought him a Magic Might of 16.

### THE PYRAMID OF ARRAKKAMANI

Artanyeszame has claimed the pyramid of King Arrakkamani as his home. He keeps his court of the dead in a chamber within the pyramid; they are posed as if it were a royal court, paying obeisance to a central throne — which is where Artanyeszame himself sits when brooding upon various schemes. He has a court strength of 181 distributed between four dozen corpses, including Arrakkamani and his mother Weteriken.

Artanyeszame has befriended three *bouda* (hyena skinchangers, see Chapter 8;

Ethiopia) who dwell in the antechamber of the tomb. These sisters, all of them witches, command a pack of a dozen magical hyenas who serve as the Undying One's covenfolk. Some have the Magic Sensitivity Virtue, and are able to locate Corpus vis residing in the long-buried dead of the necropolis. They are prone to bouts of madness.

**Magic aura:** 6 (aligned to the dead)

**Boons:** Aura x2 (Site, Minor), Seclusion (Site, Minor)

**Hooks:** Evil Custom (Site, Minor), Inhuman Covenfolk (Residents, Minor), Seed of Madness (Residents, Minor)

**Resources:** Curses (18 Build Points). Enchantments (52 Build Points). Library: *Inscription on Petitioning the Dead* (summa on Corpse Magic, Level 8, Quality 6), Initiation Script for Corpse Magic (Script Bonus +15) (45 Build Points). Specialists: Two altar priests (Magic Lore 5), four grave guardians (Single Weapon 4), ghost of Queen Weteriken, a powerful necromancer (Communication 1, Corpse Magic 10, Teaching 4), three *bouda* (Hex 5) (56 Build Points). Traps (55 Build Points). Vis Sources: 2 pawns of Vim per year (paint flecks from magical texts), 4 pawns of Corpus per year (bodies robbed by hyenas), 1 pawn of Ignem per year (glass exposed to dawn sun on rising of Sirius) (35 Build Points)

259 Build Points overall.

### Curse:

*Those that enter my tomb in their impurity shall have their flesh decay and their bones perish:* This curse is written in Meroitic on the entrance to the tomb. This Greater Malefaction inflicts the Enfeebled Major Flaw on anyone who succumbs. Artanyeszame's Magic Might makes him immune to the curse, and he has devised a rite of purification that protect his servants. (PeCo 45; Pen 0, 1/day; Base 30, +1 Touch, +2 Room; 18 Build Points)

### Enchantments:

**Shroud of Sands:** A cloak made of disks of sandstone joined in rows by twine. The wearer can move up to ten thousand cubic paces of sand, enough to bury the pyramid hiding it from view, or to excavate the tunnel to the burial chamber beneath. The sand moves slowly, and can only be used offensively against immobile opponents. ReTe 25 (Base 1, +2 Voice, +1 Conc, +1 Part, +3 Size; +5 24 uses/day) (Ease Factor 11, 10 Build Points)

**Glory of The Royal Lion:** When light strikes this statue of Apedamak, it radiates an aura that can entrap one person who looks at its eyes. It continues to trap those looking directly at it, one per round, until its daily uses are spent. Entrapped individuals are held motionless in place, unmoving except to reorient themselves to face the statue. This effect even continues if they are removed from line of sight. Those caught will starve to death unless released by a secret command word uttered in Meroitic. ReCo 40 (Base 5, +1 Eye, +3 Moon, +1 can be released, +4 12/day, +6 Pen 12) (Ease Factor 14, 16 Build Points)

**Sovereign Ward Against Wandering Shadows:** No spirit with a Might of 25 or less can enter or leave the pyramid of Arrakkamani if this effect Penetrates its Magic Resistance. This effect has trapped Queen Weteriken, who claims to have enchanted it herself into its walls. Artanyeszame gained his Might score inside the pyramid, and is immune to its effects. ReMe 57 (Base effect (25), +0 Touch, +0 Sun, +3 Structure; +1 2/day, +3 environmental trigger, +13 Pen 26) (Ease Factor 24, 24 Build Points)

### Traps:

The steps leading down to the burial chamber recede, creating a steep, smooth ramp. The 20 pace slide down to a hard surface results in +30 damage if the characters slide all the way to the bottom. A character might be able to grip onto the sides of the ramp and arrest the fall with a Strength + Athletics – Encumbrance roll (Ease Factor 9, 15 Build Points)

A false burial chamber filled with fake treasure; this is a good place for an ambush. A character might spot the falsehood of the treasure without entering the room with a Perception + Bargain roll. (Ease Factor 9, 6 Build Points)

A rain of poisoned darts fall from the ceiling. Each individual gets struck by 1 – 6 darts, each inflicting a Light Wound unless a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 6 is successful. (average of 3 Light Wounds, Ease Factor 6, 19 Build Points)

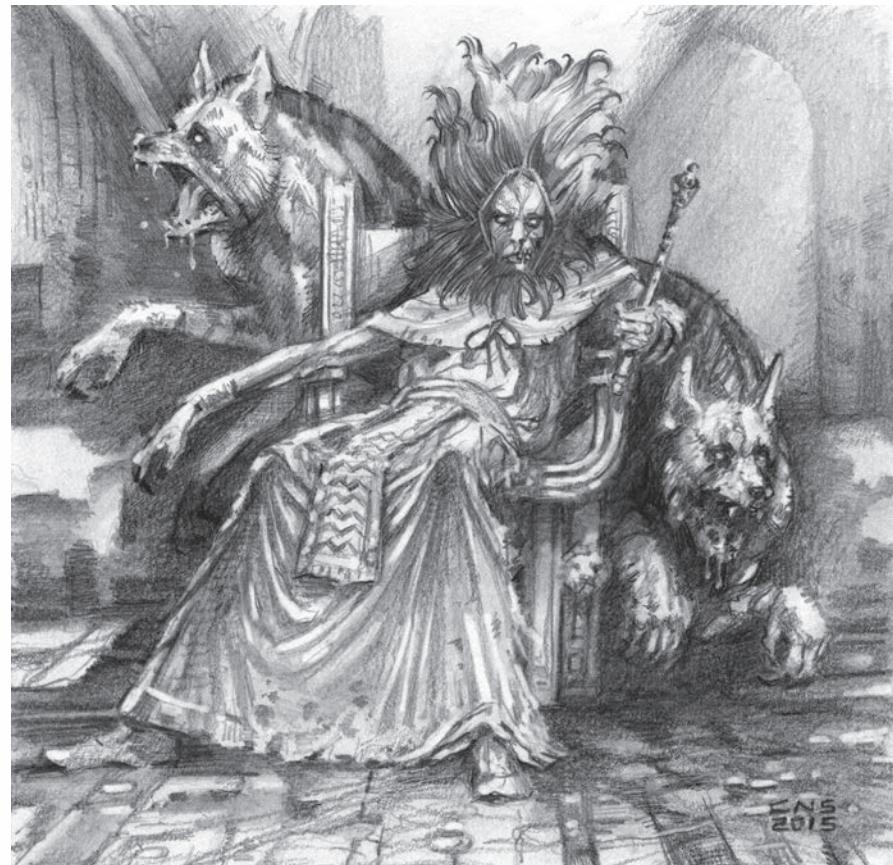
A massive stone slab falls from the ceiling, inflicts +15 damage, and traps individuals on the wrong side. A character might be able to dive out of the way with a Quickness + Athletics – Encumbrance roll (Ease Factor 12, 15 Build Points)

Blue Nile a short distance upstream from its confluence with the White Nile. The urban complex covers a wide area on a gently undulating plain cut by many shallow watercourses. Occupation is mostly confined to the mounds that lie between these streams, and are surrounded by wide open areas. Most of these mounds are covered in gravel and occupied by large wooden houses, each covered in white clay that glitters in the sun due to the mica within it. Each house is surrounded by a lush garden. Some of the mounds are covered in red brick, and these bear churches, seventeen in all, each one decorated with gold leaf. The most prominent and luxurious of these is the Church of Manbali, which serves as Soba's cathedral. There is a Dominion of 3 in proximity to these churches, but because of the diffuse nature of the city there are many lacunae where the Dominion does not reach. Around the town and on the river banks are several monasteries, each one occupied by only a handful of monks. Soba is unique in being the only Alodian city with a mosque: it has a significant population of Muslims, both Egyptian and from the southern sultanates.

Soba is famous for its alchemists, renowned for the wonders they can achieve through their craft. The city is filled with examples of their efforts. Street corners bear poles that shed light at night that rival the moon in brightness. Its streets are uncommonly smooth and pleasant for wheeled vehicles, although some Soban vehicles may not touch the ground at all but hover just above it. Extensive use is made of the streams, occasionally canalized; barges of stone float miraculously on water bringing grain and timber into the city. There are fountains in which the water flows upwards against its natural tendencies, gardens of stone statues which are tethered to the ground to prevent them from floating away and bridges of transparent metal. The city even smells sweet due to the properties of the tiles used in its roofs.

### THE ALCHEMISTS OF SOBA

Soba is rampant in wonders, and most of these are a product of its alchemists. Most are employees of the Ministry of Works, which maintains and improves the



city. These city alchemists wear distinctive red robes, and can often be seen in charge of a construction crew, or restoring the effects of the public amenities or artwork.

A player can have a Soban Alchemist as a companion character, taking the Alchemist of Soba Social Status Virtue. The Soban Alchemy Virtue permits them to perform the wonders for which their profession is famed. Soban Alchemy is expensive, and most alchemists operate under state patronage, although private patrons (via the Protection Virtue) and financially independent characters (the Wealthy Virtue) can avoid the obligations that the Ministry of Works demands. Much alchemical work is performed through the Philosophiae Ability; if you have Art & Academe, Soban Alchemists create a wide variety of alchemical reagents. They also require the Profession: Apothecary Ability to manage and run a well-stocked alchemist's laboratory. A city alchemist might have a Profession or Craft Ability related to the duties he commonly performs; independent alchemists often have artistic Profession or Craft Abilities instead. Alchemists relying on a patron or the

city to fund their experiments are required to remain in the vicinity of Soba if they are to continue to receive the coin they need. Even a wealthy alchemist might have difficulty finding raw materials for his Sovereign Reagent away from Soba.

As well as public works, state alchemists teach their techniques to the next generation at the Ministry buildings. There are both summae and tractatus on Soban Alchemy written in Nubian Greek, and many of these are jealously guarded by the wealthy families who own them. A Gifted individual can possibly learn Soban Alchemy from such books (ArM5, page 166); an unGifted character must possess the Virtue or be Initiated in it by the Ministry of Works.

## Soban Alchemy

Some Soban alchemists are able to turn the natural world on its head, making stone float, metal transparent, flames cold, and water flow uphill. These transformations are never permanent, and need to be renewed periodically if they are to persist. They are brought about through the Soban Alchemy Ability. Unlike alchemical reagents made with Philosophiae, Soban Alchemy is a supernatural science, and cannot be duplicated with Rego Craft magic. Alchemists tend to have their workshops in one of the lacunae in the city's Dominion, to avoid detrimental aura modifiers as much as possible.

It is believed by some that Soban Alchemy is the last remnants of the magic that constructed the monuments of Egypt and Kush in ancient times.

### NEW VIRTUE: SOBAN ALCHEMY

#### *Major, Supernatural*

Taking this Virtue grants the Supernatural Ability of Soban Alchemy at a score of 1. Soban Alchemy is usually aligned to the Magic realm.

### NEW ABILITY: SOBAN ALCHEMY

This Supernatural Ability allows the character to create a substance called Sovereign Reagent. Every Soban Alchemist with this power has a different recipe for his Sovereign Reagent, and it can take many forms — a powder, a waxy stone, an incense, a liquid, and so on. She can only use Sovereign Reagent she has made herself. Each dose of Sovereign Reagent costs the equivalent of a Mythic Pound of ingredients, or else a pawn of Muto vis. An alchemist can make a maximum number of doses in a season equal to twice his Profession: Apothecary Ability; during this season he can carry on his usual business but can only gain Exposure experience points in either Soban Alchemy, Philosophiae, or Profession: Apothecary. He may not be able to afford his maximum number of doses per season.

Sovereign Reagent alters one natural property of inanimate matter, while leav-

ing its shape and composition unchanged. It can either grant an absent property to an object (making it glow, float, or become transparent) or remove a property that is present (taking away its color, sharpness, or smoothness). It cannot partially affect a property; for example, a hard object cannot be made harder, nor can any object be made lighter or heavier — but can be given the tendency to rise rather than fall, or sink rather than float. An object with its solidity removed keeps its shape, but other objects can be pushed through it easily. Only one property of the object can be affected at a time and it retains all the former qualities that are unaffected. Magical media cannot be affected at all, and this includes matter currently under the effect of Soban Alchemy. The Duration of the change is dependent on the character's Ability Score:

SOBAN ALCHEMY	DURATION
1	Minutes
3	Hours
5	Days
7	Weeks
9	Months

To use Soban Alchemy, one or more doses of Sovereign Reagent must be applied to the object to be affected. A single dose can affect one cubic foot of solid matter, one cubic pace of fluid matter, or ten cubic paces of ephemeral matter (such as fire or air). Multiple doses can be applied to affect more matter. After applying the reagent, generate a Casting Total from Intelligence + Soban Alchemy + Aura modifier + stress die against an Ease Factor determined by the type of change desired:

EASE FACTOR	PROPERTY AFFECTED
9	redness/blueness/etc., saltiness/sweetness/etc., texture, symmetry.
12	pungency, fragrance/fetor, tendency to float/sink, sharpness, elasticity, flexibility, moistness/dampness.
15	transparency, cohesion/solidity, hardness, brittleness, heat/coldness, resonance (i.e. the noise it makes), silence.
18	tendency to rise/fall, luminosity

Roll a simple die to determine how many units of time (as determined by Ability score) that the effect will last; this result may be kept secret from the player if desired. Alternatively, to find out whether a long lasting transformation is still in effect, roll a simple die, and if the result is less than the number of units that have passed then the Duration has expired, otherwise it lasts for at least one more time unit.

Matter affected by Soban Alchemy becomes a magical medium for the Duration, and to affect those with Magic Resistance it must Penetrate. The Penetration Total is equal to Casting Total – Ease Factor + Penetration Bonus. Most Soban Alchemists do not learn the Penetration Ability since they consider their power to be a science, rather than magic. Substances affected by Soban Alchemy suffers warping at a rate of one Warping Point per year, and part of an alchemist's work is to replace badly affected components.

**Specialties:** a certain type of matter, a given property

### NEW VIRTUE: ALCHEMIST OF SOBA

#### *Minor, Social Status*

You are an alchemist trained in Soba. You may have Academic Abilities at character creation, and must have a Philosophiae of at least 3. Unless you take the Wealthy Virtue, you are employed by the Soban Ministry of Works (or a private patron if you take the Protection Virtue), and are obliged to spend at least two season per year laboring on the behalf of your employer. You receive only Exposure experience points for these seasons. If you have the Soban Alchemy Virtue, you cannot make Sovereign Reagent in seasons that you work for the ministry, but you can spend one of your 'free' seasons making Sovereign Reagent on the city's coin. You are typically required to use at least half of these doses discharging your duties.

# The Blemmyae Tribes

The Blemmyae are a nomadic and war-like race of magic humans who occupy the Red Sea Hills and the Nubian Desert, as well as the Libyan Desert in the west. A Blemmyae has no head or neck; his face is borne on the upper part of his torso. Libyan Blemmyae are merchants, who lead camel trains across the sands. Nubian Blemmyae are much more aggressive, and are rightly feared by travelers across the Nubian Desert.

Blemmyae herd camels for wool, leather, meat, and milk; they hunt gazelles and ostriches to supplement their diet. They also raid caravans traveling from Nobatia to Alodia and steal any luxuries they find; their reputation is such that they expect no resistance from Nubian merchants. As a consequence, most raided merchants escape

with their lives, and often with any bulky goods that the Blemmyae are unwilling to steal. The Bedouins that have invaded from Egypt are treated more roughly; Blemmyae have no treaties with these people, and see them as interlopers. No mercy is shown to them. Some Blemmyae families mine gold and emeralds from the Wadi Allaqi in the north of their territory, and they control the flow of gold into Makuria and Egypt.

## Blemmyae Culture

The Blemmyae divide themselves into five tribes, named for the five Blemmyae cities that they used to inhabit: Phoinikon, Khiris, Taphis, Talmis, and Prima. All five tribes are ruled by a single king, who is sometimes resident in Sawakin, but more commonly is found living much like any other Blemmyae among his family. The Blemmyae show great respect for their king, and tend to obey him,

but his reign is not absolute; he depends upon the agreement of the five *phylarchs*, the chiefs of the separate tribes. The King of the Blemmyae chooses one of the phylarchs to be his heir upon taking the crown, but cannot choose the phylarch of his own tribe. Once made, this choice can not be unmade — if the phylarch dies in the interim then the honor passes to the phylarch's closest male relative. Under the phylarchs are the *hypotyrami*, or sub-chiefs, each in charge of a band of fifty or so families of Blemmyae.

Blemmyae men outnumber the women ten to one; however, unlike the men, Blemmyae women do not naturally age, and contribute to multiple generations within her tribe. Bloodlines are carefully tracked to avoid a woman marrying her own descendants.

The Blemmyae have not been converted to Christianity or Islam despite attempts to do both, and instead they worship the stars and the Kushitic gods, particularly Mandulis the Sun God. They speak their own language, called Beja, which is a descendent of Meroitic.

## Ababdah, a Blemmyae

**Magic Might:** 5 (Corpus)

**Season:** Summer

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per +1, Pre 0, Com -1, Str +5, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik +1

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 30 (30)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Human, Craftsman; Affinity with Profession: Miner, Long-Winded, Warrior; Essential Flaw, Generous, No Sense of Direction

**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:** Improved Abilities x 2, Lesser Powers, Minor Virtue (Great Strength) x 2, Minor Virtue (Improved Characteristics) x 2, Minor Virtue (Puissant Thrown Weapon), Minor Virtue (Tough), Personal Powers; Major Flaw (Age Quickly), Monstrous Appearance\*, Minor Flaw (Hunchback), Minor Flaw (Poor Hearing)

\*free with Magic Human

**Personality Traits:** Charitable +3, Diligent +2, Brave +1, Excessively Generous (Communication)\* -3

\*Essential Flaw

### Combat:

**Pick**\*: Init +2, Attack +11, Defense +7, Damage +13

**Sling**: Init -2, Attack +11, Defense +7, Damage +10

\* treated as mace

**Soak:** +6

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Animal Handling 3 (camels),

Area Lore: Nobatia 1 (Pakhoras), Area

Lore: Red Sea Hills 3 (ore-bearing areas), Bargain 4 (evaluating value), Folk

Ken 1 (gold merchants), Leadership 2 (miners), Native Language: Beja 5

(Phoinikon), Living Language: Nubian 3 (Dongolawi), Organization Lore:

Phoinikon Tribe 2 (gold merchants),

Profession: Miner 6 (8) (gold), Ride 3 (camels), Single Weapon 5 (pick),

Thrown Weapons 5+2 (sling)

### Powers:

*Ease the Labor of Ten Miners*, 2 points, Init -2,

**Terram:** Ababdah can weaken rock in an area ten paces by ten paces, and up to ten paces deep, making it easy to excavate. PeTe 15 (Base 2, +1 Touch,

+1 affect stone, +3 size) Lesser Power (15 levels, -1 Might cost)

**Gold-Miner's Keen Eye**, 1 point, Init -1, Terram:

Ababdah can see gold through up to three paces of intervening material. He can estimate purity and quantity of any gold present. InTe 20 (Base 2, +1 Conc, +4 Vision, +1 see through intervening material)

Personal Power (20 levels, -1 Might cost)

**Equipment:** Miner's tools, partial leather armor

**Encumbrance:** 0 (Burden 0)

**Vis:** 1 pawn of Terram, in eyes

**Appearance:** A stocky Blemmyae wearing leather armor on both forearms and upper arms and a skirt of leather strips. He carries a pick and leads a camel burdened with equipment.

Ababdah is a Blemmyae miner who has made his tribe rich through his discovery of seams of gold. He is often shadowed by one of his younger cousins, because his family are aware of his propensity to get turned around in the sand dunes and unable to find his way home. In human society, Ababdah would most likely have the Magical Covenfolk Social Status Virtue.

## BLEMMYAE CHARACTERS

Blemmyae have faces on their chests, lacking heads and necks. The shoulders of blemmyae are spaced wide apart, leaving their faces larger than those of a normal human. Their hearing is poor, since their ears are positioned beneath their arms. Blemmyae women do not have breasts and do not suckle their children, but give them goat or camel milk instead. Blemmyae have hairless bodies, and wear no clothes on the upper part of their body. Fortunately for them, their bodies are naturally resistant to damage. Blemmyae who wish to wear armor must devise some means to permit themselves to see; this normally requires them to wear rigid armor like boiled leather or plate-and-mail with eye holes or a visor. They cannot use large shields effectively. Blemmyae warriors tend to be mounted skirmishers armed with slings rather than front-line fighters.

Blemmyae are Magic Humans (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 32) who have the following Inherited features:

- **Magic Qualities:** Minor Virtue (Puissant Thrown Weapon), Minor Virtue (Tough)
- **Magic Inferiorities:** Minor Flaw (Hunchback), Minor Flaw (Poor Hearing)

Male Blemmyae also have the Age Quickly Major Flaw as a Magic Inferiority, meaning that they have a lifespan typical of that of a human. Female Blemmyae do not share this Flaw. Blemmyae take a Social Status Virtue or Flaw appropriate to their role in their tribe, but should they join human society they should take one more appropriate to their magical nature.

## Blemmyae Territory

Numerous treaties between the Blemmyan and Makurian kings have established the limits of Blemmyae territory, but these treaties last no longer than the lives of the signatories involved. Blemmyae regularly offer tribute to the Makurian and Alodian thrones, which are thinly veiled fines for past raiding or bribes for future raiding. Broadly speaking, the region between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea belong to the Blemmyae tribes. The Pakhoras Road to Atbara describes their western border. The port of 'Aydhab is in territory claimed by

the Blemmyae, but is in Egyptian hands.

Over the last half-century, the Blemmyae and Makurians have found a common enemy in the Ja'alin, who have stolen territory from both kingdoms.

## BADI

Badi has been abandoned by honest merchants, and has become a fetid pit of lawlessness and debauchery. The only ships that regularly dock at Badi's extensive quays are pirate ships that prey on merchants navigating the Red Sea. It is said that anything can be sourced from Badi; for things that cannot be bought, unscrupulous men can be hired to procure it to order.

The Blemmyae of the Red Sea Hills keep overland travelers from Badi, for their own sakes. Likewise, the sea approach is difficult because few captains dare to ferry passengers here; standing orders from the Egyptian and Arabian authorities state that ships known to have docked at Badi forfeit the lives of their captain and crew, and any passengers are sold into slavery.

## SAWAKIN

Known to Ptolemy as the Port of Good Hope (Limen Evangelis), the Blemmyae know better: both *Sawakin* and the Beja name of the port *U Suk* mean "prisons." When King Solomon had finished with his jinn servants, some of the most troublesome were banished here. As far as anyone knows, the jinn are still inmates of a magical jail of unknown location.

Sawakin occupies a circular island at the end of a long inlet. It is a fantastic town built entirely of coral. Many of its buildings are made from bands of white, pink, and red coral, and its famous lighthouse is so cunningly constructed of delicately shaded colors from white at the base to red at the summit that it is virtually invisible at dawn or dusk. Red coral

## The Prisons of the Jinn

There are 111 jinn buried beneath Sawakin in prisons of coral, all of them inimical to man. They vary in Might; most are petty annoyances that Solomon did not feel comfortable releasing back into the wild. There are a few that are truly terrifying, and one is rumored to be Ashmodai, Prince of Temptation and one of the ten most powerful demons save Satan himself (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 27).

## STORY SEED: BLACK CORAL

Whether or not Ashmodai is imprisoned under Sawakin is unknown, but what is certain is that there are any number of jinni who claim to be him. A recent earthquake opened a crack in the coral in the basement of a warehouse, and an Infernal jinn was able to communicate with a laborer sent to clear up the rubble. This menial is now the leader of a cult devoted to the worship of "Ashmodai."

A character who comes to Sawakin in search of coral — either for trade or for enchantment — might be sold stone corrupted by the diabolic cult. Rather than having an apotropaic effect on demons, the corrupted coral instead attracts the attention of evil spirits. The cult keeps track of those to whom it sells, seeking to recruit the demons attracted by their product — once the buyer is dead or corrupted, of course.

### Story Seed: Grandmother Lion

The characters encounter an escaped Aithiops slave who has run away from Taqasi. Her command of Nubian is poor, but she is seeking someone to free her grandmother from the king's control. The slave begs the characters for help. The slave's 'grandmother' is a magical lion held at Taqasi; she is the lion-equivalent of a sorceress and has several powers including the ability to take human form. The king of Meroë discovered her secret, and holds her cub hostage to her good behavior. Not all the pet lions are friendly with the lioness, since she has The Gift and they distrust her because of it; some might betray her attempts to escape to the king. If they succeed in freeing her and her son, she might permit her cub to become a familiar or animal companion of one of the characters.

has a powerful sympathy with controlling demons (as evidenced by its Shape and Material Bonus, ArM5, page 110), and this might provide clues to those seeking for the jinn prisons.

Sawakin has a long rivalry with the other ports of the Red Sea: 'Aydhad, Badi, and Qu-sayr. Currently, Sawakin's fortunes are on the rise at the expense of those of Badi, profiting from trade with Arabia, Persia, and distant Hind, as well as selling passage to Mecca for Muslims on the *hajj*. Coral is an occasional export from Sawakin, most of it of a variety called "snake's tongue" and taking the form of a forked twig of rough red stone.

## Dedun, Lord of Hosts

As Dedwen, the Egyptians adopted Dedun as the god of incense, but to the Kushitic priesthood he was much more than that. Dedun stood for the things that are gathered in this life in preparation for life in the next. So he was a god of prosperity, because like the Egyptians, the Kushites interred their dead with grave goods for use after death. He was also the god of fame and reputation, and the patron of priests who praised the dead and kept their memory alive, and his chief cult center was at Napata (see earlier). He was guardian of the dead, lord of the fields of prosperity, and as well as incense he was the god of salt, natron, naphtha, and other substances used for preservation.

The struggle between priests and kings is often symbolized by the uraeus (the symbol of Dedun, god of priests) fighting the lion (the symbol of Apedamak, god of royalty).

## The Kushitic Dead

The priesthood of Kush contained Canaanite necromancers (*Ancient Magic*, Chapter Two), some of whom had arrived here with Tribe of Dan, and others who had settled here after Saul's purge of the Israelite priesthood in Canaan. Characters pursuing this mystery seeking insight may receive clues leading to Kush. By taking possession of the royal dead, the Kushite priests were able to control their living relatives, through the threat of wracking their spirits after death.

## MONSTERS IN THE SEA

The Red Sea is home to all manner of immense creatures and monsters. These occasionally chase shoals of fish up from the depths, and in their attempts to escape the fish beach themselves in large numbers or else leap clear out of the water into boats. The monsters come in a variety of shapes: colossal fish such as sea-eels, sharks, and whales; tremendous turtles; and frightening horrors such as massive sea-centipedes and worms.

The giant eels can be simulated by using the statistics for the elephant-eating serpents, but adding the Aquatic Quality and the Slippery Quality twice. They gain Swim 5, and can breathe water; if caught in a grapple they have a +9 to Defense Totals.

## The Cult of Dedun

Kush may be long gone, but its legacy lives on within the Nubian Kingdoms. One such legacy is the Cult of Dedun, the god of priests and the guardian of the dead. Under the direction of this cult, the pyramids of Napata and Meroë were raised, the rock-tombs built, and the fields of the dead tended. They were the virtual rulers of Kush; by controlling the dead they could control the living. Their power was eventually crushed when King Arqamani, with the assistance of the priests of Apedemak, attacked the sacerdotal stronghold at Napata, slew the priests, and took custody of the royal dead.

Few in Nubia today suspect that this cult

## Scorpion Fish (Scorpaena)

**Characteristics:** Cun -2, Per -2, Pre -5, Com -6, Str +10, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik 0

**Size:** +5

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Improved Characteristics, Ferocity (in shallow water), Tough, Greedy

**Mundane Qualities:** Aggressive, Aquatic, Large Teeth, Pursuit Predator, Thick Scales, Tough Hide

**Personality Traits:** Hungry +6

**Reputations:** Killer 2 (Local)

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init 0, Attack +11, Defense +7, Damage +13

**Soak:** +10

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-10), -3 (11-20), -5 (21-30), Incapacitated (31-40), Dead (41+)

**Abilities:** Awareness 2 (prey), Brawl 5 (teeth), Hunt 4 (large fish), Survival 3 (Red Sea), Swim 5 (deep water)

**Powers:**

**Swallow Whole** (non magical): The scorpaena can swallow whole any creature of Size 0 or smaller. The creature can struggle to escape, but the confining nature of the gullet permits only Brawl attacks. It is impossible to breathe inside the

fish, requiring deprivation rolls (ArM5, page 180) even if the victim escapes the grapple. Three rounds after being swallowed, the victim reaches the stomach. The powerful acids inflict +9 damage every round, complete immersion quadruples this to +36 (ArM5, page 181). A character may be able to brace himself and avoid complete immersion: make a Strength + Athletics roll each round: Ease Factor 6 results in only half immersion (triple damage), Ease Factor 9 results in immersion of a limb (double damage), and Ease Factor 12 means just a splash (normal damage). The fish cannot swallow a second creature until the previous one has reached the stomach.

**Appearance:** A hideous fish over six paces long with a toad-like mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth. Its body is red, and festooned with rough nodules and long spines.

Small specimens of the scorpion fish — two feet long or so — are occasionally caught in the nets of Red Sea fishermen, but these statistics are for a twenty foot long horror. This template can also be used for the giant sharks that live in the Red Sea; these should be given the Fast Swimmer Quality, giving them a +3 bonus to all rolls involving speed when swimming.

could still exist, since the very concept of dealing with the dead is abhorrent. Nevertheless, they still lurk in graveyards and forgotten tombs, and other places of decay. The modern form of the cult is less orientated toward the preservation of the dead and more toward amassing power from controlling the dead. This reversal in emphasis is due to the subtle influence of the Red (see Chapter 1); whether its members realize it or not, the Cult of Dedun has become a corruptive force serving oblivion.

## Structure of the Cult

The Cult of Dedun is a Mystery Cult. It is highly secretive in nature, and divided into informal districts who worship at a particular grave site under the leadership of a temple priest. The temple priests meet once every few years to discuss stratagem. While ostensibly a religion, most of the members beyond the rank of adherent see the cult as a route to magical power rather than a form of worship, and its Mysteries are aligned to the Magic realm rather than that of Faerie. This is not to say that there are no believers — indeed, some priests become fanatical in their devotion to Dedun — but they do not delude themselves as to the true nature of the cult: it is a way of achieving life eternal.

In the past, immortality might have been offered posthumously by the cult through becoming an akh (see Chapter 4), but corruption by the Red has lead to a cult that reveres bodily immortality through dominance of their decayed flesh.

### ADHERENT

Adherents are the typical members of the cult. They come from all walks of life, but seek the restoration of the temporal power of the Cult of Dedun. Some families have been loyal adherents for centuries, and bring trustworthy sons and daughters for Initiation when they come of age. Others are wooed by the promise of power by friends and colleagues who have achieved the rank of altar priest. Others still may come to the cult through their curiosity regarding the graves of ancient Kush, or research into the extension of life or necromancy. The only requirements of them are to attend ceremonies of worship to Dedun, which are held at night in the local temple, usually four times a year. Members of the same congregation usually show each other preferential treatment in their daily lives, relying on the cult's Prohibition (gained upon Initiation to the rank of adherent) to maintain secrecy. Occasionally, a temple priest may ask an adherent for assistance, which they freely give.

Most adherents never advance beyond this rank in the cult. Adherents can learn the Organization Lore: Cult of Dedun Ability, and may also learn the dead Meroitic language that is used for the cult's liturgy, although this is not necessary. Adherents are Initiated into the cult, but gain no immediate benefit from the Ordeal.

### ALTAR PRIEST

The altar priests are the deputy members of the cult; they assist the Temple Priest in his sacred duties to Dedun, and are responsible for maintaining the temple and keeping discipline among the adherents. Should an adherent become a liability to the secrecy of the cult, it is the job of the altar priests to silence him permanently. Each temple may have one or more altar priests, but there are

### Initiation Script for the Rank of Adherent

**Benefit:** none

**Ease Factor:** 6

**Script Bonus:** n/a

**Script Details:** The Initiate is brought to the temple for the first time on a bier, dressed in a shroud and blindfolded by a death-mask cast from her own face. She bears some symbolic death wound on her body. In the silence of the temple, she is sprinkled with oil and fumigated with myrrh. The temple priest helps her into a sitting position, and asks her to swear a fearful vow, with all the spirits of the underworld as witnesses, to never reveal the existence of the cult to outsiders. This vow is enforced by the Prohibition Flaw. He then removes her death-mask, to witness the silent congregation, all wearing their own masks. Screaming like demons, they tear off her shroud and clothe her in a new garments.

Violating the cult's Prohibition causes Dedun's Shadow to pass over the oathbreaker. This is resolved like an aging Crisis (ArM5, page 170). Even if the character survives she suffers an adverse consequence from the stroke; this usually manifests as a paralyzed limb (Lame), shaking hands (Palsied Hands), or blighted speech (Afflicted Tongue).

## The Initiation Process

Initiation is a means by which characters can acquire new Virtues through the completion of a task or series of tasks. The Initiation is guided by a Mystagogue, who, once the tasks have been completed, generates an Initiation Total equal to his Presence + Organization Lore + Script Bonus. If the Ease Factor is equaled or exceeded, then the Initiate gains the sought-after power. If the Mystagogue does not personally know the power then the Ease Factor is increased by 3 (if the power is a Minor Virtue) or 9 (if the power is a Major Virtue).

Characters with The Gift have a few advantages when seeking Initiation. Gifted characters can receive a bonus to initiation for previous Ordeals, meaning they can often avoid an Ordeal. UnGifted characters have to take an Ordeal Flaw every time they are Initiated into a new mystery. However, a different Initiation Script is needed to take

advantage of this benefit, and not all cults have alternatives available. A final benefit, which does not need a separate script, is that only Gifted characters can Initiate others with a Mystery that they do not know themselves. This means that only Gifted characters can self-initiate into a Mystery.

The Initiation Scripts listed here are all designed for characters without The Gift, although Gifted characters can still use them. It is possible that the Cult of Dedun has different Initiation Scripts for Gifted characters to use, or else the character may discover them written in the ancient Meroitic language on long-forgotten monuments, or even invent her own. Rules for this, and more information on Initiation in general, can be found in *The Mysteries Revised Edition* or *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*. Details about unGifted Initiations are in *Hedge Magic Revised Edition*.



rarely more than four, except in particularly large congregations. Altar priests are expected to have an Organization Lore: Cult of Dedun of 1 or more, and a Meroitic of at least 3 to perform the rites to Dedun.

Only those with magical powers can benefit from the ranks above adherent. Having proved their loyalty to the cult, altar priests are released from their Prohibition, replacing it with a Vow; this allows them to recruit new adherents.

### TEMPLE PRIEST

There is only one temple priest per district. He is responsible for leading a congregation in the worship of Dedun, and usually has one or more altar priests to assist him. To be considered for this rank, a character must have an Organization Lore: Cult of Dedun of at least 3, and knowledge of Meroitic at 4 or more.

Upon Initiation to this rank, a temple priest must locate a tomb to become the focus of a new cult center, and obtain his own congregation of adherents; these may be inherited or stolen from his prior temple. Due to the Mystery acquired during Initiation to this rank, temple priests derive power from their own Decrepitude. They usually abandon their families and any pretense at a normal life, and take up residence in their temple, living in squalor and eating whatever they can scrounge from within the temple and its immediate vicinity. Some temple priests even feed on the bodies they steal for their court (see later); others rely on their altar priests to

bring them sustenance. This retreat hastens the onset of aging (represented by a -3 Living Conditions modifier) and contributes to their burgeoning power. They believe that this punishment of the flesh leads to a greater purity of purpose in Dedun's service.

At this rank, the character begins to gather a "court" of interred bodies. Some temple priests keep their court at their temple, either

on display to their congregation or hidden from view, while other priests prefer to secret their court away in a separate location. These bodies are usually of noteworthy people, famous (or infamous) in life. Each member of a priest's court must be prepared according to her own individual rite, established during her Initiation into this rank. Individual variations include how a body is prepared before

### Initiation Script for the Rank of Altar Priest

**Benefit:** Dedun's Blessing. The character can align Magic auras toward the dead. The level of the aura is doubled when the activity matches the alignment; in this case, any spells or powers specifically affecting the dead, the Magic Resistance of any dead or undead supernatural creature, and so on. To align the aura the character must perform a ceremony to Dedun in the aura at least once a season for a year. The aura must be of the Magic realm, and cannot have a prior alignment. You may then make a roll of Intelligence + Magic Lore + stress die against an Ease Factor of (9+aura level). If the roll succeeds, then the aura is aligned. If the roll fails, you receive a cumulative bonus of +1 to the next roll, which can be attempted after another year of seasonal rites. If you botch, the character aligns the aura to an entirely different magical focus. Several individuals may cooperate to align the same aura; each roll is made

separately, but any bonus for previous attempts is added together and applied to the rolls of all individuals taking part. The effects of Dedun's Blessing are permanent unless the level of the aura changes, in which case the alignment is lost. See *Realms of Power: Magic* page 15 for more details on aligned auras.

**Ease Factor:** 15 (Minor Virtue)

**Script Bonus:** +7

**Script Details:** The Initiate must spend a season in seclusion at the temple, learning Dedun's rites from his Mystagogue (+3); this counts as a season of Teaching in Organization Lore: Cult of Dedun, or Meroitic. He must procure rare and expensive incenses for the temple at his own expense (+1), and learn to prepare and apply them correctly. As part of the ceremony, the Initiate loses the Prohibition Flaw gained as an adherent, but swears a Vow (as per the Flaw) of secrecy instead (+3).

burial (embalmed, mummified, stripped of flesh), how it is arrayed (dressed, wrapped in a shroud, posed in a particular position), and how it is interred (buried in the soil, encased in a sarcophagus, hung upon ropes, entombed in glass). All members of a court have the priest's name written in the Meroitic script somewhere with their body: some priests write it on a tablet and place it in the corpse's mouth; others etch it into the bones; and so on. This ritual preparation of the dead is sufficiently unique that the corpse becomes a permanent Arcane Connection to the priest, and the addition of the priest's name adds a sympathetic bonus to any who can read it.

The bodies that constitute a priest's court can have a number of different sources. They could be centuries old, liberated from their original graves and then reburied according to the priest's own rite. They could be fresh, stolen prior to their initial burial. It is not unknown for temple priests to stoop to murder to assure a quality corpse for their court. Bodies may even be stolen from other temple priests, although this is discouraged. Those corpses that have received a burial according to the rites of a Divine religion are avoided, since the burial service leaves them less suited.

A temple priest's court is rated according to its strength. This strength comes from the fame that each corpse had during his or her life; the more significant that they were, the higher the value to the priest. Each member of the court contributes the highest Reputa-

tion that it had in life to the total strength of the court, with a minimum of 1. A king has a Reputation of at least 7, more if he was particularly famous. A sub-king or major noble has a Reputation of 5 or more. If the body was interred in a Divine burial rite, reduce the effective Reputation by 3, with a minimum Reputation of 0; such bodies are therefore only added to a court if they had a Reputation of 4 or more. There is no limit to the size or strength of a court, save for the difficulty of obtaining high status corpses.

A temple priest receives no immediate benefit from her court's strength, apart from as a symbol of rank among her fellow priests. However, the court's strength is vital for obtaining and maintaining her power in the final Mystery of the cult.

## THE UNDYING ONES

The rank of Undying One can only be attempted once the character's Organization Lore: Cult of Dedun has reached a score of 5. Furthermore, the sum of the character's Warping Score and Decrepitude Score must equal or exceed 7. The details of this Initiation Script are available at just one known location, hidden among the writings on the monuments at Meroë, a site patrolled by the Kassalan Mortuary Society (see earlier) that opposes the Cult of Dedun. The Initiate must sneak or force her way into the tomb and translate the

ancient writing to find the Initiation Script. There is no known copy; obtaining the Script is the first stage of self-Initiation.

Only Gifted characters can succeed in this Initiation, but this requirement is not generally known and unGifted postulants may still attempt it with no chance of success. Succeeding in the rite strips the character of both her humanity and her mortality, converting her into a Magic Human, but in the process destroys the Initiate's Gift.

Undying Ones are bound by the same rules as other Magic Characters (*Realms of Power: Magic*, Chapter 4). While not actually dead, an Undying One counts as a dead thing for the purposes of magic; for example, they receive a bonus equal to twice the aura level to their Magic Resistance if it has been aligned by an altar priest (see earlier); but are also vulnerable to Kassalan Exorcism (see earlier).

The character's corpse-court, so essential for the Initiation Script to become an Undying One, is also important for maintaining that state, since it can be used to stave off Acclimation. The court substitutes for a Magic aura of a level equal to one tenth (or fraction) of the total strength. A court of strength 62 can therefore substitute for a Level 7 aura, enough to allow an Undying One of Might 10 to only spend half her time dwelling among the bodies in order to avoid Acclimation. Note that no aura is actually generated by the court. Undying Ones usually continue to expand their court in order to maximize this benefit.

There are currently a dozen Undying Ones lairing along the Nile Valley.

## Initiation Script for the Rank of Temple Priest

**Benefit:** Unnatural Vitality. A temple priest can draw magical power from her debilitation. She gains a bonus to all Casting Totals and Laboratory Totals equal to  $(3 \times \text{Decrepitude Score})$ . In addition, if affected by a negative modifier to magical activities (from an aura, for example), you may reduce the penalty by up to  $(3 \times \text{Decrepitude})$ , down to a minimum of zero penalty (this is in addition to the bonus to Totals mentioned earlier). Finally, she is less affected by the ravages of age: when her Decrepitude score exceeds 4 you do not need to make Crisis rolls for stressful activities, and she will not necessarily die of old age at a Decrepitude of 5. You receive a -3 bonus to your Crisis Total. Other consequences of Aging affect her normally.

**Ease Factor:** 21 (Major Virtue)

**Script Bonus:** +15

**Script Details:** The Initiate must quest to find the first corpse to form the center of her new court; this individual must have had a Reputation of 5 or more during his life, and cannot have previously been exhumed since the initial burial (+6). The Mystagogue prepares the Initiate's body according to the Initiate's own instructions — the rite she will henceforth use for her court. Variations are permitted if the rite would normally be lethal to a living being, such as encasing in molten glass, but maintaining the symbolism is important. She must endure five days and nights as a corpse, a harrowing Ordeal that grants the Enfeebled Flaw (+9).

## The Magic of the Dead

Dedun's priesthood does not teach magic to its cultists in any systematic manner; the cult is not a magical tradition in its own right. Nevertheless, the Mystery Cult offers ways in which a wizard can gather power from decay and death, and it attracts all manner of unsavory magical practitioners to its ranks. Temple priests who are also sorcerers may take apprentices from among their congregation, usually initiating them to the rank of altar priest when their apprenticeship ends. Dedun's cult is a way to power, and it attracts sorcerers and wizards who already have an interest in necromancy and dark forces. These individuals are

## Initiation Script for the Rank of Undying One

**Benefit:** Transformed Human. The character becomes a Magic Human, with a base Might of 0, aligned to the Corpus Form. You can raise this Might above the base using the total strength of the character's court, buying Might Score as if it were an Art. Therefore, a character with a court strength of 62 has a Might Score of 10. Once purchased, the character's Might score does not increase further even if the court strength subsequently increases. Like other Magic Humans she is now immune to Deprivation, Warping, and no longer ages, but she retains any effects of Warping and aging already accrued. The character loses her Warping Score, and retains her Decrepitude Score only for the effects of her Unnatural Vitality Mystery Virtue. She keeps all Virtues, Flaws, and Abilities she had in life. She acquires the Monstrous Appearance Magic Inferiority with no compensatory Qualities: she takes on a corpse-like appearance, either desiccated or rotting.

You have a number of points equal to her new Might score to spend on Magic Qualities and may take Magic Inferiorities to acquire more. You may take the Minor Virtue (Improved Characteristics) Magic Quality to buy back Characteristic points lost to aging, but this also reduces Decrepitude points by the same amount, and may reduce Decrepitude score.

**Ease Factor:** 21 (Major Virtue, -9 for previous Ordeal, +9 for self-initiation)

**Script Bonus:** +16

**Script Details:** The Initiation Script of Meroë requires that the character act as her own Mystagogue, and that she has undergone the previous initiation of temple priest and possesses the Ordeal Flaw of Enfeebled. The Script therefore only works for those who have The Gift. No variants are known that do not have these requirements. Finding the Script in the first place fulfills a minor quest (+1). The Initiation Script requires a year-long ritual, demanding that the character spends every waking hour chanting. Each organ and limb is blessed in turn: magically removed, cleansed, and replaced as part of the rite without harming the Initiate. Throughout this year, the character gains experience points for exposure only, and cannot miss a single day without having to start again

(+4). This rite requires copious amounts of expensive incense (+1), and the burning of a pawn of vis every new moon (+1). As part of the cleansing process, the character suffers the Ordeal of losing The Gift (+9).

### LOSING THE GIFT

Undergoing this Initiation causes the character to lose her Gift. While this does not affect any magic that she already possesses, her ability to increase her magical power is curtailed. This has the following effects:

- She no longer has Favored Abilities or Arts, and cannot learn new Supernatural Abilities (*ArM5*, page 166).
- If her magical tradition uses spells or enchantments, she cannot invent new ones (including inventing under instruction from a Laboratory Text or tutor) unless she possesses the Supernatural Virtue for all Arts involved in the Lab Total.
- She can no longer use Initiation Scripts which do not have an Ordeal, or which rely on previous Ordeals.
- She loses all Hermetic Virtues and Flaws (these may only be possessed by Gifted characters).
- She cannot use certain Abilities that require The Gift, such as *Parma Magica*.

### COMMON POWERS OF THE UNDYING ONES

*Lord of the Swarm*, 1 point, Init Qik – 1, Corpus: The Undying One can convert his body to a swarm of non-venomous vermin: scarab beetles, locusts, or similar. His consciousness resides in the swarm, not the individual, and he is unable to split the swarm. The swarm is treated as a single creature of Size +1. The swarms ignores defenders and can attack whomever it desires, although it is restricted to just one opponent per round at this Size. The swarm can crawl inside armor, and defenders do not benefit from its Protection. Swarms are hard to destroy: they have a natural immunity to regular weapons, and unless dealt a Fatal wound, a swarm can

disengage and reform at full strength after a number of rounds equal to its largest Wound penalty. The character can end this effect whenever he desires. The natural weapons of an insect swarm have the following statistics: Init +4, Attack +2, Defense –6, Damage +1. MuCo(An) 30 (Base 10, +2 Sun, +2 complexity) Greater Power (30 levels, –2 Might cost, +2 Init)

*Master of the Sandstorm*, variable points, Init Qik – Might cost, Auram (mostly): The Undying One has control over the desert winds. He can scour his enemies with abrasive sandstorms (similar to *Talons of the Winds*), bowl over opponents (like *Broom of the Winds*), protect himself with obscuring dust devils (like *Circling Winds of Protection*), or shift large quantities of sand with the force of the wind (a Rego Terram effect with a cosmetic effect of the wind). He can create any applicable effect with a level less than or equal to either 25 or his Might Score, whichever is lower. The cost is 1 Might point per magnitude. He can buy the Improved Powers Magic Quality to increase the maximum level of effects produced. Focus Power

*Restore the Faded Tapestry of Youth*, 4 points, Init Qik – 5, Corpus: The Undying One temporarily sheds herself of all aging points and restores her body and appearance to that of the prime of her life. She can make one of her Characteristics one higher than she ever possessed as a human; this Characteristic can be different every time she uses this power. She need not concentrate on maintaining this power, but it fades after about an hour unless the Might cost is paid again. While under its effects the character must Penetrate to touch or attack things with Magic Resistance. A Ritual Power using the CrCo and CrMe guidelines is necessary to permanently restore Characteristics lost to aging. Cr(Mu) Co(Me) 45 (Base 30, +1 Conc, +2 requisites) Greater Power (45 levels, –1 Might cost)

*The Dungeon Master*, 1 point, Init Qik – 3, Imaginem: The Undying One can see and hear anything going on within a structure he is touching, typically the tomb he calls home. It may take a few moments for him to move through the building in his mind's eye to find where the action is. Inlm 15 (Base 2, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +3 Struct) Lesser Power (15 levels, –2 Might cost)

often Learned Magicians, but they may have instead or in addition any other magical powers, of which the most common are:

- Corpse Magic (see later).
- The Goetic Arts, particularly Summoning and Commanding (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, Chapter 11). Some sorcerers practice a form of Summoning that can affect ghosts (and other spirits of the dead) as well as corporeal undead such as those animated by demons or formed from glamour. This version of the Summoning Art bears an Infernal taint, although it is (usually) aligned with the Magic realm.
- Curse Magic, such as the Hex Supernatural Ability (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 92), the Cursing Supernatural Ability (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, page 37), the Vulnero Art (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, page 84) or the Malediction Power (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 109).

## New Virtue: Corpse Magic

*Major, Supernatural*

This Virtue gives the character the Supernatural Ability of Corpse Magic, at a score of 1

### NEW SUPERNATURAL ABILITY: CORPSE MAGIC

The character can use Corpse Magic to temporarily revive a corpse. The target of this Supernatural Ability cannot have received any burial rites from a Divinely-sanctioned religion, and the corpse must be relatively intact, having as a minimum a spine, a skull, and more than half of its long bones. There need not be any flesh remaining. It takes fifteen minutes to chant the spells sufficiently to awaken the dead.

**CASTING TOTAL:** Communication + Corpse Magic + Aura modifier + stress die

**COMMANDING ROLL:** Communication + Leadership + stress die; Leadership may be limited by Language Ability

Compare the result to the following Ease Factors to determine success:

EASE FACTOR	OUTCOME
9	Speak to the dead. The corpse is not compelled to answer truthfully or directly, although it may do so anyway.
12	Speak to the dead and compel it to speak truly. Protect a corpse from being affected by further Corpse

## Story Seeds: The Cult of Dedun

A cult of undying sorcerers is an excellent source of stories.

### THEFT OF THE DEAD

A vis source of the characters is being raided by an adherent of the Cult of Dedun. He is clearly not taking it for himself, but due to his Prohibition he will not tell the characters for whom he is working or lead the characters to his temple if he suspects they are watching. Forcing him to do so triggers the Prohibition. This might be the characters' first introduction to the Cult of Dedun.

### HELP FROM THE BLACK

Soon after clashing with the Cult of Dedun, the characters are approached by a potential ally. She has been fighting against the

corruptive influence of the cult, and in secret is a knowing servant of the Black. She asks the characters for help freeing her friend who has been captured by an Undying One. Her friend is secretly an akh (see Chapter 4) who could be another important ally for the player characters against the cult.

### IF YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM, JOIN THEM

The characters' ally joins the Cult of Dedun in secret. She deludes herself into thinking she is working to bring them down from within, but in truth she has been seduced by the promise of immortality. She guides the characters against her rivals within the cult, hoping that they will retrieve information on the whereabouts of the crucial Initiation Script for transformation into a Magic Human herself.

Magic. Any attempt to do so has the Ease Factor increased by the Corpse Magic score of the character.

Animate a corpse. Orders are followed to the best of the corpse's abilities, but the character must remain in sight of the corpse else it will cease all movement until he returns Take control of an animated corpse. The Commanding roll must be greater than the original animator's (if any), else the corpse continues to follow its previous orders.

Animate a corpse and place it under the direct mental control of the character; if he can see the corpse he can issue it orders. He can leave the presence of the corpse and it will continue to obey its orders, but once they are complete it remains motionless until given another order by its creator.

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The corpse animates and sits up, allowing the character to converse with it directly. A character who is particularly skilled can cause the corpse to rise out of the grave and walk abroad. The character asks questions or issues commands by making a Communication + Leadership roll; the corpse does nothing unless commanded to do so using a roll of this type. Single word commands have an Ease Factor of 6, simple questions or commands require a 9, and more complex instructions or questions need a 12 or more. The character must know the language that the corpse spoke in life to ask it questions or issue commands. If the character is not fluent in this language (that is, a score of 5 or higher), then the character's Leadership is limited by his Language Ability. Once the character has failed three commanding rolls, the corpse sinks back into its grave or ceases movement, and cannot be subject to Corpse Magic again until the moon has risen. All corpses are also laid to rest if their heads are removed from their body.

Walking corpses typically have a Magic Might of 9 (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, Chapter 6 for more details). The Penetration Total of the Corpse Magic must exceed this Might to cause it to leave its grave, otherwise it is confined to the earth.

**Specialties:** kings, soldiers, compelling truth, animating the dead.

## Chapter Eight

# Ethiopia

Ethiopia boasts a rich legacy. Once called the Kingdom of Punt, then the Empire of Axum, by the thirteenth century the Ethiopian Empire is an amalgamation of many smaller kingdoms, each ruled by a "negus." Agew, Bet Amhara, Medri Bahri, and Shewa compose the core of a Christian culture isolated from Europe by hostile tribes and tributary Muslim territories. The Dahlak Sultanate controls the islands off Ethiopia's central coast, and Muslim merchants and corsairs rule the Red Sea. Tribes of pagans and Blemmyae occupy the lands to the north and west. The southern border is commanded by the sultans of Adal, Hadhiya, and Ifat. The Torrid Zone, that region of scorching heat discussed in *Art & Academe* (page 27) and *Between Sand & Sea* (pages 13-14), lies even further to the south, through sultry, impenetrable jungles.

The territory of Ethiopia extends from the Semien Mountains and Takkaze River in the west, to the Blemmyae occupied hills to the north, to the Ganale and Wabe Shebele rivers to the south, and the inhospitable Danakil desert and the Bab-al-Mandab strait in the east. The tall escarpments and rich salt flats of the Great Rift Valley very clearly mark the division between highland and lowland. Treasured above all, however, the Blue Nile spills out of Lake Tana and carves through rock and earth as it flows through Nubian valleys on its long pilgrimage to Egypt. While they may have been the same realm in antiquity, this is not the land of the Mythic Aithiopes (see Chapter 9).

## History

The ancient Egyptians believed Ethiopia was the home of the gods and the resting place of the Sun, a kingdom known as Punt. They sent trade expeditions there for ebony and ivory, frankincense and myrrh, gold, slaves, skins, and live animals. Herodotus' writings place Ethiopia in the mountains beyond Nubia, south and east of the Nile. Ptolemy's works say it was once ruled by King Cepheus and his wife, Cassiopeia, monarchs who came into conflict with the Greek gods in the stories of Perseus.

Despite this heritage in classic mythology, Ethiopia's remote location, its isolation from the rest of the Mediterranean made it a culture that shared its roots with Mythic Europe, but survived and evolved apart from it, creating distinct but subtle differences. The collapse of the Roman empire combined with rise of Islam and the overambitious mistakes of the Axumite Emperor in the seventh century resulted in a long period of turmoil and decline. Axum lost its formerly close ties with Constantinople and Egypt, and saw trade around the Red Sea greatly suffer. Only in the last eighty years has the Zagwe dynasty managed to establish its rule and bring order to the wider region.

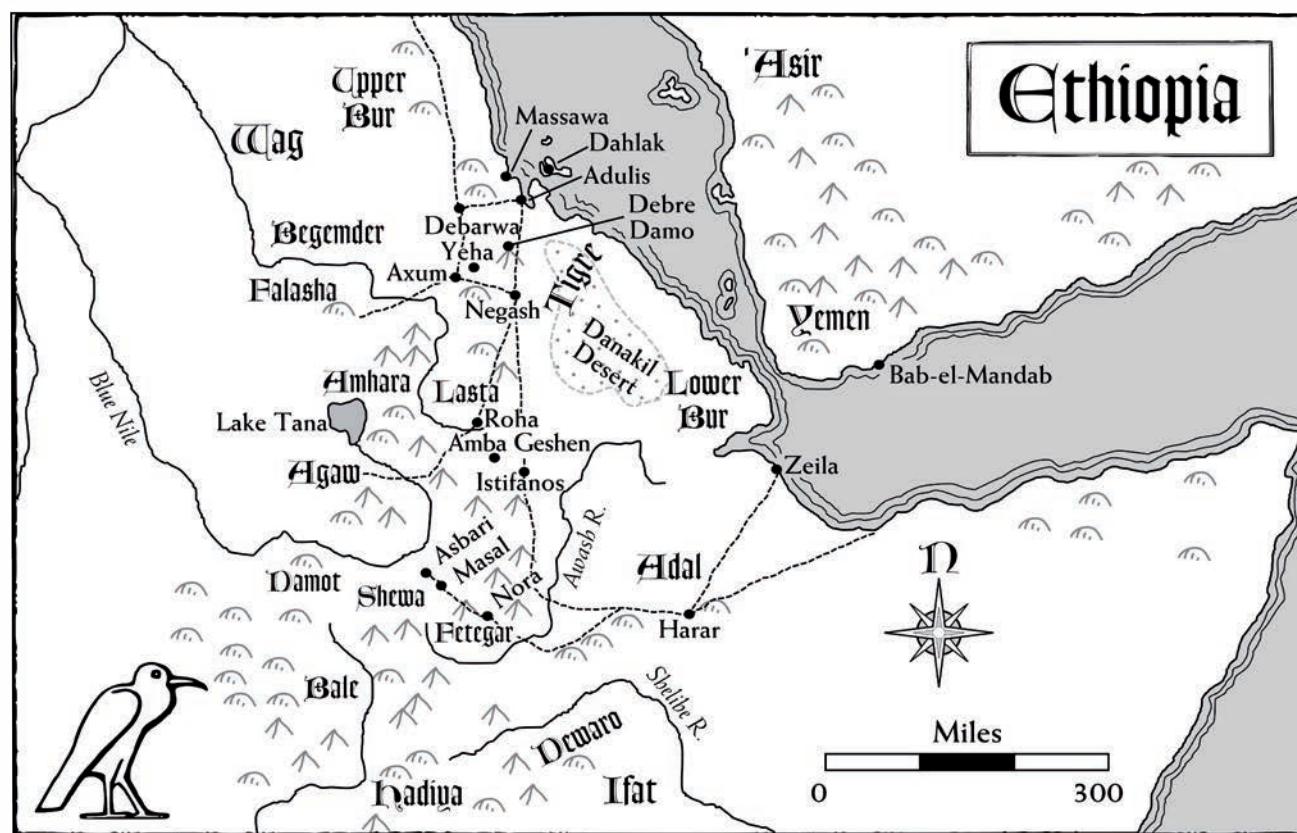
## The Axumite Empire

Emerging from antiquity, the kingdom of Axum flourished and expanded as Rome declined. The difficult terrain of the Egyptian deserts and mountains of Kush separated the nations, and Axum blossomed throughout the Horn of Africa and Yemen. While geography deterred warfare, it wasn't enough to prevent trade, and merchants

brought goods to and from the Roman empire, the Persian empire of Ctesiphon, the lands of southern Arabia, and beyond. When the kingdom of Kush collapsed, the negus of Axum sent armies north, crushing the Blemmyae in Meroë. Hungry for more, Axumite forces crossed the Red Sea and in 525 AD Emperor Kaleb's generals conquered the Jewish city-states of South Arabia. Axum expanded to include 21st-century Ethiopia and Eritrea, portions of Sudan's southeastern mountains, and southern Arabia from Najran to the southeast Yemeni coast. The emperor's influence dominated the most of the Red Sea's southern shores, from Adulis to Zeila and through the Bab-al-Mandab straight to the Erythean Sea. For 250 years, the Axumite Emperors minted gold, silver, and even copper coins. The emperor in Constantinople traded correspondence with them, and the priests of their church attended synods in Greece and the Levant. As barbarians rampaged across what remained of the western Roman empire, Axum stood shining in the south.

## THE CONVERSION OF AXUM

Some claim a eunuch of Queen Candace or the Apostle Matthew first brought Christianity to Ethiopia, but no local stories exist about these figures and regional tradition credits two brothers from Tyre for Axum's conversion in the 4th century. Traveling through the Red Sea with their uncle, Meropius, only Edesius and Frumentius survived when a violent mob massacred the crew after the ship put to shore for supplies. The pagan raiders sold them as slaves to the Axumite court, where they tutored the young Prince Ezana in Latin and Greek. As Emperor Elle Amida lay on his deathbed, he emancipated them, permitting the brothers to return to



Tyre. However, the widowed empress asked them to remain and complete the prince's education. Realizing the value of their proximity to the future emperor, they stayed and encouraged Christian merchants to openly worship. Edesius and Frumentius found their position very useful for promoting the spread of Christianity among the native Ethiopians.

Once Ezana took his rightful place as emperor, the brothers finally decided to return to their homeland. Edesius completed the journey, and told his tale to the bishop of Tyre, who had him ordained as a priest. Frumentius only traveled as far as Alexandria, in Egypt. There, he explained to the Patriarch Athanasius his belief that the whole empire of Axum would convert to Christianity, if only the Church would send a missionary entourage of priests, led by a bishop. Athanasius believed no one alive would have a better chance of success than Frumentius. He consecrated the man on the spot, made him a bishop, and directed him to spread the Word of God in Axum. Frumentius obeyed, returning to baptize Ezana, his former student and friend. Utilizing the emperor's support, Frumentius supervised the construction of churches and the

spread of Christianity throughout Axum, even traveling into Nubia and Yemen. The people called him "Abba Salama (Father of Peace)," and "Kesate Birhan (Revealer of Light)," while Ezana declared him to be the first abuna, the equivalent of a pope or patriarch. He led the Church in Axum until his death in 386 AD. In 1220, the Ethiopian Church considers him a saint and his feast day is August 1, or Nehase 7 in the Ethiopian calendar detailed later in this section.

Years later, a group of nine saints arrived in Axum, following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. Known as Abba Aftse, Abba Alef, Abba Aragawi, Abba Garima, Abba Guba, Abba Liqanos, Abba Pantelewon, Abba Sehma, and Abba Yem'ata, they preached a form of Christianity known as Monophysitism. This philosophy denied any difference between the human and the divine aspects of Christ, and while Christians in Nubia and Egypt followed it, the Council of Chalcedon declared it heretical. Following the Rule of Saint Pachomius, these saints established monasteries throughout Axum, which both became the foundation for a strong monastic lifestyle and served to further spread Christianity

into the heart of Axum. Abba Aftse created a monastery at Yeha, which ultimately failed. Abba Aragawi created the important monastery of Debre Damo and Abbas Liqanos and Pantelewon established Pantelewon Monastery in Axum, both in Bet Amhara. Abba Garima built the Abba Garima Monastery north of Adwa, and Abba Alef built the northernmost monastery at Bi'isa on the south bank of the Mareb River, both in Medri Bahri. Legend tells that the spring near Abba Garima Monastery began flowing when the Abba spat upon the stones, and its waters supposedly grant long life.

### THE FALL OF AXUM

A pair of events greatly contributed to the fall of the Axum Empire. The rise of Islam created a difficult situation along the Red Sea coast as the converted population became more hostile to anyone who was not Muslim. Axum lost contact with Constantinople after Egypt was conquered and the sultan of Cairo imposed many restrictions. The sultan forbade the Patriarch of Alexandria to appoint a new abuna to the

# The Dragon Ceto, The Leviathan

When Queen Cassiopeia claimed she and her daughter were more beautiful than all of Poseidon's nereids, the god responded by unleashing the dragon Ceto, and directing it to devastate the country's coasts and ports. Even after Perseus defeated it, Jewish tales of the Leviathan kept it vital and active, harassing local traffic to gather the benefits of sailors' fear and superstition. It still hunts the waters of the Red Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, flying between the two as whimsy strikes it.

## THE DRAGON CETO

**Faerie Might:** 45 (Aq)

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per -2, Pre -6, Com -6, Str +21, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik -10

**Size:** +10

**Virtues and Flaws:** Huge x5, Increased Might x3; Faerie Beast, Fae Sight, Faerie Speech, Feast of the Fae, Highly Cognizant, Improved Characteristics, Lesser Faerie Power x4, Personal Faerie Power x2; Monstrous Appearance, Recovery Requires Vitality, Role Requires Suffering, Susceptible to Deprivation, Traditional Ward (Payment: those who pay the sacrifice)

**Personality Traits:** Destructive +3, Inquisitive +3, Dragon +3

**Reputations:** Ravenous destroyer of the coasts 3 (Greece), Massive Sea Serpent 2 (local)

### Combat:

**Claws:** Init -1, Attack +11, Defense +10, Damage +24

**Fangs:** Init -10, Attack +14, Defense -5 Damage +22

**Soak:** +16

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-15), -3 (16-30), -5 (31-45), Incapacitated (46-60), Dead (61+)

**Pretenses:** Area Lore: Red Sea Coasts 3 (Ports), Awareness 3 (prey), Brawl 7 (crushing), Faerie Speech 5 (sounding intimidating), Folk Ken 1 (human prey), Hunt 4 (people), Stealth 3 (stalking prey)

### Powers:

**Corrosive Odor**, 5 points, constant, Auram:

Ceto constantly emits a corrosive, terrible odor, doing +5 Damage to anyone within one pace of it. MuAu 25 (Base 5, +1 Part, +2 Sun, +1 Constant): Lesser Power (25 levels)

**Venomous Bite** (non-magical): When Ceto attacks, check its attack advantage to the armor protection of the target, not the Soak. If it exceeds this number, add the effects of adder venom to the attack (ArM5, page 180) regardless of whether it causes a wound.

**Flight**, 2 points, Init -14, Animal: R: Pers, D: Sun, T: Individual; Ceto is capable of flight. It may use the Athletics skill to perform difficult maneuvers, but may not engage in combat while flying incredibly swiftly. Ceto may not fly when heavily encumbered or with a passenger of its Size or more, unless assisted by another faerie that shares the load. ReAn 40 (Base 15, +2 Sun, +3 Size): Personal Power x2 (40 levels, -2 Might Cost)

**Fiery Breath**, 6 points, Init -26, Ignem: R: Voice, D: Mom, T: Group; Ceto breathes an enormous gout of flame. All those caught within a 60-degree arc 50 paces long suffer +20 damage. Crlg 40 (Base 15, +2 Voice, +2 Size, +1 Unnatural Shape): Lesser Power x2 (40 levels, -2 Might Points)

**Lantern Gaze**, 5 points, Init -20, Ignem: R: Pers, D: Sun, T: Individual; Immensely bright light shines from Ceto's eyes, illuminating its way. Crlg 25 (Base 5, +2 Sun, +2 Size): Lesser Power (25 levels)

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Vis:** There are 9 pawns of Aquam in the scales over its eyes.

**Appearance:** A massive serpent with fin-like wings and glowing yellow eyes. Its dark green-black scales are like shields and it emits a terrible, corrosive odor. Its breath boils oceans and it causes waves in its wake. It is as large as a cog or trireme.

**Design Note:** Ceto is not appropriate as a player character.

### STORY SEED: THE GREAT SEA SERPENT

Ceto now enjoys its role as the leviathan, a breaker of ships and terror of the seas. It trails and attacks those vessels that fail to make the proper superstitious sacrifices. It is careful not to destroy too many craft, doing so near shore, and preferring merchants over fishermen, because survivors who reach shore are more likely to carry its tale far and wide.

When the magi manage to prevent their ship's destruction, or chase off the faerie with the first proverbial "bloody nose" it has suffered in a long time, the dragon takes offense and sees their group as a challenge and worthy rival, contesting their use of the seas whenever possible. It harries their ships, specifically targeting related ships while leaving the covenant's craft alone and thus building the covenant an unlucky reputation among sailors and ports. It conceals its ability to operate in and out of the water until dramatically appropriate, rising out of the water to reveal its greater power when it has the most impact. It is playing the role of the great rival and reoccurring threat, and is delighted to have such foes to play opposite it.

It is entirely possible that Ceto may decide the covenant's territory belongs to it and aid the magi should they face another foe, feeling that no other group or being is permitted to decide when the covenant will be destroyed — that is a privilege which belongs uniquely to the dragon. Ceto is not content to allow the rivalry to linger on for too long; when the story has run its course, and as the magi no longer consider it a threat but rather a hazard to be managed, it forces a battle where it either "dies," or destroys its greatest foes.



## The Lay of the Land

The actual division of Ethiopia in the 12th and 13th centuries is a nebulous and uncertain matter. From the early 1100s through the late 1200s, there were few monuments raised, few inscriptions carved, and almost no travelers' accounts. In 1220, Ethiopia is beginning to flourish after emerging from the struggles and tribulations of the rule of Gudit and the relative anarchy which previously dominated the landscape. The destruction left the countryside in smoldering ruins. Some churches or communities survived due to their remote or insignificant nature and many sites were abandoned, never to be rebuilt. Poor historical records mean most of these sacked towns are lost to memory. It has taken almost 100 years and three generations, but Emperor Lalibela's rule represents the transition of the culture from one of isolated fiefdoms to a more unified state. We have only the monolithic churches of the city of Roha (later renamed Lalibela in honor of their creator), some documented land grants by Lalibela, and indirect information provided by a few secondary sources. This leaves borders, rulers, and significant personalities as, except in very few instances, matters of conjecture. Whenever possible, history has been faithfully respected, but this also frees the storyguide to shift borders and to create the nobles, generals, and priests necessary for her stories.

Ethiopian Church until the negus paid a fee for the privilege. The negative shift in regional relations became a crisis when the Axumite governor of Southern Arabia gathered an army in the city of Najran and declared his domain's independence. Emperor Armah sent forces to pacify the traitorous governor, but they were routed shortly after arrival. This loss of the Arabian lands was compounded when the Nubian provinces took advantage of the disruption and broke away from Imperial rule. The scattered and demoralized armies failed to prevent their secession. Encouraged by the separation of the northern lands and fueled by the growing faith of Islam, rebellions flared in Adal, Ifat, and Yemen, leaving Axum reduced and isolated over a period of 250 years. The last minted imperial coins bear the name of Emperor Armah, from the year 614.

The city of Axum managed to remain politically important until the second half of the tenth century. The death knell of the fading empire came in the form of an internal revolt, led by the Jewish queen Gudit in 960. Burning churches and crushing any central authority, she ravaged the countryside and left a patchwork of small, personal hereditary fiefdoms in her wake. Her name in the Amharic language is Isat, or "Fire." A few survivors of the ruling classes escaped into Bet Amhara and Agaw, to the south. For almost 200 years afterward, the once extensive and far-flung imperial trade became nothing more than barter between settlements. The capital of Axum remained inhabited, and its ruler still claimed the title of negus, but the Axumite Empire was truly

gone. Similar to the situation after the demise of Rome, the only broad authority belonged to the Ethiopian Church.

## The Zagwe Dynasty and the Current State

In 1137, Takla Heymanot defeated the scions of Gudit and declared his Ethiopian state to be the inheritor of the Axumite Empire. This was the beginning of the Zagwe dynasty, based in the old capital of Axum. Descendants of the former Empire's administrators, the Agwe nobility wanted to reclaim lost Imperial glory. For the next 45 years, a series of five brothers and sons ruled over the land in an orderly succession, with Kedus Harbe, the current emperor's predecessor, ascending to the throne in 1180. They reinstated the ancient Axum custom of imprisoning young heirs at the monastery and treasury of Debra Damo when the boys reached the age of thirteen. Under these rulers, the king of Ethiopia once again became an emperor as neighboring lands were subjugated.

The future Emperor Lalibela was born in the town of Roha, in the kingdom of Bet Amhara. After a swarm of bees surrounded him at his birth, his mother named him "Lalibela," meaning "Even the bees acknowledge him" in Ge'ez, as she saw it as foreshadowing his future reign. His brother, Kedus Harbe, seemed to hate Lalibela. When Lalibela's half-sister attempted to poison the boy, popular opinion said Kedus

### The Lost Regio of the Great Stelae

Erected early in the Axumite history, the great stelae (or "hawilti," singular "hawilt") began as a part of their worship of Mahrem and Astar, the Sun god. The afterlife for the faithful meant a realm of comfortable prosperity, residing with the gods. Acting as royal residences in this spirit world, the three enormous stone obelisks were carved complete with doors and windows and raised in the capital of Axum. Beneath their towering heights, the living could enter subterranean vaults to pay their ancestors rightful homage. Additionally, nobles and priest who knew the secret entrances could pass through the false doors and access this hidden afterlife regio, taking counsel from the combined wisdom of past kings. Unfortunately, as Axum's people, commoner and noble alike, embraced Christianity, the spread of the Divine made accessing the regio difficult, even for the fading priesthood. Emperor Ezana completed the last Great Stele just prior to his conversion to Christianity, never entering its mystical halls. When the priesthood disappeared, the secret of the regio was lost to time.

However, the regio did not collapse. It was merely submerged beneath the Divine aura, and on the night of the winter solstice, the Divine recedes just enough for Faerie to emerge for one short window, allowing easier entry to the regio within. Once inside, the regio takes the form of a vast palace scented with myrrh and decorated with gold and ivory. The ghosts of ancient kings of Axum lounge here, watching their legacy outside. These ghosts speak both Ge'ez, the language of ancient Axum, and fluent Latin, and lament the fortunes of their homeland. They might be convinced to expound upon the elements of their trade with Rome, teach the Ge'ez language, or reveal lost sites of pagan worship and magic.

Harbe was behind the plot. Guards killed her in the act and Lalibela took it as a sign from God; he would not go to live in exile at Debra Damo. God wanted Lalibela to visit Jerusalem. As Saladin captured the Holy City in 1187, Lalibela had completed his pilgrimage and was returning through Egypt.

In Alexandria, Lalibela experienced a vision. He saw Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem and received another directive from God. The Lord told Lalibela he must return to Ethiopia, take the mantle of emperor, and build a new Jerusalem as his capital. When he arrived at Roha later that year, his brother abdicated in favor of Lalibela. Kedus Harbe then retired to Debra Damo, claiming angels showed him his younger brother should be emperor. The construction of Roha's magnificent carved churches began the next year, and finished in 1200. These structures have Biblical names, including the town's river, known as the River Jordan. The city remains the capital of Ethiopia in 1220.

Masqal Kibra is the empress and wife of Lalibela. In 1190, she persuaded Abuna Mikael to name her brother, Hirun, the bishop of Axum and Lasta, a position he still holds. Hirun's scheming caused the abuna to leave Ethiopia and return to Egypt, claiming his authority had been undermined and stolen. This controversy forced the patriarch of Alexandria to visit in person in 1210, bring-

ing the current abuna, a pious man named Yeshaq. Lalibela's cousin is the scheming Na'akueto La'ab, king of Gojam. As a demonstration of mercy, Lalibela released Na'akueto La'ab from imprisonment in Debra Damo. To demonstrate his piety and loyalty to Lalibela, his cousin built two magnificent churches in Lasta. One is called Wagra Sehin, "among celestials," and the other is Ashetan Maryem, "among terrestrials." Many of the nobility suspect Na'akueto La'ab simply waits for the right time to seize the throne, believing Lalibela weak. The emperor's thirteen-year old son, Yetbarak, was also excused from imprisonment in Debra Damo. Should your saga follow history, Emperor Lalibela abdicates to Na'akueto La'ab in 1229 so he may retire as a monk in the churches of Roha. This leads to a war of succession between Na'akueto La'ab and Yetbarak. This conflict causes Lalibela to return and assist with his son's eventual victory. Yetbarak then rules until the Solomonic dynasty overthrows him in 1270.

### Ethiopian Culture

Commoners and lords live very similar lifestyles in Ethiopia. Everyone survives primarily by agriculture, raising grains and veg-

### Of Alexander and Pyralaoi

Ranked as one of the four great empires of antiquity, Axum was at the heart of a vast and far-flung trading network stretching from Axum to Cairo and Jerusalem to Rome in the north and from Axum through Adulis and Zeila to Yemen and beyond. The *Periplus of the Erythean Sea* speaks of a distant kingdom to the south, Azania, near the Torrid Zone, and another to the distant east. The rulers and people of these places are unknown beyond this text, and it details marvelous products, such as pure, strong iron or lustrous pearls the size of a man's fist, and other goods now lost to obscurity, like lakkos chromatinos or spikenard and bdelium incenses. It discusses the heirs of Alexander and their mighty fortresses and the Pyralaoi of the Torrid Zone, or "Fire-people," served by Arab slave clerks. For magi seeking inhabitants at the edges of the world, the *Periplus* is an invaluable starting point. Using Axum as a home base and referencing the *Periplus*,

a traveler could easily consider voyages into realms once considered fantastic myth.

**The Periplus of the Erythean Sea (Latin or Classical Greek)**

Tractatus Area Lore: Ethiopia (Quality 5), Area Lore: Erythean Sea Coast (Quality 5), Area Lore: Red Sea Coast (Quality 5), Tractatus Magic Lore (Quality 5)

**Author:** Unknown, a Roman citizen of 2nd century Egypt, Greek translation by Arrian of Nicomedia

**Availability:** Very difficult to find, usually in private collections in Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem.

**Description:** Translated from Latin to Classical Greek by Arrian of Nicomedia, this book discusses the ports, kingdoms, and exports of the lands surrounding the Erythean Sea. Older copies are found as a scroll, but later manuscripts are books. It consists of 66 chapters, most of them about the length of a long paragraph and packed with details.



tables, and supplementing their crops with hunting and livestock, such as cattle, donkeys, goats, chickens, and camels. Very few dedicated merchants exist, unless a local lord sponsors one to generate goods for regional tribute or barter. More often than not, communities hold a surplus harvest in reserve, either to protect against famine and drought, or to feed the retinue of the emperor's wandering court.

There are a few ethnic divisions in the country, generally represented by dialects of language (Agaw, Amhara, Tigray, Tigrinya). However, Ethiopians really only con-

sider these differences in situations when no outside threat or enemy is present to unite them. In most cases, Ethiopians consider all Ethiopians equally.

### APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

Ethiopian dress depends on the local climate; what suits the warmth of the lowlands is often impractical in the highlands. People in the lowlands prefer loose fitting cotton, linen, or, in the case of wealthier

individuals, silk tunics with long wraps. Lowlanders favor a cloth called shemma, made by weaving long colorful strips with shiny threads into patterns that are then sewn together. Shawls are also very popular. Sandals are the most common footwear, and men prefer round, brimless flat-topped caps. While highlanders like this style of cap, their clothing is more often made from wool, animal skin, and fur, with fewer wraps. The highland terrain demands that boots replace sandals. Cloaks of wool or fur, and heavy vests are common, especially in mountain communities. Men wear trousers beneath their tunics and often carry long, thin sticks. They use these as canes, walking sticks, or simply hang their arms from them while traveling.

Facial hair is uncommon among Ethiopian men, although one sees an occasional mustache and goatee, or a simple mustache, and almost all keep their hair short. Full beards are extremely rare. Women keep their hair long, either in free locks or small braids. Ethiopian facial features tend to blend aspects of African, Mediterranean, and South Arabian ethnicities, with a range of lighter to dark complexions.

### CUISINE

Ethiopians abstain from pork and shellfish; both the Christian and Falasha Jewish communities follow dietary restrictions forbidding these foods. Traditional dishes combine various meats and vegetables as a thick

## The Ethiopian Calendar and Dates

The calendar has slightly offset dates, with the new year beginning on August 30, rather than in January. This does not impact spells with Year durations, as the duration is based on Solstices, rather than mundane calendars. (Note that 1220 is a leap year.)

MONTH	JULIAN START	LEAP YEAR START
Meskerem	August 30	
Taqamt	September 29	
Hadar	October 29	
Tahśāś	November 28	
Tarr	December 28	
Yekatit	January 27	
Megabit	February 26	
Miyazya	March 29	March 28
Ganbot	April 28	April 27
Säne	May 28	May 27
Hamle	June 27	June 26
Nehase	July 27	July 26
Pagume	August 26	August 25

stew called *wat*. People serve *wat* on pieces of *injera*, a sourdough flatbread made from fermented *teff* flour. Instead of plates, people use slabs of *injera* to serve food, and only use their right hand when touching food. Clean water can be an issue, and popular beverages include *katikala*, distilled from millet, *tela*, a local beer, and *tej*, a honey wine similar to mead. Although it is known in the highland kingdoms of Agaw and Shewa, coffee is uncommon elsewhere in the empire. A few small Sufi sects near Harar praise the drink for its restorative properties. Warriors in Agaw and Shewa grind raw coffee beans, which they call *bum*, into a paste with lard or butter and roll them into balls, which they eat while on the march.

## POLYGAMY

The Coptic Church regularly urges the abuna to preach against polygamy in Ethiopia; it is a frequent topic in the letters sent from the patriarch of Alexandria. A minority of Ethiopians practice a form of polygamy where a man may have many wives. Neither the Christian or Falasha Jewish communities discriminate against this polygamy, and proponents claim their lifestyle is justified by scripture in the Old Testament. Regardless, any polygamist is responsible for the survival and well-being of all the children he fathers. In the Islamic sultanates, polygamy exists by virtue of historical precedent, but it is far less common. For characters who maintain a larger, polygamous family, you might use the Close Family Ties flaw.

## CALENDAR

The calendar used in Ethiopia differs substantially from the Julian calendar used in Mythic Europe. Each month has only 30 days, and there are five or six days considered to be a special sort of thirteenth month, known as epagomenal or intercalary days, which complete the year. The sixth intercalary day occurs every four years. This cycle of years culminating in the extra intercalary day is named after the Evangelists, starting with John. After John, comes Mark, then Matthew, and Luke is associated with the leap year. The months mirror the Coptic calendar, beginning on the same days, but are named in Ge'ez. The Ethiopian Church uses a slightly different date for the birth of

In Ethiopia, many believe some blacksmiths, whose trade is hereditary, are folk witches with the power to change into a hyena, known as bouda. Bouda supposedly rob graves at midnight, unearthing Christian corpses and consuming them. Unlike the bouda of the Maghreb, Ethiopian bouda are hyena-spirits capable of possessing people and driving them to savage acts of lust, murder, or rage. To protect themselves from these spirits, Ethiopians ask debterah to fashion amulets which shield them from the powers of these evil creatures.

Shapeshifting bouda are detailed in *Between Sand and Sea*. However, Ethiopian bouda might be faeries who inspire such behavior to harvest vitality, or weak tempter demons who seek to corrupt good Christians and spread sin.

## BOUDA HYENA-SPIRIT

**Faerie Might:** 10 (Me)

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

**Size:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Faerie Beast, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Feast of the Dead, Improved Characteristics, Increased Faerie Might, Lesser Power x2, Personal Power; Monstrous Appearance; Incognizant, Nocturnal, Role Requires Suffering, Negative Reaction (unpleasant odor), Susceptible to Deprivation, Traditional Ward (Folk Charms)

**Qualities:** Crafty, Crushing Jaws, Keen Eyesight, Large Teeth, Mimicry, Pursuit Predator, Thick Fur.

**Personality Traits:** Cowardly +3, Sly +2

**Reputations:** Corpse-eating 3 (regional), Treacherous 2 (local)

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +2, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage +6\*

**Dodge:** Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +5, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5),

## The Bouda Menace

-3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Pretenses:** Animal Handling 3 (hyenas), Area Lore: Ethiopia 4 (highland grazing pastures), Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (food), Brawl 5 (bite), Faerie Speech 5 (lying), Guile 4 (feign dead), Hunt 4 (tracking), Survival 3 (desert).

**Natural Weapons:** The weapon statistics for a hyena's bite are Init 0, Atk +4, Def +1, Dam +3. The damage bonus is increased to +6 as noted due to the Crushing Jaws Quality.

**Powers:**

**Enthralling Sound:** 2 points, Init -10, Mentem: R: Voice, D: Sun, T: Group: The bouda creates emotion within a group of people who hear it. Fear, lust, and wrath are all common options. This power also increases the intensity of an already existing emotion. A stress roll with an appropriate Personality trait against an Ease Factor of 9 allows a victim to overcome this power's effect. CrMe 30 (Base 4, +2 Voice, +2 Sun, +2 Group): Lesser Power x2 (50 levels, -4 Might points)

**Skin of Man or Beast:** 1 points, Init 0, Animal: R: Pers, D: Sun, T: Individual: The bouda takes on the form of a male or female human appropriate to the area. MuAn 20 (Base 10, +2 Sun): Personal Power (20 levels, -1 Might points)

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Vis:** There are two pawns of Mentem in the bouda's tongue.

**Appearance:** The common striped hyena has a comparatively massive torso with shortened hind legs, causing its back to slope down. Their short muzzles are borne by a large head and long thick immobile neck. The faerie often has its eyes glow red for intimidating effect.

**Design note:** To use the Bouda hyena-spirit as a companion, it needs to replace the Incognizant Flaw with either Narrowly Cognizant or Highly Cognizant and replace it with another flaw, like a Personality Flaw. It currently has 9 Virtues and Flaws and a base physical form of a hyena.

Christ, so the number of the Ethiopian year is eight years less than the Julian year number from January 1 until August 30 or 31, and then seven years less for the remainder of the Julian year. January 1st 1220 in Mythic Europe is Tarr 5th 1212 according to the Ethiopian calendar. Major holidays include:

**Enkutatash** – Ethiopian New Year's day. (1 Meskerem or August 30)

Celebrating the return of the Queen of Sheba following her visit to King Solomon, this holiday usually involves a large festival held at the local church.

**Maskal** – The festival of St. Helena's recovery of the True Cross. (17 Meskerem or September 15)

Memorializing the discovery of the True Cross by Emperor Constantine's mother, Saint Helena, this event involves a large ceremonial bonfire made with daisy-decorated lumber. Afterward, clergy gather the fire's charcoal remains and mark a cross on the foreheads of the faithful. This grants participants a temporary Faith Point, lasting until the soot is washed off or the Faith Point is used. According to tradition, God spoke to Helena in a dream, explaining how the smoke of a fire would lead her to the savior's cross. Saint Helena built a pyre of wood and frankincense, and its smoke climbed high into the sky before falling back to earth, marking the Cross' location.

The Falasha also observe this holiday, claiming it celebrates the pillars of fire which led the Israelites out of the desert.

**Gena** – Ethiopian Christmas (Tahśāś 28 or December 25)

**Timket** – Ethiopian Epiphany (Tarr 10 or January 6)

A celebration of Christ's baptism in the River Jordan lasting three days, this holiday includes dramatic processions through nights of fasting. Priests even parade the tsellats, replicas of Moses' tablets, on Ketera, or Timket's Eve, and use them to bless the pool or river where the festival rituals take place on the next day.

**Faseka** – Ethiopian Easter (This date moves somewhat. In 1220, it will be Miyazya 2 or March 27)

**Kulubi Gabriel** – Celebration of the Feast of the Angel Gabriel. (Tahśāś 18 or December 16)

The church in Kulubi becomes a pilgrimage destination as people arrive for the sermon and celebration. Clergy baptize any children born through the archangel's intercession, who are often named after the messenger of God's Host.

**Axum Tsion** – Celebration marking the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Ethiopia. (Hadar 20 or November 18)

Pilgrims attend mass at Axum's Church of Maryam Tsion. Many of the devout continue to the carved stone churches in Roha, completing a symbolic pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

### WARRIORS AND THE ARMY

Military units in each kingdom follow the ancient Axum tradition and divide their forces between cavalry and infantry. Typical infantrymen wield swords and spears while using shields. The 8-foot-long spears are balanced for both melee combat and short-range thrown attacks of about twenty-five paces. The spear is so ubiquitous in the Ethiopian military that the Amharic word for 'spear' and 'war' is the same. Cavalry wears heavy chain mail, but most infantry and some lighter cavalry wear the equivalent of quilted armor. Local taxes are used to feed the dedicated soldiers of a local lord, but even some professional soldiers are required to keep farms.

Quickly raised local militias often have nothing more than a protective shield and a dagger or spear.

### LOWLANDS AND HIGHLANDS

Ethiopian culture is strongly divided between the highlands and the lowlands of the Red Sea coast. The highlands of the Ethiopian plateau enjoy a wide range of temperatures, but also include many dry and alpine regions, where overland travel can be quite challenging and finding fresh water is difficult. Lowlanders, by contrast, maintain a lifestyle dependent on the sea and primarily use the Tigray dialect. The temperatures in the lowlands regularly reach 32 degrees Centigrade throughout the year. Both regions raid one another for livestock, and regular feuds over the use of arable land for farming or grazing create localized tensions and distrust.

### CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

Calling themselves Beta Israel, "the children of Israel," the Falasha Jews remain culturally distinct, keeping marriage within their communities and maintaining Jewish practices. Concentrated in the Falasha province in Agaw and Gojjam, as well as in Bet Amhara, they peacefully coexist with the surrounding Christian majority. Gudit once reigned as queen over the region, and these notoriously fierce warriors rampaged through Ethiopia as her army. However, the last 100 years of Zagwe rulership seems to have erased any resentment and many loyally serve the Emperor. Christians live alongside the Falasha in their towns, where they help with burials since the Falasha have taboos regarding the handling of corpses. While unusual, being a Jew in Ethiopia does not qualify the character for the Outsider flaw unless the character is also a blacksmith, due to superstitions associated with blacksmiths and the evil spirits known as bouda.

### THE LEGACY OF SHEBA

The ancient pedigree of the Ethiopian people is a book known as the *Kebra Negast* (The Glory of the Kings), written in the scholarly language of Ge'ez. This 117-chapter chronicle details the story of how Solomon seduced an Ethiopian queen of Sheba called Makkeda, who then conceived a son, Menelik, and returned home with Solomon's ring. Later, Solomon's son returned, proving his birthright with the ring, and then enjoyed an extended stay with the king. After insisting he must return to his kingdom, Menelik asked Solomon for a tassel of the tapestry used to cover the Ark of the Covenant. Solomon felt he could not send Menelik back to Ethiopia alone, and asked for the firstborn sons of all the tribes to accompany Menelik, led by the son of the high priest, Azariah. Upset about the perceived exile, the sons stole the Ark of the Covenant, which miraculously spirited Menelik's party home before Solomon could assemble a pursuit. Once back in the Ethiopian highlands, Menelik and these sons established a new Zion, believing the Ark to be a gift from God. Succeeding to the throne, he utilized the great power of the relic, marching on enemies and repel-

ling all attacks, becoming the first negusa negast, or king of kings, in Ethiopia. The first-born sons became the Falasha people who live in the Falasha province of Begember and follow the Jewish ways.

This saga holds a special place in the hearts of the Ethiopian nobility, particularly the lords of Bet Amhara. They sincerely believe in its truth and accuracy, and the story of Makkeda and Menelik likely contributes to the tolerance enjoyed by the Falasha Jews.

## Religion

Ethiopia is Christian, with an important Jewish community and a few Muslims. Jews live in the Falasha region of Bet Amhara and the Gojam region of Agaw, and some Muslims live in both Bet Amhara and Medri Bahri. However, large populations of Muslims inhabit the southern tributary states. No accepted pagan populations exist within the country.

### CHRISTIANITY

Three tenets distinguish Ethiopian Christianity. First and foremost, it is a monophysite religion, like that practiced in Nubia and the Coptic Church. Ethiopians believe the divine and human natures of Christ are inextricably intertwined, his human nature was "dissolved like a drop of honey in the sea." Second, an Ethiopian Christian appeals to a hierarchy of angels and saints known as "the Kidusan," as well as to God, when praying. This group conveys the prayers of the faithful to God and carries out the Divine Will. Third, it is the representation of the Ark of the Covenant, the tabot, that is consecrated and holy, not the church structure. Each tabot, dedicated to a particular patron saint, rests in an inner sanctum accessible only to the priests. These priests pray on behalf of the community and carry the tabot through the town on religious holidays. Additionally, the Ethiopian Church uses Ge'ez as its liturgical language, not Latin, but this is more of a cultural than philosophical difference.

Several odd traditions govern Ethiopian church buildings, dictating even the form of the structure. There are cave churches, or hypogaeum. There are rectangular, cut-stone churches. Finally, there are round timber churches. Other architectural styles are not

permitted. The carved, monolithic churches of Roha are the most glorious example of hypogaeum churches, but these also include churches built in caves or from caves. Most cave churches date to the era between the fall of the Axum Empire and the rise of the Zagwe dynasty. This dangerous period required a house of worship to also act as a protective fortress at the center of the community. Popular during the days of the Axum Empire, rectangular churches of cut stone exist throughout Ethiopia, but especially in Medri Bahri. The security of the Zagwe dynasty has led to a new design: the round timber church. These structures are most common in Bet Amhara and Agaw. Most importantly, however, custom demands both the circular and rectangular churches maintain a thick, surrounding forest.

This sacred forest carries the faithful's prayers into Heaven. In communities with these forests, the Divine aura is concentrated within the forest area, resulting in an aura one lower in the areas outside the forest, even if the church is in the middle of town. A particularly lush forest means a stronger Divine aura, usually one higher than standard (See *Realms of Power: Divine Revised*, page 10). Additionally, a church's tabot is consecrated and it almost never contains relics, but rather replicas of the stone tablets carried by Moses. The tabot serves as the focus for the aura and maintains it, even when taken out of the forest, for as long as it was in the aura.

### CHURCH STRUCTURE

Appointed by the head of the Coptic Church, the patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt, the abuna leads the Ethiopian Church. The abuna serves for life, and an Egyptian has historically fulfilled the office. These priests arrive in Axum, certain they have been exiled, and often unable to speak the local languages of Amharic or Ge'ez. The abuna appoints bishops, who then appoint local priests and some of the debterah (singular: debtera), or lay deacons.

This traditional requirement for the patriarch to appoint the abuna is not without challenges. The emperor must pay a fee to the sultan of Cairo before he allows the patriarch of Alexandria to anoint a new abuna. Currently, however, the patriarchy is vacant. Cyril ibn Laqlaq and his foes in Alexandria remain in a political deadlock, preventing the

Coptic Church from electing a new patriarch.

Twice a year, a messenger arrives from the north, bearing letters from the patriarch. This courier and his entourage remain, waiting for the abuna's replies, and then return to Egypt. Certain he is the next patriarch, ibn Laqlaq continues the tradition in order to remain current regarding the situation in Axum.

If your saga follows history, ibn Laqlaq finally overcomes his opposition in 1235 and becomes Cyril III, head of the Coptic Church. Fortunately, Abuna Yeshaq seems in good health after arriving in 1210. However, historically, the abuna dies in 1225, and Giyorgis II replaces him in 1235, serving until 1284, when the future saint, Takle Haymanot, becomes abuna at the age of 69.

### ISLAM

While Christianity remains the dominant religion, Islam has a long and storied past in Ethiopia. In 1220, almost all Muslims in the empire live in the southern sultanates or the Dahlak archipelago. However, two notable exceptions exist. One ancient community thrives in Negash, in Medri Bahr, and another enclave maintains the mosque in the Bet Amhara port of Zeila, just beyond the straits of the Bab-al-Mandab. The Zeila settlement was founded in 613, when the Prophet's daughter Ruqayyah bint Muhammad, her husband Uthman ibn Affan, and thirteen other Muslim travelers fled persecution by the Christian king, Quresh.

### STORY SEED: THE TREES LISTEN

Can the Divine aura be transplanted with the trees? When magi discover the nature of Divine auras in Ethiopian church forests, they may be tempted to transplant whole stands of trees to other locations, essentially bringing the aura someplace else. What is the nature of items carved from this wood, and what are the consequences of transporting portions of the forest beyond Ethiopia? Could it be used to instantly create a Divine aura someplace else, or craft items for imprisoning demons or stunting another magus' magical ability? If it works with a Divine aura, could a similar effect be created for other Realms, presuming such wondrous trees could be found?

Emperor Armah granted the exiles imperial hospitality until they returned to the Islamic community in Medina in 622. Those who remained in Ethiopia built the mosque in Zeila and then settled in Negash.

### PAGANISM

Before Saint Frumentius, Ethiopians venerated Astar, the sun god, his son Mahrem, and Mahrem's many children. This pantheon was also worshiped in southern Arabia during antiquity. The shrines and temples to these gods in Ethiopia were converted or destroyed during the last half of the Axum Empire, following its conversion to Christianity. Other than slaves captured from beyond its borders, active pagan communities do not exist in Ethiopia. However, aggressive tribes live beyond the Takkaze river, and beyond the Kingdom of Damot, to the south. They raid border towns for captives, goods, and livestock. Enslaved pagans live in squalor, treated like animals and considered enemies of the Church and the empire. Standing decrees in Agaw and Shewa make killing pagans a legal activity, and the Church makes no attempt to convert the tribes.

## Economy and Trade

The Ethiopian economy is still primarily agrarian. While farmers grow crops like carrots, lettuce, and onions, a grain called *teff* dominates Ethiopian agriculture. Ethiopians use *teff*, which is similar to wheat, to make sourdough flat breads and other staple foods. Millet and barley are also grown for bread and beer production.

Rich in raw goods, Ethiopians use routes to the north and west to trade with Nubia. Some trade occurs with ports throughout the Red Sea, but the sultanates of Asir and Yemen fail to discourage piracy against Ethiopian merchants, making ventures risky and dangerous. Animal skins, exotic spices, even elephants and ivory, captured from the lowlands or the southern borders, are exported from Ethiopia. A brisk slave trade operates as well, stealing away pagan tribe members and selling them to Nubian merchants and Muslim slave markets in Harar or the Dahlak Archipelago. Some wealthier Ethiopians keep a few slaves, who work mines or fields. Gold is found in the

mountainous southwest and west, as well as in a few places along the escarpment dividing the highlands and lowlands. The salt flats of the Great Rift Valley provide a source for the mineral, making caravans out of the Great Desert unnecessary. Salt remains valuable enough that parts of Ethiopia accept it as currency.

### TRANSPORT

Ethiopia's mountainous highlands, with their steep slopes and sheer cliffs, make overland journeys quite challenging. Crossing rivers often adds leagues of distance and days of travel time due to the lack of easy fords and absence of reliable bridges. River travel also suffers, since good quality landing sites are uncommon. Most people use horses, camels, and donkeys, all of which live in Ethiopia and adequately manage the terrain. Travelers prefer to use the Red Sea whenever appropriate, as travel up and down the coast is faster and less dangerous than traveling cross-country.

### REGIONAL WILDLIFE

Many of Ethiopia's animals are novel sights for European travelers in Africa for the first time. Troupes of five to 250 ba-

boons roam the countryside, and can be quite terrifying when angry. Hyena packs of four to twenty animals are also common. Larger animals, like elephants and elephant-eating serpents, gazelles, hippopotamuses, leopards, lions, many varieties of antelope, rhinoceroses and zebras all thrive in the country. In the southern regions, one can find other strange beasts, like the long-necked giraffe, or large bats, such as the flying fox. The painted dogs, noted for their distinctive coloration, and the odd, scaly pangolin live in the northern lands, near the Semien mountains. Traders take both hides and live animals for sale in towns and markets.

## Kingdoms of Ethiopia

At its core, Ethiopia is a feudal state, one held together by the personality and might of its emperor, Gabril Mesqa Lalibela, the negusa negast, the negus of Bet Amhara, the ras of Lasta, and bitwoded of Axum. He rules over the kingdoms of Agaw,

## Story Seeds: The Birthright of Solomon

Menelik hid the Ark after his rule, entrusting it to the care of the Kahens, the priests among the firstborn sons who accompanied him. The Ark was later moved to the Church of Maryam Tsion in Axum. Menelik's ring, once a ring of Solomon and bearing one of his seals, is said to be in their care. Unfortunately, its hiding place was lost among the many islands and monasteries of Lake Tana in the centuries following Menelik's reign. Exploring the many sites and locating such a potent item might easily occupy any magus with an interest in Theurgy or Ars Notoria. If the ring is discovered with the remains of a Kahlen not offered a proper burial, the resulting ghost could provide insights regarding the powers of the Ark when used against the nonbeliever, as well as ancient sites throughout Ethiopia. Any magus hoping to interrogate a ghost of one of

these long dead priests must speak Ge'ez or Hebrew with an Ability of 4.

The Ark of the Covenant has a Faith Score of 10, giving it 10 Faith points and a Divine Might of 100 for any Ethiopian, Falasha or Christian, while for non-Ethiopian Christians and all Muslims it has a Faith Score of 7, as described in *Realms of Power: Divine Revised*, page 44. The Ring of Solomon is a relic with a Faith Score of 7 for Jews, Falasha, and Ethiopian Christians, but non-Ethiopian Christians treat it as having a Faith Score of 5. It adds its Faith Score to any casting total of a Solomonic art practitioner (see *The Cradle & The Crescent*, pages 33–37), or any recitation made by a practitioner of Ars Notoria (see *Realms of Power: Divine Revised*, page 98) and it may be studied by a Gifted individual as a tractatus in Ars Notoria with a Quality of 5. The current location of the ring is unknown.

Behri Madri, Bet Amhara, and Shewa. He claims suzerainty over and tribute from the Muslim sultanate of Dahlak in the Red Sea, and the sultanates of Adal, Ifat, Deward, and Hadiya along the southern border. The vassal kingdoms possess borders following geographic boundaries. Along the northern shore, Medri Bahri encompasses the lowlands of the Red Sea coast to the Da-

### Story Seed: Discarded Directive

Ruqayyah took refuge in the court of Emperor Armah, and the agents of Quresh, led by 'Amr ibn al'As, pursued her. He brought rich gifts for the negus and the courtiers, seeking to convince the Axumite lord to turn over the refugees. The negus called the leader of the Muslims, Jafar, to his presence, and demanded an explanation of the situation. Jafar explained the virtue and peace the Prophet brought to his people, and read a series of verses from the Qur'an. His reading moved the negus to tears, and Armah declared not only his belief in the Islamic truth, but declared that Jafar and the members of his group could live in Axum as long as they wished.

The next day, 'Amr ibn al'As attempted to show that the Muslims denied the divinity of Christ. When the negus asked Jafar for a response, he said, "Our judgment of Jesus is the same as that of Allah and His Messenger. Jesus is God's servant, His Prophet, His Spirit, and His command given unto Mary, the innocent virgin." The negus replied, "Jesus is just what you have stated him to be, and is nothing more than that." To Jafar, he said, "Go to your homes and live in peace. I shall never give you up to your enemies." He returned the gifts to 'Amr ibn al'As and sent the embassy of Quresh from Axum.

When the negus died, the Prophet uttered a prayer for him, and said to his people, "Leave the Abyssinians in peace, as long as they do not take the offensive." Based on this, the sultanates of the southern border have maintained their tributary relationship. A cabal of demons could work to erode the sultans' respect for the Prophet's request while inciting aggression among the Ethiopian lords.

nakil desert and includes part of the highland plateau to the Takkaze River. In the northwest, Bet Amhara includes the Semien mountains, through the highland plateau, and into the Great Rift valley. Agaw claims the southern foothills of the Semien, all of Lake Tana, and the portion of the highland plateau bounded by the Blue Nile. Finally, the kingdom of Shewa commands the southern highlands, with the Wabe Shebile River demarcating the border with the autonomous, but tribute-paying, Muslim sultanates.

Few large, permanent settlements exist in Ethiopia in the thirteenth century. The average community consists of a local church and a couple of dozen families occupying a fortified hilltop or surrounded by a protective wall. Almost all settlements of significant size are a noble's seat of power. Notable sites are discussed below. In each, the church is the core of the community, be it a carved stone hypogea, a standing cut-stone construction, or a round timber building. The homes of the populace surround the church. When raiders breach a town's defenses, the citizens take shelter inside.

### Ranks and Titles

The titles of Ethiopia are slightly different than those of Europe, but with a few exceptions, they follow similar rules. In decreasing importance, these are:

A **negus** is a high king, like the bahri negus, or the negus of Shewa. Several ras swear fealty to a negus. No one but the emperor may bestow the rank of negus.

The highest noble rank is a **ras**. Minor princes occasionally use this title, and the rulers of lesser kingdoms use it. One example is the emperor's cousin Na'akueto La'ab, the ras of Gojjam.

**Bitwoded** is similar to a duke.

**Dejazmach** is analogous to "count," but the literal translation means "gate-keeper." This honorific can also be granted as a military title.

**Fitawrari** is equivalent to "baron." This is also occasionally given as a military rank, and has a literal translation of "leader of the vanguard."

**Gerazmach** is an older, lower arist-

### Bleeding Trees

#### STORY SEED: THE DEVIL'S IN THE TREES

The rare spices of both frankincense and myrrh are collected in small quantities along the Red Sea coast of Ethiopia. Much as in Yemen and Asir, people harvest these substances by carving long, deep wounds in the trunks of special, thorny trees, and then gathering the bits of dried resin that the trees extrude. Stands of these trees are rare and jealously guarded by those who know the secrets of bleeding the plants, in order to keep the sources safe.

The flying serpents, or jaculi, that live in these trees in Mythic Arabia (See *The Cradle and the Crescent*, pages 116–118) are not found in Ethiopia, leading some to believe the trees there might be the result of direct cultivation. However, if someone brought the trees from Yemen or even the isle of Soqatra (See *Rival Magic*, page 110) to Ethiopia, why don't they or their descendants tend them now? Is there a difference in the potency, and is it possible that Yemeni merchants might sabotage Ethiopian sources to secure their own?

A lesser false god demon has managed to either cultivate several stands of myrrh trees or transplant them near the covenant. It then proceeds to reveal the stands to multiple groups of villagers, merchants, local nobles, and covenfolk, hoping to incite not only greed, but possibly murder. If the magi become involved, the demon is sure to attempt to infiltrate the covenant's grogs or covenfolk, so that it can work itself closer to corrupting the more powerful magi.

If the matter does result in bloodshed, then mundane investigation might bring the covenant more attention than they're looking for, possibly drawing them into some very entangled relationships with local rulers. While a covenant in Ethiopia is quite distant from the more populated regions of the Order, isolation doesn't absolve them of the Oath. A visiting Quesitor or neighboring covenant might still bring charges of interference, especially if the myrrh trade involves a covenant in the Levant.

cratic title, but is given to favored military commanders.

**Kenyazmach** is equivalent in rank to gerazmach. A powerful ras often appoints both a gerazmach and a kenyazmach to show equal favor to two of his powerful warriors.

**Balambaras** is equivalent to a local governor.

**Ato** means 'Sir' in the context of a knight or minor vassal. When granted to a woman, the title is **woizero**.

Noble children all use the title **lij**. A noble's wife is called **emebet hoy**.

Collectively, the nobility are called the **mesafint**.

In Ethiopia, noble titles are inherited first by any surviving brothers, then pass on to the sons of the previous ruler. For example, if the ras of Damot dies, his two brothers will both serve as the ras, and when they die, then the first-born son of the eldest previous ras takes the mantle. Some nobles dislike the tradition, and seek to subvert it by putting their children on the throne before their siblings.

## Medri Bahri

Four provinces comprise the kingdom of Medri Bahri. Upper and Lower Bur stretch along the coast, Eritrea lies to the north, and Tigre occupies the central region. The population lives primarily as farmers and fishermen in a land covered in mangrove forests. Medri Bahri has a hot, humid climate, and occupies the majority of Ethiopia's lowlands. However, it also stretches up, into the highlands; the Takkaze River serves as its southern border. The bahri negus rules from Debarwa, on the highlands, and is considered the second most powerful man in Ethiopia, after the emperor.

## ADULIS

The Yemen sultanate sacked this port in the eighth century, when it occupied the Dahlak archipelago in response to pirate attacks. The once-rich trading center never really recovered. It is still the home of the

bishop and the governor, who maintains a standing military force there.

## BAB-AL-MANDAB

This strait separates Medri Bahri and the rest of Ethiopia from Yemen. It is controlled by the Muslim navies of Yemen, who are friendly with the sultanate of Adal. Passing beyond it requires a story, the same as passing through the straits of Gibraltar.

## DANAKIL DESERT

Dividing Medri Bahri from Bet Amhara, this broken landscape of heat-scorched salt flats occupying southern side of the Bab-al-Mandab strait marks the southeastern boundary of the kingdom. Similar to salt mines in the Great Desert, far to the west, small communities subsist by hacking large slabs of salt from the ground. Long camel caravans carry this "white gold" to markets in Adulis, Debar-

## The Voice of Saint Yared

The story of Saint Yared comes from the zenith of the Axum Empire. Born in the capital and raised by his uncle Gidewon, he invented the sacred music still practiced within the Ethiopian church. Yared learned to link the spiritual with the musical through the blending of *zema* chant music after being instructed by three divine birds and studying with Abuna Aragawi of Debre Damo. Using this divinely inspired knowledge, he composed and arranged hymns connected to religious celebrations and holidays. *Debterab* consider this music to be the basis of their expressions of faith.

Five volumes of chants are attributed to Yared. *The Books of Digna and Tsome Digna* details chants for church holidays and Sundays services. Chants for major holidays, daily prayers, and the month of fasting are recorded in *The Book of Meraf*. *The Book of Mewasit* provides chants to the dead. And finally, chants reserved for after Mass are discussed in *The Book of Zimare*. These books collectively act as a summa of Organization Lore: Ethiopian Church, Level 5, Quality 8.

The Axumite emperor was very fond of Yared. According to legend, on one occasion, Yared's singing mesmerized the em-

peror, and he dropped his spear on Yared's foot. The song completely engrossed them both, neither man noticed until the music ended and the emperor pulled his spear free. Mortified by his actions, the emperor offered to grant Yared any request within his power. The *debterab* asked to live the remainder of his life in solitude, so he could focus on meditation, musical composition, and prayer. Yared spent his final years in the Semien mountains, and the cave which served as his imperial hermitage remains undiscovered. His feast day is 11 Ganbot (May 8 or 9).

Yared cemented the role of *debterab* within the Ethiopian church. While they serve alongside mundane lay deacons and cantors, *debterab* also act as community educators and defenders who instruct the children of the nobility, craft protective amulets, calculate astrological horoscopes, and exorcise evil spirits from individuals using a text passed from teacher to student called *The Magic Star Book*. They formed a holy *societas* with members in the Christian and Jewish Falasha communities. Even Falasha priests, or *kahens*, become a *debterab* before being confirmed as a rabbi, although not all fulfill this requirement. Those who fully

embrace this role become something more, learning the secrets of a full-fledged *debterab*.

**Holy Societas: Debterah (singular: Debterab)**

**Favored Abilities:** Adjuration, Blessing, Craft Amulets, Invocation.

See *Realms of Power: the Divine Revised*, page 137 for details on Craft Amulets. Adjuration, Blessing, and Invocation are described in *Realms of Power: the Divine Revised*, pages 34, 37, and 48–50. For those who wish to use *debterab* without this text, they should have the following Virtues: Clerk or Educated, Enchanting Music, and either Sense Holiness/Unholiness or Wise One. Suggested abilities include Artes Liberales (astronomy), Chirurgy, Organization Lore: Ethiopian Church, Medicine, Music, Teaching, and Theology. If they have taken Wise One, they should have some skill in Divine and Infernal Lore. In this case, the character does not have any immediate means to perform exorcisms, other than through leading ceremonies and utilizing the Divine auras generated by an Ethiopian church's *tabot* and forest.

Depending on their other capabilities, a *debterab* may make an interesting grog or companion character.

wa, and Zeila. A fiery and capricious ifrit jinn occupies an active volcano in a depression within the desert. This cone of black basalt is known as Erta Ale, or "Smoking Mountain." A lake of molten rock bubbles within its deep, pit-like caldera, periodically spitting a clump of burning debris or overflowing the volcano's rim. The mountain sports a bare, shallow slope, and almost nothing grows nearby. However, for magi considering a location to pursue the volcano magic suggested in *Hermetic Projects*, this is an ideal site.

## DEBARWA

Home of the bahri negus, Debarwa lies about twenty miles from the edge of the plateau dividing the highlands and lowlands, nestled along the banks of the Mereb river. As the capital of both Tigre and all of the Medri Bahri, it controls rich mines of copper, gold, and iron all along the escarpment. Boasting a population of 6,000, many of the trade routes from the coast to the highlands pass through Debarwa and it holds a large market every Saturday. All of this combines to make the bahri negus very rich, and able to maintain a strong army of very well-equipped soldiers. Bouda faeries prowl its roads and wild forests, urging anyone they find to lustful or murderous excess. This activity makes hyenas particularly feared and hated. The bahri negus places a bounty on live hyenas, trying to capture the faeries, but he fails to realize this will likely be ineffective.

### STORY SEED: ON A WING

Covenants which become more involved in mundane elements of Ethiopia might find great profits to be made either by building bridges or providing magical ways to circumvent the natural obstacles of travel, such as items which allow short periods of flight. However, both have the potential to draw in jealous rivals either attempting to take over a bridge and charge a toll, or ambush a covenant's agent to steal an enchanted device. In both cases, the magi must decide what sort of response and involvement is best not only to resolve the situation, but to maintain the status of the covenant in the local area as word of their expeditious construction or travel methods becomes better known.

## MASSAWA

After an expedition from Yemen sacked Adulis in the eighth century, Massawa grew important as a trade port. Fifteen leagues northwest of Adulis, Massawa is built across two islands and along the shore. The Muslim Sheikh Hanafi rules here, swearing allegiance to the bahri negus. The influx of merchants makes the sheikh rich, wealth he has used to build a mosque on the larger island out of carved white coral blocks, and to sponsor Muslim missionaries to travel into the heart of Ethiopia. Sheikh Hanafi invited numerous shipbuilders from Yemen and Hijaz, who now help expand his merchant fleet. All of the sheikh's captains have instructions to carry any pilgrims bound for Mecca for free.

## NEGASH

This modest hamlet of Christians and Muslims lies on the trade road from Axum to Zeila. About thirty leagues east southeast of the former imperial capital, the village

### STORY SEED: SERPENTS OF UNKNOWN PROVENANCE

The symbol of the Order of Hermes includes snakes, and an ambitious magus might seek out an elephant-eating serpent to bind as a familiar, believing it the embodiment of magic. These great creatures may possess a more ancient legacy, as the degenerate sacred snakes of the pharaohs, corrupted since their escape from the Muslim purge of the old faith of Egypt. More fantastic sagas might make the elephant-eating serpents the spawn of Jormungandr, spreading its influence to distant shores as prelude to something terrible. Or are the enormous beasts descendants of the serpent of the Bible, revealing the potential proximity of the Garden of Eden?

These animals are found nowhere else in the Mythic World, and their depredations are not limited to elephants. What began as an investigation into the disappearance of vital livestock or even patrolling grogs might reveal an unsuspected resource or potential story lying in wait for the characters.

hosts a small stone mosque and the tomb of the ancient Axumite Emperor Armah, known for sheltering the Prophet Mohamed's daughter. Locally, the emperor is called by his Arabic name, Aṣḥama ibn Abjar al-Najashi. Many devout Muslims make a pilgrimage to this place, wanting to see the grave of the emperor who saved a companion and helped preserve an early part of Islam. The Islamic community is an accepted part of the countryside, as residents now consider the emperor's directive to be tradition and leave the Muslims to live in peace. A Divine aura of 4 exists around the tomb.

## Bet Amhara

Rich and fertile, the highlands of the kingdom of Bet Amhara serve as the breadbasket of the empire. Several smaller kingdoms compose it, with the kingdom of Wag guarding the frontier to the north against Blemmyae incursions, stretching down into Begemder and Falasha and reaching into the very heart of Ethiopia and the lands of Amhara. The Jamma river serves as its boundary with Shewa, while the Abbay River separates it from Agaw. To the northeast, the Takkaze river marks the border with Medri Bahri.

This region is the very heartland of Ethiopia, the core of the lost Axum Empire, a bastion of the Christian faith beyond the Mediterranean.

## AMBA GESHEN

Difficult access, wild cedars, and a natural spring pool make this roughly cross-shaped hilltop an obvious choice for fortifications. Amba Geshen served as fortress and treasury during the Axumite Empire, and as the prison-in-exile for imperial heirs after the third Zagwe emperor. However, Emperor Lalibela has abolished this practice and consecrated a church with the promise that no more sons of Zagwe would be sent to wait for the emperor's death. Named Egzyabeher Ab, or "God the Father," the church stands on the southern edge of the summit. Once again made into a fortified treasury, Amba Geshen's numerous long, narrow halls act as housing for the guards and storage.

A precarious foot trail, called "Macarquer," allows for only single-file entry to the gatehouse at the top. This solitary route means the residents must pull anything oversized, such as cattle or large building supplies, to the gate platform using ropes. However, this doesn't prevent the community from keeping animals; escaped populations of monkeys and rabbits interfere with the gardens until captured for the stew pot, and a small herd of goats and several oxen provide some nourishment.

## AXUM

A religious center and the traditional imperial coronation site, Axum serves as a monument to the former glory and heritage of Ethiopia. The three massive stelae of its ancient graveyard are taller than any Egyptian obelisk and the Ark of the Covenant purportedly lies within the sanctuary of the Church of Maryam Tsion. Built in the fifth century, the church has a thick, lush forest; the Divine aura here depends on whether or not Axum is the true resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. Nearby, a short wall separates the necropolis' thirteen monoliths from the town and includes "Ezana's Stone," a pillar with the same message engraved in

Ge'ez, Classical Greek, and Ancient Sabaean languages. (Ancient Sabaean is found on ruins in Petra, Yeha, or locations in Yemen and 'Asir.) Knowing one of these languages allows the engraving to be studied for a season as a tractatus on one of the other languages or for Area Lore: Ethiopia, with a Quality 5. The stone tells the accomplishments of King Ezana's reign and his conversion to Christianity by Saint Frumentius.

Axum stands as one of the larger Ethiopian cities, boasting a population of almost 4,000 people. Its legacy and relics remain a great source of pride for the citizens. When he visits, the emperor and his retinue stay in two stone Axumite-era palaces, rather than their usual tent encampment. The larger of the two is 120 meters by 80 meters, known as Ta'akha Maryam, it has 50 rooms. The smaller palace is called Dungur, and said to be the former residence of Queen Makkeda. A pasture, north of town, holds many ancient tombs and a cluster of stelae, none much taller than a man, called "Gudit's Field." A large reservoir carved out of the rock lies a short distance away, which the locals call "Sheba's Bath." Nearly 750 years old, an ancient pagan temple converted into a monastery by Abba Pantelewon and Abba Liqanos continues to operate atop a small hill.

## The Negusa Negast

In order to ensure the loyalty of his nobility, the emperor's court constantly travels throughout the kingdoms, engaging in political maneuvering, and using the military force of his retinue to deter invasion or rebellion. The mobile tent compound of the negus and his courtiers is the true center of his power, able to respond quickly when the situation demands. The town of Roha, in the kingdom of Lasta, remains the official capital, as both the emperor's birthplace and spiritual center.

The complete, official title of the current emperor, Lalibela, is:

**Moa Anbessa Ze Imnagede Yehuda, Atse Lalibela, Negusa Negast, Seyoume Igziabeher**

The first phrase, **Moa Anbessa Ze Imnagede Yehuda**, means "conquering lion of the tribe of Judah," and always precedes the emperor's titles at events or in correspondence. This is not a personal title, but refers to Christ and demonstrates the emperor's submission to the will of God. **Atse** means "emperor," and **Negusa Negast** means "king of kings." This is the common short form of his title, signifying his position as king over all the other kings within Ethiopia. Finally, **Seyoume Igziabeher** means "elect of God" and represents the Divine selection the emperor claims as part of his office. When dealing with the southern sultanates, the emperor also uses the title **Negus Tsion**, or "king of Zion."

Honorifics used to address the emperor include **Girmawi**, which means "His

(or Your) Imperial Majesty," and **Janhoy** which is equivalent to "Sire." The imperial household and family is called **Getochu**, which is the plural for "our master." The empress uses the title **Nigeste Negast**, and while they have little true power, consorts are respectfully given the title of **Itege**.

The Imperial court is called the **makwanet**. It includes:

**Afe Negus** — "Mouth of the King." Because the emperor himself never speaks in public, the two heralds granted this position speak as if they are the Emperor.

**Blattengeta** — "Lord of the Pages." Equivalent to a major domo or castellan, this individual administrates the daily operation of the imperial retinue.

**Blatta** — "Page." Similar to personal valets or ladies-in-waiting, these officials ensure proper protocol is observed, and the personal needs of the imperial family are met.

**Enderase** — "Regent of the Empire." The emperor's representatives also use this title when visiting fiefs and vassals.

**Lique Mekwas** — This position belongs to two extremely loyal and well-trusted individuals who follow the emperor at all times, wearing the same clothes. They even go into battle with him, and serve as decoys, meant to distract assassins.

**Tsehafi Tezaz** — "Minister of the Pen." This official guards the emperor's great seal, records the details of all important appointments, and publishes all laws and treaties.

## DEBRE DAMO

Founded by Abuna Aragawi, one of the legendary Nine Saints, the monastery of Debre Damo stands atop a mountain plateau once claimed by a serpent cult. Its cut-stone church holds a large collection of illuminated manuscripts, and intricate carvings on the beams and ceiling tell the story of the abuna's miraculous ascent to site. Tradition holds that the Archangel Gabriel watched over Aragawi, fiery sword at the ready, as a giant serpent looped its coils around the abuna and carried him up the sheer cliff. Paintings in the church record how it deposited the Saint upon a large stone and departed, never seen again. Its cult converted to Christianity under the abuna's tutelage. Anyone entering the monastery now kisses the stone in gratitude for a safe arrival.

Visitors must climb a thick rope of braided leather nearly 80 feet long to reach the complex, occasionally combined with a basket for older or infirm pilgrims. This method of entry has kept the monastery and its ap-

proximately 100 monks safe from attackers for over 700 years. The broad, flat summit contains an Axumite style church that curiously lacks a forest, nearly two dozen shared homes and their gardens, a pen for several cattle and rabbits, and a half-dozen carved stone cisterns. The whole community enjoys a Dominion aura of 3.

### ISTIFANOS MONASTERY

Built along the western shore of Lake Hayq in southeastern Amhara, generations of Emperors used this monastery as an archive of their correspondence, documents, and land grants. Tradition states that the large, deep body of water is the result of an encounter between a haughty young princess and a pregnant woman she wronged. This terrible insult so angered God that his wrath caused the lake to rise up from nothing, drowning the princess and her retinue. Where the pregnant woman was sitting and the village behind her became an island, now marked with a small shrine and a Divine aura of 4. The lake itself hosts large, bony catfish and hippopotamuses. The surrounding shoreline supports citrus fruits, like lemons and oranges. A large, empty stone palace overlooks the lake on the shore opposite the monastery. Built by a forgotten Axumite Emperor, the structure remains unoccupied and its stones unscavenged. It has a Magic aura of 3 and the ghost of a melancholy Axumite princess haunts it. Nearby, a small Muslim village lives off the bounty of the lake.

### ROHA

At first glance, only a modest village occupies this rocky, dry area; nothing seems to distinguish it as the birthplace of the current emperor, Lalibela. However, sunken beneath the surface lies the spiritual jewel of the Ethiopian empire and the legacy of its ruler, the eleven hypogeaum churches of Roha. Small clusters of mud-brick and red stone homes, belonging to the town's residents, surround the tunnels leading down to these absolutely gorgeous houses of worship. Each building is carved from a single piece of stone, and this religious complex represents a symbolic pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the River Jordan.

The churches occupy three sites. To the north of the channel named the river Jordan stand Bet Denagel (House of Virgins), Bet Golgotha Mikael (House of Golgotha Mikael), Bet Maryam (House of Mary), Bet Maskal (House of the Cross), and Bet Medhani Alem (House of the Savior of the World). South of the river lie Bet Abba Libanos (House of Abbot Libanos), Bet Amanuel (House of Emmanuel), Bet Gabriel Raphael (House of Gabriel Raphael), Bet Lehem (House of Holy Bread), and Bet Qeddus Mercoreus (House of St. Mercoreos). The eleventh church, Bet Giorgys (House of St. George), is isolated from the others, but connected by a system of trenches. The whole complex has a Dominion aura of 7.

### YEHA

Considered a sacred site even before the arrival of the Nine Saints, Yeha occupies the fertile and lush plain of an easily defended mountain vale. The only remaining testament to its former glory is a crumbling temple on a high outcropping. Fading graffiti indicate that the structure may have been used as a church or monastery before the roof collapsed, and a few of the internal walls as well as several large, square pillars bear Sabatean engravings. A ruined shrine sits at the base of a natural stone staircase and three rock-cut tombs sink into a bare slope south of the main structure. This temple is a third of a mile from any other

structure, at the heart of a Magic aura of 3.

About two hundred people live in the nearby village, including a Falasha blacksmith, a potter, and a weaver.

### ZEILA

Built from carved blocks of polished, white coral, the walled port of Zeila serves as a rich and bustling hub of trade between Ethiopia, Yemen, and the world beyond the Red Sea. The governor maintains a strong and well-equipped army, while entertaining shifting alliances with the sultan of Adal to the south and the ras of Amhara to the east. A growing Muslim population calls Zeila home, and its mosque was built by companions of the Prophet, and has a Divine aura of 5. Wealthy merchants urge the governor to favor the sultan over the emperor, in order to ease travel through the Bab-al-Mandab strait and increase their own power.

### Vis Site: The Quarry and the Stone Lion

About a league west of Axum, in the dry scrub near the quarries where masons cut the Great Stelae from the earth, a large rock outcropping bears the life-sized etching of a lioness with jaws open, frozen in mid-stride. According to legend, the Archangel Gabriel fought the lion here, and threw her with such force against the rock that only the etching remained. If an animal corpse is laid at its feet on night before the first day of spring, and the corpse is protected from scavengers throughout the night, some part of the corpse will contain 5 pawns of Animal vis.

At the nearby quarry, long and wide trenches lay in the raw rock face, as if someone simply cut the stelae from the earth like butchers at work on a carcass. However, three partial stelae lie half in the earth- long, partially worked bones of ragged stone. If chips from these stones are gathered at noon on Ethiopian Epiphany, they contain 5 pawns of Rego and 5 pawns of Vim vis. The local inhabitants carefully monitor these sites, responding aggressively if they see someone defacing the stones.

### Vis Site: The Mists of the Nile

When the waters of the Blue Nile first begin their flood, their magic is evident at the falls of Tis Abbay. The misting water can be captured at sunrise, yielding 3 pawns each of Aquam, Creo, Imaginem, and Perdo vis. This is the point of greatest potential, the origin of a journey which will feed a nation, carve away at the very bones of the mountains, and yet reveal the absolute beauty of a rainbow hidden with the first beams of light. Unharvested, this vis feeds the rich flora growing around the falls. Plants and Beasts of Virtue are common here.

## Story Seeds for Roha

The heart of the empire is a good place to set stories.

### SAGA SEED: A TEMPLE IN AFRICA

When Lalibela returned from Jerusalem in 1187, he brought with him a small group of Knights Templar who were in Cairo at the time. The knights sought to establish a second region from which to organize attacks on their enemies in the Levant and retake the recently conquered Holy City of Jerusalem. As part of their plans, they fought for Lalibela against his brother, Kedus Harme, winning the emperor's trust.

These knights are a secret ally of the Emperor, attempting to build a cadre of like-minded knights in his cavalry, learning the extent of Lalibela's temporal powers and now maneuvering to gain as much influence as possible. Their discovery of a Hermetic covenant in Ethiopia may lead them to press for some form of alliance with the magi, to attempt to destroy the potential rival, or to subtly manipulate the covenant's activities toward the Templars' goals, but the direction of such a saga all depends on the sort of Templar Order the storyguide wishes to portray, be it Divine, Infernal, or mundane.

### SAGA SEED: THE ANGEL'S SHARE

If the Templars are in Ethiopia, then one very strong reason for their continued presence is a desire to claim the Ark of the Covenant in exchange for their actions and services. With the Ark of the Covenant in their possession, they would easily be able to return to France and provide their Order with the spiritual authority to establish themselves not only as an organization independent of the pope, but perhaps even justify the establishment of a nation governed by the Templars. By sending and receiving correspondence through the twice-annual letters sent by the patriarch of Alexandria, before his death in 1216, they have some idea of the events which have been transpiring in Provence. A single missive sent in 1219 alerted them to the presence of the Fifth Crusade in Damietta, and underlined the

possibility of success in their endeavor.

However, the Templars who arrived in 1187 are approaching their late fifties and early sixties. Their pages, squires, and sergeants, young when they arrived, are in their late forties. If they want any chance of seizing the Ark of the Covenant from the Church of Maryam Tsion in Axum and making the journey back to Europe alive, the time to act is now.

Depending on their relationship with the covenant, the Templars may attempt to trick the magi into stealing the Ark for them, enlist their support in forcibly acquiring it, or engineer a double-cross where the magi create a situation enabling the knights to steal the Ark. In these cases, the Templars and magi might engage in a long, overland chase toward the Crusaders in Damietta. Should the Ark reach the army, it is possible their attempt to take Cairo in July of 1221 will not fail. Or, if the magi wish to foil the Templars without resorting to bloodshed, they may replace the Ark with a replica in an elaborate heist of their own.

### STORY SEED: HOW MANY ANGELS DANCE

It is said that angels helped Lalibela to build the churches at Roha, and they may still reside in the niches and at the gateways, watching over the faithful who come to pray at this holy complex. An angel might potentially appear to someone praying for guidance at an altar. Additionally, one can never be certain about the nature of a person approaching one within the church complex of Roha. These angels watch for those with great Faith or potential, and sometimes take human form to ask them for favors, to direct the completion of tasks. These endeavors might be as simple as ensuring a pious but occasionally senile anchorite is brought enough food to survive an illness, or be as involved as the recovery of people and items captured by a pagan raid. While angels may not know the greater scope of the activities they request, due to their lack of access to the secret knowledge of God, one can be certain there is a greater purpose at work.

If you are considering the Templar theft of the Ark of the Covenant, then the angels might help guide the magi to either support or thwart the knights. God tacitly approved the

first theft of the Ark, when it left Jerusalem, and might do the same in this situation, feeling the Ark better suits His plans if it is elsewhere. Alternatively, the Ark might be needed in Ethiopia, and the characters might be the ones God needs to ensure it remains. The angels of Roha's churches are perfectly suited and thematically appropriate to deliver this message.

### STORY SEED: FOR THE LOVE OF...

One of the angels of Roha has fallen in love with one of the mortals who attends the churches, despite the impossibility of such an event. The other angels fear the mistake of the nephilim will be committed again. However, the angels won't act directly against either the errant angel or the object of its affections. Instead, they try to influence the characters to escort the individual far away, perhaps even on a dangerous mission into Egypt or across the Great Desert. If they become desperate, perhaps one of the angels may attempt to convince one of the grogs to kill the mortal. Is it possible that the whole situation is a test for the characters, and not the angel?

### A FRAMEWORK FOR PILGRIMAGE STORIES: ROHA AS JERUSALEM

Designed to represent the spiritual journey to Jerusalem now denied to Ethiopians following the capture of the Holy City by Saladin, Roha encompasses the major sites one might visit when traveling to the navel of the world. By spending a season navigating the tunnels and paths, praying at each church, fasting, evading and defeating the challenges set by demons clothed in possessed locals (and thus protected from the Divine auras) or Bouda faeries calling down temptation from the rims of the hypogeums, an individual can complete a pilgrimage story as described in *The Church*, pages 16–19.

Lalibela built a symbol of the Holy Land when the caliphate rendered pilgrimages impossible. In the Church of Bet Golgotha stand replicas of the tomb of Christ, the tomb of Adam, and the crib of the nativity. The channeled stream representing the River Jordan marks the site of Christ's baptism with a small stone cross. The hill overlooking the site is called the Mount of Olives.

# Agaw

The negus of Agaw rules over the lesser kingdoms of Agaw, Damot, and Gojjam. Bet Amhara shares Agaw's northern border, defined by the Semiens mountains. Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile and a major tributary of the Nile, lies in Agaw. The kingdom of Gojjam lies south of the lake, while Agaw proper extends along the western shore, up to the Semiens. Finally, the kingdom of Damot serves as the southernmost border of Agaw, with a tributary of the Blue Nile, the Jamma river, separating it from the pagan tribes on the other shore.

The population of Agaw greatly benefits from the fairly reliable rainfall and the clear waters of the Blue Nile. This combination of rich soil and ample water ensures the highland kingdom is fertile and prosperous. Agaw usually suffers the least when drought or famine strikes Ethiopia's many provinces.

The warriors of Agaw are notoriously fierce and capable, and the kingdom traces

## Story Seed: The Lost Temple

After investigating the ruins on Tana Qirqos, it might become apparent that the structure was a copy of the temple of Solomon that once housed the Ark. Using it as a model, they might be able to ascertain the appropriate location of the ancient Holy of Holies. Armed with this information, the magi could make for Jerusalem, hoping to access a Divine regio created by Solomon and populated by nephilim. Alternatively, this duplicate temple may serve as another entry point to the same regio, allowing characters to travel between Ethiopia and the Levant. The nephilim residing there would know the Ark of the Covenant firsthand, and may have studied Ars Notaria or Kabbalah with Solomon himself. The nephilim might be convinced to act as allies in an endeavor to recover the Ark, or to battle demons loose in the countryside.

Additionally, students of Hermetic Architecture may wish to study the ruins when investigating potential breakthroughs or simply trying to improve their skills.



its heritage to the heady days of the Axum Empire. The emperor even raised a monument detailing the difficult challenge required to bring Agaw into the empire. While the current negusa negast was born in the Lasta kingdom's town of Roha, the hills and rich valleys of Agaw forged the Zagwe dynasty. Emperor Lalibela's cousin, Na'akueto La'ab, is the ras of Gojjam, and while he is not yet the negus of Agaw, he is next in line to become the negusa negast. This alone makes him the true power in Agaw.

## LAKE TANA

At fifty-two miles long and forty miles wide, Lake Tana is larger than any lake in Mythic Europe. Three rivers feed into it: the Gumara, the Lesser Abbey, and the Reb. It is more than 40 feet deep in most places, and settlements occupy sixteen of its islands. Seven islands host small fishing villages, and nine islands support monasteries built in either the round timber or rectangular Axumite style of cut stone. The largest island, Dek, is ten miles across, with

three villages and two churches. The holy island of Daga lies just to the southeast of Dek; its monks forbid women and livestock from visiting. Tradition states that the island of Tana Qirqos, near the mouth of the Gumara river, once housed the Ark of the Covenant, before it was moved to the Church of Maryam Tsion in Axum. Ruins on Tana Qirqos reveal that a large temple once existed there. Those with Judaic Lore who study the site for a season find it corresponds to the proportions of Solomon's temple as described in the Torah. The whole island has a Divine aura of 4.

## THE BLUE NILE

Carving a sharp channel through the Semiens Mountains, the Blue Nile peels away the rich sediments and brings fertile prosperity to the Egyptian plains. Called the River Abbey by the locals, the waters of Lake Tana spill down the waterfall known as Tis Abbey ("Smoking Waters") and begin the long journey to the land of the pharaohs. Few places exist to easily cross from the eastern to the

western side. If your saga follows history, no stone bridges connect the opposing shores for centuries. The rainy winter season effectively isolates the lands of Agaw and Gojam until the flooding river waters subside.

## Shewa

Three lesser domains comprise the larger kingdom of Shewa. Shewa proper lies in the north, while Bale is in the southeast, and Fetegar is in the southwest. Bale and Fetegar both enjoy wetter, more forested landscapes than Shewa, largely due to the Wabe Shebile river which marks the southern-most boundary. All three kingdoms regularly clash with pagan tribes to the southwest and the sultanates to the south.

A cluster of very old communities serves as the core of the negus' power in Shewa. These towns are perched atop a set of north-to-south mountain ridges measuring roughly five leagues long. This series of plateaus and rocky hilltops rises 3500 to 4000 feet above the Rift valley and drops into the Awash river.

## ASBARI

Built on a wide, rocky spur on the eastern edge of a high plateau cliff, Asbari often suffers from pagan raids. Homes and work-

## Where is Prester John?

Unfortunately for the crusaders of Europe, Ethiopia is not the home of the fabled kingdom. However, exiting the Maryam Tsion Church in Axum on Easter morning at sunrise, it is possible to enter a Faerie regio, which seems to mirror tales of the lost kingdom of Prester John. This mysterious land is pleasant and vibrant, inhabited by people who resemble the ethnicity of the person who has entered. When asked, they do claim to be governed by a wise Christian king, but law forbids them from saying his name. Anyone who falls asleep in this realm either awakens in the church where they were baptized as a child, or within the Maryam Tsion church, making exploration of the kingdom difficult.

shops surround the large walled church that overlooks the town from a small hill and also acts as a defensive redoubt in times of need. The eastern and northern church walls serve as part of the town's boundary walls, and the cemetery's field of hundreds of rock-cut tombs covers the northern slope. At the western edge of the community, a straight wall two paces high and two paces thick blocks access from the rest of the plateau. A winding, half-mile route leads from this wall to the town gate. The hillsides along this path, both above and below it, have been made into productive terrace farms, three terraces deep. These terraces exist in a Magic aura of 2, and grow various Plants of Virtue.

## MASAL

Known for their quality pottery and razor-sharp obsidian tools and arrowheads, the people of Masal occupy three very close hilltops. Their community lies between their neighbors, with Asbari to the north, and Nora to the south. Each settlement maintains a central church and a population of about five hundred people, nestled behind a protective wall. Near each town is a vast, ancient, rock-cut cemetery with countless tombs. Many sport Axumite decorations but, strangely, nothing indicates the name or heritage of the occupants. A single, massive obelisk covered with carved medallions containing stars of Solomon bears vague Ge'ez inscriptions suggesting a royal tomb. The monolith actually indicates an entrance into a set of caverns leading deep into the earth. These caves have a Magic aura of 3 and some of them show signs of former habitation.

## NORA

Nora is a city of walls, densely populated and situated on a rocky outcrop. About 3,500 people live here, including the negus of Shewa. However, the negus spends much of his time abroad, hunting pagans and raiders. The town elders and church priests cooperated to create the ascending patchwork of living areas, small gardens and walled courtyards. Built from large stone blocks, the city wall follows the contour of the mountain, especially where the slope is nearly vertical. The streets follow the walls from the main gates back to the city

center, climbing the outcropping in stages. Some streets even have walls running along both sides. Several 30-foot tall circular towers stand along the inner perimeter of the city, allowing defenders to easily guard the whole route. Inside, ornamental tiles line the causeways and most of the structures are closely packed rectangular buildings. The primary church has a small forest, only about 10 feet deep, and 20 feet tall, but very lush and verdant. Surrounded by 15-foot tall walls which protect a rectangular, Axumite-era building, it has a Dominion aura of 3. Nearby, but outside the city, a burial mound of raw stone contains hundreds of carved tombs.

## The Sultanate of Dahlak

The sultanate of Dahlak occupies the four larger islands and 200 smaller islands which compose a dense archipelago situated just off the coast of Adulis. Nominally independent, the sultan, who lives in the cut-stone and carved-coral village on the largest island of Dahlak Kebir, grows rich through his business of refreshing the water stores of vessels traveling north and south. A network of elaborate channels keeps his many cisterns full, and attracting merchants from Egypt, the Levant,

## Story Seed: Beyond the Sultanates

The jungles of the sultanates become hotter and thicker as one travels south, filled with dangerous animals, poisonous plants and terrible hazards. This jungle must be traversed in order to find the vast and towering Mountains of the Moon, which Herodotus indicated as the border of the Torrid Zone. Anyone seeking the edge of the world, as described by Diogenes, has a difficult trek ahead of them, opposed by the pagan tribes, hyenas, lions, and elephant-eating serpents, as well as the ever increasing temperatures. Once there, will they find the rim of Creation? Perhaps it is the Garden of Eden, or a way to walk into Arcadia or even Paradise? For the Hermetic explorer, no matter what is found, the journey itself might be the reward.

the coasts of the Red Sea, and beyond.

Dahlak's population of roughly 2000 people live in a very pastoral manner, either as fishermen, like those on the island of Nahaleg, or by harvesting pearls and tortoise shell for trade, like those on the island of Nakura. The wealthier residents create beaded glass jewelry and act as merchants, trading animal hides, spices, and slaves throughout the Red Sea. An active slave trade flourishes, annually selling 3,000 to 4,000 slaves brought from abroad. While some gazelles thrive on the acacia and scrub, birds are far more numerous. However, the sultan and his family love the elephants which roam the nearby mainland coast. They aspire to create a small herd on Dahlak Kebir.

The *Periplus of the Erythean Sea* calls the Dahlak islands, "Alalaois," and claims its people are capable seafarers and pirates. This reputation is not undeserved; in the early eighth century, pirate activity forced the sultan of Yemen to occupy the islands in retaliation. He used them as a political prison, and one gained the name "The Isle of Thorns." This occupation led to the conversion of the population to Islam. Dahlak has a reputation as the beachhead for missionaries seeking to bring the word of the Prophet to Africa. The primary mosque occupies a converted Axumite church, creating an island-wide Divine aura of 3.

### Vis Sites: Stones and Stele

Two vis sites exist near the remote townships of Masal. The first is the stele gravemarker, which marks the tomb of an Axumite Falasha wizard who helped create these original communities. Every year, on the first day of Passover, the frost found on the shaded side of the stone contains 4 pawns of Rego vis.

The second site is near the obsidian mines used by the locals. In an abandoned seam of the volcanic glass, chips of the black, vitreous rock can be collected from old sampling pits once a year, yielding 3 pawns of Terram vis and 3 pawns of Ignem vis. The obsidian isn't mined because this vein of the glass fractures and cracks easily, making it poor material for any tools or jewelry.

### The Sultanates of Adal, Deward, Hadiya, and Ifat

A disorganized and contentious collection of Muslim states make up the Ethiopian empire's southern border. They bitterly pay a grudging tribute to the negus in Roha, nursing a smoldering grudge against their situation. The sultanate of Hadiya lies to the west of Shewa, the River Abbay forming its northern boundary. To the east is Deward, which borders the Ethiopian kingdom of Bale to the north, then the sultanate of Ifat, bounded by the Awash river to the east and south, and finally the sprawling Adal sultanate occupies the east, stretching across the Great Rift escarpment into the Danakil desert.

Hadiya boasts small, fertile hills, rich with fruit and grains, and thick with good pastures for horses and elephants. Thick jungle forests cloak its southernmost regions. It is about eight days journey from north-to-south, and nine days journey from east-to-west. The people here use pieces of iron as money, and pay their tribute in ivory and exotic animal skins.

Deward sits between Hadiya and Ifat, hemmed in by the strong Christian kingdom of Bale on its northern border. With these neighbors, it is unsurprising that the men of Deward often forgo clearing the jungle covered hills to raid the region to the south, capturing elephants and taking slaves for trade. The sultan prefers infantry over cavalry, and

most of his troops are seasoned veterans.

Similar in size to Hadiya, Ifat is ten days journey north-to-south by six days journey east-to-west. A man from Ziela named Dunya-huz rules Ifat. He maintains strong cavalry forces and grooms his son, Umar Walashma, with dreams of a greater, consolidated Ifat, uniting Deward, Ifat, and Adal. Ifat grows more forested and hot as one travels south.

Finally, the people of Adal are the most devout of the sultanates, likely due to a recent influx of Muslim clerics from Yemen. Adal has ambitions of expansion, as it has been cultivating an alliance with the city of Ziela, and an imam from the capital of Harar recently converted the governor of Ziela to Islam. The priests of Adal preach against the tribute to the negus, encouraging defiance, rebellion, and a war of conquest against Ethiopia. The sultanate stretches from the Awash river to the shores of the Red Sea. The climate of Adal better matches the dry and desert-like feel of its northern Ethiopian neighbors, becoming even drier as one travels east, toward the Erythean Sea. Along its southern borders, the devout and peaceful imam, "Sheikh Hussein" travels among the pagan tribes. He brings the wisdom of the Prophet to the unenlightened while slowly developing a following.

### Story Seeds: The Nascent Saint

Born in 1215, the boy who will become one of Ethiopia's greatest saints now lives in Shewa. Takle Haymanot is a young boy, living with his father, the priest Sagaz Ab ("Gift of Faith") and his mother Egzi'e Hayraya ("Choice of God"). Takle Haymanot was born after his parents, who had failed to have children, pledged their firstborn to God. He is studying scripture and theology from his father. Later, he will be reputed to be watched over by Archangel Michael, a rumor which seems likely to be true when the sleeping boy is seen attended by a young man who calls magi by their birth names, calmly ignores any Aegis or magical effect, and disappears effortlessly. (See *Realms of Power: Divine Revised*, page 30 for his statistics.)

Pagans who live beyond the Jamma River to the south of the Kingdom of Da-

not sometimes send long-range raids to Shewa for goods and slaves. Takle's own mother is captured sometime in his youth, desired as the wife of a pagan lord. Her rescue and return was considered proof of the archangel's protection. Perhaps her recovery is suggested by the boy's young attendant with a knowing, serene smile? For a devout magus, or one assisted by a Divine Ghostly Warder or Guardian Angel, this rescue offers the opportunity for the character to operate as an active extension of the will of God and agent of an archangel, providing a great inspiration to the child who, if your saga follows history, will be responsible for the resurgence of Christian faith and devotion in the northern part of Ethiopia at the end of the 13th century.

## Chapter Nine

# Mythic Aithiopians

Although Nubians refer to the "Slavelands" as if it were a defined area, in reality the various people who make up the majority of the captives sold to Egypt are sourced from many separate localities. Some are taken from the east of the Nile and others from the wilderness between Alodian city states, but the majority come from west and southwest of Upper Nubia. Referring to the Slavelands as a single place makes it easier for Nubians to think of the inhabitants as born slaves, rather than free and independent people who are kidnapped from their homes and forced into hard labor. The Nubians forget that once upon a time, they themselves were just one of the tribes from the Slavelands.

The various peoples that make up the Mythic Aithiopians (or Aithiopes, meaning "burnt faces," singular Aithiops) were first described in travelogs like that of Diodorus Siculus. They share with the Nubians their black skin and hair. Each tribe has its own language, although as discussed earlier there is sufficient commonality between these languages for mutual comprehension. None of these people have received missionaries from any of the Divine faiths, and would typically be considered pagan. However, they all share a belief in a single Creator god, who made an initially perfect world that as later rendered imperfect by the actions of the first man and woman, a story that should sound familiar to any of the three dominant Divine religions. The Aithiopes have no organized religion or holy men; they are animists who either appease or avoid the natural spirits who were cast out of Eden with the first couple. At the option of the storyguide, their religious practices (such as they are) might be considered a Divine religion.

The names used for each of the tribes are those by which they were known to

the Greeks, and still used by the Nubians. These tribes are not meant to represent the real inhabitants of East Africa; this region is very much the "Mythic" of "Mythic Africa."

### The Icthyophagi

Found along the coast of the Red Sea, the Icthyophagi ("fish eaters") live deep in coastal ravines, in arched dwellings made from the ribs of immense sea creatures and woven with seaweed. When the coast is inundated by strong tides the Icthyophagi gather the amazing bounty of fish it brings. The women and children target the smaller creatures and throw them onto land, while the men band up to tackle the bigger fish with goat horns and jagged rocks. The fish are taken up to the cliff-tops, where the sun heats the rocks to red-hot temperatures; the fish is then pounded into bricks of dried meat. Icthyophagi drink only once every five days, trekking inland to find the watering holes of the Blemmyae; they bloat themselves with water and lie supine, barely able to breathe while their thirst is quenched.

Icthyophagi do not form families, instead they all live together and raise their children communally. They are famous for their resistance to pain.

### CHELONOPHAGI

Some Icthyophagi live on the coastal islands of the Red Sea, and these have learned instead to feed on turtles. The islands are low-lying and numerous; the outer islands break the waves leaving the inner ones calm and idyllic. None of the islands have any soil or fresh water. During the day, immense

turtles — some the size of a boat — bask in the sun at the surface of the sea. The Chelonophagi ("turtle eaters") swim up to the sleeping giants and turn them onto their backs, then swim them back to shore. They are baked belly-upwards in the sun then eaten; the upper shells are used as skiffs for when the Chelonophagi make their trips to the mainland to find fresh water.

### Rhizophagi

The Rhizophagi dwell in marshes around the White Nile River. They eat the roots of the abundant reeds (thus their

### Mythic Aithiopians as Characters

The Aithiopes make interesting grog, companion, or even magus characters due to their exotic origins. They automatically receive the effects of the Outsider Social Status Flaw within Nubia, and are probably considered a runaway slave in any Arab-occupied lands. Aithiopes have intrinsic Virtues and Flaws, which are in addition to the normal allotment for characters. These are listed with each tribe's description.

If you prefer, you can play a Mythic Aithiopian as a Magic Human (*Realms of Power: Magic* page 32). The extra Virtue and Flaw instead become the Minor Virtue Magic Quality and the Minor Flaw Magic Inferiority. Magic Humans are by default immune to aging and deprivation, and you may wish to consider taking Inferiorities to negate these benefits.

name, "root eaters") which they excavate and pulp, then form into large balls which are dried in the sun. The Rhizophagi dwell in peace with one another, but are at war with the multitude of lions who come out of the desert seeking relief in the cool marshes. The Rhizophagi have no defenses against the lions, since they make no weapons. However, at the rising of Sirius, swarms of mosquitoes and biting flies descend upon the marshes. The Rhizophagi know how to use the plants of the marsh to repel these vermin, but the lions are driven away, hurt by the stings and terrified by the humming.

The Rhizophagi are excellent natural apothecaries and herb-doctors. Their vast knowledge of the natural world is learned at their mothers' knees, and it is said they never get sick and are exceptionally long-lived.

## Rhizophagus Characters

A Rhizophagus is a prize item at an Egyptian slave market; not only are they famously docile, but they have useful skills that they can use at their owner's command. Let the buyer beware: a Rhizophagus is also an expert poisoner. Typically they have good scores in Profession: Apothecary and Chirurgy. Some Rhizophagi healers may have the Mythic Herbalism Virtue (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, page 81 or *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 125)

**Intrinsic Virtue & Flaw:** Herbalism (*Art & Academe*, page 55); Noncombatant. For those without *Art & Academe*, the Herbalism Virtue grants access to a special Ability called Herbalism. This Ability duplicates the uses of the Medicine Ability without requiring academic knowledge of anatomy and physiology but rather relying on erroneous yet effective folk beliefs about disease and their remedies.

### STORY SEED: TRIBAL MEDICINE

A king's daughter has fallen ill, victim to a disease that has proven resistant to all cures. The characters are tasked, either by request or in hope of claiming the offered reward, to find a cure. Rumors speak of a Rhizophagus healer with remarkable powers

## Hylophagi

Near to the Rhizophagi are the Hylophagi, who gather fruit in great abundance when it is available, but during the rest of the year climb trees and chew upon the tenderest shoots at the very tips of branches. The Hylophagi are small and exceptionally nimble, and can leap from tree to tree like birds; even when they fall they seem to never hurt themselves. They have tails and are covered in pale fur. They fight one another for possession of certain trees, using clubs fashioned from branches; they dismember their victims by pulling them apart. Hylophagi have never mastered the manufacture of tools. They wear clothing made of leaves or tree bark tied in place with vines, and even simple man-made objects seem to baffle them.

Some Hylophagi live in immense trees with hollow trunks big enough to hold an entire village. The leaves provide them with water, and the fruit attracts animals for them to eat to supplement their diet.

## Icthyophagus Characters

Icthyophagi characters are suited to sagas set by the coast. They tend to have high scores in Survival and Swim. The bricks of dried fish paste made by the Icthyophagi are very light and highly nutritious: despite their unpalatable taste they are useful for long voyages since they don't spoil. A month's worth of this food weighs just one point of Load.

**Intrinsic Virtue & Flaw:** Enduring Constitution; Weakness (drinking water)

### STORY SEED: COASTAL RAIDERS

A tribe of Icthyophagi have tamed one of the mighty sea-eels of the Red Sea, and are using it to raid merchant ships. This is unusual behavior for the peaceful Icthyophagi, and characters might be interested in who is really directing the tribe.



## Hylophagus Characters

Hylophagi are not humans but a race of intelligent monkeys. Use the statistics for baboons in the Bestiary, but add the Perfect Balance Virtue and the Primitive Equipment Flaw (*Grogs*, page 83; for those without this book the Flaw restricts the character to using the simplest tools, and Inexpensive weapons and armor).

Hylophagi are in general considered not worth the effort of importing from the Slavelands, since they cannot learn to use tools. Some Nubian kings employ a Hylophagus gardener, who cares for the trees and plants with teeth and nails. In their homelands, Hylophagi are occasionally found living with Magical Humans such as the mouthless Astomi or the ear-winged Panotii (see *Between Sand and Sun: Mythic Africa* for more details).

Characters who hear about the immense village-trees of the Hylophagi may see an opportunity for an unusual covenant. They may travel into the Slavelands in search of a seed (which can be subjected to magically-accelerated growth), or else a fully-grown tree which can be moved with *Free the Striding Tree* (*ArM5*, page 139), or similar magic. A village tree has the approximate interior dimensions of a *Mystic Tower*. Employing Hylophagi as covenfolk is a good idea since they have expert knowledge of how to care for a village-tree.

### STORY SEED: THE FAR-AWAY TREE

A tribe of Hylophagi dwell within a magically-awakened village-tree. Initially content with wandering through the Hylophagi territory, the tribe has now set its eyes on the lush Nile Valley. The juggernaut of living wood is virtually unstoppable by mundane means: its rubbery bark and fibrous wood makes it immune to most weapons, and it can stomp flat houses and armies with equal ease. Add to this a village of Hylophagi living among its branches armed with clubs and thrown rocks, and it is no wonder that the locals turn to the player magi for help. If they lack the capacity for direct assault, the characters should determine why the village has suddenly set its eyes northward — could it have something to do with the tribe's new witch-doctor?

## Cynegi

The Hunters or Cynegi occupy the inland region, which is not suitable for agriculture. They sleep in trees to avoid the wild beasts that infest this land, and during the day they approach watering holes as suitable places to bring down game. They use clubs hardened by fire, as well as bows and arrows, and spears with bone blades. They make leather from the hides of the beasts they kill, which they form into the minimal clothing they wear; leather is also used as their currency, with hides from more dangerous animals accorded a higher value.

The Elephant Hunters are a western group of the Cynegi, who specialize in bringing down the great beasts of their homeland. These they hunt in a remarkable manner: grabbing the creature by its tail and planting their feet on its thighs, they hack away at its hind legs with an axe.

## Struthophagus Characters

Struthophagi are highly prized as light cavalry. Not only are their ostriches swift and hardy, but they can also hurl stones at the opponents while their riders fling spears.

**Intrinsic Virtue & Flaw:** Puissant Ride; Small Frame

Once the beast is hamstrung it collapses to the ground, whereupon the other hunters rush forward to start removing chunks of meat, often before the creature is dead.

## Struthophagi

South and west of the Cynegi are a people called the Struthophagi ("bird eaters"). They are a small-bodied people, and very hard working. Every Struthophagus home is filled with evidence of their industry: carefully woven baskets; ingenious furniture made without sawing or jointing the wood; delicately-painted pottery; extensive vegetable gardens, and so forth. They regret sleeping, since it wastes time they could be spending making, building, and improving their homes. The Struthophagi raise the immense birds called ostriches, and use them for meat, leather, and as mounts. A common legend among the Struthophagi is that the ostrich was first entrusted with fire, which it hid beneath its wing. The first Struthophagus convinced the ostrich it could fly, and when it stretched out its wings, he stole the fire. He later felt guilty for the despondent bird, and vowed to care for it, as his descendants still do. The feathers of these birds are highly prized, and are one of Nubia's principal exports to Egypt. The Struthophagi are a peaceful race, and suffer greatly at the hands of the slavers.

## Cynegi Characters

The Cynegi trade skins with the Rhizophagi in return for the manufacture of a substance called *kombè*. This sticky black venom attacks the vital spirit, causing breathlessness, chest pains, and paralysis. Anyone struck with an arrow laced with *kombè* must make a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 12, or be rendered immobile within five minutes. After ten minutes the victim cannot breathe, and must make Deprivation rolls until he eventually suffocates (*ArM5*, page 180). Cynegi have the Profession: Prepare Kombè Ability which allows them to safely and correctly charge an arrow with *kombè*; characters should roll Dexterity + Pro-

fession: Prepare Kombè against an Ease Factor of (usually) 6 after shooting each arrow. Failure means that no toxin is administered to the victim; a botch means that the poisoner accidentally envenoms himself. Characters without this Ability cannot succeed, but must still roll to check for a botch (and have the usual three extra botch dice for an untrained Ability). The Rhizophagi also manufacture an antidote to *kombè* poisoning, but this antidote requires copious amounts of water, and most Cynegi carry only a few doses to cut down on encumbrance.

**Intrinsic Virtue & Flaw:** Puissant Hunt; Reckless

### Acridophagi

A short distance from the Struthophagi, on the very edge of the desert dwell the Acridophagi, or "locust-eaters," who are leaner than other humans, and very dark in color. During the spring, the deserts generate winged vermin called locusts, which descend upon the lands of the Acridophagi in dense swarms. The tribesmen drive them into ravines with fire, and kill them in vast numbers using smoke; the locusts are then salted and provide them with food for the rest of the year. Accordingly, the Acridophagi grow no crops and raise no livestock. The Acridophagi have short lives, where forty years is considered venerable. As they age, loathsome winged lice infest

#### Acridophagus Characters

**Intrinsic Virtue & Flaw:** Greater Immunity to Thirst; Greater Malediction\*

\*The Acridophagus curse causes them to start making Aging rolls at 15, when the louse infestation begins.

#### STORY SEED: FAMINE OF AGES

A group of Acridophagi travel into the Nile Valley to try find someone who can help them, but are treated with contempt. Maybe the characters will help them instead? Many years ago, a sorcerer bound a famine demon into an Acridophagus child, inking spells of binding onto his skin. In return for this terrible fate, he was treated like a king and kept safe from harm. When he eventually was to die of old age, the winged lice would each take a piece of the demon away with it, destroying it for ever. However, the tribe now believe that the sorcerer they employed may have been corrupt, and harbor the terrible suspicion that upon the man's imminent death, the demon will be multiplied and carried to the ends of the earth. Undoing this evil might involve finding the original sorcerer (undoubtedly now very powerful), or it could be as simple as killing the demonic vessel.

their bodies. The infection begins with a terrible itching and progresses to a discharge of an acrid thin humor. The vermin soon burrow their way to the surface and pour forth from wounds, each taking away a portion of the person's flesh until there is nothing left. The lice spontaneously generate within the flesh of the Acridophagi, and cannot be cured or excluded, even with magic. The lice do not seem to have a taste for the flesh of other races.

### Cynamolgi

To the south of Ethiopia stretches a great country rich in pastures, but it is without inhabitants due to the abundance

#### Cynamolgs Characters

A Cynamolgs has a strong connection to his pack of dogs, who treat him as their leader. Since they train together to defeat predators, a Cynamolgs can act as the leader of a trained group of dogs, using his Animal Handling in place of Leadership. These tribesmen rarely have the Animal Companion or Magical Animal Companion Flaws, since they are equally bonded to all animals in their pack.

**Intrinsic Virtue & Flaw:** Puissant Animal Handling; Compulsion (protect his pack)

#### STORY SEED: THE GAMEKEEPER TURNED POACHER

The district around a covenant is sorely troubled by a *bouda*, and it is suggested that a Cynamolgs might be the best solution to this elusive creature — even a magus cannot kill what he cannot find. The characters are asked to track one down; there are rumors of a wanderer divorced from his homeland nearby. The price he asks is steep, and once he has completed his task, the characters may discover that he is more trouble than the *bouda* ever was.

of venomous scorpions and spiders whose bite brings swift death to their victims. Beyond this land of venom is the pasturage of the Cynamolgi. These tall men wear great beards and maintain packs of savage dogs which are used to drive off the lions, leopards, hyenas, and other fearsome predators that would feast on their cattle if they could. These cattle are highly prized by all, and are the target of Nubian slavers; the Cynamolgi are themselves rarely taken as slaves since they are too troublesome to capture.

A Cynamolgs's bond with his dog pack is a strong one. A Cynamolgs man is suckled on a bitch, and his teat-mates become the foundation of his pack. No one can approach the dogs save the man who raised and trained them, for fear of serious injury. When a Cynamolgs dies, his dogs must be killed and buried with him, or else they run wild and become the very ravening cattle predators from which they used to guard.

Cynamolgi have a reputation for being a solemn race who weigh every matter with great deliberation, but are decisive when they act, and fierce in war.

### Megabari

The land of the Cynamolgi is west of that of the Megabari or Trogodytes, who are themselves south of the Ethiopians. Like their neighbors, the Megabari are pastoralists, although they herd sheep and goats as well as cattle. The Megabari go naked except for their loins, which they cover with skins. They carry round shields covered with stretched oxhide and fight with spears and arrows, but their champions carry massive clubs with iron knobs.

The Megabari are nomadic, following pasture and the rains. Each band has a tyrant to rule them; the tyrant is the owner of the two pairs of animals whom the band consider to be their parents — a bull and cow, and a ram and sheep. Once one of these animals die, its mate is killed and another pair of the same species is chosen to be the new Father and Mother of the band. The owner of this pair becomes the tyrant-in-waiting. Once the old tyrant loses one of the other parents, the tyrant-in-waiting assumes full authority, and he is "adopted"

by a second pair of parents.

The women hold power in the bands, and are afforded great respect, and no man will ever dare strike a woman. Only the tyrant has a wife; the other women choose with whom they will lie. If the tyrant's wife should choose a partner, then he is bound to pay the tyrant a specified number of sheep.

When the rains come, the Megabari graze their stock and feed on their blood and milk, which they allow to seethe together for a while. However, as the pasture withers, the Megabari retreat into the marshy places and fight with one another for the scant grassland. Such wars begin with the throwing of stones; once injuries ensue they continue with bows and arrows, which leads to many casualties in mere moments, so good archers are they. The fighting is usually terminated by the women, who rush into the fray to protect their sons.

## THE CARNIVOROUS BULL

The carnivorous bull originates in the land of the Megabari, but is occasionally brought back by Nubians who capture a Megabari tribe as slaves and take their livestock as spoils. Some believe that Megabari

### Megabarus Characters

**Intrinsic Virtue & Flaw (Men):** Puissant Bows, Prohibition (harming women)

**Intrinsic Virtue & Flaw (Women):** Temporal Influence, Sensitive (to disrespect)

### STORY SEED: THE MAN-EATING COW

All through Nubia cattle are dying mysteriously. Often they simply disappear, but occasionally skin or bloodless bodies are discovered; magic is suspected, and the characters may come under suspicion. All these cows have their origin in Megabari lands; stolen spoils that contain carnivorous bulls that now infest Makurian herds.

magicians are able to create these creatures as revenge against those who enslave them.

The carnivorous bull appears much like a normal bull, although it is larger in bulk, and its mouth opens all the way back to the ears; with its mouth closed this feature is hard to see. It is red in color, although this is not an unusual color for cattle. Its head is armed with a pair of formidable horns, which it can swivel like ears, or hold rigid. The only diagnostic feature is that its eyes glow at night. These animals have the prowess of a lion, the swiftness of a horse, and the might of a bull.

The carnivorous bull is a cunning creature. It insinuates itself into a large herd of cows, and then picks them off one by one, eating all evidence including the bones,

hide, horns, and hooves. It may also pick off dogs and herdsmen who get too close to uncovering its nature. The creature is driven by its essential nature to kill and eat, although as a magical creature it has no real need to do so.

### Carnivorous Bull

**Magic Might:** 10 (Animal)

**Season:** Summer

**Characteristics:** Cun +1, Per 0, Pre -4, Com -4, Str +5, Sta +3, Dex 0, Qik 0

**Size:** +2

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Ferocity (charging), Puissant Brawl, Tough, Gluttonous

**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:**

Greater Power, Improved Attack (horns), Improved Damage (horns), Improved Powers, Improved Soak x2, Minor Virtue (Improved Abilities) x2, Minor Virtue (Lesser Immunity to piercing weapons)

**Mundane Qualities:** Aggressive, Ambush Predator, Fast Runner, Large Horns, Tough Hide

**Personality Traits:** Hungry +5, Bull\* +3, Sly +2

\*Essential Trait

**Combat:**

**Horns:** Init +2, Attack +13, Defense +8, Damage +11

**Teeth:** Init 0, Attack +11, Defense +8, Damage +8

**Soak:** +12

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5 (15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 4 (charging), Awareness 3 (prey), Brawl 5+2 (horns), Guile 4 (pretending to be a normal

cow), Hunt 4 (cows), Stealth 5 (stalking prey), Survival 3 (plains)

**Natural Weapons:** The creature's weapons have the following combat characteristics: *Large Horns* Init +2, Attack +3, Defense +2, Damage +3, *Large Teeth* Init 0, Attack +4, Defense +1, Damage +3

**Powers:**

*Calm the Lowing Herd*, 2 points, Init -2, Animal: This power keeps all animals in the vicinity of the carnivorous bull calm and quiet, allowing it to attack and eat its prey without arousing suspicion. It can affect up to 50 cows, or similar sized creatures. ReAn 45 (Base 10, +2 Voice, +2 Sun, +2 Group, +1 Size) Greater Power (45 levels, -3 Might cost, +3 Init with Improved Powers)

**Appearance:** A massive, red-colored bull. It can open its mouth over 100 degrees, enough to swallow a cow's head whole. If watched carefully, its nature can be divined by the occasional twitch of one of its horns, or the fact that it is not eating grass.

If the bull's true nature has not been spotted, then it automatically wins initiative on the first round of combat, and receives a +3 bonus to Attack Totals for the first round only. Carnivorous bulls have a +3 bonus to all rolls involving running.

## Chapter Ten

# Potential Covenant Sites of the Nile Region

This book considers the lands of Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia to be devoid of Hermetic wizards in 1220, leaving the scene open for storyguides. Two ready options present themselves when considering a saga set in the Nile region. If the intention is to act as Hermetic explorers hunting for lost magics and wealth in the wilds of the Egyptian necropolises, then the saga can proceed for some time before the magi need to interact with their peers or the local powers. These magi seek to explore and investigate, to create a legacy of accomplishment and discovery. Other covenants might create competition for resources the players don't wish to explore, or come just to grab a share.

The second potential role for a covenant set in these lands is political; a covenant may seek to expand the boundaries of an existing Tribunal, or establish a new Tribunal and see it ratified by the Grand Tribunal. Either goal requires attendance and sponsorship at a Grand Tribunal, and neither is a short-term project. These goals require established, populated sites known and accessible to Redcaps, and demand political interaction to acquire support, driving player magi to seek out or attract neighbors.

The covenant sites described in this chapter do not, officially, contain covenants in 1220. No magi are described, but characters whom magi might recruit, and resources that they might find, are given in detail, to make it as easy as possible for storyguides to turn them into full covenants, or for troupes to found their own homes, if desired.

### TO SCOUR THE PAST

For troupes hoping to loot through tombs and seize the magic they believe simply waits to be claimed, it may be best to have no other covenants in the region. If, as the saga progresses, the troupe decides that they would

like to introduce Hermetic politics, then magi can arrive to found covenants at one or more of the other sites described here.

### TO BREAK THE RULES

The Fifth Crusade made landfall in Damietta in 1218, and is preparing for an attack on Cairo. An actively crusader covenant may decide to establish itself in the Nile region in order to dodge the Order's rules on interference with the mundanes, believing their presence in a land without Tribunal membership frees them from the potential charge of "endangering the Order through my actions," or "bringing ruin upon my sodales." Without Hermetic neighbors, without regional residents, they might believe there is no one to accuse them and no place to bring charges, and at first this might well be true. However, their actions may force other covenants in the Roman or Levant Tribunals to send magi to establish a presence in the area. Covenants may have other reasons for seeking the Hermetic frontier. To a covenant tired of political maneuvering or bitter about the limitations of established tradition in a Peripheral Code, the idea of establishing an unsupervised covenant may seem very attractive.

### TO REDRAW THE MAP

A new covenant wishing to join and expand an existing Tribunal must be known to either local members of House Mercere, or members of the Tribunal the magi wish to join, and who must be able to contact the covenant in good time (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 49). The covenant must also meet any specific requirements for membership dictated by the Tribunal's Peripheral Code.

Inter-tribunal disputes, such as border

definitions, must be settled at Grand Tribunal (ArM5, page 14). However, as of 1220, no precedent has been established regarding contested tribunal boundaries. One obvious reason for contesting a Tribunal boundary is to increase access to vis sources. For more vis-starved Tribunals, the opportunity to claim a large region as part of the Tribunal means wider legal access to a desperately desired resource. For politically divided Tribunals, the addition of new covenants might upset the status quo, shifting the balance of power on voting matters.

### TO BUILD THE NILE TRIBUNAL

Perhaps the most politically ambitious goal is the creation of a Nile Tribunal. A Tribunal must have at least twelve magi from at least four covenants, and at least one Quaesitor to preside at Tribunal meetings.

This chapter includes three covenant sites, so if the troupe wants to get straight into the politics, they could put non-player covenants on all these sites, and found their own covenant elsewhere. Alternatively, they could found their own covenant as the first Hermetic presence along the Nile, and then sponsor further foundations.

In either case, the covenants need to meet as a Tribunal, and find a sponsor to present their case at a Grand Tribunal, either 1228 or 1261. There would inevitably be political opposition to the creation of a new Tribunal from some in the Order, but other magi could be convinced to offer their support. The player magi need to keep all the magi of the Nile committed to the plan, and defend all the covenants from enemies, as the scheme cannot succeed if there are not enough covenants in the region.

In such a saga, covenants would need to survive the Fifth Crusade, currently in Damietta, the rigors and machinations of any who might want to prevent a new Tribu-

nal from being established, and, if your saga follows history, the Seventh Crusade, which attacks Egypt again from 1248 to 1254. Opponents might include local (and previously unknown) eremites and Moorish sahirs who wish to keep politics and the greater reach of the Order from North Africa and Egypt, treasure hunters intent on looting what they can find and bringing it back to covenants in Mythic Europe without interference, or magi of other tribunals hoping to prevent the creation of a new delegation capable of raising issues and voting on matters at Grand Tribunal.

## Siwa Oasis

Well-suited for magi interested in exploring the mysteries of the deserts and Egypt, Siwa Oasis provides an isolated base of operations which is in Egypt, but sufficiently distant to be ignored by the politics of Cairo and the surrounding cities. It has a Magic aura of 3.

### History

It was once the oracle of the Carthaginian and Garamantian god Ammon, and the site of a pilgrimage of Alexander the Great, and people have lived at Siwa Oasis for nearly two thousand years. However, as time progressed, even the great oracle slowly went into decline and eventually no priests maintained the temples, a process hastened by Justinian's decree in 532. The people there weathered the conquering wave of Bedouin tribesmen which washed over North Africa to establish the great caliphate in 708, and stood as an island within the sea of Islamic culture. They did not convert to Islam until late in the 12th century, and kept an insular culture, protecting their way of life and the oasis.

The number of people living at the oasis on a permanent basis dwindled, until roughly seven families numbering approximately 200 people remained in 1200. The forty adult men of the group decided they could not securely hold the village at the ancient oracle temple, and constructed a new fortified village at the current site. The members of this community still keep the date palm orchards and gardens they previously held, but have a safer home within Siwa's gates.



### Establishing the Covenant

This section gives a series of story seeds showing how player magi could take over the buildings and establish the covenants, recruit grogs, discover the vis sources, and learn how to harvest the vis sources.

### Boons & Hooks

The covenant site is described through the following Boons and Hooks, further details of which can be found in the *Covenants* supplement.

While not a proper castle in the European sense, Siwa is sufficiently enclosed and gated to act as a fortress against all but the most overwhelming forces and those bearing heavy siege engines. Its salt mud hardens into cement-like bricks, and the residents build upward, their homes creating a sort of casement wall and ringworks. In most places, this would qualify for the Castle and Ringworks Hooks, but in Siwa, the powers near enough to be threatened by it are the

Bedouin tribes, who are nomadic and do not worry about the site. They may cause trouble from time to time, but not enough to merit a covenant Hook, unless the troupe decides to make conflict with the Bedouin a more important feature of the saga.

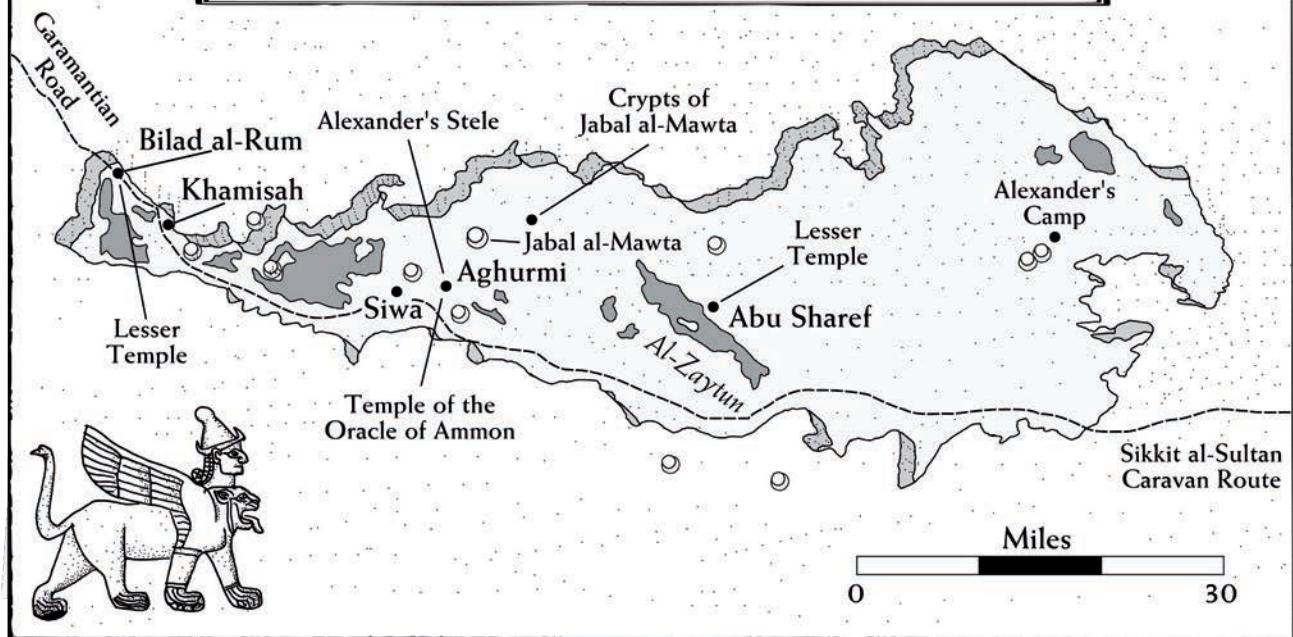
**Poverty (Minor Resources Hook):** The oasis community survives by trading dates and charging rest fees to caravans. This provides enough to sustain the population and maintain repairs, but it doesn't buy Venetian glassware for laboratories.

**Multiple Sites (Minor Resources Hook):** Laboratories may be established at three different sites and the village of Siwa proper.

**Road (Minor Site Hook):** Siwa Oasis is *en route* to Alexandria and Cairo for caravans traveling in and out of the Great Desert to the west on the Garamantian Road. These caravans regularly stop at the springs of the oasis to rest and recuperate. Some travelers pass through Siwa on their way to Mecca.

**Tribunal Border (Major External Relations Hook):** Siwa's location in Egypt puts it outside of normal Tribunal boundaries. Is part of the Roman Tribunal? The Levant Tribunal? The Theban Tribunal? Or will it be

# The Covenant of Siwa Oasis



a part of something it completely different?

**Unsafe (Minor External Relations Hook):** Crusaders. Moors. Deserts for days in any direction. Raiding Berber tribesmen. Thirst. Starvation. Blazing sun. Need we go on? Only the most desperate or driven Redcap visits Siwa Oasis.

**Difficult Access (Minor Site Boon):** It requires eight days' travel through the desert, along the Sikkit al-Sultan caravan route to the east, to reach Alexandria. It is a twelve-day journey to the southeast to reach the inhabited oasis of Bahriyah. Seventy-five leagues to the west, along the Garamantian Road through the Great Sand Sea, is the oasis of Awdjila. Travel through the Great Sand Sea is hard, and many would prefer to go north, to the coast, travel by sea to the villages near the ruins of Cyrene, and then travel the 30 leagues south-southeast to Awdjila.

**Edifices (Minor Fortification Boon):** The Siwa Oasis village rises about two to three stories at this point. Its narrow streets allow for a single laden donkey to pass. It is impressive and imposing, rising out of the sands of the oasis.

**Important Building (Minor Fortification Boon):** Built from cut stone, the temple fort of the main Oracle of Ammon stands at the abandoned village of Aghurmi, atop a

very large rock. It has a Magic aura of 3 and is surrounded by approximately a dozen smaller structures in various states of repair. A small brick watchtower is here, a partial brick wall, and Alexander's Stele. A deep well is cut into the rock at the bottom of a staircase within the Temple.

**Important Building (Minor Fortification Boon):** The lesser Temple of the Oracle of Ammon stands within the abandoned village of Abu Sharef, near the shores of the salt lake of Al-Zaytun. It is constructed from well-dressed stone, with walls over a meter thick in places. It has a Magic aura of 3, with sufficient chambers to act as both sanctum and laboratory.

**Important Building (Minor Fortification Boon):** Another lesser Temple of the Oracle of Ammon stands in Bilad al-Rum, at the base of a hill near the western edge of the oasis and the abandoned village of Khamisah. It is built with well-dressed stone, and has a large number of rock-cut tombs in the nearby hill, as well as several ancient quarries. This rectangular temple also enjoys a Magic aura of 3 and has three grand halls that could act as both sanctum and laboratory. There is a single brick out-

building nearby, close to the cliffside.

**Peasants (Free Residents Boon):** The Siwan villagers are hardworking men and women. Capable with simple weapons, but not disciplined warriors, the men live on a rough frontier where raiding tribesmen are commonplace.

**Strong Community (Minor Residents Boon):** The survival of the Siwan villagers depends on their close-knit sense of community. They view most outsiders with distrust and do not allow any but the most honored guests to enter the gates of the Siwa Oasis village. In the village and among themselves, they speak the Tamazight language of the Berbers, but the elders, those who deal with caravans, or who venture out to trade also speak Arabic.

**Ungoverned (Minor External Relations Boon):** Although nominally ruled by the sultan in Cairo, no governor or official has ever tried to exercise authority here, and the wave of Islamic conquerors failed to breach the defenses. The inhabitants consider themselves independent.

With seven Boons and seven Hooks, there is room for Siwa to be customized by magi living there by adding a balance of Boons and Hooks. Those troupes looking

for additional Hooks might consider Castle, as discussed earlier, the minor version of Natural Disaster, where locusts attack the date palm harvest; or the minor version of the Site Hook: Regio, where a version of the temples exist within a Regio the magi have not fully explored or even discovered yet.

### Potential Covenfolk

The inhabitants of the fortified village of Siwa could act as the covenfolk for Siwa Oasis covenant. Roughly 220 people live here in seven families, and the majority only recently converted to Islam. Many might still cling to pagan beliefs, or there might be an odd holdout. They keep the gardens and date palm orchards and collect rest fees from caravans that pass through. They have three primary divisions.

The sheikhs, seven to ten wealthy land-owners and elders of the families who guide the community, act as a council, overseeing affairs.

The zaggalah (singular "zaggal"), are the "club-wielders," the young men of ages twenty to forty who do not sleep inside the village walls, but enter in emergencies or during the day. They work the fields and deal with travelers, remaining a part of the village but outside it until they marry. The new family's home is then added atop the walls of the village.

The khadim are the special guard of the Sheikhs. They are drawn from the zaggalah and not permitted to marry until they are released from service. Their employment is renewed each year and they also help enforce the laws of the village.

Other notable inhabitants include the old wise women who help maintain the homes and keep the village's stories or the firekeeper, an old man chosen to monitor not only the primary gate, but tend a small

fire kept there for the whole of the village to light their household hearths.

### COMPANIONS

Potential companions at Siwa Oasis include a Folk Witch or a Berber treasure hunter.

### AZNAG AG TANNAN

A renowned and capable Berber treasure hunter, Aznag specializes in surviving the rigors of traveling in the desert, locating ruins amidst the sands and returning to civilization with the trinkets and objects men desire. He's a canny and slick operator who works hard to never reveal the secrets of his methods.

## Story Seeds

### STORY SEED: SOMETIME LORDS OF SIWA

Bedouin raiders occasionally attack the oasis, raiding the fields in an attempt to capture women, livestock, goods, and supplies. Should the magi arrive while a particularly vicious attack is underway, the elders of Siwa might be willing to enter into an agreement with the wizards, in exchange for the recovery of their kinfolk and a promise of future protection. This desert tribe is different, however. The raiders entered into their own bargain with a sahir, or perhaps even a corrupting and bloodthirsty demon. Saving the people of Siwa means finding them before the tribesmen's patron claims them for its own appetites. The adventure's antagonist need not fight to the death, but instead might become a thorn in the side of the future covenant.

### STORY SEED: LOCATING LABORATORIES

Potential laboratory sites might require liberation before the magi can establish them for research. Old ghosts, desert spirits, or bound jinn could all linger in spaces once used by pagan hierophants or Gifted sahir. Unquiet entities, they require some service before they

accept a new custodian, like the recovery of a lost idol or the restoration of an ancient rite. While some wizards could resort to force to destroy the spirits and claim the space, there could be many reasons why the sites are better with their magical occupants left unharmed, such as laboratory augmentations, potential guardians, or laboratory assistance.

### STORY SEED: A TURB FROM WITHOUT

If the magi wish to avoid dealing with the repercussions associated with the inevitable deaths of the Zaggalah while serving as grogs, then the wizards may seek to recruit from the Zenata Berber tribesmen who range around the oasis. These rough men desire goods, wives, and excitement, and they are very familiar with the kind of grim and dangerous lifestyle which is associated with living by the sword. Securing the services of their host means keeping them paid, but also occupied. If left bored and underutilized, they are likely to take to raiding passing caravans or travelers, which could very quickly draw unwanted attention from the sultan in Cairo. Stories associated with turb are more probably associated with the consequences of their more reckless members getting into trouble due to inactivity.

### STORY SEED: FILLING THE COFFERS

Fortunately, identifying and harvesting several of the Siwa Oasis vis sources only requires interacting with the town elders, to learn the folkloric traditions and legends of the different places associated with strange happenings. Unfortunately, magi tend to have problems interacting with people socially, and even those who enjoy the Gentle Gift must earn the stories from the town sheikhs through magical interrogation, social interaction, or good-natured bartering. This process might involve acquiring luxury goods from Cairo and Alexandria, proving the magi have truly accepted the Siwan customs and culture, or resorting to Men-tem trickery. Alternatively, the wizards may choose to discover these sites on their own, spending seasons traveling from place to place and experimenting with each one, or interrogating local spirits and ghosts to uncover the methods associated with collecting the specific pawns of vis. This process has the added benefit of making the magi more familiar with the oasis, but doesn't have the same potential to strengthen their relationship with the Siwan elders.

## GROGS

The grogs for Siwa Oasis can be drawn from two groups, either from the thirty young men who comprise the zaggalah within Siwa village, or the Berber tribesmen of the Zenata confederation who live in the local area. It's important to note that "Berber" is a term used by outsiders; they call themselves Imazighen, or singular Amazigh, which means "Free People" in their native language of Tamazight, using the Tarifit dialect.

Utilizing the zaggalah keeps the number of agreements maintained by the covenant to a minimum, but means weakening the defending force and reducing the number of available field hands when taking grogs on adventures. Additionally, these are the unmarried sons of Siwa village. Their deaths abroad will not be viewed favorably.

Striking a deal with the more martial and capable tribesmen gives the covenant a force of fifty-five warriors, each with two to three camels. They know the local region and make their living by raiding caravans, attacking pilgrims, and selling loot and slaves in the markets when they need something. They camp among the springs which feed into the large salt lake of Al-Zaytun. Any bargain with

## New Hook: Multiple Sites

### Multiple Sites (Major/Minor Resources Hook):

With important facilities established at several different sites, the covenant must decide whether they wish to allow certain areas to operate without the protections of the Aegis, enact the ritual either individually and exchange tokens, or perform the ritual several times on the same day. Leaving portions of the covenant outside an Aegis means they might be harassed by supernatural elements seeking to oppose the covenant. Multiple instances of the Aegis require more vis and mean either someone's sanctum remains unprotected longer while the other rituals are being performed, or there are a larger number of tokens in circulation, which increases the opportunities for theft.

For the major form of this Hook, there are five or more sites requiring protection.

the Berbers requires an initial show of force, a promise of regular spoils, and delivery of that promise. A careless covenant might find themselves with a reputation as the kept wizards of a bloodthirsty tribe, rather than the allies of capable desert nomads.

## SPECIALISTS AND OTHER COVENFOLK

Siwa Oasis operates as a sort of cross between a Manor and Farm, and a Grand Castle (see *Covenants*, pages 45–46), in that it maintains many date palm orchards throughout the oasis but the village itself is a fortified structure capable of withstanding serious onslaughts. However, the nature of

the community means there are few craftsmen available, and its close-knit culture means outsiders remain generally unwelcome. When a need arises for hard goods the people cannot make themselves or barter for with passing caravans, they send a merchant to Cairo or Alexandria to acquire the item.

## SPECIALISTS

While there are craftsmen in the village, the magi would need to recruit true specialists from elsewhere. The community's herdsmen maintain several flocks of 20 to 30 goats and modest stables of camels. Feel free to adjust these numbers as desired by the troupe.

## Aznag ag Tannan

Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Animal Handling 2 (camels), Arabic 3 (slang), Area Lore: Egypt 3 (ruins), Area Lore: North Africa 3 (ruins), Athletics 2 (running), Awareness 3 (spotting ambushes), Bargain 3 (hard sell), Brawl 4 (dodging), Carouse 2 (gambling), Charm 2 (guards), Folk Ken 2 (customers), Guile 2 (lying about where he has been), Leadership 3 (organizing attacks), Ride 4 (camels), Single Weapon 4 (long sword), Stealth 4 (in open desert), Survival 4 (finding water), Tamazight 5 (Tarifit dialect), Thrown Weapon 3 (sling)

**Equipment:** Dagger, desert clothes, quilted armor, long sword, sling and stones; three camels, digging implements, gear for camping and traveling in the desert

**Encumbrance:** 1 (3)

**Appearance:** Aznag wears the flowing clothes appropriate to a traveler of the deserts. He is never without his sword and dagger.

Aznag likes eating well, riding hard, and living well, and he's realized the best way to enjoy that lifestyle is to take it from others with the least amount of danger to himself. This usually means looting old ruins and graves, acting as a guide, or the occasional spot of banditry. He has a group of seven cousins who look to him as a leader, and he acts as a captain to their group.

## SERVANTS

The rest of the Siwan villagers maintain the fields and the daily operations of the village. Even children as young as seven help with gardens and date palm orchards.

## The Zaggalah

The zaggalah commonly maintained same-sex partnerships among their number. This behavior did not prevent them from marrying wives and the Siwa community openly accepted their relationships as unremarkable. This greater level of intimacy adds complications when using the zaggalah as grogs. This is not simply because the wider world usually reacts poorly to such devotion between men, but because casualties gain significant poignancy, potentially driving a zaggalah to despondent, self-destructive behavior; dangerous attempts to rescue or aid others in combat against impossible odds or in acts of great bravery; or simply result in horrible depression, as they grieve their fallen love.

### STORY SEED: THE TURB FROM WITHIN

The zaggalah are the most familiar with outsiders, often dealing with those who seek to trade with the oasis or purchase supplies from them. They understand prosperity and what it can bring. Additionally, these are adventurous young men, who might be persuaded by fantastic stories and the promise of excitement, and who might be easier to deal with, given the wizards have likely just made an arrangement with their town elders. Negotiating with them, offering to support them on an occasional retributive attack, or presenting the opportunity to see the wider region and return flush with wealth might be enough. However, such negotiation is certain to require a proof of not only the magical prowess of the magi, but a demonstration of the magi's sincere consideration for the zaggalah. In the harsh environment of the Great Desert, trust is nearly as important as water.

## Life at the Oasis

Everything in this section is subject to change once the magi set up a covenant here.

### INCOME AND SUPPLIES

Relatively poor, Siwa Oasis acquires manufactured supplies from the proceeds of seasonal palm date sales in Cairo and Alexandria. It lacks the manpower to render salt from the lakes, and salt often arrives via caravans, reducing the need for local salt production.

### LIFE AT SIWA OASIS

The insular culture of Siwa Oasis is fairly simple. The people grow dates, some olives and wheat, keep small herds of goats and camels, trade with passing caravans, and live their lives. They brew a drink from the heart of date palms, called lagbi, which is intoxicating when it ferments.

The men shave their heads and the women wear elaborate silver jewelry while keeping their hair in tiny braids. Both sexes wear flowing clothes fashioned from fabrics brought from Cairo or through trade. Occasionally a Bedouin or Berber tribesman or woman joins the community through marriage, but otherwise, interactions are very limited due to the unique dialect of Tamazight (Siwan) spoken here. (Scores in Living Language: Tamazight are considered one less unless Siwan is the specialty.)

## The Site

Siwa Oasis has four potential sites for laboratories and infrastructure, and a functioning covenant requires at least two. These consist of Siwa Village, and any one of the following: the main oracle temple at Aghurmi, the lesser temples at Abu Sharef in the east, and the lesser temple at Bilad al-Rum in the west.

### ENVIRONMENT

The oasis itself is a large depression, some 50 miles long, and about 5.5 miles

across at its narrowest point in the west, 18.5 miles across at the widest point in the east. The plateau drops down almost 500 feet to the oasis floor. There are several small salt lakes. The largest salt lake, al-Zaytun, is three miles wide and stretches diagonally along the depression floor for 18 miles, fed by numerous freshwater springs. There are no fish in these bodies of water; the water is sterile. The oasis is a great patchwork of desert terrain and rich swaths of date palms, springs, and light foliage.

The fortified settlement of Siwa is near the oasis' center. Nearby is the conical hill of Jabal al-Mawta.

### MAIN STRUCTURES

Built in 1203, the walled village of Siwa is called "Shali" by its inhabitants. The main oracle temple at Aghurmi is about 3 miles to the east of the main settlement. The lesser temple at Abu Sharef is 28 miles to the east, on the far shore of the Al-Zayat salt lake, in an abandoned and crumbling village. Abu Sharef is generally considered the easternmost edge of the oasis community's territory. On the western edge of the depression, 13.5 miles from Shali, are the crypts, quarries, and the temple at Bilad al-Rum.

### OUTLYING BUILDINGS

There are numerous small structures scattered throughout the depression. These are usually mud brick houses consisting of one or two rooms in various states of disrepair.

## External Relations

The remote oasis does not really have external relations before the magi arrive, but particular entanglements are particularly likely.

### THE SULTAN AL-KALIL

The sultan of Egypt considers Siwa Oasis to be a part of his realm, but does not feel the resources necessary to exact taxes from it would be worth the time or manpower spent bringing the population into submission. The establishment of a cov-

enant might change that assessment, but he currently has his hands full with the Fifth Crusade in Damietta. To the people of Siwa Oasis, he is just another distant ruler with no more authority than the sultan in Marmarakesh.

### NOMADIC TRIBESMEN

Siwa Oasis occasionally deals with raids and harassment from Berber and Bedouin tribes looking for loot or supplies. This diminished with the construction of the walled village, and would probably stop completely should word spread about magi in residence. However, if Siwa becomes obviously prosperous and wealthy, its success would draw the attention of greedy opportunists.

## Resources

The following resources are available to a covenant on this site.

### INCOME SOURCES

Siwa Oasis derives part of its income from the date palm harvest, which is then sold to caravans passing through the oasis or in market at Cairo or Alexandria. This provides 20 Mythic Pounds per year.

The other source of income comes from barter and rest fees gathered from passing caravans. This provides the equivalent of 20 Mythic Pounds per year in gold, hard goods, exotic goods, and miscellaneous materials.

### VIS SOURCES

There are four vis sites immediately available to Siwa Oasis:

#### Alexander's Camp

4 Herbam per year 20 points

#### Alexander's Stele

6 Vim per year 30 points

#### Crypts of Jabal al-Mawta

5 Corpus per year 25 points

#### Spring of the Sun

Either 6 Aquam or 6 Ignem 30 points

### ALEXANDER'S CAMP

*4 pawns of Herbam per year*

This small, yet lush and verdant spring, is surrounded by tall, fruitful date palms. The vis from this site can be collected by cutting the first fronds to sway in the breeze on the Ides of February, the anniversary of Alexander's arrival at the campsite. A pair of crows are often seen at this location; legend says that they are the same crows which led the ancient emperor to Siwa across the desert. There is a Magic aura of 2 here.

This source costs 20 Build Points.

## Story Seed: Getting Slaves

At first, recruiting grogs for Ikhmin-di's covenant may seem like a very simple process of purchasing them from slavery. However, this has the result of making the covenant appear very rich. Such a site then seems ripe for plundering by raiders, extortion by bandits, or even worse, pressure from local lords for additional tax revenue. Magi might find conducting their own liberation raids to be more productive, though more dangerous, as they hunt and then strike out against groups of Nubian, Berber, or Bedouin slavers. Many slaves might simply use the opportunity of such raids to make their escape, while some might be willing to repay the covenant with a term of service. Should the magi make such attacks too frequently, then the slave expeditions are likely to send more heavily armed expeditions, possibly with supernatural support.

## Gwafa

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 23 (23)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Covenfolk; Tough, Warrior, Well-Traveled; Ability Block (Languages), Reckless, Social Handicap (Inconsiderate of language difficulties)

**Personality Traits:** Brave +3, Reckless +3, Loyal +2, Subtle -2

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init 0, Attack n/a, Defense +4, Damage n/a

**Fist:** Init 0, Attack +5, Defense +4, Damage +2

**Kick:** Init -1, Attack +6, Defense +4, Damage +5

**Sling:** Init -3, Attack +5, Defense +3, Damage +6

**Long sword:** Init +2, Attack +12, Defense +6, Damage +8

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Animal Handling 2 (camels),

**Area Lore:** Egypt 3 (oases), Area Lore: North Africa 3 (trade routes), Athletics 2 (running), Awareness 3 (standing on guard), Brawl 4 (kicking), Carouse 2 (remaining sober), Ride 4 (camels), Single Weapon 4 (long sword), Stealth 4 (in open desert), Survival 4 (finding water), Tamazight 5 (Tarifit dialect), Thrown Weapon 3 (sling)

**Equipment:** Dagger, desert clothes, quilted armor, long sword, sling and stones, three camels, gear for camping and traveling in the desert

**Encumbrance:** 0 (3)

**Appearance:** Dressed in the flowing clothes appropriate to one familiar with journeys into desert, he presents an imposing figure upon his camel. Up close and in a peaceable setting, Gwafa's youth and ready smile shows.

Unable to pick up other languages, Gwafa's interactions with those unable to speak Tamazight are difficult. He thinks he's quite funny, however, and just because someone doesn't speak his language doesn't mean they won't appreciate his sense of humor. He still tells jokes when assisting as a guide, even if no one else understands them, and finds other people's frustration entertaining.

### ALEXANDER'S STELE

6 pawns of Vim per year

Raised by Ptolemy as compensation for preventing Alexander's body from being interred at Siwa, this tall standing stone pierces the sky next to the main temple of Ammon, in the old village now called Aghurmi. The vis is collected by placing a prism, gemstone, or piece of glass atop the stele, to be hit with the light of the rising sun on the Ides of February. There is a Magic aura of 3 here.

This source costs 30 Build Points.

### CRYPTS OF JABAL AL-MAWTA

5 pawns of Corpus per year

Carved into the rocky hillside, "The Hill

of the Dead" is a series of ancient tombs cut into the side of a tall, conical hill. The tombs consist of one or two chambers, dating back to the ancient dynasties of Egypt. On the winter solstice, the vis collects in a lone skull left in a tomb faced with two pillars with cobra-headed cornices. Should the tombs ever be emptied of mummies and human remains, this source ceases to exist. The Berber tribesmen like to look here for undiscovered tombs to loot. There is a Magic aura of 2 here.

This source costs 25 Build Points.

### SPRING OF THE SUN

6 pawns of either Aquam or Ignem per year

This deep and clean spring lies very near the temple at Aghurmi. It is called the Spring of the Sun due to its curious behavior. The waters of this spring grow cooler and more pleasant as the day progresses, such that at the hottest point of the noon day sun, the pool is crisp and refreshing. Then, as the day ends, it grows more tepid and warmer, until it fairly boils at midnight. On the full moon between the end of October and the beginning of November (corresponding to the ancient festival of Thesmophoria), the vis of this site can be gathered by collecting the water in an amphora at either noon or midnight. Vis must be gathered at one time; vis gathered at noon is Aquam, while vis gathered at midnight is Ignem. There is a Magic aura of 2 here.

This source costs 30 Build Points.

## Story Seed: New Landlords

The eparch of Nobatia has obligations to the sultan of Egypt based on the terms of the Baqt. To help offset these needs, he might be willing to grant the magi rulership of Ikhmindi in exchange for regular payments of either gold or slaves. Such an arrangement requires negotiating with the eparch, the spiritual and temporal ruler of the area, considered the equivalent of a metropolitan bishop within the Coptic church. This position means the eparch is likely protected by strong Magic Resistance from either Commanding Presence (See *Realms of Power: Divine Revised*, page 42) or a relic, as well as Divine agents, and able to negotiate with the magi from a position of some strength.

The player magi could learn of this possibility if they arrive at Ikhmindi at the same time as the eparch's tax collectors, watching as the residents of the fortress-village explain their current dire circumstances and inability to pay the required taxes. By accepting responsibility for this obligation, and delivering it personally to the eparch, they might convince him to invest them as governors of the town, and more or less turn a blind eye to what else occurs there. Depending on the arrangements, a visiting quaeasitor who begins investigating the covenant's circumstances may be less forgiving, however.

## Story Themes

Siwa Oasis lends itself naturally to several kinds of story.

### COVENANT THEMES

Siwa Oasis provides an excellent location to pursue stories of exploration, delving into the secrets of the deserts, the native traditions, and the lost ruins. Its remote location reduces its exposure to the mundane aspects of the region, allowing stories to easily focus on fantastic elements, or to provide a distant safe haven, where the magi can regroup and plan when political interaction with the caliphate and the crusaders interferes with their machinations. However, this remote location also allows for themes of scarcity and survival; what initially felt like comfortable solitude can quickly become dangerous isolation as human opportunists or supernatural predators decide the covenant looks like easy prey.

### THE CRUSADERS COME CALLING

In your saga, the Fifth Crusade may not be willing to remain ensconced in Damietta until 1221. To open an additional front against Sultan Al-Kamil and to better reinforce their power base, they send a contingent to Siwa Oasis in order to gain another local source of supplies.

The size, strength, resourcefulness, and Divine protection of this contingent help determine if this is a simple story of routing a

## New Hook: Fragile Vis Source

Fragile Vis Sources (Major/Minor Resources Hook):

One of the covenant's vis sources that creates four or more pawns of vis has an aspect which makes it vulnerable to degradation. Should something damage a specific feature of the site, the vandalism causes the vis source to stop generating. If the damage can be reversed, the site resumes production normally.

For the major form of this Hook, there are three or more vis sites which are fragile. If a site cannot be repaired once it is damaged, it counts as two sites.

This Hook might be unknown to the members of the covenant.

## Story Seed: The Past of a Slave

Additionally, defeated armies were often sold *en masse* into slavery; the lot the magi recently purchased contains a general or tribal prince concealed among their ranks. This mundane leader could attempt a rebellion or coup from within, or offer a wide-ranging adventure for the magi, if they're willing to escort him home. In a similar vein, lords sold criminals into slavery as often as they executed them, and the magi may have bought cutthroats just waiting to open the gates to confederates after leaving a subtle signal.

mundane army, and dealing with the consequences, or a greater arc as the magi struggle to defend the covenant and secure its future against a pious and dedicated force.

## TRADE ROUTES

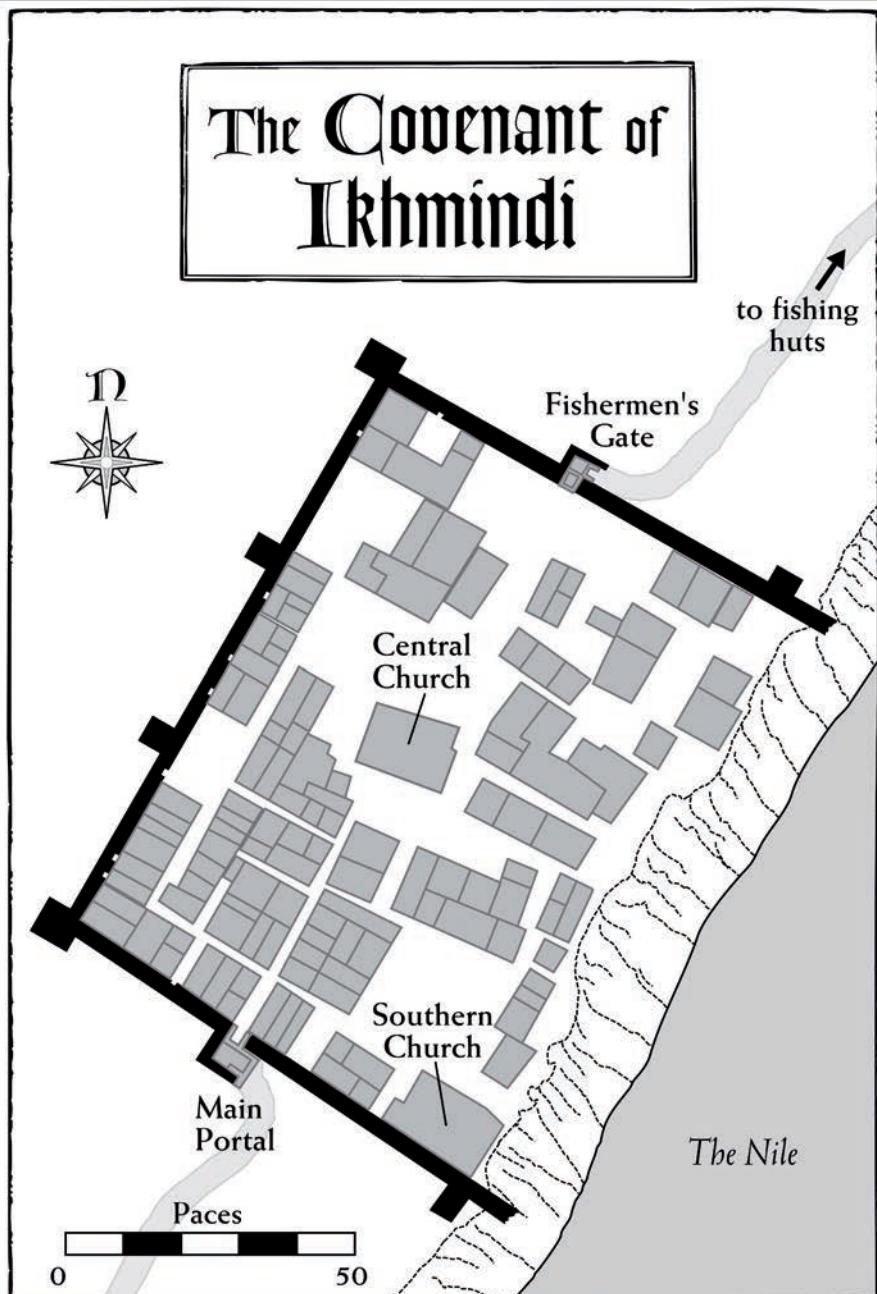
Siwa Oasis lies on the borders of two ancient regions likely to be rich in adventure potential. To the west stretches the Great Desert and the remnants of the Garamantians and the ruins of Libya. These sites are discussed in *Between Sand and Sea*. Additionally, caravans from the Great Desert pass through Siwa on their way to Cairo, bringing the slave and salt trade to the magi's very doorstep. In a sense, the adventure comes to the covenant on the backs of camels.

## Ikhmindi

Ikhmindi is a frontier site where techniques and magics could be tested with little fear of interference or reprisal. Standing at the crossroads of trade routes going through Nobatia to the north, west and southeast, relatively easy access to the shore of the Nile means magi can travel back to civilization when they desire, but their position beyond the first cataract ensures that only the most intent visitors come calling. The site has an aura of 3.

## History

Founded by Greek missionaries in the mid-sixth century, the straight lines and strong walls of Ikhmindi began as a fortification meant to foster conversion to Christianity in the area while providing protection to farmers who lived cultivating the slopes and bartering with the caravans on the trade route through Nobatia. The structures sheltered locals on many occasions, but Ikhmindi was normally unoccupied, serving effectively as an unattended caravanserai until escaped slaves repopulated it ten years ago, joined by nearby families eager to create a community.



## Establishing the Covenant

This section contains story seeds for the process of establishing a covenant at Ikhmindi.

## Boons & Hooks

The covenant is described through the following Boons and Hooks, details of which can be found in the *Covenants* supplement.

**Castle (Major Fortification Hook):** Ikhmindi is by no means a European castle, but its walls and gates provide protection in a hard and dangerous region. While Ikhmindi is definitely a refuge against nomadic raiders, a large force with siege engines, or a flotilla of raiding fishing boats could overwhelm its

## Tapara

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 33 (33)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Mercenary Captain: Enduring Constitution, Gossip, Improved Characteristics, Premonitions, Tough, Warrior, Well-Traveled; Ambitious, Enemies (Local Raiding Tribe); Fear (hyenas), Infamous.

**Personality Traits:** Ambitious +6, Pragmatic +3, Stoic +2

**Reputations:** Slaver 4 (Nubian freeholds), Capable Merchant 3 (Great Desert and Nubia), Good Provider 3 (Ikhmindi)

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +6, Damage n/a

**Fist:** Init +1, Attack +4, Defense +5, Damage +1

**Kick:** Init -2, Attack +4, Defense +4, Damage +4

**Bludgeon:** Init +1, Attack +6, Defense +5, Damage +3

**Long sword:** Init +3, Attack +9, Defense +6, Damage +8

**Shortbow:** Init 0, Attack +6, Defense +4, Damage +7

**Soak:** +6

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Animal Handling 2 (camels), Arabic 3 (slang), Area Lore: Egypt 3 (oases), Area Lore: Great Desert 2 (oases), Area Lore: Nubia 3 (oases), Athletics 2 (running), Awareness 2 (spotting ambushes), Bargain 3 (hard sell), Bows 3 (shortbow), Brawl 4 (dodging), Charm 2 (guards), Folk Ken 2 (customers), Guile 2 (lying about where he has been), Leadership 3 (organizing caravans), Nubian 5 (Mahasi Dialect), Premonitions 2 (sensing ambushes), Ride 4 (camels), Single Weapon 4 (long sword), Stealth 4 (in open desert), Survival 4 (finding water), Tamazight 2 (Siwan)

**Equipment:** Dagger, desert clothes, quilted armor, long sword, shortbow and 20 arrows; three camels, gear for camping and traveling in the desert

**Encumbrance:** 1 (3)

**Appearance:** Tapara wears the clothes appropriate to nomadic tribesman of the deserts. He always carries a scimitar and dagger.

defenses. It measures roughly 360 feet by 300 feet, with four defined quarters and a large church in the center. The eparch of Nobatia might grow concerned or hostile if the covenant becomes too important regionally.

### Fragile Vis Sources (Major Resources Hook)

Ikhmindi has two vis sources vulnerable to sabotage or vandalism. One of these, the abandoned copper mine, cannot be repaired if damaged.

### Poverty (Minor Resources Hook)

Ikhmindi is remote; even if it can host caravans, these really only come in the early spring and late autumn. The revenue from such camel-trains provides revenue to supplement local agriculture and maintain repairs. However, it does not cover more expensive aspects of a covenant, like quality laboratory equipment.

### Ringworks (Free Fortification Choice)

There is no central keep within Ikhmindi, making the defensive walls and gates a sort of ringworks.

**Road (Minor Site Hook):** Ikhmindi is on the route for caravans coming out of the Great Desert to the west or from along a splinter of the Darb al-Arba'in coming from the Slavelands to the south, and headed to the Red Sea to the east and Egypt to the north. These caravans stop at the wells and walls of the settlement to rest and perhaps resupply a bit before continuing onward.

### Unsafe (Minor External Relations Hook)

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 23 (23)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Covenfolk, Puisant Bow, Tough, Pessimistic, Social Handicap (Pagan)

**Personality Traits:** Hard-working +2, Steadfast +2

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +3, Damage n/a

**Fist:** Init +0, Attack +4, Defense +2, Damage +1

**Kick:** Init -1, Attack +4, Defense +1 Damage +4

**Bow:** Init -1, Attack +13, Defense +8, Damage +7

## Petros

**Dagger:** Init +0, Attack +6 Defense +2, Damage +7

**Soak:** +4

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Arabic 3 (slang), Area Lore: Nubia 2 (springs), Athletics 2 (hiking), Awareness 2 (standing guard), Bargain 2 (bartering), Bow +2 (short bow), Brawl 2 (dodging), Carouse 2 (gambling), Folk Ken 2 (determining intent), Hunt 3 (small game), Nubian 5 (Mahasi Dialect), Profession: Farmer 3 (terrace farming), Stealth 2 (in the hills), Survival 3 (finding water)

**Equipment:** Dagger, peasant clothes, bow and 20 arrows; gear for camping and traveling in the hills

**Encumbrance:** 0 (2)

**Appearance:** Dressed in flowing, light trousers and a loose, smock-like cotton garment, Petros wears a half dozen copper bangles on each wrist and ankle. He prizes his necklace of cowrie shells and a diamond-shaped piece of green-brown glass. His horn bow is a family heirloom, his only real inheritance as he is the third of four boys.

Petros is always on the lookout for a potential wife. He thinks Ikhmindi is an excellent site to start a family and while he is very dedicated to its survival, he is convinced Egyptian slavers will destroy it. Unfortunately, he doesn't always consider the consequences of his actions, and his desire for a wife often leads him to poach or commit petty theft from visiting caravans.

Residents of Ikhmindi must deal with raiding nomadic tribesmen from the desert, slavers, and bandits out of Egypt. This deep into the countryside, the law extends as far as your bowshot and endures as long as your sword arm.

**Edifices (Minor Fortification Boon):** Any structure along the outer wall is aligned with its entrance facing inward, and all are at least two stories. The outer-most street of the town is actually more of an alley covered by a barrel-vaulted ceiling, connecting to the next ring of houses. This creates a very impressive, casement-like structure with over 100 smaller, internal buildings.

**Difficult Access (Minor Site Boon):** It is a twelve day journey to the northwest across the desert to reach the inhabited oasis of Bahriyah. Seven leagues to the north, further if following along the winding path of the Nile river, is the first Cataract of the Nile and the religious settlements surrounding the island of Philae. Ikhmindi is built on a peninsular sort of hill bordered on the east and west by steep ravines, which limits easy access to a trail leading down from the pass through the hills to the north. However, this pass is the route used by caravans, which reconciles this Boon with the Road Hook. A very rough footpath leads down the south-east ravine wall to some fishing huts near the river shore.

**Healthy Feature (Minor Site Boon):** The well in the center of town always contains fresh, cool water, and seems to invigorate the townsfolk who drink from it. The aura of the site emanates from this well, and it provides all residents who drink from it for a majority of the year with a +1 bonus to Aging Rolls.

**Missile Weapons (Minor Residents Boon):** Nearly all the native, male members of Ikhmindi are either capable with a bow or possess the Puissant Bow Virtue. There's a reason Nubian archers are known as "Archers of the Eye."

**Important Building (Minor Fortifications Boon):** Fashioned from cut stone, unlike the other freestanding brick buildings of Ikhmindi, the central church has a high ceiling, four distinct chambers and a small catacombs, making it large enough to act as sanctum and laboratory for two magi. There is no Dominion aura here, as there has been no sustained worship for centuries. This has allowed the natural Magic aura of 3 to reemerge.

**Important Building (Minor Fortifications Boon):** The southern church of Ikhmindi is incorporated into the external wall, and is constructed from well-dressed

stone. There is no Divine aura here either, as there has been no sustained worship for centuries. This has allowed the natural Magic aura of 3 to reemerge. There are enough chambers to act as both sanctum and laboratory, but no catacombs underneath.

**Peasants (Free Residents Boon):** The villagers of Ikhmindi are men and women who know what hardship means. Many are former slaves, others have lived this sort of subsistence lifestyle for generations. All men and women are proficient with simple weapons, but certainly are not disciplined warriors.

There are six Boons and eight Hooks selected for Ikhmindi, allowing for some customization by magi establishing a covenant. Troupes looking for additional Hooks might consider the Minor version of Contested Resources, where nomads or other settlements conflict with the covenfolk, or the Minor Surroundings Hook: Hermit, representing a Sufi or Gnostic mystic who lives nearby and disagrees with the covenant's use of the churches, or even the Major version of the External Relations Hook: Beholden, representing the greater demand regional inspectors have on the site to produce excess food and goods proportional to the population. A constantly raiding Bedouin tribe might be a Minor External Relations Hook: Rival.

Additional Boons might include the Minor Resources Boon, Hidden Resources, representing unknown materiel in the ruins of a lost Nubian tomb of antiquity such as gold or non-Hermetic items and texts, or from the ruins of the former walled community of Sabagura (which lies 5 leagues to the north), like tools, forgotten supply caches, possibly accidentally abandoned livestock, or even lost goods hidden inside the covenant. The Major External Relations Boon, Autocephelous, would be fitting for this covenant, and eliminate the need to deal with regional inspectors, but might indicate that the raiders are much worse in this area.

## Potential Covenfolk

The inhabitants of Ikhmindi are an eclectic mix of people from all over Africa, the Slave-lands, and even some poor souls from Europe.

## COMPANIONS

Potential companions for Ikhmindi include nomadic tribal leaders, local folk witches, regional inspectors (the equivalent of minor nobility or senior bureaucrats), or even a caravan leader. Those seeking more fantastic companions might find a local Jinn, or Beast of Virtue. Such a creature might find living inside Ikhmindi difficult, however.

## TAPARA

Tapara is an enterprising Nobatian man who alternates between leading and guiding caravans, making a decent living for his family, which lives safely within Ikhmindi. He's avoided becoming a slaver directly, but has trafficked in slaves before. He runs caravan ventures that tend to keep him from Ikhmindi in spring and autumn, and often spends the hot summer planning and preparing. He relishes the cooler winter months, which he prefers to spend with his wife and children, doing as little preparation for the spring as possible.

## GROGS

The potential grogs of Ikhmindi are much like the covenfolk, eclectic and diverse, as they are also drawn from some liberated slaves and many locals. However, they all share a common desire to keep Ikhmindi secure.

## SPECIALISTS AND OTHER COVENFOLK

Few specialists and no teachers are available at Ikhmindi. A religious hermit might be convinced to act as an instructor for a group he found worthy. Specialists might also receive training at either Faras or Qasr Ibrim, about 50 miles downstream.

## SPECIALISTS

Specialists useful at Ikhmindi might include a basketweaver, fishermen, herdsmen, potters, and a smith. There is nearby grazing sufficient to maintain a few small flocks of goats or camels. The huts near the riverbank provide space for several fishermen to operate.

Potters could assist with construction, ensuring strong fired-clay bricks are used to build and maintain the tightly packed structures.

## SERVANTS

The residents of Ikhmindi form the work-force responsible for feeding, maintaining, and operating the community. Within the walls, this population consists mainly of the women, children, and elderly. Young boys often assist the fishermen, either on their boats or with maintenance tasks at the riverside storage huts. Men who do not serve as grogs work the few sparse fields along tributary streams together, in order to be safer.

## Available Resources

There are few resources available at Ikhmindi.

## INCOME AND SUPPLIES

Modest farming, fishing, and livestock resources provide for Ikhmindi's subsistence, but a covenant would probably rely on Tapara's caravan operations or other visiting caravans to acquire more exotic or expensive materials. Limited manufactured goods are carefully maintained. There is a strong tradition of utilizing everything available, down to burning dried dung as a fuel source when necessary.

## LIFE AT IKHMINDI

The community is stoically pleasant, cognizant of their remote and simple existence but also aware they are living during increasingly dangerous times. They remain here because, while it is a challenging lifestyle, it is effectively free of outside governance.

## Buildings

Ikhmindi is a self-contained community; nearly everything associated with the community lies within the walls of the primary struc-

ture. The walls are ten feet thick and there are two watch towers in each side, as well as one at each corner of the roughly square structure. There are two land gates, one overlooked by a watch tower on the northeastern wall, and the other the same on the southwestern wall. Inside, buildings are relatively small and tightly packed, with "streets" truthfully no more than alleyways five feet across. A full 15 feet of open space surrounds the central church building, and residents often gather there to meet or talk. Rooftop spaces are used as well, providing a cooler area to sleep. Livestock sleep inside the walls, in two stable buildings near the front gate.

## ENVIRONMENT

While above the Nile riverbanks and nestled in the drier surrounding hillsides, Ikhmindi exists in that sliver of terrain where the climate transitions from verdant land to harsh desert. It is often hot and dry, but the moisture of the nearby Nile allows for some irrigation. On rare occasions in winter, the ravines and hillsides are swathed in fleeting cloaks of pre-dawn fog which quickly burn away with the rising sun.

## MAIN STRUCTURES

Ikhmindi itself consists of a fortress 360 feet by 300 feet, with two gates. The main portal faces the trail from the southwest, leading to the caravan route. A smaller, northeastern entry is called the Fishermen's Gate, and leads to the narrow path down to the tributary ravine and the collection of fishing huts. A southwestern gate adjoins the courtyard of the second church. The eastern side of the community is built right up to the edge of the cliff, which drops 15 paces down to the sandy area along the river. When the Nile floods each year, these lower structures are submerged, and anyone living there moves up to join the rest of the community.

The largest structures inside Ikhmindi are the two churches. About a hundred buildings packed inside the walls. Each building is big enough to hold a family, although only about half are occupied.

## LABORATORIES

Up to three laboratories with attached living spaces may be established in the two well-built, cut-stone churches and the central church's small catacombs. If desired, this could be made into six laboratories, but these labs would lack any attached living space.

## OUTLYING BUILDINGS

The huts near the river's shore are part of the community, but other than the boats, nets, and simple tools, there is nothing of significant value here.

## External Relations

The covenant of Ikhmindi exists in a tumultuous and harsh region. Its relationships are tenuous or hostile.

## THE EPARCH OF NOBATIA

The eparch resides in the closest settlement of any significance, Premnis, called Qasr Ibrim by its former Egyptian occupiers, some 50 miles downstream. He escaped the occupation of the area by the Abbasid forces and returned to Premnis to resume his role when the garrison departed. He remains the main authority of the region, although embattled by the encroaching Bedouin tribes. The eparch's involvement in covenant operations might be pivotal in a saga focused on forging a Tribunal, but nonexistent in one where the magi seek out lost Egyptian and Nubian treasures.

## NOMADIC TRIBESMEN

The area is home to nomadic raiders, but Ikhmindi, while a possible target, is not an obvious one. Thus, the level of interference can be adjusted to suit the desires of the troupe.

## Story Seeds

### STORY SEED: ANY PORT...

Following a terrible storm, the magi arrive in Adulis to find the potential covenant site devastated. Fishing boats are partially buried on the beach or submerged, the pier is demolished, homes are badly damaged. Only the lighthouse seems barely touched. Perhaps a greedy merchant or an overzealous missionary hopes to finish the destruction of the village to facilitate some new construction. In order to survive and perhaps have a chance to pay their taxes, the community elders are willing to negotiate an arrangement with the newly arrived Hermetic magi. In exchange for magical assistance and repair, the residents serve as their covenfolk. Their sailors act as grogs, and the lighthouse is ceded for sanctums. Rumors claim the structure is unstable, and the magi must decide if they will perpetuate the charade or find a legal way to secure their rights to the town from the governor of Adulis.

### STORY SEED: FREE AT LAST

Both Adulis and the nearby sultanate of Dahlek host large slave markets, fed with slaves from the distant southwestern lands, the Great Desert, and even with prisoners taken in the Levant. A group of European crusaders captured in Egypt might find themselves for sale in these distant ports. Acquiring the group requires a bidding war with a wealthy merchant who wishes to teach the crusaders a lesson by forcing them to work on the mosques being built to the north, in Massawa. Should the magi publicly outspend the merchant, they draw the attention of the bishop of Adulis, who then wonders why the covenant doesn't donate more either in tithe or through charity. If they decide to surreptitiously rescue the crusaders from their construction service, the magi need to deal with the Divine aura surrounding the mosque construction, and possibly devout guards who monitor its progress. When freed, some or all of these crusaders gratefully offer to join the covenant.

### STORY SEED: SHIPWRECK OF A DIFFERENT COLOR

The dawn brings another vessel limping into the covenant's docks. This tattered hulk might carry crusaders from an unfortunate skirmish in Egypt, pursued to the Red Sea before they fled in a stolen fishing boat. However, their pursuers aren't far behind, and intend on settling accounts with blood. The ship may be crewed by willing faerie sailors, wishing to reenact stories of survival, rescue and service, for the right bargain. Or the passengers might possibly be the remnants of a Catholic or Orthodox expedition, seeking to reestablish communications between the abuna and the Mediterranean Christian communities. While the messenger or envoy might be dying, his message is undamaged and his retinue of hired guards now find themselves far from home and without an employer.

### STORY SEED: VIS FROM BEYOND

Long ago, a devout Christian and member of the village saved it from a visitation of the faerie dragon Ceto, though it cost the martyr her life. Her bones now lie among the fire coral vis source, perfectly preserved and untouched by the sea, unlike other objects occasionally pulled from the waves. The woman is venerated as a local saint, though unrecognized by the Ethiopian church, and the bones possess a Faith point. So long as they lie in the coral, no vis may be gathered. Even if they are removed, the vis does not appear immediately and the individual who recovered the bones begins to experience dreams and visions. The woman's spirit promises to reveal the secret of the vis sites and the methods for harvesting them once her remains are delivered to the bishop in Adulis, but can the magi manage this task without drawing more attention to the covenant?

## Resources

The following resources could be exploited by a covenant.

### INCOME SOURCES

Ikhmindi has no real local sources of income other than fees and barter from acting as an occasional caravanserai. Since caravans only pass through the area during the spring and late autumn, there are limited opportunities for profit and many potential complications associated with a large group of armed men camping on the covenant's doorstep or accessing its well.

The covenant could try to supplement this with its own caravans.

### VIS SOURCES

The vis sources around Ikhmindi are threatened by treasure hunters who might unwittingly damage a site's vis generation capability by looting a location or vandalizing the structure.

#### Abandoned Copper Mine

4 Rego vis per Year	20 points
3 Terram vis per Year	15 points

#### Black Sandbar of the Nile

8 Creo vis per Year	40 points
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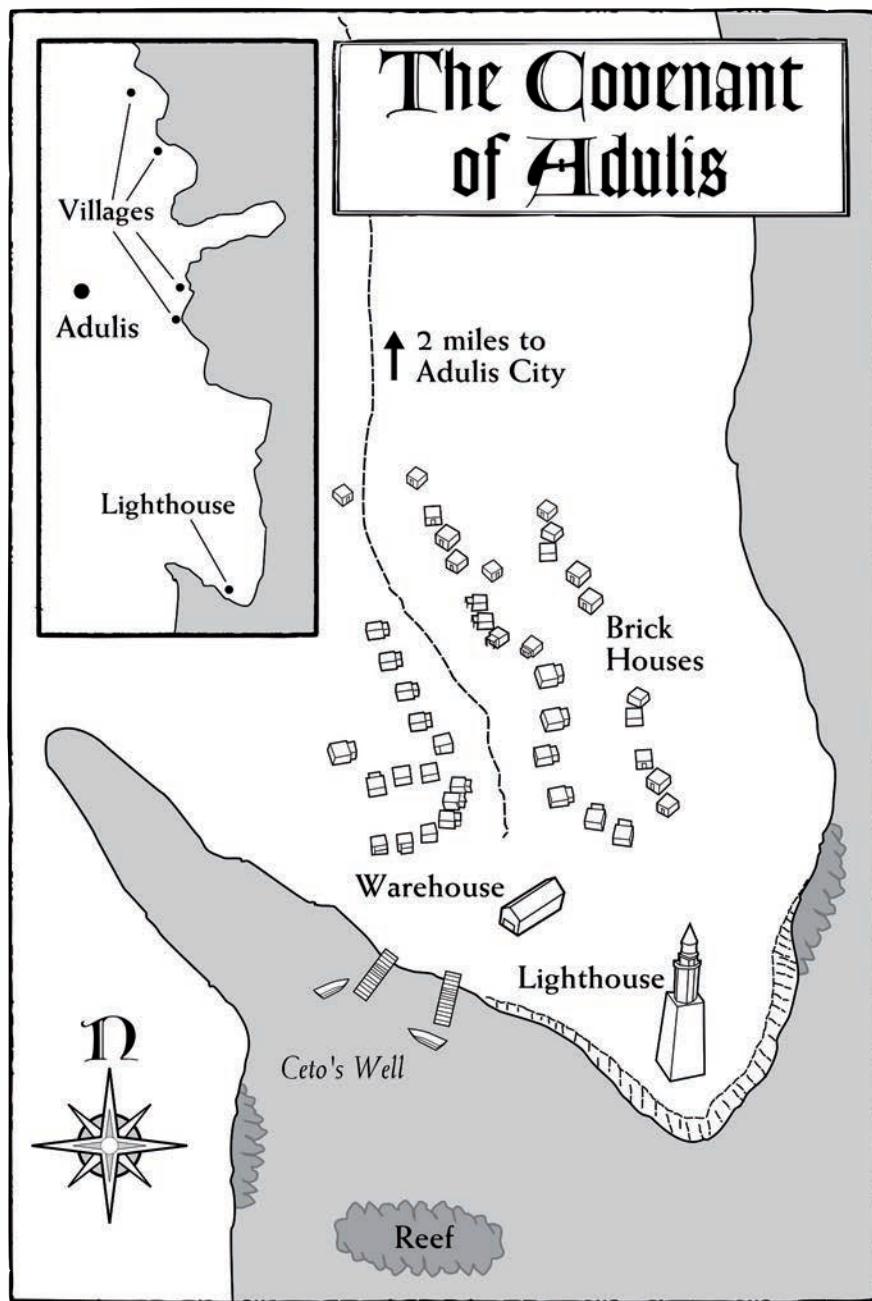
#### Temple Kiosk of Qertassi

7 Imaginem vis per Year	35 points
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### ABANDONED COPPER MINE

4 pawns of Rego per Year, 3 pawns of Terram per Year

This small warren of tunnels was carved from a hillside along the Wadi Allaqi caravan route, about 25 leagues to the east of Ikhmindi. A small but exquisite statue of Hathor watches just inside the entrance, but the hieroglyphic seal at its base has been defaced. The entire complex is no more than 300 linear feet of mine. The vis gathers in small nuggets of pure copper ore or any mining implements left leaning against the open seam of metal. The whole system enjoys a Magic aura of 3, but permanently ceases



generating vis if anyone removes the statue.

This source costs 35 Build Points.

#### BLACK SANDBAR OF THE NILE

4 pawns of Creo twice per Year

When the Nile floodwaters begin to surge in June, and when they begin to recede in October, Creo vis is deposited on this remote sandbar in the form of rich black silt, enough to fill two amphorae. The sandbar is two leagues to the north of the covenant's fishing

camp, and exploiting it is a simple matter of discovering it. There is no Magic aura here.

This source costs 40 Build Points.

#### TEMPLE KIOSK OF QERTASSI

7 pawns of Imaginem per Year

Twenty-five leagues to the north-east is a small, abandoned temple, kiosk structure, and quarries, all dedicated to Hathor. When the powerful *haboob* sandstorms blow through this area, the howling winds de-

posit Imaginem vis in the sands which gather around the base of the four internal columns topped with Hathor-faced capitals. The temple has been somewhat scavenged for dressed stone, leaving only walls, but the kiosk, with its sandstone slab roofing, four internal columns, and twelve external papyrus-sculpted columns, is mostly intact. This site has a Magic aura of 3, but does not generate vis if the Hathor capitals are removed or damaged. Repairing or replacing the capitals restores production.

This source costs 35 Build Points.

### Story Themes

For the covenant established at Ikhmindi, a number of themes present themselves for incorporation into a usual Ars Magica saga. These themes include survival in a harsh environment, exploration of a strange land for treasure-filled tomes, discovery of lost ancient magics, triumph in the face of Bedouin adversity, and the hope of forging a great covenant legacy.

#### THE BEDOUIN STORM

Two different and aggressive Bedouin tribes have decided to demand surrender and tribute from Ikhmindi. They know of the properties of the covenant's well, and want not only a cut of caravan camping fees, but information when weak caravans are in the area to plunder.

What might begin as a small demand for free water or a meal can escalate to tribute of actual wealth and information, perhaps even calls for wives or slaves in exchange for not attacking. Obviously, this threat must come from a sufficiently large tribe capable of overwhelming the covenant's defenses and harassing its population while remaining mobile enough that magi cannot eliminate them without significant effort.

A single tribe might be bought off or scared away without the ever increasing demands, but these two tribes are also competing for their own dominance of the local area, and so neither is willing to accept less than submission from Ikhmindi.

## LOST TOMBS AND TREASURES

Many temples, tombs, and ruins exist along the shores and hills bordering the Nile river. An entire saga could be devoted to unlocking the secrets and valuables lost to antiquity. In this type of saga, magi established at Ikhmindi worry less about the mundane requirements of daily survival, either through secured resources or magical assistance, and focus on uncovering, unsealing, and plundering the hidden caches of the pharaohs. Their primary foes will consist of tomb guardians, resident spirits, and the magical beasts bound as sentries. They may form rival-

ries with devout mundane groups or with other Hermetic magi living as eremites or participating in regular expeditions from Mythic Europe.

Other stories include escaping with treasures from tomb-*regiones* before the entrance closes while another group attempts the same feat, out-running another group also seeking shelter from an impending storm or holding the shelter from aggressive individuals trying to enter. The saga would be dominated by the acquisition of ancient magical treasures and the trade or deciphering of those treasures, possibly including regular visits to Mythic Europe in order to sell these prizes.

## Zerezghi Senai

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 35 (35)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Merchant; Ways of the Sea; Improved Characteristics x2, Inspirational, Warrior, Well-Traveled, Curse of Venus, Driven (Going beyond Bab-el-Mandeb); Delusion (Sailor's Superstitions), Missing Eye

**Personality Traits:** Outgoing +3, Superstitious +3, Brave +2

**Reputations:** Capable Captain 3 (Adulis), A handsome scoundrel 2 (Red Sea Ports)

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +4, Damage n/a

**Fist:** Init +0, Attack +4, Defense +3, Damage +1

**Kick:** Init -1, Attack +4, Defense +2, Damage +4

**Bludgeon:** Init +0, Attack +4, Defense +3, Damage +4

**Axe:** Init +1, Attack +10, Defense +5, Damage +7

**Soak:** +4

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Amharic 5 (Tigray), Arabic 4 (Yemeni), Area Lore: Red Sea 2 (ports), Athletics 2 (Climbing), Awareness 3 (detecting ambushes), Bargain 3 (negotiating sales), Brawl 3 (dodge),

Carouse 2 (gambling), Charm 3 (first impressions), Dead Language: Ge'ez 1 (liturgy), Folk Ken 3 (magi), Guile 3 (lying to authority), Leadership 4 (directing crews), Legerdemain 3 (tying knots), Music 2 (working songs), Profession: Navigator 4 (fishing vessels), Profession: Sailor 4 (fishing vessels), Organization Lore: Covenant of the Adulis 1 (personalities), Single Weapon 4 (axe), Stealth 1 (at night), Survival 3 (finding drinking water), Swim 3 (underwater diving)

**Equipment:** Navigator's Tools, Pack, Leather Armor, Axe

**Encumbrance:** 1 (4)

**Appearance:** A wiry and hard Ethiopian man with a thin mustache, losing his left eye only seems to have enhanced his dour but strangely alluring appearance. He wears well-woven garments and carries a high-quality axe. His hands are callused and strong, and he never wears shoes on board his ship.

Zerezghi Senai is eager to take his vessel into the unknown and see the many sights of Arabia and India. He has tried the qat leaf on several visits to Yemen, and finds it invigorating. Although an incorrigible romantic, he is never any happier than when on-board his ship on the open seas, and tends to find more than the occasional pining lover or jealous husband awaiting with complications when he returns to a port. He comes from a long line of ship captains, and while none contest his skills, he is bound by a number of strange superstitions.

## Adulis

In a village to the south of the town of Adulis, there is a site with a Magic aura of 3.

## History

One of the communities destroyed in antiquity by the great, mythical dragon known as Ceto was later rebuilt, and the resulting site gained a magical aura and a *regio* in the deep harbor, just offshore. Where this *regio* leads is not known, but it is most likely associated with the myth of Perseus and Andromeda.

## Establishing the Covenant

Magi arriving in Adulis must navigate the social environment of the town and the surrounding communities to identify the village as a potential covenant site.

## Boons & Hooks

The covenant is described through the following Boons and Hooks, details of which can be found in the *Covenants* supplement and this text.

**Dwindling Resources (Minor Resources Hook):** The pearl beds on a nearby island are being poached by a gang of fishermen from Adulis, the Dahlek sultanate, or a particularly voracious jinn, who finds them delicious.

**Linked Vis Sources (Minor Resources Hook):** The fire coral beds and magical school of fish are linked. If the magical school of fish or the fire coral beds are over-harvested, then both sites begin to suffer, reducing their vis production by half.

**Poorly Defensible (Minor Site Hook):** Situated on the shore south of the port, the site is open to access.

**Regio (Minor Site Hook):** The deep natural, but small, harbor at the edge of the site is Ceto's Well, the site where the great sea monster dove into the waves and destroyed the ancient village at this location.

## Lands of the Nile

This regio opens into the Magic Realm on the anniversary of the creature's attack and during powerful storms. It has three levels, and the innermost allows travel to a part of the Magic Realm very much like the eastern Mediterranean, in the Ionian Sea. It is outside a covenant's likely *Aegis* boundary.

**Road (Minor Site Hook):** Adulis is the end point for caravans coming out of Nubia to the west, or Egypt to the north, and from the Red Sea to the east. These caravans stop at Adulis to rest and resupply a bit before returning.

**Tribunal Border (Major External Relations Hook):** Adulis' location means it is outside any established Tribunal, but within the sphere of influence of the Levant Tribunal. Covenants there might take an interest in magi established so close to Mecca and Medina. Additionally, the Muslim rulers who control the Bab-el-Mandeb make traveling beyond the Red Sea a challenging story.

**Urban (Minor Site Hook):** Residents of Adulis must deal with the nearby town and its governor. While it might have been a very powerful trading port three hundred years ago, now it sees far fewer merchant vessels. If the covenant's ship returns regularly from beyond the Arab blockade with a rich cargo, chances are the local governor, nearby merchants, or pirates who prowl the Bab-el-Mandeb will become interested. Additionally, should any of the covenfolk become talkative about the research of the magi, it's possible the bishop in Adulis will investigate for witchcraft.

**Healthy Feature (Minor Site Boon):** The cool breezes that blow across the harbor and through the covenant invigorate the residents and help keep away disease. They provide all residents who live within the covenant for a majority of the year a +1 bonus to Aging Rolls.

**Important Building (Minor Fortification Boon):** The old lighthouse that overlooks the harbor is constructed from well-dressed stone. There is no Divine aura here, as it stands on the edge of the village and the residents attend the larger church within Adulis proper. There are sufficient chambers to provide four sanctums and laboratories, but this prevents it from being used as a mundane lighthouse.

**Secondary Income (Minor Resources Boon):** The people of the village discovered a hidden copse of myrrh trees in a secluded location and managed to keep the site to themselves. They know how to harvest the

resin and keep it almost indefinitely. A covenant could sell this substance anywhere around the Red Sea.

**Unwitting Defenders (Minor External Relations Boon):** The governor of Adulis maintains a small, but capable force of some three hundred men and about fifty cavalry, as well as three small vessels. These troops keep the surrounding region clear of small-scale threats and attacks.

**Sailors (Free Resident Boon):** The villagers are men and women familiar with the sea, as well as living in an occasionally disputed area. All inhabitants are proficient with simple weapons, but lack any disciplined training.

There are four Boons and nine Hooks based on the site, allowing for some customization by magi establishing a covenant. Troupes looking for additional Hooks might consider the Minor Site Hook: Uncontrolled Portal, to allow Ceto's Well to have many entrances and exits to the mundane and Magic Realm, or the Major Site Hook: Monster, to allow the mighty Ceto the ability

to burst up through the docks and damage the covenant itself from time to time, during vicious storms. Such attacks might also explain why the covenfolk serve the magi.

## New Hooks and Boons

### Linked Vis Site (Major/Minor Resources Hook):

Two or more vis sites that each produce four or more pawns of vis are linked together with a specific action and location separate from the actual production site. If the associated condition is not prevented or performed (depending on how the players choose to arrange the association), then the vis sites gradually stop producing vis. Their rates are halved in the first year, then quartered in the second, then stop all together. A story is necessary restart production, which recovers over another three years. Generally, an outside party or force has an interest in

### Ammanuel Alazar

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 22 (22)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Covenfolk, Warrior, Well-Traveled; Delusion or Fear (Sailor's Superstitions), Temperate

**Personality Traits:** Loyal +2, Superstitious +2

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +5, Damage n/a

**Fist:** Init +1, Attack +5, Defense +4, Damage +1

**Kick:** Init +0, Attack +5, Defense +4, Damage +4

**Axe:** Init +2, Attack +11, Defense +6, Damage +7

**Soak:** +4

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Amharic 5 (Tigray), Arabic 4 (Yemeni), Area Lore: Red Sea 2 (ports),

Athletics 3 (climbing), Awareness 2 (on watch), Bargain 2 (negotiating pay), Brawl 3 (dodge), Carouse 1 (gambling), Charm 2 (young women), Legerdemain 3 (tying knots), Profession: Sailor 4 (fishing vessels), Folk Ken 2 (magi), Guile 2 (lying to fathers), Music 2 (working songs), Single Weapon 4 (axe), Stealth 2 (at night), Swim 3 (underwater diving), Survival 1 (at sea)

**Equipment:** Pack, Leather Armor, Axe

**Encumbrance:** 1 (4)

**Appearance:** A young Ethiopian man with light, linen clothing, a canvas pack, a leather breastplate and a heavy boarding axe. He keeps his hair under wraps and carries a smile far more often than his axe. He could just as easily blend in at a Yemeni port, but his dark skin would draw attention further north.

A member of one of the fishing boats, Ammanuel Alazar has traveled throughout the Red Sea area and knows quite a bit, despite his youth. While not a seasoned warrior, he's capable in a fight and loyal to the covenant and his fellow crewmates.

one or more of the vis sites, and a story is required to monitor and shepherd the sites through the vis production process.

For instance, the six pawns of animal vis produced by magical bees in Iberia require the nearby field of magical wildflowers to bloom by the first day of summer and the bees to visit them. The flowers produce four pawns of Herbam vis. If the field doesn't bloom on time or the bees are prevented from visiting, perhaps because an early frost damaged either the field or the hive, only three pawns of animal and two pawns of Herbam vis are available in the autumn. If the field failed to bloom on time, or nearby villagers unknowingly harvested the pre-bloom buds for making ink, or the bees were kept away again by a Bear of Virtue raiding their hive, only two pawns of Animal and one pawn of Herbam would be produced. A third failure of either would result in the loss of the sites.

For the Major form of this Hook, four vis sites are linked by the same associated condition. If potential damage to a site is permanent, it counts as two sites. This Hook may be Unknown. The vis sites thus linked must be purchased separately during covenant creation.

#### Unwitting Defenders (Major/Minor Resources Boon):

The covenant's location is such that most mundane defensive duties are performed by an entity which is unaware of the covenant's existence. The covenant likely pays some small tax for this protection. There is no formal agreement, and the defensive force cannot withstand a serious invading or attacking force, but it does prevent bandits, pirates, or other opportunistic groups from harassing the covenant. The covenant cannot directly guide, lead, or otherwise influence this defending force without revealing its existence, at which time a story should determine if this Boon shifts to become a Local Ally (or Powerful Ally, in the case of the Major Boon) or a Rival/Unsafe Hook.

For the Major form of this Boon, the covenant is protected by a force that can weather a siege or oppose a serious attacking force and it certainly pays taxes for this protection, but this is factored into expenditures unless the Poverty Hook is chosen. This force may even possess some form of fortification, but the covenant has no control over or access to the fortification.

## Potential Covenfolk

The village has an existing population, who form the obvious initial source for covenfolk.

### COMPANIONS

Suitable companions for Adulis include caravan leaders, merchant captains, local equivalents of knights or minor nobles looking to advance their station, jinn, or other supernatural creatures who made the trip from Mythic Europe.

### ZEREZGHI SENAI

A native ship captain from a long line of captains, Zerezghi would love nothing more than to break past the Bab-el-Mandeb and see the sights his grandfather told him of in tales his father assured him were no lies. His sailing vessel is quick and well-kept, and he knows the ports of the Red Sea well.

### GROGS

Grogs could be recruited from the rougher elements of the fishing crews, brought from Mythic Europe, or hired from the local area. Any force larger than twenty draws the attention of the local authorities.

### SPECIALISTS AND OTHER COVENFOLK

Specialists and teachers can easily be found, due to the size of the town and the proximity of other communities within the Red Sea region.

### TEACHERS

Instructors for Amharic, Arabic, and Ge'ez, as well as Artes Liberales, are easily located within Adulis. Other teachers might be easily brought from nearby ports.

### SPECIALISTS

A covenant would have little trouble finding specialists. The autocrat might be a retired ship captain who had previously encountered Hermetic magi. Other useful specialists include a blacksmith, a carpenter, fishermen, herdsmen, potters, and a weaver. The area can support a couple small flocks of goats and camels. The docks here offer room for several fishermen with their own sloops. The potters might assist with construction, creating hard white bricks mixed with crushed coral.

### Site

The potential covenant site is a village, and thus already has structures and inhabitants. Some of the structures are ripe for conversion into part of a covenant.

### ENVIRONMENT

A dry but coastal environment, the site does not offer easy living, but it is certainly not an extreme hardship. Compared to other environments further north or across the Red Sea, it is pleasantly temperate, somewhat dry, but not dangerously so.

### LABORATORIES

The lighthouse of the village could potentially house four laboratories and sanctums. It is built of rough stones mortared together. If all the laboratories are occupied, there is no mundane lighthouse in operation. When needed, magic could be used to provide the illumination, but any laboratory activity suffers a -5 penalty, unless the magus is Blind, due to the distraction. A story or project might be completed by the magi, allowing the lighthouse to still function, while maintaining comfortable brightness within the laboratory.

### ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

The islands that support the pearl and myrrh resin resources are neither inhabited, nor claimed by anyone. A covenant could harvest them surreptitiously, but in the long term establishing formal ownership would be wise.

## External Relations

If the magi stay hidden, they may avoid most external relations. However, being close to a town, discovery brings entanglements.

### SULTANATE OF DAHLEK

Should the covenant become known to the sultan of Dahlek, he seeks to control the magi, or blackmail them into an arrangement where they assist with an attempt to seize control of Adulis. He has long coveted the elephants that roam the shores south of the town, but cannot support the animals on his island. If the characters learn of this desire, they may be able to purchase regular safe passage through Bab-el-Mandeb with delivery of an animal and regular loads of fodder.

### Governor of Adulis

The governor of Adulis is strongly influenced by the bishop who is based in the large Byzantine church located in the northern quarter of town. The bishop does not like the idea of wizards in his town, and may convince the governor to attack. If a way can be found to discredit the bishop or replace him with someone more tolerant of the magi, the governor could accept the presence of the magi in return for a promise to assist the town in times of dire need and regular donations as a sign of their generosity and pious natures. This might bring its own complications, should any other members of the Order of Hermes visit and learn of such an arrangement.

## Resources

The following resources are available in the area.

### INCOME SOURCES

There are two Typical Quality sources, each resulting in 100 Mythic Pounds of profit. The first is a grove of myrrh trees, hidden on the slopes of a nearby island. These trees are bled to produce the high-quality resin so

valued in other lands. The second is a pearl fishery, hidden in a cove of a different island.

### VIS SOURCES

There are three vis sites immediately available.

#### Fire Coral Beds

6 Vim per year 30 points

#### Magical School of Fish

6 Animal per year 30 points

#### Storm Flotsam

3 Perdo per Solstice 30 points

### FIRE CORAL BEDS

*6 pawns of Vim per Year*

Growing on the northeast rim of Ceto's Well, a ridge of ruby-red fire coral generates six pawns of vis, which may be safely harvested at a rate of either 1 pawn every two months, or 6 pawns each year. If it is harvested early more than once a year, then its growth is hindered and neither it, nor the magical school of fish that lives among these beds, generates more than 3 vis until the coral remains unharvested for a year to recover. Several fishermen in Adulis know of this site, and their crews consider harvesting raw coral for jewelry from it when times become difficult. See the Linked Vis Site Hook for more details.

This source costs 30 Build Points.

### MAGICAL SCHOOL OF FISH

*6 pawns of Animal per Year*

A large school of yellowtail tang fish live in and around the fire coral beds, eating the coral and any food dropped from passing vessels. They are fully twice the size of usual yellowtail tang, and each one is easily a meal. The school generates six pawns of vis, which may be safely harvested at a rate of either 1 pawn every two months, or 6 pawns each year. If it is harvested early more than once a year, then its growth is hindered and neither it, nor the fire coral beds where the school lives, generates more than 3 vis until the fish remain unharvested for a year to recover. Selling these fish at market generates extra wealth for the covenant, but it inspires fishermen from Adulis to attempt harvesting them after a storm. See

the Linked Vis Site Hook for more details.

This source costs 30 Build Points.

### STORM FLOTSAM

*6 pawns of Perdo per Year*

Twice a year, with the first spring storm and the first autumn storm, the flotsam and jetsam washed up under the docks contain three pawns of vis. This is usually contained in broken bits of ship hulls, torn netting, and lost floats, but occasionally more interesting pieces arrive.

This source costs 30 Build Points.

## Story Themes

A covenant on this site would have themes of discovery and exploration. Survival is less of an issue, but Christian magi might experience some hardship due to the removed nature of the site, finding it difficult to acquire books. On the other hand, Muslim magi might better manage the distance from Mythic Europe by being able to easily access the Levant and Mythic Arabia. Adulis shines best when it serves a purpose specific to the magi living there.

### PUSHING THE FRONTIERS

A covenant established in Adulis allows for the most flexibility of options for a saga wanting to explore a variety of regions, as there is easy access to Egypt, Ethiopia, the Levant Tribunal, and Mythic Arabia. Slightly more removed, but still nearby, are the southeastern Great Desert, and Nubia. For sagas truly wishing to push the frontier, there are merchants in Yemen, just beyond the Bab-el-Mandeb, who know the routes to the islands of Soqatra and the wonders of that realm. All this requires a firm conviction, a steady resolve, and ship to sail. With the promise of riches, there are plenty of vessels in Adulis willing to take the chance, especially if they have a secret weapon on board.