

# Sub Rosa

An Ars Magica Magazine

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August 2008

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## Contribute to Sub Rosa

Sub Rosa is made up of fan driven content. Contributors receive a complementary copy of the issue their work appears in.

To contribute articles or illustrations, visit the Sub Rosa website (<http://www.subrosamagazine.org>) and follow the guidelines.

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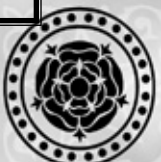
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Sub Rosa



# Under the Rose

## Alex White

*Salve sodales.* Welcome to the third issue of **Sub Rosa**, the *Ars Magica* fan magazine. Unsurprisingly, this issue was delayed (it seems the fate of all *Ars* zines). There are a lot of people to thank for getting this issue finished and out the door, and there were many hurdles that were – eventually – overcome. Issue Four is due in October, barring unforeseen delays. Depending upon contributions, I will aim to release Issue Five this year, likely in December.

As some readers may know, the *Sub Rosa* website came under attack by spammers. It took a concerted effort to get the site back up and running. Many, many thanks go to Lynne Lupien for her excellent advice and invaluable assistance. Without her, the site

would still be down. Ben McFarland also deserves a great deal of thanks in managing the artwork solicited for this issue. There is some amazing original art for the articles in Issue Three, and Ben deserves credit in ensuring the art was sourced quickly and efficiently.

Also, I'd like to welcome and Scott – two of the new artists who have joined the *Sub Rosa* family.

The *Sub Rosa* website had had an overhaul and an upgrade. *Sub Rosa* is now also on Twitter, allowing you can subscribe and be notified when the site is updated.

This issue is crammed with great articles and adventures. It is clear that the authors have put a great deal of time and effort into these contributions. I know that Atlas and David are reading,

and I hope that more aspiring *Ars* authors and artists consider sending in their work.

It is often disappointing that so few readers talk in detail about what they liked, commenting on which article or piece of artwork they enjoyed. I receive many emails with comments such as “great job”, “good issue”, but very few of them go further than that. The authors and artists deserve more.

I strongly encourage readers to send in emails, comments, praise, criticism or questions. Any feedback only helps us to improve future issues.

The best way you can give authors and artists more encouragement – and ensure they keep contributing – is to comment on their work, whether to *Sub Rosa*, on our website, on the *Atlas* forums or via the *Ars* email list.

## Issue 2 Competition Winner

3

### Niall Christie

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the second issue of *SR*. The magazine continues to go from strength to strength; long may it continue!

I appreciated the report on *GT 2007*. I'm attending the one in Berkeley in 2008, and it gave me some sense of what to expect. Clearly costumes will be required...

I am enjoying watching other authors developing the material that I presented in *Blood and Sand*, its sub-supplements and *RoP: Divine*, both in new supplements (like *HoH: S*) and now in *SR*. In “*Jinn as Characters*”, Lachlan Hayes did a fabulous job of updating the “*Jinn Characters*” from *Vestiges in Sand*

to 5th edition, including successfully negotiating the fact that in 5th edition *jinn* may be drawn from the *Magic*, *Faerie* and *Infernal* realms, which makes things more complicated.

“*The Path of the Circle*” was an intriguing new path for *Criamon* magi that helped with the ongoing attempt to move the perception of the house away from nutty weirdos. Now you can play a nutty weirdo who also experiments with body parts (just kidding)!

I was particularly pleased to see “*The Atropaics*.” I've always felt that these needed to be recast for 5th edition, especially since the publication of the fabulous *RoP: I*. Alex did excellent work in integrating them into the *Templar* order; it makes perfect sense that this

should be the case in the *Mythic World*.

“*Malham Cove*,” “*Wheostan the Old*” and “*Jerod's Cave*” all presented juicy material for use in *Ars* sagas, while “*The End of the Hohenstaufen*” provided useful background material and “*Beasts of the Realm*” helped to fill out the current lack of a full bestiary for 5th edition. All good stuff!

Keep up the great work!



# News from the Line Editor

## David Chart

### Grand Tribunal

I've just got back from Grand Tribunal, an Ars Magica convention in Cheltenham in the UK. There was a simultaneous regional convention in California, but the UK convention was several times larger. (Granted, total attendance of the two conventions was probably about 40, but still.) I had a great time. I got to play lots of Ars Magica, meet lots of people, including some authors I've been working with for years, and answer some questions on the future of the line. Thanks to CJ and his friends for organising it and making it all happen, and to them, John & Michelle Nephew, and Angela Taylor for organising the splendid Grand Tribunal shirt.

One thing that struck me again at the convention was just how international Ars Magica is. There were two people from the USA, two from Norway, one from France, and one from Germany, as well as several from the UK, and me, sort-of from Japan. Even the Berkeley convention was international; at least one of the attendees came down from Canada. This is, in fact, a very noticeable feature of the Ars Magica community. We have a lot of sales outside the USA, and although as some foreign retailers order from US distributors and some foreign customers order from US retailers we don't have precise numbers it's probably around half. The same applies to the pool of authors, and I think that more than half the line is written by non-Americans. Sub Rosa, of course, is edited from Australia, and Ars Magica itself is edited by a UK citizen living in Japan.

I think this is a very good thing, although Ars Magica by itself is unlikely to bring world peace. From a purely economic perspective, it gives us something of a buffer against economic downturns that affect one country. More importantly, it means that there are multiple cultural perspectives being brought to bear on the development of the line, which can only increase its richness and vitality.

### Upcoming Books

Funnily enough, one of the things I was asked about at the convention was upcoming books for Ars Magica. Next up, as announced on the Atlas web site, is Hedge Magic revised edition. This book was actually written from scratch, and doesn't even cover all of the traditions in the original Hedge Magic, because some of them have already been done. On the other hand, the grugachan are back, we have natural magicians (no, that's not what was in Art & Academe; the rules there are not magical at all), and rules for the rune wizards of the North, who may or may not be part of the Order of Odin. Officially, the Order of Odin is probably just a paranoid fantasy. Probably.

The next book after Hedge Magic should be Realms of Power: Faerie. I want to talk about that more next time, because I think Timothy Ferguson did a fantastic job of developing the idea that faeries are inherently interested in people to create a concept of faerie that makes them frightening and dangerous, but not evil. Faeries have always supposed to be amoral, and I think Timothy has really managed to capture that.

But, as I say, more about that next time.

## Third Issue Competition

Write an email to Sub Rosa to Win

Subscribers that write an email to Sub Rosa will go into the running to win an Ars Magica supplement of their choice. Emails should be sent to [subrosa@pointlessmentalcruelty.com](mailto:subrosa@pointlessmentalcruelty.com).

The email should comment on one of the articles in either Issue 1, 2 or 3. Existing and new subscribers may enter.

The winner will be drawn on 1 October, and announced in Issue 4. To subscribe, simply visit [www.subrosamagazine.com](http://www.subrosamagazine.com).

## Who's Who?

### Raina Strausman

Raina is a 21 year old Illustration Major living in Albany, NY with her boyfriend and two adorable cats. She enjoys RPGs, Joss Whedon, faeries, and folk music.

### Robert Scott

Robert Scott is a native of New York City, the home of superheroes. As a freelancer, Robert has created art for board games, children's books, role-playing games and magazines. As a digital artist, he strives to bring the richness and life of traditional media into the digital realm.

See more of his work at <http://robertscottart.com>.



# The Circle of the Cabeiri

*Pagan rites and worship are rarely tolerated and never condoned amid the rise of the Dominion. Drawing on rituals practiced since the times of Homer and Plato, the Circle of Cabeiri attempts to preserve what it sees as the reverence for the misunderstood Mother Spirit of Nature and the chance to ascend into a unity with that spirit. Maintained in secret, they believe theirs is a tradition that can and does coexist and complement the spirituality of the Divine.*

## The History of the Circle of Cabeiri

A forgotten mystery of antiquity, the Circle of the Cabeiri once flourished throughout the Aegean and Hellenistic world. Incorporating the Eleusian Mysteries and the worship of Cybele — known to some as the Magna Mater, Demeter, Ephesian Artemis, or sometimes by her secret name of Axiéros, the Circle was a popular cult that competed in many places side by side with early Christianity in the Mediterranean world.

Encouraged by and subsidized by Roman emperors, even into the fourth century, only the abolishment of all prayer and sacrifices at non-Christian temples in 392 AD by Theodosius I finally issued the death knell of common support. The cult that once initiated King Lysander of Sparta, Philip II of Macedon, and Cornelius Piso (the father-in-law of Julius Caesar) into their number was forced to become a hidden and covert organization. Many sites ceded to Christian churches, much of their lore and secret rites were lost as members died and initiations nearly came to a standstill.

Those who remained kept the traditions barely alive through the maintenance of rites at the lone site of the Sanctuary of the Great

Gods, located on the island of Samothrace. Its remaining members included witches of Thessaly, wise women, seers, superstitious sailors, and farmers — those who might have followed the “old ways.” It no longer was an openly displayed association, but became a secret whispered and shared between trusted friends and those thought to be like-minded.

Their origins claim to stretch back into antediluvian times, when man was first taught the art of working metal, of words and numbers, of healing and the control of spirits. The Circle

**Ben McFarland**

knew methods to see the portents in flames, and how to influence the birth of a child. They spoke the tongue of lost Hyperborean civilizations, and knew the ways of the mountains and wilderness. The final mysteries of the Circle tell how one can draw upon the darker magic of the underworld and ascend to immortality, united with the Divine spark of the Magna Mater.

As the Order of Hermes began to incorporate some of these



members into its fold, the Circle of Cabeiri's rituals were pursued by magi who found the rites and philosophy to be congruent with their own aims and beliefs. This brought about a very small renaissance in the Circle's membership, as many of the weaker magi sought to increase their powers through affiliation with the cult. While quite welcoming at first, the remnants of the Circle reversed their once accessible requirements and began to demand quests and trials from those who petitioned them — using the influx of powerful applicants to recover lost fragments of their heritage and beliefs.

## The Circle of Cabeiri Today

The Circle maintains one last stronghold on the Mediterranean island of Samothrace. Most initiations occur there on significant conjunctions and days. They know of the ruins of other Sanctuaries in the Aegean, and new applicants are sent to recover relics or fragmentary documents that can help complete the collection at the Sanctuary of the Great Gods.

The Circle knows of the Philosophers of Rome and the Nature Magic sect of House Merinita — and see both as kindred organizations. If the Philosophers' gnostic research could be incorporated into the Circle's mysteries, the leadership would be very pleased. The Merinita are viewed as wayward children, stumbling forward without proper guidance. Whenever possible and appropriate, the Circle attempts to reintegrate them within their own organization. Cult hierarchs would be quite interested in incorporating the Awakening and Guardian of Nature Mysteries, if only to strengthen the defenses at Samothrace. Is it possible that someone from the Circle encouraged the True Merintiae

and Agnes in an attempt for a greater union? (HoH: MC, pg 106)

Most Verditius are considered to be a greedy corruption of the art taught by the Dactyls, and they are not often invited or permitted to join the Circle. At their heart, they might seem a match, but only those who refuse to ever participate in Vendetta and keep their Hubris reasonably in check can hope to learn the Circle's lessons.

The Circle of Cabeiri finds the cult known as the Disciples of the Worm especially pernicious and loathsome. Members often attempt to thwart applicants who seek to desecrate old Sanctuaries and the tombs of former members. Indeed, they try to prevent the Sanctuary at Samothrace from ever becoming known to the Disciples. When possible, Circle initiates will certamen for control of a newly discovered site. Should that fail, members are willing to do anything necessary to recover what a Disciple might have taken.

Those who accidentally find relics of the Cabeiri and willingly return them might find a solicitation to join after a period of observation. Caution

colors any decision the cult makes to bring someone within the fold. Prospective members are carefully watched by mundane means for some time, perhaps investigated via spirits and divination before finally being proffered their invitation to the Sanctuary on Samothrace. Once initiated, a member joins the Circle for life. Those who betray them can expect unending Wizards' War until one side is dead.

## Structure of the Circle of Cabeiri

The Circle has two main tiers of membership. The first tier is for the lay members of its Mystery — sailors, farmers, those who make their living from the land and sea, and don't find the wisdom of the cult conflicting with their religious faith. They are known as Initiates and Contemplatives. This first tier also acts as a testing period of dedication for hermetic applicants. The speed at which members develop their cult knowledge demonstrates the quality of their commitment.

### Laity of the Circle

The lowest level of the Circle of Cabeiri, the Laity is also the most populous, drawing from the mariners and common people of

### Mystagogues and Initiation Scripts of the Circle of Cabeiri

The usual Mystagogue of the Circle is drawn from any member of the Outer to Inner Ring—all are expected to share in the education process. They typically have a Presence of +1 or more and Circle of Cabeiri Lore of at least 4.

They are often revered elders of their village or family, making the pilgrimage to the Sanctuary on Samothrace not only for the celebration beginning on the 1st

of September, but also several times a year to confer with the clergy who maintain the Sanctuary and those visiting.

Initiation scripts often involve quests for lost knowledge or relics (+6), ordeals that maim, such as the castration of the galli or ritual scarification of the Outer Ring, or inflict more stringent vows (+3), sacrifices of time and wealth to the Circle's defense or growth (+2) or a potent invested device (+3), all of which are performed at the Great Sanctuary (+3) and involve instruction from the Priesthood (+3).



the region. Most members at this point do not possess the Gift or any other supernatural virtue — they are just common folk. In deference to the old ways, the prospective members must speak Greek, but given the Circle's Aegean location, this is rarely an issue. Some more conservative members demand a petitioner not carry a "blood debt", that he has never committed murder, but in these more desperate times the question is usually omitted from an interview.

### Initiate

This most basic of memberships within the Circle requires very little in the way of sacrifice in order to learn the virtue of Wilderness Sense. Often, Initiates must only travel to the Great Sanctuary to partake in the ritual of Mysis, a celebration beginning on the First of September. (+4) Once there, he must take a Vow never to reveal the secrets or existence of the Circle to outsiders. (+3) The Mystagogue then spends the course of the celebration revealing the basic mystery of Wilderness Sense and exposure to the Circle of Cabeiri Lore. (+3) The new Initiate is given a ring of carved porphyry stone as a symbol of his membership.

### Contemplative

Once an Initiate has gained Circle of Cabeiri Lore score of 2 or more, been a member for at least a year, and contributed to the defenses of the Sanctuary, he may partake in the ritual of Epopteia and learn the secret of Mountain Lore. Contemplatives, as they are known, wear a red sash belt with a circular ring buckle to indicate their status.

### Priesthood of the Circle

After achieving Contemplative status and spending at least three more years as members of the

### Relics of the Circle of Cabeiri

What might those who wish to attain the Priesthood of the Circle quest to recover in Mythic Europe? Some ideas follow:

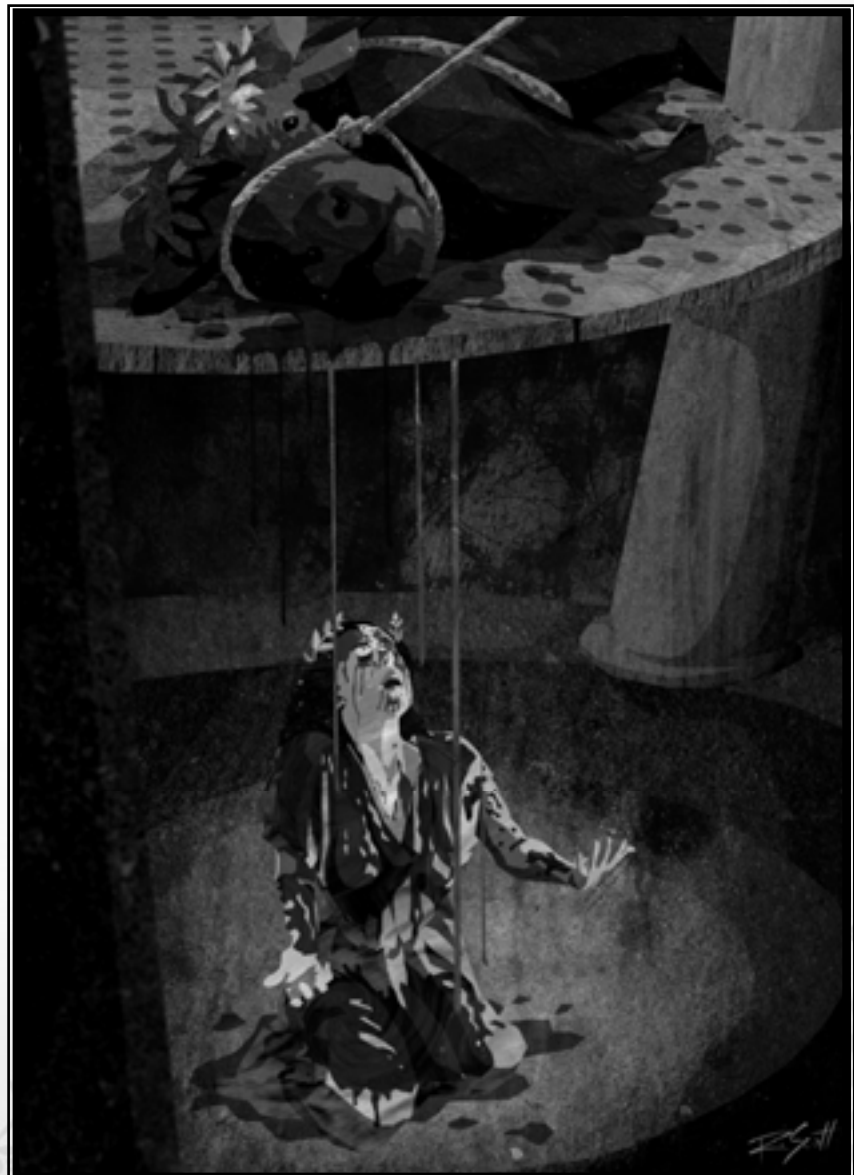
- The Augustine likeness of Cybele, bearing the face of Augustus' wife, Livia.
- The statue of Cybele from either Alexandria or Ephesus, both said to be the work of Heron and capable of giving milk from its many breasts.
- The mosaics depicting Cybele in the Circus Maximus.
- The Sacred Black Stone of Cybele, brought from her first

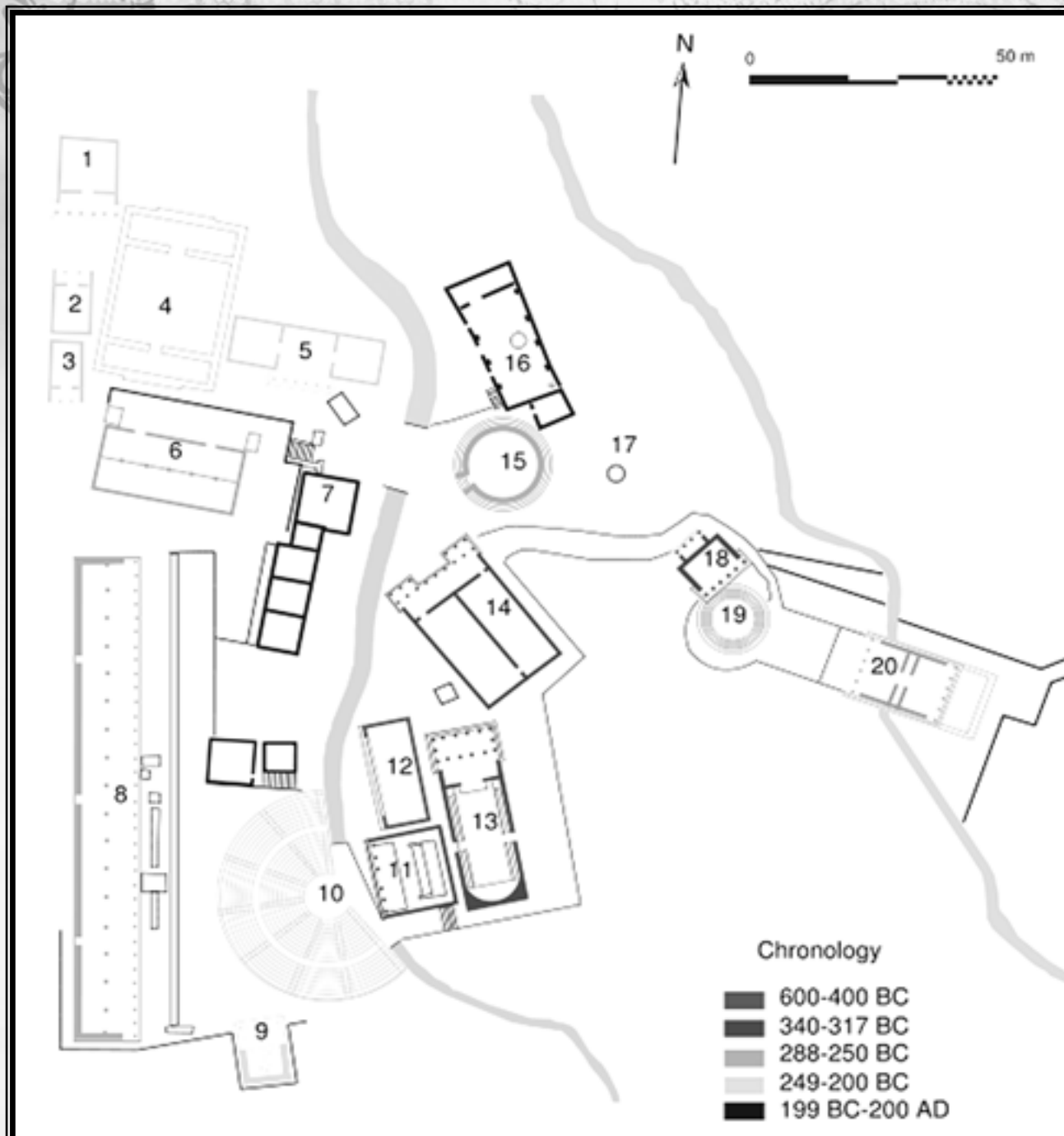
temple in Phrygia to the Palatine Hill in Rome.

- The Altar stone from any lost Shrine, such as the one on the bank of the Tiber—now likely beneath St. Peter's or incorporated into the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, or in Lyon, France, or beneath the Plaza de Cibeles in Madrid, Spain, or in Setif, Algeria.

- An ancient copy of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, or Xenophon Ephesius' *Ephesian Story*, Book 1, detailing rituals and ceremonies performed in Imperial Rome and Ephesus.

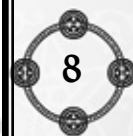
- Scrolls detailing rituals from the Library of Celsus in Ephesus, rescued before the Goths burnt it in 262, but lost over time.



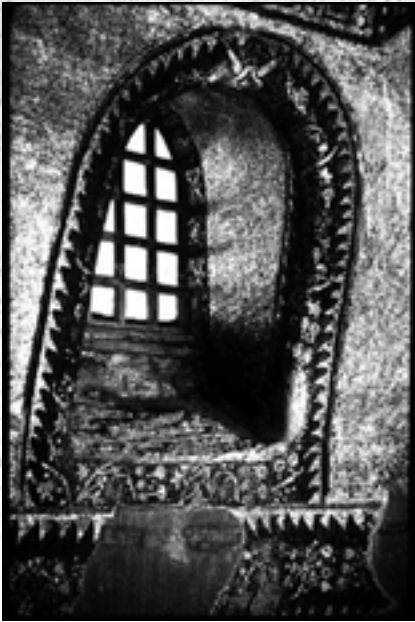


### Map Key

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p>1-3: Hellenistic treasures</p> <p>4: Hall of the Kuretes</p> <p>5: Miletean building, cult armory</p> <p>6: Néôrion, monument to the safety of seafarers</p> <p>7: Banquet hall</p> <p>8: Portico</p> | <p>9: Fountain of the Nike of Samothrace</p> <p>10: Theater</p> <p>11: Great altar</p> <p>12: Building for displaying votive offerings</p> <p>13: Hiéron, site of Contemplative and most other major initiations.</p> <p>14: Building of the Dancer's Frieze or "temenos", Library of the site</p> | <p>15: Arsinoé rotunda or "Arsinoéion," the site for the Taurobolion</p> <p>16: Anaktoron, resting place of sacred relics</p> <p>17: Community well</p> <p>18: Public Altar to Cybele</p> <p>19: Public Oratorium</p> <p>20: Ptolémaion, the grand entrance hall to the complex</p> |
|--|--|---|







Circle, the ambitious may join the priesthood. Most members from this point forward, though not all, have the Gift.

## The Outer Ring: Servants of the Circle

The outermost ring of the priesthood possesses two paths: the Dactyls; and the Korybantes, either sometimes called Kuretes. Each fulfills a different role within the Circle, acts as stage where future clergy build their knowledge of the Circle's lore and secrets, and are the first line of defense for the Great Sanctuary. Hopeful priests must have a Circle of Cabeiri Lore score of at least 3, but most are not confirmed until the ability reaches 4.

Ceremonies that elevate a Contemplative to the Priesthood always occur on a solstice or equinox.

Both paths possess their own mysteries, but some, like Minor Magical Focus: Making/Keeping People Healthy and Affinity: Craft (Smithing), are common to each. (See ArM5 for virtues)

### Dactyls: The Wise Ones

Dactyls were the traditional servants of Cybele, acting as smiths and healers. It was said that the Dactyls taught both man and gods letters, numbers, and the art

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of metalworking. Within the Circle they act in a support role, forging weapons, providing wards, and keeping the ancient tongue alive. Virtues initiated by the Dactyls include: Affinity: Terram, Minor Magical Focus: Crafting Metal, Puissant Craft: Smithing (All ArM5), Hermetic Numerology (TMRE, pg 91), the Accelerated Ability: Warding — which they call the Ephesia Grammata (HoH:S, pg 112), and the Dead Language of Hyberborean (AM, pg 104).

### Korybantes: The Warrior Seers

Korybantes supposedly watched over the infant Zeus and Dionysus. They are great warriors who bound spirits, could forge metal, and divine the future. Their ceremonies and rituals always involve rhythmic dances. Within the Circle they act as visionaries and enforcers, often leading raids to sites where trouble is expected. Virtues initiated by the Korybantes include: Major Magical Focus: Defense (ArM5), Performance Magic: Dance — which they call Sorcerous Dance (TMRE, pg 29), a fire-associated Divination (TMRE, pg 58), Names of Power (TMRE, pg 76), Synthemata Magia (TMRE, pg 87), Invocation and Theurgy (TMRE, pg 78).

## The Middle Ring: Servants of the People

This second level of the Priesthood sees differentiation along gender lines, though hierarchically men and women are equivalent. Prospective priests are expected to have a Circle of Cabeiri Lore score of at least 5. Both aspects of the Middle Ring have their own Mysteries, but the virtue of Puissant Creo (ArM5) is known to each.

### Galli, or Priests

Romans considered these castrated priests to be a third gender. The ritual that elevates a member of the Outer Ring into the ranks of the Galli involves self-castration, and usually occurs on the Dies Sanguinis (or Day of Blood), traditionally March 24th. On this day Cybele's consort, Attis attempted to castrate himself and died, only to be resurrected by the Goddess. After the ceremony, Galli are most often dressed as women, and expected to serve at the Sanctuary for at least a year. Virtues initiated by the Galli include Hermetic Sacrifice (TMRE, pg 117), and Wilding (HoH:MC, pg 104, 106).

### Galla, or Priestesses

Priestesses of Cybele keep the Rites of Fertility, and in antiquity some served as temple prostitutes,





while others were vestal virgins. Now, this dedication is reflected in a period of focused servitude to the growth and defense of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods for at least a year. The ritual that begins a Priestess' period of service usually begins on April 12th, at a celebration known as the Megalesian. Virtues initiated by Priestesses are Fertility Lore and Fertility Ritual Magic (AM, pg 55).

### **The Inner Ring: Servants of the Cabeiri**

The final level of the Priesthood differs only in title, and serves for life. There are usually no more than two or three of each, and always one living away from the Great Sanctuary on Samothrace. No one who reaches this point within the Circle has a Lore score of less than 7 and likely 8 or 9, depending on their seniority.

### **Archigalli or High Priestesses**

Archigalli and High Priestesses are usually inducted on March 27th, the anniversary of Cybele's arrival to Rome and the beginning of her patronage of the Empire. In this ritual, the Taurobolion, the

priest or priestess enters into a small cave-like chamber, then covered with a perforated wooden floor. Above, a great bull is sacrificed and allowed to bleed out through the floor. The emerging hierophant makes a metaphorical rebirth from the earth, strong in the powers of the Cabeiri. An Archigalli of Persian descent is known as a Megabysos. Members of this rank are intimately involved in the growth and maintenance of the Circle of Cabeiri, and while they might take time for personal interests, they are expected to live either at the Great Sanctuary, teaching the Priesthood and Laity, or at a place of safety — so that the knowledge of the Circle might survive if a disaster struck Samothrace. At this point, the member embodies the paradigm of the Circle. Virtues initiated by the Inner Ring include Ascendency (TMRE, pg 82) — rising up to become one with the spirit of the Divine that the Cabeiri represents, and Chthonic Magic (RoP:I, pg 123) — drawing on the underworld and ancient animistic origins of the overarching tenets of the Circle.

### **The Great Sanctuary of Samothrace**

This cyclopean compound is located west of the town that shares its name with the island, on three terraces of Mount Hagios Georgios. Built up from 600 BC through 200 AD, the Great Sanctuary is now maintained by the members of the Circle of Cabeiri. The grounds are open to all Laity of the Circle, but most buildings consecrated to the Mysteries are reserved for the Priesthood. However, there are dedicated temples where any may come to leave a votive offering, sacrifice or libation to the Cabeiri. Indeed, a great many items of some power have been left as votive offerings and had their magic rendered through sacrifice, while others wait, dusty and untouched, on the temple altar. An excellent description of the grounds can be found at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samothrace\\_temple\\_complex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samothrace_temple_complex), and a map has been attached for reference.



# Societas Flambeonis

## Flambeau Apocrypha and the Knights of Seneca

Within House Flambeau there's a Societas called the Knights of Seneca. Comprised of roughly a dozen magi scattered across Europe, they seek to embody the most noble virtues of their House; Bravery, Loyalty, Temperance, and Wisdom. They are small, but their acclaim is such that they are known and respected as heroes and adventurers. This wasn't always the case. Their history goes back to the Schism War, and their early days are fraught with violent conflict. Once considered ruthless Reconquista magi, they were still praised for heroism, and the glory of their deeds overshadowed their indiscretions.

Key to understanding the Knights of Seneca their relation to what is known as the Flambeau Apocrypha. A patchwork of societates, House Flambeau stems from various different traditions, lineages, and even mysteries. All Flambeau magi have variant views of history to some extent, and official lore is kept purposefully vague to avoid conflict. Outsiders tend to misperceive the majority view as the norm, and thus other beliefs must somehow be heretical or apocryphal. Flambeau scholars shun these terms, preferring "legend". Most Flambeau magi only hold a few apocryphal beliefs, but the Knights of Seneca embrace a large body of the disputed lore. Their very history is intertwined with it, making them a subject of much interest to historians. Not all of this attention is positive though, as some take offence to a few of their claims. Even their name is a source of controversy, going back to a centuries old dispute as to whether the founder was a Frank or a Visigoth. Further, they claim that the magus who established

their societas was one of Seven Champions at Flambeau's side during his Final Battle, and through him they hold the Founder's final secrets.

## The Flambeau Apocrypha

Before discussing the Knights of Seneca, it is important to explain the Flambeau Apocrypha. It is important in order to understanding that societas, and it affects the entirety of House Flambeau. As mentioned, even the vulgar identity of the Founder causes controversy. The official stance is that his identity is uncertain, though Provencal tradition states he was born of Frankish nobility. Iberian magi insist that he was born of a Roman-Visigothic family; ascribing him the name of Reculed Annaeus Seneca, from which the Knights of Seneca take their name.

In truth, these conflicting, heretical, and apocryphal beliefs are the fault of the Founder himself. He wrote very little, almost nothing about himself, and all we know of him is what's recorded by his followers

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and contemporaries. Sometimes, stories conflict. The mysterious conditions of his disappearance only serve to heighten his legend. The irony is that, as a result, more has been written about Flambeau than any other single founder. The result is a mix of myth, legend, mystery, distortion, speculation, secret agendas and hidden truths. Individual beliefs vary, influenced by region, lineage, and association. Likewise, so does one's reaction to conflicting ideas. Respectful parlance is to refer to Legend. Apocrypha is disrespectful; not for the belief, but for an individual being debated with. Some feel their beliefs are incontrovertible truth, but may be willing to admit that it's a hidden truth. Still, there may be conflicting ideas one finds so objectionable, it's considered tantamount to heresy. Debates can quickly turn bitter, even violent.

Below are some common elements of the Flambeau Apocrypha. Not every Flambeau magus is concerned with them all, but certainly they have interest in one or two.

### Inirelte's Certamen

A spirited lot, disagreements amongst the Flambeau can lead to hard feelings or even combat. Certamen is the preferred way to resolve disputes, but at one time, contests of endurance were more popular; such as Test of Flames. Inirelte excelled at each, and she even enjoyed dueling while in flames. She developed a Certamen style around it, which is actually a Minor Breakthrough. It never caught on because it's limited to Creo Ignem contests. A separate

breakthrough and spell would be needed for each combination.

You know how to duel in Inirelte's style if you know Test of Flames, because at first, this is nothing more than mere spectacle. Since normal Certamen protocols are followed, your Parma Magica protects you for now. Mastery of the spell allows you great advantages and options. You may add your Mastery score to either Attack or Defense as you choose each round, and many Mastery Abilities have obvious direct applications; such as Penetration, Resistance, Imperturbable Casting, and Quick Casting.



## The Founder's Final Fate

The most well known dispute in Flambeau lore is the final fate of the Founder. Though there's no official stand, there are many strong opinions. Garus, the Primus, upholds the theory that Flambeau retired to a monastery; laying aside his magic so that he may die a natural death instead of fading into Final Twilight. A strong stubborn tradition insists that Flambeau died in a glorious final battle against his enemies. Detractors say his spiteful wrath was his undoing; but proud followers of this tradition say he tried to offer an olive branch to his enemies, who had set a trap to ambush him. The most popular version of this story was written by Joseph of Flambeau, who tells a tale of tragic misunderstanding.

He gives the Sahir leader's name as Tariq-ibn-Suleiman-al-Afdal-al-Sahir, portraying him as an honorable opponent and weary warrior, ready to admit defeat. Tariq requested a parley to discuss joining the Order and House Flambeau, and the Founder had agreed to meet with him; bringing seven of his followers along for the negotiations. The two camps met in a valley near the Tagus river, and at first, everything was cordial and productive.

In his narrative, Joseph makes a point of mentioning Tariq's lovely daughter Yasmina, a powerful sahira well trained by her father. According to the story, she had been having an ongoing secret romance with a member of Flambeau's entourage. Never naming who, the story continues with her lover sneaking in her tent at night, and tragic misunderstanding strikes when other sahirs catch them alone together. Thinking he intended harm, they attacked him instinctively and he was forced to flee. However, in his desperate escape he had killed two sahirs, and from there everything spiraled out of control in a pitched battle.

Flambeau and his champions were forced to regroup at a nearby abandon castle, thereafter called Tagus Tower, where destiny awaited them. Joseph goes into dramatic detail about the battle, graphically describing the demise of some of the Seven Champions. One is torn asunder by furious djinn, pieces of his corpse scattered to the wind. Another falls to a raging efreet, split into red ruin by it's sword of brass. Most importantly, Flambeau is never described as a battle enraged berserker. Rather, he is likened to a parent, grieving at the loss

## Joseph of Flambeau

Joseph was a 12th century magus descended from the lineage of Elaine. He was fond of using a dual meaning for Flambeau; a torch, which can bring destructive fire or creative illumination. Arturius of Bonisagus called him one of the greatest Hermetic authors of his day, with famous works on topics such as Finesse, Parma Magica, Penetration, and Spell Mastery. But his most acclaimed tome concerns the history of his House and the early Order, entitled simply The saga of House Flambeau (Order of Hermes Lore Summa, Level 5 Quality 14)

of each follower who falls at his side. Further, the Founder's final decision is described as one made in grim acceptance of the inevitable. He describes the Founder's legendary talisman, the Fireheart, as capable of storing more than a queen of vis, and claims Flambeau's ability to use vis in his spells far exceeded that of other magi. He channeled all of his energy and placed all of this vis into one final legendary spell of destructive immolation. His last shouts echo with thunder as the tower shatters with explosive force, and incineration rains down upon the valley.

Though variations of this story are popular, they are not universally believed. Lately, the idea that he retired peacefully has grown more popular. Regardless, a traditional custom among Flambeau is to carry large quantities of vis reserves on their person, usually an item of jewelry. They call this the fons et origio, meaning "source and origin"; typical of their subtle and deeply contemplative philosophy.

## Origin of Flambeau

Like his death, the origins of Flambeau are also disputed. His vulgar heritage was already



mentioned, but there is also the issue of his pre-Hermetic lineage. This is actually a pedantic debate over whether Flambeau was descended from more of a Mercurian or Mithraic tradition, but agreeing both had an influence. Also, the Franks have apocryphal stories of Flambeau allied with Charles Martel before the Founding. The timing for this is all wrong, and it's now believed these were actually the exploits of a Visigothic wizard named Delendar; a friend and mentor to Flambeau who perished before the Founding.

### "Join or Die"

Fear of Flambeau, along with his infamous "Join or Die" recruitment campaign, motivated many wizards to join the nascent Order for protection, stimulating its early growth. The dispute concerns the amount of brutality used to enforce this policy. Besides the sahir, it's known that Flambeau had at least two famous battles against other wizards. One was against Varstus in the Alps, whose followers surrendered after their leader was slain. Another was against a cult of Roman necromancers, who not only refused his offer, but tried to attack him with a necromantic artifact called Vardian's Skull. Flambeau shattered the skull and defeated these necromancers in a fierce battle.

The tradition of Ex-Miscellanea necromancers at the Covenant of Vardian's Tomb claim they are descended from those defeated necromancers. Further, they claim he was a butcher who stalked his victims maliciously, and that he hunted over fifty other hedge wizards just for sport. No one believes this outrageous assertion, but scholars doubt that Flambeau's recruitment policy worked out as peacefully as is claimed.

## Mythic Blood and The Lumina

Mythic Blood can be used in a variety of ways to incorporate the concept of a descendant of Flambeau into your saga. Some may believe that they are the Lumina, but in truth they are descended from similar powerful figure (such as a dragon, an efreet, or the wizard Delendar). Example Minor Magic Foci include Creating Fire or Ferocity in Battle. The Minor Personality Flaw could be Overconfident, Proud, Wrathful, or some such. The inborn power should relate to fire or warfare. If you want to use the idea that

Elaine was the first Lumina, the inborn power would have something to do with creating light. For example, cause an object to glow with equal illumination as daylight (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, no words). The Magic Focus would still be Creating Fire, as that was indeed the Founder's greatest talent. The Minor Personality Flaws could be Driven (dedication), Dutybound, or Higher Purpose. If you want to have a conspiracy theme, Covenant Upbringing may represent your having been hidden away at Val-Negra most of your life.

Or the descendant of Flambeau might have been someone else altogether.

### The Lumina

A legend that reoccurs throughout the ages is the Lumina; the supposed mysterious lost bloodline of Flambeau. These stories wax and wane in popularity, with each generation of magi reinterpreting them for themselves. In 1220, most mature magi have grown tired of these stories and doubt their credibility. However, the younger magi are rediscovering these myths, and the senior Flambeau are quite eager to share them.

The earliest of these tales date back to the Primacy of Apromor, and the resurgences in their popularity often coincide with great struggles. The Schism War, Reconquista, Crusades, and other conflicts provided many new and entertaining Lumina stories. The youngest Iberian magi were apprentices during the battle of Nova de Tolosa and the Shadow Wars, which explains the renewed again popularity of these tales. As for their origin, it may be that his followers took the loss of Flambeau as such a tragedy; they needed to immortalize him

through some mysterious obscure lineage. Perhaps this same sense of loss is what caused Flambeau scholars to research the origin and fate of the Founder, developing the variety of contradicting theories.

Or perhaps there's some grain of truth in these stories.

The classic form of the tale never identifies the "Mother of Light", but scholars have theories based on various hints; an unknown young maga, a secretive Frankish noblewoman, and even a mysterious sahir. One bawdy joke involves Trianoma cuckolding Bonisagus, but many find this offensive.

Some say Elaine, but most prefer to think that she was actually the first Lumina. This is unlikely, but it's never been proven or disproven, and the myths persist. If Elaine was indeed the Lumina, then the torch was extinguished with her, for she never bore any children. However, she also disappeared just as mysteriously as the Founder (Joseph claims she retired to a convent). Still, myth is not easily discouraged. Famous Flambeau heroes have often been compared to the Lumina because of their





virtuous and heroic qualities, including such names as Iarna, Vancasitum, Garus, and Pietro ex-Tyталus.

Modern magi view the Lumina as a metaphor for the more noble and virtuous qualities the Founder represented, an example for the children of his House should follow. These and other stories have become vehicles for lessons of bravery, valor, and honor. As a candle flame replicates itself, a Flambeau magus is supposed to pass these lessons on to his filiae, so that the eternal flame of the Founder may be carried on.

## The Knights of Seneca

As mentioned, the history of the Knights of Seneca is thoroughly intertwined with Flambeau Apocrypha. They were formed in the aftermath of the Schism War, when a trio of veteran Milites settled in Catalonia. They were Delendos of Flambeau, his filius

Julius, and Valdarius ex-Verditius. Valdarius joined House Flambeau after accusing his former housemates of timid inaction and double dealing during the Schism War. Reputedly, he was a master of the creation and use of magical armaments. Julius was their leader during their most glorious and infamous period. A master tactician and brilliant politician, he shaped their violent past and charted the course of their destiny.

But by far the most of the three is the mysterious elder Delendos. He isn't thought of as mysterious for secretive or shadowy reasons. It's because what is known of him is mostly legend and little fact. His name is typical vulgar Latin of the day, referring to destruction and devastation. The irony is that he was a master of the Art of Creo.

## The Legend of Delendos

It is known that the historic Delendos was venerable when he participated in the Schism War. His heroism in that war and his role in establishing the Knights of Seneca are not in doubt. What's disputed is the claim that he is far older still, and was in fact the second of the three apprentices of Flambeau. The Knights of Seneca believe that he was one of the Seven Champions at the Founder's side for the final battle, the only one to survive that day, and that he was charged with the mission to carry out Flambeau's final wishes. Their story is similar to the one written by Joseph, but it is more than mere legend to them; they treat it as true history. They add that Delendos was leading a counter attack on the ground below when his pater magically signaled to him a warning to seek shelter.

Delendos has his own spell ascribed to legend; a hollow sphere



of steel conjured to surround and protect him from the fiery fury Flambeau unleashed in the valley. He limped back to Val-Negra to tell his tale, and an expedition was formed to investigate the site. No evidence of any battle was ever found, and when the expedition had returned, they discovered that Delendos disappeared into the night.

The saga-cycle continues, with tales filling the gap of time between the Final Battle and the Schism War. Supposedly, in the aftermath of that battle, he wanders the war torn lands of Iberia seeking solace in solitude. He finds conflict no matter where he goes, and cannot escape the memory of his fallen brethren. His opponents are often wicked sahir or cruel jinn that he winds up defeating, but occasionally he comes across those who are gentle and noble who manage to trick, elude, or even befriend him.

Scholars find these tales interesting even though obviously apocryphal (mixing elements of 9th and 11th century history together). In early stories all sahir are enemies. In later stories, a distinction is made between the noble sahir (who resemble Umayyads) and the wicked (who resemble Almorovides). This cultural bias resembles the relationship between the Senecans and different groups of Moors over time.

### Early Days of the Knights of Seneca

At first the Knights of Seneca were merely a ragged band of veterans and almogavers, seeking their fortunes where they may. Operating out of Catalonia, they participated in many of the conflicts and skirmishes of the Reconquista. On the outer edge of scrutiny, they felt they were doing their duty defending against enemy wizards. This was valid, for at the time the Order feared the possibility of a rival Order of Suleiman. The first sahir to join

## El Cid and Blood of heroes

El Cid is a figure of actual history, whose fame and legend put him on par with figures such as Arthur, Roland, Siegfried, and others. An excellent example of a Mythic Hero, El Cid is much more contemporary than these others, and makes an excellent archetype for a Mythic Companion with the Blood of Heroes. One of his heroic qualities was his ability to overlook the Gift, religious differences, and other social handicaps.

### Mythic Forbearance

#### Minor Heroic Virtue

You are not as strongly affected by the social impediments that others may have. The Gift does not disturb you, and you treat the Blatant Gift as only being half as strong. For all other relevant Flaws;

such as Disfigured, Outsider, Pagan, Social Handicap, etc; reduce the total social penalty by half.

## Tizona, the Sword of El Cid

Compared to mythic weapons such as Excalibur or Durendal, Tizona is a longsword of exceptional quality and beauty. It was forged in Toledo with exquisite master craftsmanship. It is up to you to decide exactly how to handle a quality weapon in your saga. The easiest way is to simply assign it a bonus of +1 to Attack and Damage. You may also want to use the elaborate rules for exceptional craftsmanship from Cities & Guild, and/or the rules for an Item of Quality from HoH-Mystery Cults. You may also want to choose to further enhance its mythical characteristics by incorporating powerful enchantments that enhance the wielders leadership, skill in battle, and so forth.

the Order in 925 were Umayyads. But after the Caliphate fell, they came under the pressure of the fundamentalist and intolerant Almorovides that invaded in the 11th century. The Berber Marabouts, akin to hereditary saint, proved resilient to magic because of their Faith. They persecuted magi and sahir alike, though they did force some of the holdout sahir (who had not yet joined the Order) to submit to their will. This gave the Knights of Seneca and other Reconquista magi legitimate cause to ply their skills.

By this time, the Knights of Seneca had grown into a formidable association of warrior magi commanding a cadre of elite custos. Julius filius Delendos, youngest of the original band, had matured in wisdom and power. He was now the eldest of the Knights and a

formidable leader. A brilliant tactician and excellent politician, he is a fine example why it's important to keep political savvy as sharp as skill in battle.

When it was alleged that their activities interfered with mundanes, Julius made the convincing argument that their involvement was limited to instances when enemy wizard's participated in aggression, thus the Almorovides were acting as minions in an Arcane conflict. This was (and still is) a gray area in Hermetic law and no charges were ever brought forth. This is also around the time that the Reconquista versus Roman debate begins (see ToH-Iberia). Though there were those who opposed the actions of the Knights of Seneca, many also supported them (including the Umayyad Hermetic Sahirs, who were strongly opposed to the Almorovides).



## The Covenant of Valencia

Operating out of Zaragoza at that time, there was a band of sahirs called Al-Estancia. Stubborn holdouts still refusing to join the Order, they were also refusing to submit to the Almorovides. Longtime rivals of the Knights of Seneca, they had earned each other's begrudging respect, and now found themselves facing a common enemy. Despite that, they still couldn't overcome their differences. The catalyst for change required a heroic knight whose fame and influence eclipsed that of any Iberian wizard or king of that day.

Rodrigo Láinez de Bivar was a prominent military leader who had served the kings of both Christian Castile and Moslem Zaragoza. He had also worked with the Knights of Seneca on several military campaigns. A heroic warrior to say the least, his cunning intelligence and excellent leadership earned him the respect of the Knights of Seneca. They would participate in his strategy and planning sessions, where all were treated on the level and encouraged to come up with innovative ideas. Because of his genius in the art of war, the magi assigned him the nickname "Campeador", Camp-Professor.

Such was the awe and respect he commanded, the Moors called him El Cid (al sayed, or Lord).

El Cid's career spans too many heroic deeds to discuss here. He served King Alfonso of Castile, and after a falling out he served the Moorish ruler of Zaragoza. It was here he first met the Sahirs of Al Estancia, earning their trust and respect as he did with the Knights of Seneca. He served Alfonso again, but after another falling out he found himself in again in exile. With few followers, low funds, and no outside support; the triumph that was to follow testifies to his heroic leadership abilities. No evidence implies he sought assistance from his Flambeau or Sahir friends, but he managed to capture two key castles he used as a base of operations, and miraculously laid hold of a large treasure; with which he was able to finance a much larger force. He eventually pressed on to conquer Valencia, ruling it as his own personal fiefdom.

Rodrigo had arranged a parley between the Sahirs of Al-Estancia and the Knights of Seneca, himself serving as moderator, his honor alone standing as guarantee of the

integrity of the meeting. Generations removed from the Founder's conflict, The Senecans insisted that their only issue was Hermetic membership. Until now, the Al-Estancia Sahirs never thought it worth their while to join the Order, seeing how their Hermetic kin still suffered persecution. But faced with the common threat of the great Almorovide invasion, they began to see the advantage. The Knights of Seneca pledged to support them against Hermetic persecution if they would swear the Hermetic Oath. They did, and both groups swore an oath of allegiance. Thus, under the patronage of El Cid, the Covenant of Valencia was established.

Though controversial, this expansion of the Pax Hermetica earned the Knights of Seneca prestige and acclaim. Enemy wizards were kept at bay, nearly all the remaining reluctant sahirs were recruited into the Order, and Valencia greatly enhanced the prosperity of the tribunal. The more pressing matter in Hermetic politics of the day was the partitioning of the Val-Negra Tribunal into the Iberian and Provençal Tribunals. The cause for this was the burgeoning population of magi, and it was hoped dividing them would resolve some of the disputes in the region.

Though short lived, the Covenant of Valencia vastly exceeded expectations for a Spring covenant, and were a paragon of achievement. Through them, many Greek and Arabic texts made their way into the Order, and it is no coincidence that the Iberian Tribunal has a reputation for their accomplishments in fields such as Astrology and Alchemy. The Library of Valencia grew quickly because of trade, and likewise so did their power and influence. At their peak, the Covenant of Valencia had twenty members from a mixture of traditions, controlled enough vis

### Story Seed: Legacy of Valencia

The Library of Valencia contributed much to the Order of Hermes, and they themselves managed to accumulate an impressive collection in trade. The bulk of the library was divided up into the covenants various Valencia magi had joined afterwards; such as Andorra and Estancia Ecarida. Left behind were a lot of worn out ex-libris copies and exemplars, but there might have been a few forgotten hidden gems as well. When the Almorovides took the city, the last of the Valencia magi was able to

negotiate by sharing his library and providing the fruits of his jinni tended orchards. When the Almohades invaded and chased him out, the fundamentalists wanted to burn the library and exorcize the jinni. However, wiser minds prevailed.

The Academic texts are great gems if recopied; but who knows arcane and magical tomes were forgotten? Valencia has a reputation for excellent quality produce, so it seems the Almohades still employ the jinni in the orchards and vineyards. But have they learned the magic necessary to control them? What other secrets were left behind?





and other resources to rival older established covenants, and had they survived, they would have come to politically dominate the Iberian tribunal, rivaling famous covenants such as Doissetep and Fengheld.

But such was not their fate.

They prospered vigorously, but when El Cid died unexpectedly in 1099, everything began to unravel. Without the unifying force of his charisma, many of the Knights of Seneca wandered off elsewhere. Within a few years, Valencia fell to the Almorovides. For a small time, a greatly weakened and reduced Covenant of Valencia persisted, but when a new wave of Moors called the Almohades invaded (who were even more fundamentalist), the remnants of the Covenant of Valencia were driven out. The Sahirs of Al-Estancia merged with their brethren at the covenant of Escarida in Granada. This infusion of new blood was their salvation, for they also suffered terrible losses at the hands of the Almorovides. The renamed covenant of Estancia Escarida has since grown to become the dominant political and cultural center for Islamic Magi in the Order.

### Delendos and the Lumina

The Knights of Seneca found renewed purpose as well. The Legend of Delendos makes allusions to a relationship to the Lumina, though not in so many words. Reference is made that he know Flambeau's final secret and was charged with his last orders. During their time at Valencia, a resurgence in the popularity of Lumina Legends coincided with their discovery of a more intimate link with them. The coincidental timing suggests the Senecans were either riding the wave of a trend, or that someone was trying to pacify these warrior magi with distractions.

Or it and everything else in the legend of Delendos might be true.

What's more likely is that the Knights of Seneca needed to reinvent and reinvigorate themselves, so they could continue as a Societas with a united purpose.

In any case, in what seems an obvious addendum, the story is that only two magi went on the expedition to investigate the scene at Tagus Tower, Apromor and Delendos himself. Their goal was to cover the matter up and keep it quiet, for the war against Damhan-Allaidh had just begun. They were not worried about morale. Rather, they did not want to distract Flambeau magi and divert them to Spain when the real threat was hiding somewhere in Britain. There is in fact a valley in that region with a weak Magic Aura. There is no sign of a ruined tower or a battle ever having taken place there; not a single corpse or ghost. The valley is overgrown with lush vegetation, and as normal, vis can be found in certain magical herbs and roots & etceteras. What's fascinating is that the vis produced is almost always Ignem rather than some other Art. The Knights of Seneca have registered a claim to the site with House Mercere, and hold ceremonies here. They permit other Flambeau to visit the site if they treat it with respect and reverence. Some do come here on occasion, often to reflect contemplatively before a major battle.

As for the Lumina, they claim that Elaine was secretly Flambeau's daughter, a common theme. The unique twist is that, as part of their cover up, they convinced Elaine that Delendos was really Flambeau, and he finished her training. She was very young at the time, and the use of Mentem magics completed their deception. It was decided to keep everything

a secret to protect her. This is a common example of the sort of exaggerated mythical stories prolific in the Order during the twelfth century. Other popular myths from that era include Trianoma's Ghost and the Corpse of Tremere.

Knights of Seneca in the 13th century view Lumina legends as a metaphor representing the more noble and virtuous qualities House Flambeau is supposed to represent. They were to be the Custodians of the Lumina, meaning that they were to uphold and exemplify these virtues. As Delendos lost his sense of purpose wandering the borderlands, the Senecans forgot their true purpose while fighting in the Reconquista. Virtues they like to emphasize are called the four Illuminations; Courage, Loyalty, Temperance, and Wisdom. Flambeau is the first Illuminator and represents Courage, setting the example for all to follow. Delendos represents Loyalty, fidelity, honor and duty. Apromor represents Temperance, patience and pragmatism. Time destroys all things. Wisdom is represented by Elaine, as knowledge is the basis of all power, and force must be tempered by wisdom.

### Recent History

The Knights of Seneca have not actively participated in the Reconquista for over a hundred years, though they have had skirmishes with the Almohades. They also played a major role in the recent Shadow Wars (see HoH-Iberia). In brief, Infernal forces sought to stir up hatred and warfare during a lull of peace and tranquility. Heretics tried to blemish the reputations of the Knights of Santiago and the Templars. The infernalist Rassus infiltrated the Covenant of Jafaryia, killing those he could not corrupt. He began hostilities against Estancia Escarida, claiming that it was they that were the diabolic threat. When exposed in 1208, Archmagus Karandos was



first to strike against his corrupted filius. He charged in blind and alone, and was thus vanquished. Remembering their pledge from long ago, having defended Estancia Escarida against allegations all along, the Knights of Seneca launched their full weight into the Shadow Wars. By 1220, it is believed all infernalists have been purged, but the tribunal remains vigilant.

### Current Activities

Modern Knights of Seneca resemble magical questing knights, always in search of adventure. With Lumina legends regaining popularity, they use their connection as motivation for quests. This is just an excuse for adventure, but they would be delighted to turn up evidence that they actually possess some secret truth. Goals for quests could be a manuscript of lost lore, a legendary artifact, a supposed true descendant, etceteras. Adventures might include travel to distant mythic places, studying among the sahors, plundering treasure, challenges of a crafty jinn, the intrigue at Val-Negra, and more.

Though scattered across several covenants, they hold regular meetings and ceremonies, and assist each other whenever possible (the assistance given and received roughly balances out). They also train together periodically in order to insure their effectiveness as a martial unit, with elite custos and warrior companions participating as well.

### Organization

The Knights have a very loose organization and a simple hierarchy based on seniority. They choose a leader from their elders, and this position is currently held by the Archmagus Antonio Perez of the Covenant of Andorra. His comrades jokingly refer to him as the Grandmaster. Continuing with the theme, custos and warrior companions are called Sergeants, and apprentices Squires. This is just casual parlance, not an official designation. Though scattered, they remain in constant communication. They are rather small, just over a dozen members, which makes this

easy. Elder members look out for the juniors in a sort of mentoring system, and all Knights can depend on each other for help and support (the loan of silver or vis, access to training or important texts, the services of one or more specialists, direct assistance of a fellow, and so forth). This balances out, and a Knight of Seneca can be expected to be called upon for assistance by his fellows just as much as he expects to be able to call upon them.

### Joining the Knights of Seneca

Friends and allies who have proven their valor and skill are occasionally invited to join the Knights of Seneca. This is indeed an honor and a sign of great respect, as an invitation requires a unanimous decision. One must be a Flambeau magus of much Acclaim, and they are required to face some sort of challenge or complete some sort of Quest. A Knight of Seneca might choose to raise his apprentices as a sort of squire among the knights, in which case they all participate in his training and the administering of his Gauntlet. A newly accepted Knight of Seneca is inducted in a sacred ceremony that involved baptism in the Tagus River and a banquet held in the historic valley.

If creating a starting character as a newly Gauntleted Knight of Seneca, you must choose the Mentor Minor Flaw, representing the influence of your elders. In addition to the Free Virtue granted by the school of your parents, you were also trained in the School of Julius, and must choose the Skilled Parens Minor Virtue. If creating an experienced magus as a starting character, you may simply incorporate membership in the Knights of Seneca into your history. They are not a Mystery Cult, and no new Virtues or Flaws are gained.



## Magic of the Knights of Seneca

The magic of the Knights of Seneca is influenced by many schools, and their philosophy advocates cross-training. There has always been a strong Mercurian influence amongst them, and they also include a closed lineage of Verditius magi.

### Schools of Magical Combat

#### The School of Delendos

**Recommended Virtue:**  
Puissant Creo

Not to be confused with the figure of legend, the Delendos who was a Schism War veteran was a master of Creo, and magi descended of his lineage have Puissant Creo as their Free House Virtue. As they focus on conjuration and evocation, they are easily confused with the School of Sebastian or the School of the Founder. However, the former excludes fire magic and the latter focuses on that alone. This School uses fire and other attacks to form a well rounded repertoire, and have been known to train an apprentice that can cast Incantation of Lightning and Ball of Abysmal Flame right out of their gauntlet. Aside from flashy evocations, they also rely on logistical conjurations and healing.

#### The School of Valdarius

##### Closed Mystery Lineage

Valdarius of Verditius was a war comrade of Delendos during the Schism War. He renounced his original House in disgust, accusing them of timid inaction and double dealing, and joined House Flambeau. His use of magical armaments was impressive and his valor in combat left no doubt of his worthiness, and he was inducted in the heat of battle. Considered a part of the School of Verditius, the lineage of Valdarius

represents a closed set of Mysteries handed down from parens to filius. If an elder dies before they teach you their secrets, they are gone forever. House Verditius will not teach you, and they look on you with disdain. You begin with Verditius Magic as your Free House Virtue, having all the same benefits and drawbacks. You must also choose the Minor Flaw of Cabal Legacy, and it is common to have a Vendetta going with the Confraternity of Roland (as this lineage is split off from that one). Mysteries still known by this lineage include Items of Quality, Reforging, and a Major Magic Focus in Arms & Armour. Inner Mysteries may be learned in any order and even taken during character creation.

#### The School of Julius

**Recommended Virtue:**  
Skilled Parens

Regardless of the School of their parens, all magi of the Knights of Seneca are trained in the School of Julius. This does not represent a magical lineage (Julius himself was of the line of Delendos). If creating a Knight of Seneca as a newly Gauntleted magus, you must choose Skilled Parens in addition to your Free House Virtue, reflecting the diverse training you received from your elders. You must also take the Minor Flaw of Mentor.

### Spell Mastery

The Knights of Seneca emphasize the importance of Spell Mastery, no matter what your school, and they like to keep on top of new developments in this field. Having a strong Mercurian influence, they are able to learn and teach all of the Mastery Abilities listed on pages 33 & 34 of Societates. In addition, the Knights of Seneca have acquired these latest developments in the field of Spell Mastery.

### Amplify (Cult of Mercury)

Similar to the Mutantes Boost, this Mercurian variation is at once more versatile and more limited. You may use vis (of the appropriate Art(s)) to amplify the power of the mastered spell. Each pawn spent adds one magnitude to the Range, Duration, Target, and/or Damage of the spell. A Magnitude of increased damage usually equals and additional +5 points for direct damage spells, +2 for indirect effects, and for many Perdo effects an increase in wound severity. You may not Amplify a spell to Duration-Year or Target Boundary, unless the spell is already a Ritual. The limitation is that the maximum number of pawns you may use to Amplify a spell equals your Mastery score.

### Flex

You choose one aspect of the spell, Range, Duration, or Target, and you can change it by one magnitude. Which parameter and how it is flexed (up or down) is fixed when you choose this Mastery Ability. You may choose this multiple times for different options. However, you may not use two options together at the same time unless this is chosen as a third separate ability. Treat the spell as a normal spell of the adjusted level.

### Simulcasting

This allows you to cast multiple different spells at once. Each of the other spells involved must also be mastered with Ability, and the maximum number of spells allowed equals the lowest Mastery score of all the spells involved. Each spell is rolled for separately, in whatever order you desire. If a spell fails, fatigue loss is applied and you may continue down the line if you didn't botch. If you accumulate additional fatigue loss after unconsciousness, each additional level lost causes an extra hour of unconsciousness. You may



halt the succession any time you choose. Subtract the total number of discrete targets from any aimed/targeting rolls that may be required. Even if all spells are directed at the same target a -1 penalty still applies. Multiple Spells may be otherwise or further penalized or restricted, depending on the circumstances. Usually this is only used for a combination of two spells meant to work together. If you want to lob multiple attack spells at targets, you are better off Multicasting.

## Vacillated Casting

When casting the Mastered spell, you may choose to delay the effect, and even decline it. You first roll to cast the spell, and if successful, you exercise the option to hold it by concentrating. When choosing to release it, treat the spell as if you had just cast it for purposes of Initiative. When you concentration relaxes (or fail), you may choose to release the spell or let it dissipate (unless you botched your Concentration roll). No words or gestures are required to release or decline a spell.

This cannot be employed with Ritual spells except by Mercurian Magi, and instead of holding the spell with concentration, they employ a focus object. The Ritual can be held until the next sunrise or sunset, and can be declined as normal.

## New Spells

### Fist of Jupiter

CrAu20

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind

You discharge a thunderbolt upon whatever you strike with your touch, inflicting +20 damage. Those hit by the thunderbolt must make a Strength stress roll of 6+ to remain standing. This spell fits well with the Vacillated Casting Special Mastery Ability.

(Base 3, +4 unnatural, +1 Touch)

### Sword of the Avenger

CrIg20

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind,  
Req: Rego

This ignites a flame along the edge of a sword blade, doubling its damage value. More than a simple variant, this spell is intended for use with the Mastery Ability of Imperturbable Casting, because of the difficulty maintaining concentration on a spell during combat. In addition, the Rego requisite protects the sword from the flames, allowing the spell to be used repetitively on a weapon with out harming it.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +1 Concentration, +1 Requisite)

### Wrath of Reculed

CrIg20

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind,  
Req: Rego

This spell creates a jet of flame that emanates from your hands, shooting out up to twenty paces in the direction you choose. Anything caught in the path of this flame suffers +15 damage (-1 per pace of distance). Aiming is usually easy for this spell (+1 on Targeting rolls), but going against strong winds can be difficult (-1 or more). A jet is a natural form of fire that can be found various places in the Middle East.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +1 Requisite)

### Sphere of Delendos

CrTe20

R: Per, D: Diam, T: Ind

This conjures a sphere of steel around you that is sufficient protection against most physical harm. The sphere has a diameter equal to your height, and there is more than enough air for the duration.

{Base 5, +1 Diameter, +1 elaborate shape, +1 safely surrounding}

### Howl of the Steel Weapons

InTe15

R: Per, D: Sun, T: Hearing

This spell warns you of the danger of metallic weapons with a howling sound signaling motion. This grants a +9 Defense bonus versus metallic weapons, provided you are able to parry or evade the attack, and you can dodge any metallic or metal tipped projectile originating from more than ten paces distance. The howl is only audible to you and cannot be mimicked by voices.

(Base 2, +2 Sun, +3 Hearing)

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Andrew Gronosky for his forbearance and advice, Lachlan "Jarkman" Hayes for his helpful criticisms and suggestions, and my old friend Carmello Hernandez for playing the best Flambeau magus in any edition ever.

## Suggested Reading

Dahl, Ferguson, Gronosky, Post, Shirley, & Simmonds; *Houses of Hermes-Societates*; Trident

Peter Hentges; *Tribunals of Hermes-Iberia*; White Wolf

Joseph F. O'Callaghan; *A History of Medieval Spain*; Cornell University Press

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# Caravanserai

Ben McFarland

For many sagas, the choice of covenant location can set the tenor of more than just the first arc, it can define the whole game — or, at the very least, determine its direction for a number of sessions. Sometimes it is the region itself that the Story guide intends to hold the players' focus, and players may be provided a number of possible sites from which they will select a new home for their characters. In an attempt to add variety to the old saw of 'a castle on a hill by a faerie wood,' the following location is presented. It is not intended to be a full reference, but provide an overview for further research.

For this covenant, the setting is the central portion of the province of Anatolia, located in modern day Turkey. In 1220, this is Cappadocia: a land of turmoil. Even in the thirteenth century the area is already ancient, after seeing civilizations rise and fall for more than three thousand years. A covenant set here will be surrounded by Muslims and Christians, Latins and Byzantines, pagan ruins and Roman structures, scenic vistas and distant travelers. It has the option of choosing

between the Theban and the Levant Tribunals, though the politics of Constantinople might demand that the magi focus their attentions to the west. This covenant is set in a caravanserai, and as such is different from the usual gathering of magi — where wizards might usually seek to hide from visitors, the caravanserai is built to attract visitors, and brings stories to the covenant hiding in plain sight.

## The Region

Before man ever strived to call it home, Anatolia (or Cappadocia) was a land distinctive for its geography. Rolling hills and craggy peaks are commonplace, but most particular to the region is a layer of volcanic earth known as tuff. It yields to pick and shovel easily enough, and is the reason why caves and underground structures honeycomb the landscape. Regardless of which king or emperor claimed rulership over Cappadocia, the natives always carved places for refuge or habitation from the

living rock. It is this custom that creates the great functionality of the caravanserai.

## The history

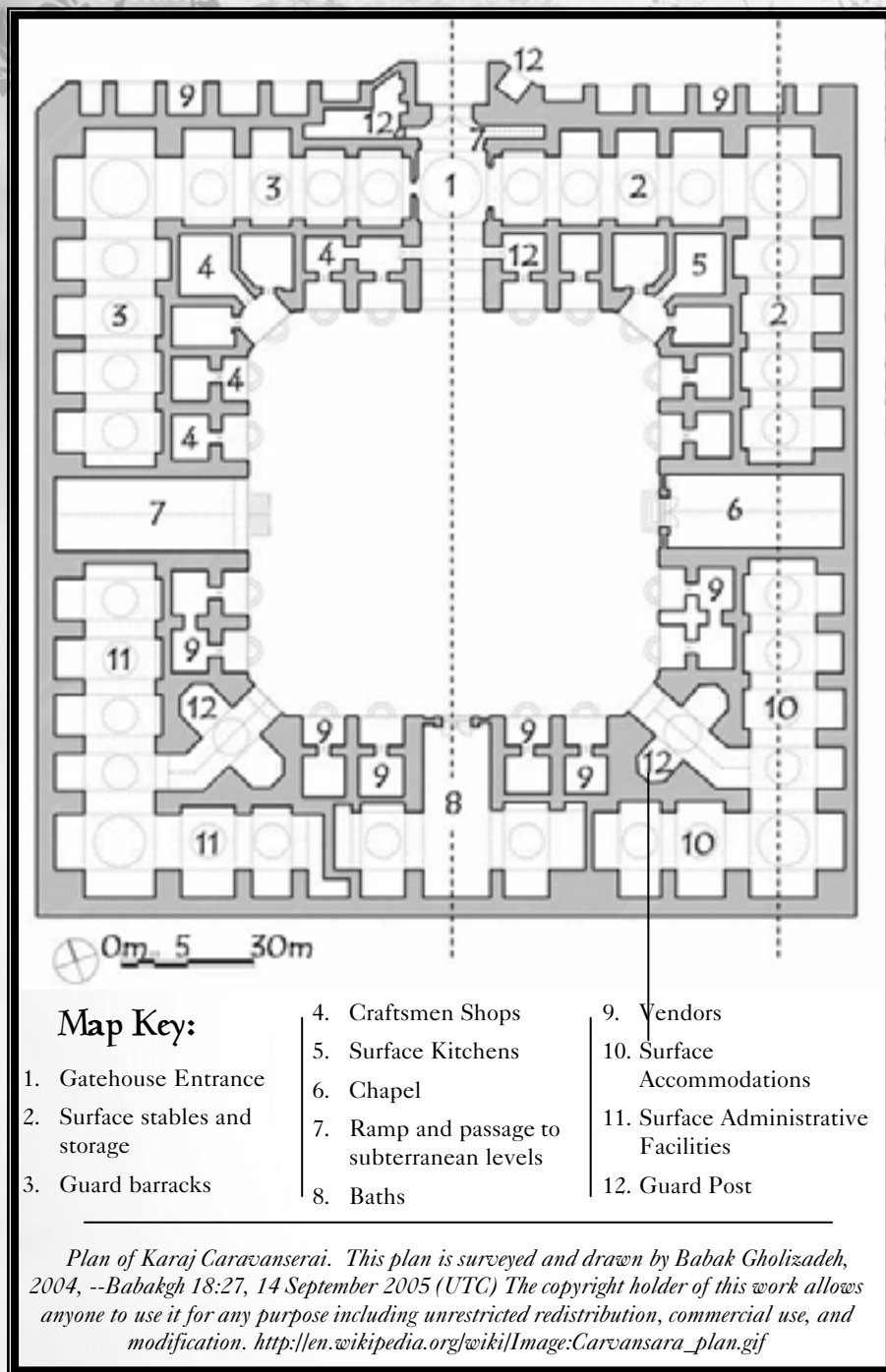
The list of those lords who laid claim to the region is quite extensive, covering a span of nearly 3500 years. It includes the Hittites, to the Urartu, to the Persians, to Alexander the Great, and the Romans. Currently the region is divided between the Empire of Nicaea, the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, and the Sultanate of the Seljuk Turks. All three powers hold sway over some part of the region, and undoubtedly influence local politics. Sometimes called "the dustbin of history," there are innumerable ruins, abandoned locales, and places once revered by one of the reigning cultures. It is entirely possible that some of these sites might be incorporated into the caravanserai.

## History of the Caravanserai

The Silk Road was in use prior to the period of the Hellenistic City states, having been greatly expanded by Alexander's conquests to the east. It became a well-established aspect of the region during the Roman Empire, whose citizens prized the fabric for comfortable undergarments. Trade has flowed along its length for nearly 1500 years by 1220, carrying gold, lumber, ceramics, and ideas east; and bringing gems, jade, silk, and information west. Along its length, caravans needed a safe haven, a bastion against bandits, and a place to rest with more amenities than just a roadside camp. The caravanserai fulfills this need with a fairly complete complex, each one



Map of Political Boundaries in 1204, published with GNU Free Documentation License, modified, source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Byzantium1204.png>.



**Map Key:**

- |                                |  |                                       |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Gatehouse Entrance          | 4. Craftsmen Shops                         | 9. Vendors                            |
| 2. Surface stables and storage | 5. Surface Kitchens                        | 10. Surface Accommodations            |
| 3. Guard barracks              | 6. Chapel                                  | 11. Surface Administrative Facilities |
|                                | 7. Ramp and passage to subterranean levels | 12. Guard Post                        |
|                                | 8. Baths                                   |                                       |

*Plan of Karaj Caravanserai. This plan is surveyed and drawn by Babak Gholizadeh, 2004, --Babakgh 18:27, 14 September 2005 (UTC) The copyright holder of this work allows anyone to use it for any purpose including unrestricted redistribution, commercial use, and modification. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Caravansara\\_plan.gif](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Caravansara_plan.gif)*

established roughly a day's travel from the next.

**The Structure**

The caravanserai was a square rectangular walled structure, built with a single entrance wide enough to permit large or heavily laden pack animals to enter. It was not uncommon for a caravanserai to have three levels underground to complement the surface structure. The center courtyard of the building was usually open to the sky, taking

advantage of natural light. Alcoves lined the courtyard walls to accommodate merchants, their caravans, and trade goods for storage or other requirements, and sometimes housed shops that might either purchase incoming products or resupply a caravan's needs. They provided water for human and animal consumption, bathing, and religious rituals. Many even constructed elaborate baths for travelers to enjoy. Stables for animals were often on the first subterranean

level. They also kept fodder for animals and catered to travelers' comforts.

**Hooks and Boons**

**Site, Major Boon:**

*Natural Fortress* — underground facility.

**Site, Minor Boon:**

*Healthy Environment* — good well, influx of fresh goods.

**Site, Minor Hooks:**

*Road* — the Silk Road.

*Urban* — the caravanserai is essentially a small market hamlet, it might have personalities similar to a Wild West frontier town.

*Weak Aura* — the presence of a chapel in the surface facility will almost be a certainty. The nature of this chapel, either Muslim or Christian, will set the social tone of the people and environment, but its mere existence will likely negatively impact the aura. Covenants with this Hook may or may not want to use the similar Residents hook.

**Fortifications, Major Hook:**

*Gatehouse Keep* — the caravanserai is essentially a small keep, but with floors below ground instead of above.

**Fortifications, Minor Boon:**

*Bedrock* — this represents the tuff layer from which the lower levels are carved.

**Resources, Minor Boons:**

*Right* — this covenant can gain revenue from hosting caravans.

*Secondary Income* — this covenant can also trade goods from caravans with locals.

**Resources, Minor Hook:**

*Regional Produce* — this equivalent hook represents the unusual goods that pass through a caravanserai from the distant east.





### Residents, Minor Hook:

*House Church* — these may be Christian or Muslim, but they doubtless exist.

### Relations, Major Hook:

*Tribunal Border* — the caravanserai occupies the space between the Theban and Levant tribunals. Who will hold greater sway, Constantinople or Jerusalem?

### Surroundings, Minor Boon:

*Hidden Ways* — the tunnels of the subterranean portion of the caravanserai permit access to the countryside that is not immediately obvious or well known.

### Net Total:

Three more minor Hooks than Boons.

Depending on the timeframe for the saga, it would be simple to place a War Zone Major Hook

here, given the state of flux of the borders of the Seljuk Turks, thus providing a covenant with three more minor boons. Any number of minor Hooks would also be appropriate, such as Fallen Temple, Rights and Customs, or Unsafe. Considering the political and religious nature of the region, a Rival Relations Hook is also appropriate. This gives the players room for at least six to nine more points worth of Boons.

### Story Seed

**Crusader Shakedown:** With the constant stream of Crusaders from Europe into the Levant, it is not unusual to have a group of Christians seek to either find loot or shelter at a caravanserai, depending on its (apparent) spiritual allegiance. This group, however, is no ordinary band of Crusaders. A group of peasants, after coming upon a band of

Crusaders that died on the road and salvaging their gear, has decided to attempt to blackmail loot from what they believe to simply be another caravanserai. The magi must try to decide if this is a sincere group of Crusaders acting in a manner they think just, impious Crusaders seeking treasure, or their actions are all a bluff. These false Crusaders were likely seen approaching the caravanserai — stories of the way station's response will certainly spread throughout the area. Will it bring true Crusaders looking for the imposters? Muslim soldiers for the Sultan seeking revenge? Or perhaps bandits looking for a real score?

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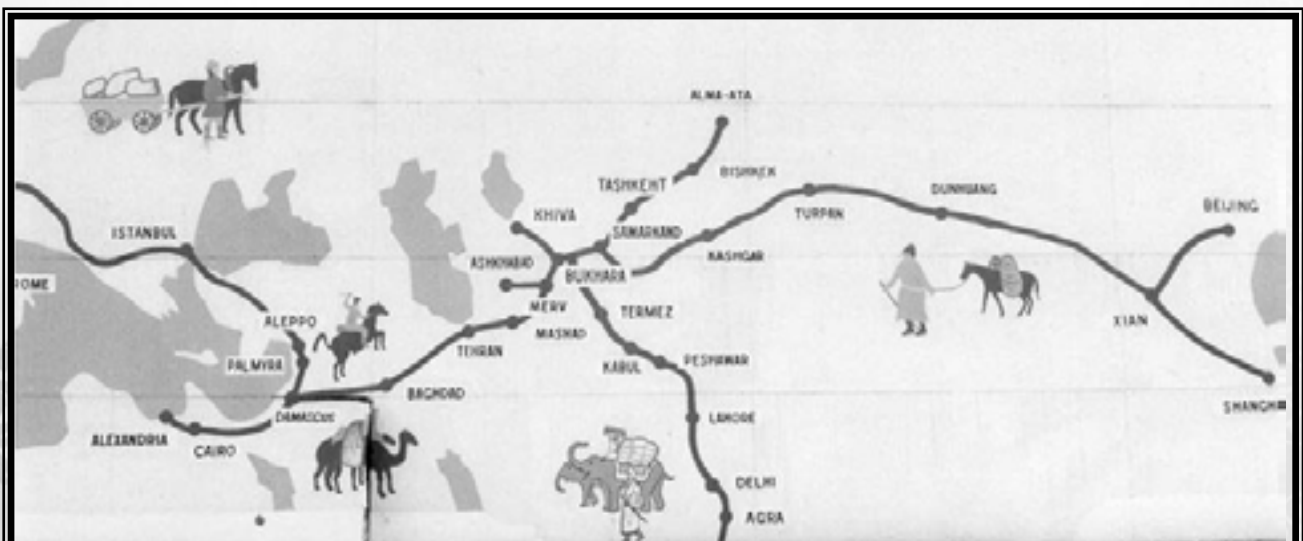
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The History Channel: *Lost Worlds, First Christians*, 2007



Plan of Karaj Caravanseraï. This plan is surveyed and drawn by Babak Gholizadeh, 2004, --Babakgh 18:27, 14 September 2005 (UTC) The copyright holder of this work allows anyone to use it for any purpose including unrestricted redistribution, commercial use, and modification. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Carvansara\\_plan.gif](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Carvansara_plan.gif)





# The Northwych Yew

## Mark Lawford

There is a silent presence that haunts the road outside the village of Northwych and it has dark designs on those it watches come and go. How long until the silent threat is discovered? Who will save old mother Mattie from unjustly being hanged for a crime she did not commit? And will the magi be willing to destroy the killer when they discover that vis may be at stake?

This story introduces the village of Northwych, a site of supernatural evil, and a group of faeries whose prescience could be useful if only their foul manners can be overcome. The covenant has the chance to make firm friends or steadfast enemies in the village of Northwych but more importantly they have the chance to save an innocent.

## Précis

A young man arrives at the covenant to petition for aid in the case of his mother. She has been accused of consorting with dark powers and killing his father by hanging. Paul protests at his mother's innocence and pleads with the "wise men" to help him.

A little way north of the covenant there is a lone yew tree. By its size it is clearly very old and story has it that faeries visit upon the tree at certain times of the year. But the faeries do not visit for pleasure.

The tree is a faerie manifestation, poisonous and evil to its blood-red core. For generations it has been occasionally taking unsuspecting travelers as they passed by. It was the yew tree that hanged John when he ventured too close to its branches; the tree reaching down with its long fingers and, wrapping

them around its victim's neck, hoisting him up into its branches. The Wicked Players, foreseeing John's death, were present to watch his end and went back to the village, playing out the man's death at every tree they found.

Mother Mattie, wife to the murdered John, saw the players enacting their foul play and knew that her husband had been killed. The next day his body was found hanging from the tree just as Mattie said. The village naturally assumed that she had done away with him and had blamed devilish sprites for the crime.

Her son, protesting her innocence, pleaded with the village to stay their vengeful hand while he found a rumored college of wise men, not far distant, to prove his mother's innocence and catch the real murderer.

## Dramatis Personae

The following characters play a significant role in the story. It is safe to assume that other villagers have no distinguishing virtues or flaws.

### Statistics for Old Mother Mattie

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 50 (50)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence Score:** 0 (0)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift; Enduring Constitution, Inoffensive to Animals, Second Sight; Clumsy, Outcast, Judged Unfairly

**Personality Traits:** Bitter +1, Nervous +2, Brave -1

**Reputations:** Outcast 2

**Combat:**

*Dodge:* Init: +1, Attack N/A, Defense +4, Damage N/A

*Fist:* Init: +1, Attack +5, Defense +4, Damage -1

*Kick:* Init: +0, Attack +6, Defense +4, Damage +2

*Pitchfork:* Init: +1, Attack +9, Defense +6, Damage +4

**Soak:** +2

**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 5 (hens), Northwych Lore 5 (people), Athletics 1 (run), Awareness 4 (search), Baking 3 (daily), Sussex Lore 1 (laws), Bargain 3 (produce), Brawl 3 (Kick), Brewer 4 (weak beer), Carouse 3 (power drinking), Chirurgy 3 (binding wounds), English 5 (Northwych dialect), Farmer 4 (plowing), Folk Ken 4 (peasants), Great Weapon 3 (Pitchfork), Guile 3 (lying to authority), Ride 2 (mule), Second Sight 5 (faeries), Spinning 4, Survival 2 (sleeping rough)

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Appearance:** Mattie is an old grey woman whose harsh years hang heavy upon her. She is drawn and stooped and her hair is thin and lank.



## Old Mother Mattie

Old Mother Mattie is Gifted, a curse that drew attention to her weaknesses and failings and obscured her initially gentle nature. She was hounded as a child by those she might have called friends and disowned by her parents as soon as they could be rid of her.

She considered herself lucky to find John, the only man who would have her. They married but the stigma that the Gift bestowed on Mattie soon affected John's standing within the village and before long they found themselves without support, scratching a subsistence living from their meager plot.

Mattie's Gift manifests as Second Sight and she occasionally sees things hidden from mortal eyes. On the night that John died, she saw the Wicked Players playing out his death, hanging him from a tree in the village.

## Paul

Paul, like his father before him, has become Inured to the Gift, as per the new Virtue described

below, and has become accustomed to his mother's Gift through years of exposure all through his life. Because of this Paul will also not be affected by the Gift of any magi characters in this story.

Paul is a simple honest young man trying to eke out a living with the dual burdens of poverty and exclusion. He knows that his mother had nothing to do with his father's death and will fight to save her until the bitter end.

## Father Woodnut

Father Arnulf Woodnut is a devout and protective man who sees it as his life's duty to serve his God and his village.

Father Woodnut will be a man to reach. He is honest and devout and so will not be easy to corrupt. He has a limited Magic Resistance thanks to the relic he wears so may not be as susceptible to magic as might be hoped. But most of all, he believes he has caught John's true killer and while he has fear enough to imagine Mattie being led astray by sprites, he lacks the

imagination to conceive of an even more bizarre truth.

More than anything, he wants Mattie to confess her crime and find absolution and forgiveness in punishment. Whatever his harsh treatment of her bodily form, he does not want her unconfessed soul to spend eternity in Hell.

## Headman Daniel

Daniel is a pragmatic man not given to sentiment or easy persuasion, something he learned through long hard service to his lord while fighting in the Holy Land.

As a leader Daniel takes his responsibilities seriously and is both content and fulfilled. He does not hanker after days long gone and simply wants life in his village to run smoothly.

He was one of the first to see John strung up on the yew. He will be able to describe the scene and should be the first port of call for characters wanting information on the site.

Daniel wants a safe village. He can't stand by and let a murderer

## Statistics for Paul

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 20 (20)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence Score:** 0 (0)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Long-Winded, Inured to the Gift, Tough; Poor

**Personality Traits:** Friendly +2, Stubborn +2, Inured to the Gift +6

**Reputations:** None

### Combat:

**Dodge:** Init: +1, Attack N/A, Defense +5, Damage N/A

**Fist:** Init: +1, Attack +6, Defense +5, Damage +0

**Bludgeon:** Init: +0, Attack +8, Defense +5, Damage +2

**Knife:** Init: +1, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +2

**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:** Animal Handling 2 (hens), Northwych Lore 2 (geography), Athletics 2 (running), Brawl 4 (Knife), Cooperage 4 (buckets), English 5 (slang), Farmer 3 (small plots), Guile 1 (lying about his family), Hunt 2 (setting snares)

**Equipment:** Old torn and repaired shirt and hoes, a cracked leather belt, and a knife.

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Appearance:** Paul is a good looking man, though with a perpetual tired and hungry look about him.



## Statistics for Woodnut

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 35 (35)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence Score:** 0 (0)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Priest, Relic, Temporal Influence; Vow (Poverty), Busybody, Weak Characteristics

**Personality Traits:** Alarmist +1, Devout +1, Disciplined +2

**Reputations:** Dedicated (Christians) 1

**Combat:**

*Dodge:* Init: +1, Attack N/A, Defense +2, Damage N/A

*Fist:* Init: +0, Attack +1, Defense +1, Damage +0

*Kick:* Init: -1, Attack +1, Defense +0, Damage +3

*Knife:* Init: +0, Attack +2, Defense +1, Damage +2

**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:** Northwych Lore 4 (personalities), Artes Liberales 3 (rhetoric), Awareness 2 (alertness), Brawl 1 (Dodge), Carouse 3 (staying sober), Chirurgy 3 (binding wounds), Church Lore 3, Civil and Canon Law 4 (laws in the Northwych area), Common Law 4 (local

laws), English 5 (extensive vocabulary), Fishing 3, Latin 4 (church ceremonies), Leadership 4 (inspiration), Philosophiae 3 (natural philosophy), Theology 3 (biblical knowledge), Whittling 2

**Equipment:** Priestly clothes, a ring made from a lock of Saint Aldegund's hair providing 1 Faith Point.

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Appearance:** Woodnut is a short stocky man with thick brown hair worn parted in the middle.

Father Woodnut wears a ring made from a lock of hair cut from the head of Saint Aldegund. Aldegund is the patron saint invoked against sudden death (recalled on an Intelligence + Theology Simple roll vs. 12). The relic has no known powers beyond the protection afforded by relics (Realms of Power: The Divine, page 45).

## Statistics for Daniel

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 45 (45)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Peasant, Warrior (50/50), Temporal Influence, Arthritis (Repetitive Movement: -3), Weak Characteristics: -3

**Personality Traits:** Brave +2, Gruff +2, Pragmatic +1

**Combat:**

*Dodge:* Init: +0, Attack N/A, Defense +5, Damage N/A

*Bow, Short:* Init: -1, Attack +6, Defense +3, Damage +7

*Fist:* Init: +0, Attack +6, Defense +6, Damage +1

*Kick:* Init: -1, Attack +5, Defense +4, Damage +4

*Knife:* Init: +0, Attack +6, Defense +5, Damage +3

*Spear, Long:* Init: +2, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +8

*Sword, Short:* Init: +1, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +6

**Soak:** +2

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

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

**Abilities:** Arabic 2 (Jerusalem), Northwych Lore 5 (politics), Athletics 3 (running),

Bows 2 (Bow, Short), Brawl 5 (Fist), Carouse 4 (cheap beer), English 5 (slang), Farmer 5 (vegetables), Folk Ken 4 (peasants), Great Weapon 3 (Spear, Long), Guile 3 (perceiving lies), Hunt 4 (tracking), Leadership 5 (Northwych villagers), Norman French 2 (taking orders), Occitan 1 (slang), Single Weapon 3 (Sword, Short), Soldier 2 (the holy land), Survival 3 (the holy land), Teaching 3 (Farmer)

**Equipment:** None

**Encumbrance:** 2 (3)

**Appearance:** Paul is a good looking man, though with a perpetual tired and hungry look about him.

## Statistics for The Wicked Players

**Faerie Might:** 10 (Mentem)

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

**Size:** -2

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Second Sight, Greater Immunity (damage inflicted by each other), Dwarf, Faerie Nature

**Personality Traits:** Innocent +2, Malicious +2, Playful +2

**Combat:**

*Bite:* Init: +2, Attack +6, Defense +6, Damage +0

*Kick:* Init: +1, Attack +7, Defense +6, Damage +3

*Fist:* Init: +2, Attack +6, Defense +6, Damage +0

*Bludgeon:* Init: +1, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +2

**Soak:** 0

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

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

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (jumping), Awareness 5 (searching), Brawl 4 (Kick), Climb 3 (trees), Disguise 5 (voices), English 5 (poetry), Folk Ken 3 (peasants), Jongleur 5 (group plays), Second Sight 5 (invisible things), Stealth 5 (hide)

**Equipment:** None

**Encumbrance:** 1 (1)

**Powers:**

**Appearance:** Strange distorted versions of humanity in miniature, these colorful misshapen goblins lark and lurch about in equal measure.

The Wicked Players are completely unable to harm each other. They play out the deaths of others and while they might administer fire, or bludgeon, or drown each other they are immune. They are not immune to damage however and they are harmed as normal by the actions and assaults of others.

Any weapon they pick up to use against a human is considered a bludgeon. Even fire, though it will feel hot, will not burn its target.

live on no matter what his opinion of John.

## The Wicked Players

A band of callous faeries haunt the area, playing out and relishing stories of death and despair. Their behavior is not something they can control or change, they exist to mirror such stories as they happen to the mortals they live among and they rely on them for their very existence.

The Wicked Players themselves are short and spindly, with knobby joints covered in multi-colored patchwork clothes making each look like a jumble of knotted string. Their faces are long and pointed with wickedly oversized features. They each have a kind of individuality, from the slightly taller leader, to the calm studious one, to the sinister evil one all dressed in black, to the excitable rotund one... each is a cliché, but each has a malicious streak that dominates them. They also have the unnerving practice of finishing each others' sentences.

On the night that John was hanged by the Northwych Yew they saw and played out his death by hanging one of their number upon the tree on the village green.

The crucial thing to remember about the Wicked Players is that they are witnesses. They have witnessed all of the Yew's crimes and can certainly save Mattie if the village can accept their testimony.

## The Northwych Yew

The Yew is tall evergreen fir tree with needle-like leaves that spiral along the thinnest of its branches and its trunk is hollow through age.

This faerie tree can unfold itself, its foliage becoming great wings of leaves and twigs, revealing arms formed from branches. It cannot uproot itself but can move if someone frees its feet for it. The yew has many



## Statistics for The Northwych Yew

**Faerie Might:** 20 (Herbam)

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

**Size:** 3

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 2 (6)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Improved Characteristics, Ferocity (when surrounded), Tough, Size: 3, Berserk (Bonus: +2 Attack, +2 Soak, -2 Defense), Second Sight, Soak: 10, Light Touch, Faerie Nature, Crippled, Tainted With Evil, Cruel

**Personality Traits:** Angry +2, Honest -2, Sly +2

### Combat:

*Lashing Tail (whip-like branches):* Init: -2, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +4

*Large Horns (raking sticks):* Init: +0, Attack +11, Defense +8, Damage +7

*Grappling (enfolding wings):* Init: -2, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +4

*Bludgeon (great clubbing):* Init: -2, Attack +9, Defense +5, Damage +6

**Soak:** +17

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

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32)

**Abilities:** Area Lore 3, Brawl 7 (Large Horns), Disguise 3, Hunt 5, Stealth 5, Second Sight 1

**Equipment:** None

**Encumbrance:** 0 (1)

**Appearance:** In faerie form, this creature is a thing of great leafy green wings, strong branch limbs ending in whip-like fingers, and contorted angry faces like knots in the tree's bark.

The Northwych Yew is both watchful and agile. It can see attackers wherever they are around it and has the means to both defend itself and to strike at those nearby. Each round it can make four attacks, one from each of its listed weapons. They attack independently, not as a group and each has its own initiative score. They may work together however, for instance, the Yew may attempt to grapple a character and then bludgeon him while he is defenseless.

faces that watch back and front, each face is that of one of its victims.

It oozes blood-red sap if cut, that same red core can be seen when it opens its mouths to reveal its thorny teeth.

## New Virtue

**Inured to the Gift (Minor, General)**

Characters with this Virtue gain an additional personality trait of "Inured to the Gift". For every season that the character spends in the company of someone openly Gifted (i.e. not the Gentle Gift or Magical Air) he gains 2 exposure experience points towards this personality trait. For every year that the character spends without contact with anyone Gifted he loses 2 experience points from this trait. Gifted characters remove the value of this trait from the penalty to social rolls they make when dealing with this character. This may reduce the penalty to zero but cannot grant a bonus.

## Locations

### Northwych Village

**Dominion Aura:** 3

The village of Northwych is a small affair of some thirty families. Cottages and the church are clustered around a central green common and a well sits at the top end of the village. The village sits midway up a hill, with the road running north-south through it.

While John was not well-liked, the Northwych villagers do not want a murderer in their midst and so called for justice to be done. It was only Paul's insistence that stayed their hand from hanging Mattie on the yew tree

Emotions are running high in Northwych (social rolls suffer a penalty of -1) and the villagers see hanging Mattie as an end to the incident. Neither Daniel or Father Woodnut are inclined to

prolong what they see as a concluded matter.

### The Tree on the Green

A tree grows in the middle of the village green. Note, this is not the murderous Yew. This is a natural tree that the Wicked Players happened to pass and act out their play upon.

On a concerted search of this tree (Perception + Awareness Simple Die vs. 9+) characters will see signs of a rope having been strung over one of the branches. This is evidence of Mattie's story of the sprites having enacted John's death.

### Mother Mattie's house

Mattie, Paul, and, until his death, John live beyond the ditch that surrounds Northwych Village. Life has been hard for the family - and Mattie's home is a clear indication of this.

The small wooden house is a single room with a dirty torn curtain that hides Mattie and

John's bed from the rest of the room. Paul sleeps on a bed in the main area. A fire pit occupies the center of the room and cooking utensils are kept on the small table pushed away to one side. Some very fine buckets are evident and this is a testament to the skill with which Paul and his father plied their trade.

A few hens scratch around in a fenced area adjoining the house and a vegetable plot lies beyond that.

### St Aldegund's Church

The church is a small wooden building surrounded by a stone wall containing the graveyard. Father Woodnut lives in the adjoining cottage.

Mattie is being held prisoner inside the church, sleeping on the benches, her hands bound, and tied to the door by a length of rope. She always has one of the other villagers with her and she is distressed and distraught.

At night, especially the night before her hanging, Father Woodnut stays with her trying to get her to confess her crime and free her soul from its burden.

### The Churchyard

John, killed as he was before confessing his sins and receiving absolution, has been buried beyond the churchyard wall. His spirit is thus trapped in the mortal world and cannot move on to its reward in either heaven or hell.

The Dominion aura of 3 surrounding the church and covering the village stops abruptly at the churchyard wall which abuts the ditch surrounding the village.

John's grave is unmarked but is clearly identifiable as the soil is freshly turned and heaped. John's spirit can be summoned and, despite his horror (spells to calm his racing spirit, or Leadership or Charm Simple rolls vs. 9 or more will help him overcome this. John

is Inured to the Gift so no penalties will apply), will speak.

1) John did not see his attacker, nor did he hear him against the wind in the trees.

2) His killer must have been strong as he was very quickly hoisted off the ground. If it wasn't so quiet he'd imagine there was more than one of them.

3) He remembers struggling against the noose.

4) He does not remember his body being searched as he lost his grip on life but does ask about the rabbits he'd caught (he can only assume that theft was the reason he'd been killed) as these were for Mattie and Paul.

5) He cannot believe that it was Mattie.

The rabbits John asks about were found at the tree. Daniel can confirm this.

Those unearthing John's body may discover that it now contains three pawns of Perdo vis; one pawn in each eye and one pawn in his tongue (all are distended and swollen through strangulation). This vis is an effect of being hanged by the tree (see below).

If his body is examined for clues the following may be found:

1) His fingernails have bits of bark beneath them. This is from his struggling against the noose of vine that the tree strangled him with.

2) There are small round bruises dotted along the red raw mark of the noose around his neck. These came from the knots on the vine and are important as they are a hint that it was not a rope that was used to hang him from the tree.

## The Well: home of the Wicked Players

**Faerie Aura: 3**

The Wicked Players live in a faerie regio (ArM5, 189) within the well and their sinister chuckles can be heard echoing from the well by those who have Second Sight or use appropriate magic (ArM5, page 158) to detect it (if the players suspect that there may be something down the well then various Imaginem or Vim solutions may work for them). The regio is sealed off by day, subsumed by the Dominion, but by night, with the weakening of the Divine aura, the regio descends and is accessible from the mundane realm. The regio can be entered both by day and by night.

To enter by night, the must climb down into the well and descend to just above the water line (this changes depending on how full the well is). There is a ledge that leads into a passageway, tall and broad enough for the largest man present to squeeze through bent double. The ledge is the entrance to the regio so characters with Second Sight or magical aid will be able to see it in the darkness when looking from above.

Characters move through the passage at a rate of Quickness + Athletics + five feet per round and the passage appears to be fifty feet long.

Characters larger than size -2 suffer a -3 penalty to all rolls and must roll three extra botch dice while in the passage. These characters can only attack or defend with Brawling weapons.

At the end of the passage is the grotto in which the Wicked Players live and if any intruding characters fail a Dexterity + Stealth Simple roll vs. 9 then the Wicked Players are alerted and will swarm out to defend their home. If they do, they will attack (reaching the intruders in two rounds) and will



only retreat when their vanguard has taken wound penalties totaling -3. Once they retreat, they will attempt to hide in their grotto.

### The Grotto

Inside the grotto the roof suddenly sweep up and round into a huge dome supported by tree roots, as though beneath the bole of a very large and very old tree. In the middle of the grotto is a raised round stage and scattered here and there are all manner of props; a knife here, a rope there, a bottle of a most noxious unction, and beyond that a vine. These are not real but are part of the faerie glamour that defines and is defined by the Wicked Players.

If the Wicked Players are hiding, a determined search and a successful Perception + Awareness Stress roll vs. the Dexterity + Stealth (hide) + Simple roll of the Wicked Players will reveal them behind various curtains or tree roots or even under chairs; somewhat obvious places but strangely not visible without a search.

### The Old Yew Tree

**Faerie Aura:** 3

Full of foreboding and chills, this site gave birth to the murderous yew that stands at its center. The power of the site works through the yew and while the yew may be destroyed the malevolence of the site will live on.

The tree stands at a crossroads. The main road north out of Northwych is crossed by a small track which one way leads up to through the woods to a fish pond. The faerie aura extends all around like tree roots running under the ground.

### Bodies

Entwined in the roots of the tree are the remains of those who were slain by the tree but not found within a week, now little

more than rags and bones. They carry little of note upon them and have rotted beyond ability of Whispers Through the Black Gate (ArM5, page 130) to reach them.

### A New Source of Vis

Not a power of the yew tree itself, the site provides for a particularly nasty source of vis. The body of the first person hanged from the tree in any given season is imbued with three pawns of Perdo vis. There are several problems with this.

Firstly, how do any potential users of this vis discover the source? Secondly, how do they then go on to discover that only the first person in a season to be hanged on the tree is imbued with vis? Thirdly, can they countenance even allowing such a source to exist, let alone to actually use it?

### Expected Sequence of Play

The characters are pulled into the story by Paul's arrival at the covenant. From there the magi may choose to go to the village of Northwych on the basis of either saving Paul's mother or investigating a potential faerie site.

Once the characters are in Northwych, Mattie will be hanged unless the magi are able to convince the head man or the priest of her innocence. Of course, they may discover that the bodies of those hanged on the Northwych Yew become imbued with Perdo vis and they may decide instead to claim the site as a somewhat grisly vis source.

### Introductions

The first the magi know of things is the sound of Paul running through the covenant grounds pursued by guards. Paul

### Event Timing

The table below lists out the important story events and when they happened or will happen if the covenant fails to help.

Day	Event
Tuesday	John leaves home to snare rabbits and poach fish north of the village.  John is killed by the Northwych Yew.  Mother Mattie sees the Wicked Players enacting John's death.
Wednesday	John is found hanged on the Northwych Yew.
Thursday	Mattie is condemned to hang upon the Northwych Yew for the crime of killing John.
Friday	Paul leaves Northwych to look for the covenant and plead for help.
Saturday	Paul reaches the covenant.
Sunday	The characters arrive in Northwych.
Monday	Mother Mattie is due to hang.

calls out for the "wise men" while the guards clatter over obstacles thrown in their way.

### Investigations

The aim of the story is to save Mattie from being hanged. The players can do this by simply abducting her or by proving her innocence to the village. Assuming the troupe takes the second option, the general flow of investigations is likely to be:

Travel to Northwych Village where the investigators meet

Daniel, Woodnut, and Mattie. Mattie will tell them about the Wicked Players and the tree on the green. Investigating the tree on the green will confirm at least a part of Mattie's story and that could lead them to the well and the Wicked Players. If the Wicked Players can be convinced to bear witness, and if the villagers can be convinced that the Wicked Players are not the threat, the trail leads to the real killer - the yew tree.

Depending on their approach, magi amongst the investigators may want to speak to John's spirit in order to get his version of the story. This may lead them to investigate the tree, but without the testament of the Wicked Players the village will simply believe that Mattie has somehow bewitched the tree.

## Visiting Northwych

In all likelihood, the magi will have no authority in the village of Northwych. They will also find the priest, Father Woodnut, and Headman Daniel ill disposed to strangers especially if they have the Gift.

They see the case of Mattie as closed and are only waiting for

Paul to return so that they can hang her. They will hang her the day after Paul's return.

When the player characters arrive they will be faced with huddled groups of women standing off, whispering and watching. It won't take long for Daniel and Woodnut to arrive to confront the strangers.

## Father Woodnut

As the village priest Father Woodnut sanctioned Mother Mattie's punishment. She was accused and stood trial before her peers and was convicted on the evidence brought before them.

He maintains that Mother Mattie killed John as she was the first to bewail his death a full day before his body was found. He accuses her of summoning sprites and spirits to do away with her husband for reasons unclear but motives most foul.

He believes this because:

1) She announced not only the time but also the manner of John's death.

2) She openly spoke of seeing sprites performing the act.

## Headman Daniel

Daniel's opinion of Mother Mattie has been colored by years of exposure to her Gift. He doesn't like her and he doesn't trust her. But he can't express why of course, so he falls back on years of unfounded suspicion.

He openly claims that her years of childlessness and sudden conception were signs of her being in league with sprites.

Of course, the truth is that Mattie did not marry until she was thirty and then conceived Paul that same month.

## Other Rumors

A death in the village will stir rumors up from nowhere and the events in Northwych are no exception.

Gathering rumors will be hard for any outsiders with the Gift. There is also a penalty for asking about Mattie and John while Paul is present as the villagers will not talk openly in front of him.

Players can be afforded some flexibility in how they go about collecting information and rumors, using whatever abilities they are able. As a guideline, a Communication + Charm or Carouse + Stress die vs. 6 will provide the following (see table).

## Mattie's Story

The first problem is getting access to Mattie in order to hear her side of the story. She is being held in the church and both Daniel and Woodnut will initially deny access.

Woodnut will relent if the possibility of Mattie confessing her crime is raised.

Daniel will relent if any of his other villagers are in danger and talking to Mattie could prevent further death.

## Other Rumors

### Rumor

John beat Mattie regularly

Mattie must have been involved in the death of Eda (a woman of middling years who died suddenly a year ago)

Mattie hasn't taken communion for years

Headman Daniel hated John

Paul helped his mother kill his father

### Truth

This is true. John was a violent man and Mattie suffered.

This is a hint that she has seen the Wicked Players before as she talked then of how Eda lay alone clutching her chest unable to call for help - she saw the Wicked Players enact Eda's grim passing.

This is true, but is a consequence of her social exclusion, not a symptom of a wicked lifestyle.

Daniel did hate John for many reasons - this is a red herring and investigators may start to ask questions about where Daniel was on the night John was killed.

This is false of course but that won't stop people talking.





She awoke during the night on hearing a commotion outside. She went out onto the green and there saw seven sprites, six in a ring and one in the center being beaten by the others. Then, the six tied a noose around the seventh and flung the rope over a branch of the tree on the green. They then hauled away, lifting sprite into the air. His legs thrashed and his fingers tore at the noose and no sound could he make but ghastly choking and but one word, "Mattie".

When the sprite finished kicking and was left to hang the other sprites whisked themselves away (in the direction of the well). But by the time Mattie reached the tree the other sprite was gone, rope and noose and all. Her screams woke several of the villagers.

All comforted her as she had clearly had a bad dream... and then John failed to return.

## Confrontations

### Finding the Wicked Players

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If they are found within their grotto (see above) they will fight the intruders tooth and nail. The combat should be more comical than truly dangerous but they will not stop until one of their number is incapacitated or killed outright. They will then cower and submit to questioning, mourning for their fallen brother all the while.

The Wicked Players will not offer information about Mattie as they are looking forward to her hanging. But they will, if coerced strongly enough, admit that they saw John's death and that it wasn't Mattie that killed him.

But their information comes in the strange form of a play. The Wicked Players assemble on the stage in the grotto, some standing on the shoulders of others, arms played representing a tall tree. Another haunts the base of the

tree, always moving but always touching the tree for he is part of it. One more plays John, who is dragging two of his struggling brothers (the rabbits). John ambles by, whistling innocently and stops to mop his brow by the tree. At this, the spirit hiding at the base of the tree quickly scales it, drops a rope around John's neck, and pulls him into the air. John chokes, kicks, and scrambles while the rabbits writhe and scream. Soon, all is quiet and John is dead. The play should appear in turn pantomime and horrific.



### Confronting the Northwych Yew

The Yew is unrepentant. It exists to haunt the edges of folklore and to breed fear in those who live nearby. It will remain silent and still while its villagers are nearby, but will interact with supernatural beings. It is sly and dishonest and will attempt to misdirect any questioning.

The Yew will defend itself with all its power regardless of who might see it and will fight to the death.

### The hanging

As Mattie is due to hang in the evening Father Woodnut spends much of the day absolving the villagers of any sin in the matter.

Daniel spends his day in the fields. He knows what needs to be done with Mattie and sees no need to labor the point.

In the evening, Mattie will be taken up to the Yew tree. When she gets there two men attend to the rope. They have difficulty as the leaves and branches get in the way of the rope when they attempt to throw it over a branch. This is a clue that it would have been very hard for anyone to set up a rope. The men quickly return with a ladder and thread the rope over the branch.

Those with Second Sight will see (on a Perception + Awareness Simple Die vs. 6) the Wicked Players mocking Mother Mattie as she is led to the tree. And they mimic the actions of the executioner and the crowd and even of Mattie herself. Mattie will see them and plead for someone to send them away.



If the hanging is allowed to continue, Mattie is hanged and dies upon the tree, with Paul restrained by the men of the village.

## Rewards and Consequences

If the covenant bullies Northwych into releasing Mother Mattie they will gain the enmity of the village and they will also gain a poor reputation in all the lands controlled by Northwych's owner. This reputation should then be applied to any interactions the covenant has within those lands where they have been identified.

If the covenant proves Mattie's innocence, life will not improve

for her or for Paul but she will at least be safe. If the proof comes openly from the covenant, then it will also have earned a good reputation for Wisdom (or as suggested by play) in all the lands controlled by Northwych's owner. As for the poor reputation above, this is then applied to social interactions within the affected lands.

## The Fate of the Tree

The Northwych Yew itself will, unless destroyed, continue to murder as the opportunity arises and may take one or two people a year. As it is a creature of story, it must obey certain rules and it cannot consume the body of its victim until a week

has gone past without somebody finding it and cutting it down. So it is possible that the tree could keep on murdering and feeding for years and maybe even centuries to come. What the effects of this on the tree might be are left open but it is worth asking whether such a tree might produce seed and where the winds might carry them.

If the tree is left standing, the villagers will not actively seek to have it cut down. They will be fearful of it and will advise people away from the area in which it stands. But in a generation or two it might become a hanging tree. Its reputation may draw hangings to it and, if the covenant has discovered the vis source associated with the tree, there may be vis to be had.



# Mythic Zoroastrianism

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

—Pliny, *Natural History* 30.2.3

Back in 2002, I wrote an extensive article, “Mythic Zoroastrianism” for *Hermes Portal* on Zoroastrianism – the oldest continually practiced monotheistic religion on earth – which included numerous spells, virtues, books and a bestiary. I followed this up with an article titled “Prince of Magi”, about Osthanes, the original super-wizard. A third article – “More Zoroastrian Mysteries” – was also written, but never published, which contained more Zoroastrian themed spells, books, monsters, and spirits.

This article revises many of the spells, virtues, mysteries and creatures for *Ars Magica* Fifth Edition. I also refer readers to *Hermes Portal* on the Internet, where old issues are available for free download.

I am indebted to Michaël de Verteuil, Jeremiah Genest and Niall Christie for their early assistance in writing and editing the original articles for *Hermes Portal*.

## Mysteries of the Magoi

There are still practicing magoi, mostly located in Southern Persia. Holy books and hymns may still exist scattered throughout the lands of the Persian Empire, and even further, following the route of the Cult of Mithras. The Zoroastrians are a holy societas (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 116-117), with degrees of initiation for senior magoi that grant them unique holy powers, that are initiated as mystery powers.

As they are aligned to the Divine, Zoroastrians gain a benefit

when in a Dominion aura. Magoi experience the Divine Ascent rather than Twilight (even if they learn Hermetic magic), and almost exclusively manifest Divine Unity (RoP:tD, p.65), and exemplify one of the Amesha Spentas.

Magoi are not required to have The Gift, or True Faith, but many magoi have both. The magoi teach as favoured abilities the Holy Method Invocation, and the Holy Power Wonders, and the Holy Magic and Sense Holiness and Unholiness virtues. Several additional abilities and virtues can only be gained through the initiation process (see *The Mysteries*

Alex White

Revised, page 13-18). Non-Gifted magoi may gain any Zoroastrian virtues through the initiation process.

## Organization

Magoi have three ranks: mobed, ervad, and dastur. Mobeds are initiated Zoroastrian priests; they have access to all of the favoured abilities open to magoi (Invocation, Wonders, Holy Magic, and Sense Holiness and Unholiness).

### New Zoroastrian Ranges, Durations and Targets

To use these new ranges, durations and targets, the practitioner must possess at least a score of 1 in the ability Magoi Cult Lore.

#### New Range: Ground

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

#### New Duration: Fire

The spell will last as long as a specific Sacred Fire burns in a specific Zoroastrian Holy Temple (which fire and temple must be determined at the time of casting the spell). Fire is equivalent to Moon.

#### New Duration: Love

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

#### New Target: Community

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

#### New Target: Homeland

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



## Zoroastrian Virtues

The magoi know and initiate their followers into the following mysteries:

**Philosophical Alchemy** (TMRE, p.41) – note, magoi may extract and use holy vis.

**Names of Power** (TMRE, p.76) – note, magoi typically invoke the names of the Amesha Spentas or the yazata, which are divine, rather than magical, spirits.

**Invocation Magic** (TMRE, p.78)

**Synthemata Magia** (TMRE, p.87)

## New Zoroastrian Virtues

### Magian Astrology

#### Major, Supernatural

According to the holy Zoroastrian tome, the Dadistan i Menok i Khrat ('Judgements of the Spirit of Wisdom'), the art of Astrology was passed from the Spirit of Wisdom unto Zoroaster, along with many of the secrets of the created world.

The Magoi believe that all welfare and adversity that comes to humanity and the world originates through the seven planets and the twelve zodiacal signs. To the magoi the twelve great Spirits of the Zodiac are amongst Ahura Mazda's most capable and holy defenders, constantly striving to bring goodness and wellbeing into the world. The planets on the other hand are ruled by monstrous demons, which, by dint of being closer to the world, constantly thwart their zodiacal rivals and more often than not succeed in bringing ruin and misery to humanity (hence explaining why the earth is not a paradise).

This virtue allows magoi access to Astrological durations (see TMRE, p.49), allows them to

calculate favourable hours for spell casting (TMRE, p.49) and can make astrologically linked enchantments (TMRE, p.50). Magoi gain no benefit from astrological correspondences linked to the planets.

### Tribal Blood-bond

#### Minor, Supernatural

You possess a blood-bond to a powerful spirit, thanks to your familial heritage. Most magoi possess this virtue thanks to their tribal heritage to the original Persian sacerdotal caste, the Magians, from which the Prince of Magi, Osthanes originated. Other magi have a blood-bond with Zoroastrian yazatas. For magoi, the spirits they are bonded to are divine in nature, but this virtue may originate from any Realm.

To call on the help of the tribal spirit, you must make a Communication + Charm + modifiers + simple die versus an Ease Factor of 15 + a simple die. If the roll succeeds, then the spirit uses one of its powers aid you.

#### Invoke Tribal Spirit:

**Communication + Charm + modifiers + simple die vs. 15 + a simple die**

The tribal spirit is bonded to an entire tribe or nation, so invocations for assistance should be couched in helping the entire tribe. Continued or frivolous requests may see the spirit ignore you, or even punish your hubris. Likewise, sinful appeals to the Prince of Magi, or a yazata will be ignored.

This virtue is not restricted to magoi.

### The Vaj

#### Minor, Supernatural

Magoi possess a deep relationship with the holy spirit of Wisdom. For magoi, Wisdom (Vohu Manah) is the highest

## Invocation modifiers

Situation	Modifier
In appropriate aura (e.g. Divine)	+ aura rating
Reciting prayers to honor spirit	+2
At spirit's sacred site	+2
True Faith	+1 per Faith Point
Recent unfavourable action	-1 to -3

essence of Ahura Mazda, from which all creation is sustained. The Vaj ('utterance') is the practice of holy mantras whose purpose is to surround the magoi with a holy shield that protects them from unclean things. This virtue grants the Supernatural Ability, The Vaj, with a level of 1.

The Vaj is a short prayer that is performed every week on a holy hour. If that hour is missed, the Vaj cannot be performed for that week.

When performed, the magoi rolls a Communication + The Vaj Ability + simple die divided by three. This score is then added to all Soak and Magic Resistance totals, and to totals resisting disease, deprivation and poison.

**Vaj bonus: (Communication + Vaj + simple die) / 3**

This protection does not stack with any other form of supernatural resistance, such as from spells, Holy Powers, Parma Magica or Arts scores; only the highest score ever applies.

## Gifts of Gayomart (the Primeval Man)

#### Major, Supernatural

Gayomart, the Zoroastrian 'Adam' or first man, is seen by the





magoi as personifying human perfection. Through devoting oneself to Ahura Mazda, you may infuse yourself with the aspects of Gayomart. This virtue allows magoi who possess the major True Faith virtue to gain additional powers as their True Faith score increases (see “Embodying the Light”, RoP:tD, p.61). You must have True Faith to gain this virtue.

**Asha (Truth):** True Faith 1

You cannot be lied to or purposefully deceived. In your presence, no one may speak or communicate a direct lie. This power has a Penetration equal to your True Faith score, and may be increased by +5 for each True Faith point spent. If this power Penetrates, even demons and faeries cannot deceive you.

**Vohu Manah (Good Mind):** True Faith 4

Through Vohu Mana, you personify wisdom and the true path to God. You gain a Commanding Aura (RoP:tD, p.42), with a Magic Resistance equal to your Faith Score x10, a bonus to your soak equal to your Magic Resistance divided by 5, and a commanding aura (equivalent to Aura of Rightful Authority with Voice range).

**Hauvatat (Wholeness):** True Faith 6

Your physical body becomes immune to putrefaction, change, disease and all forms of material corruption and decay. Gain a bonus to your Aging Total equal to double your True Faith score. You more easily resist magical attempts to alter the shape of your body, inflict harm upon you or give you diseases or wounds. You gain an additional bonus to Soak and Recovery rolls equal to your True Faith Score x3. Furthermore, you no longer scar

or blemish, as your body slowly returns to its perfect natural state. Incapacitating wounds no longer leave permanent marks upon you, and given enough time (years) you can re-grow lost limbs and other body parts.

**Ameratat (Immortality):** True Faith 8

So long as you maintain the maxims of Zoroaster and Ahura Mazda, remain in a state of purity and truthfulness, observe the taboos and behave with good thoughts, good words and good deeds, then you will never die, and instead gain a Warping Point instead of Aging or Decrepitude points. Your body slowly ages, although you can more easily resist its effects through the gift of Hauvatat. While this virtue means you effectively will never die, you can still be killed from massive damage.



## New Abilities

### Magoi Cult Lore

This Lore covers the history, structure and arcane secrets of the magoi. It does not cover details of the Zoroastrian faith, and most magoi also possess Theology. Magoi use this lore to initiate new members into the cult and to perform certain types of magic.

## The Zoroastrian Library

### Yasna ('Worship')

Summa (Theology): Quality +3, Level 10

Contains seventy-two principle hymns to be recited daily. At their core are the seventeen Gathas, composed by Zoroaster himself.

### Yashts ('Hymns')

Tractatus (Theology: Zoroastrian), Quality +9

Hymns that date back to the prophet and are prayers to Zoroastrian angels and spirits. They are presented as quotations of Zoroaster.

### Vivevdat ('Law against the demons')

Summa (Infernal Lore), Quality +6, Level 7

A collection of prose texts that oppose the forces of evil, through detailed purity laws.

### Khorda Avesta ('shorter Avesta')

Summa (Theology): Quality +8, Level 5

A collection of frequently used prayers owned by Zoroastrians who are not priests.

### Hadhokht Nask ('sayings')

Tractatus (Theology: Zoroastrian), Quality +8, Level 4

Descriptions of the journey of the soul after death.

### Zoroaster's Telescope

Summa (Artes Liberales: Astrology); Quality +2, Level 9

Zoroaster's Telescope is a scroll written by Zoroaster which contains a map of the heavens, and the names of the divine spirits that control each constellation and planet. It is incredibly rare, and is written in Avestan. Translations are even scarcer.

### Shah Nameh ('Book of Kings')

Tractatus (Area Lore: Ancient Persia), Quality +5

The great Persian epic, written by Ferdowsi, tells of the numerous Persian heroic kings, such as Kay Us, ruler of the world and builder palaces of gold, silver, steel and crystal, which granted him immortality.

### Zatspram

Summa (Artes Liberales: Alchemy), Quality 5, Level 10.

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

### The First Book of Magic

Summa (Magic Lore), Quality 3, Level 12.

Written by Osthanes the Prince of Magi, the First Book of Magic sets out the principles of the divine, magical and natural world, and reveals the great truths of creation, as laid down by Zoroaster to Osthanes. There are only a few copies of this book, and they are also powerful Zoroastrian relics.

### On the Transmutation of Natures

Summa (Artes Liberales: Alchemy), Quality +4, Level 6

This ancient authority on divine alchemy is written on the hide of an ox and stretched on a frame of rare wood inlaid with gold and other precious metals and gems. It purports to be a dialogue between Zoroaster and Osthanes, recorded in the first years of Zoroaster's mission. On the Transmutation of Natures is written in Aramaic. As well as describing the basic rules of alchemy, this text also contains a number of rites and rituals that allow someone to initiate into the Minor Mystery Virtue of Vulgar Alchemy. It contains the legendary phrase 'Nature delights in nature; nature conquers nature; nature dominates nature.'

Contains the following spells: Refine the Essence of the (Element) (ReVi15), Ascendance of the Base (Element) (CrVi15)

### The Nature and Wisdom of a Fortunate Man

Summa (Theology: Zoroastrian), Quality +13, Level 4

A summary of the virtues of a fortunate or blessed man, Osthanes wrote this during the Zoroastrian Golden Age, recalling the life and nature of Zoroaster. It amounts to being a guide to correct Zoroastrian behaviour, as one who is industrious, casts off desire for worldly goods and fame, who is confident and deliberate, who collects friends and seeks their advice, is agreeable, whose arrogance does not outweigh his merit and who seeks strength for the needs of others, not himself.

### Dadistan i Menok i Khrat ('Judgements of the Spirit of Wisdom')

Summa (Philosophiae: moral philosophy), Quality +9, Level 5

A collection of gnostic utterances or precepts ('andarz'), the Judgements of the Spirit of Wisdom contains moral instruction given by Vohu Manah. It



establishes Zoroastrian orthodoxy, lays out the moral principles that should guide living, and provides summaries of traditional knowledge contained in the Avesta. Amongst the essential duties of the faithful include thrice-daily worship facing the sun, the celebration of the gahambars (the seven seasonal festivals in honour of the Amesha Spentas), and veneration of the yazatas, while abstaining from the worship of images. Charity is also emphasised by Vohu Manah, who names as virtues the sheltering of wanderers, aiding the poor, and demonstration of benevolence to all good people.

### The Book of Thirty Chapters

Summa (Artes Liberales: Alchemy), Quality +1, Level 10

A quintessential text on Alchemy, The Book of Thirty Chapters was written by Ostanes, the son of Osthanes, in the third century BC. Obsessed with the need for secrecy, Ostanes couched the book in deep and imperceptible allegory and symbolism that is nearly indecipherable even to those initiated into the mysteries of alchemy. The key metaphor revolves around the idea of falling asleep and being taken up in a dream where wisdom and insight are gleaned from an old man. For this reason, although a valuable work, The Book of Thirty Chapters is a rare and abstruse masterpiece, known only to a few erudite alchemists.

### The Book of the Deeds of Ardashir son of Babag

Summa (Area Lore: Ancient Persia), Quality +10, Level 5

Written under the supervision of Tansar, a powerful magoi, this short prose work describes the deeds and legends of Ardashir, first Sasanid king. It describes the lighting of sacred fires, the



interpretation of many prophetic dreams, the consultation by court astrologers for omens, and the nature of the celestial court. A major part of the Book recalls the great battle between Ardashir and the Lord of the Worm, Haftan-bokht, a dragon-like follower of the Druj. It finishes with the recounting of the birth of Ardashir's son, Shahpuhr, in accordance with the prophecy of the Kaft of India

### The Righteous Empire

Summa (Magic Lore: spirits and ghosts), Quality +10, Level 4

Originally found in a royal inscription, the words of Kartér, the successor to Osthanes, have been transcribed into a manuscript. The Righteous Empire describes the orthodox

position of the afterlife, heaven and hell. Manuscript copies contain voluminous commentaries, which amount to a summary of the Zoroastrian Invisible World.

### The Eye of Bel

Tractatus (Magic Lore: augury), Quality 12, Level 6

Written by the founder of the Cos Island Astrological School, The Eye of Bel is a Sasanid era text on astrological prophecy. It is written on papyrus scrolls in Middle Persian and is of very high quality, with detailed images of the heavens and their role in prophecy and augury. Translations of The Eye of Bel exist in Greek and Demotic, but are rare and difficult to come by.





## Coming in Sub Rosa Issue Four

The Dying Drake

*By Phil Chase*

Knights Templar: The Infernal Brotherhood

*By Alex White*

More Beasts of the Realm

*By Ben McFarland*

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