



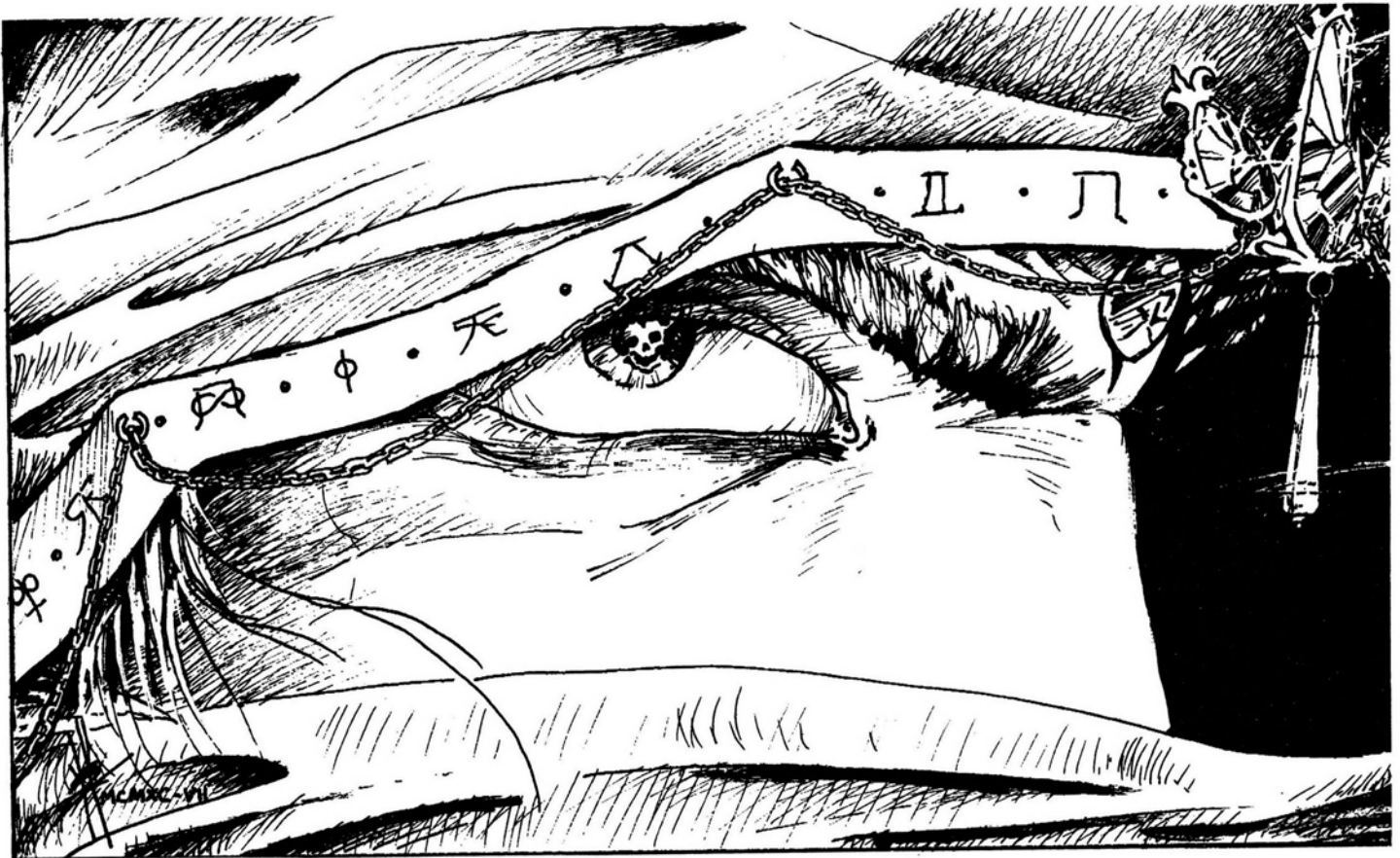
by Jonathan Tweet

Lian Rampant

LR1020

# The Order of Hermes

A Complete Society of Wizards in a  
Medieval Setting



By Jonathan Tweet



Lion Rampant

Dedicated to Mark Rein•Hagen,  
whose Chaos made  
my Cosmos beautiful.

## The Order of Hermes

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Lion Rampant would like to make a special dedication of this supplement to Mickey Thomas, whose courage and perseverance in the face of adversity set a standard for us all to pattern our lives after. We'll miss you Mickey.

### Editor's Note

In an attempt to avoid sexist language, "they" is used to replace "he or she" when referring to non-specific cases. Our apologies to Grandma Tweet, who taught English.

The words "Magus" and "Primus" are masculine words in the Latin language. In **Lion Rampant** campaigns, the feminine forms ("Maga" and "Prima") have been used as well as the masculine versions when referring to female characters.

All references to page numbers in **Ars Magica** are from the second edition.

More useful material on **The Order of Hermes** can be found in other **Lion Rampant** products, especially **Ars Magica**, **Covenants** and **Saga Pack**. For a closer examination of the fall of a covenant and the after-death experiences of magi, see **The Broken Covenant of Calebals**. These products are available in fine game stores everywhere, or can be ordered directly from **Lion Rampant**. For more information and a price list, write:

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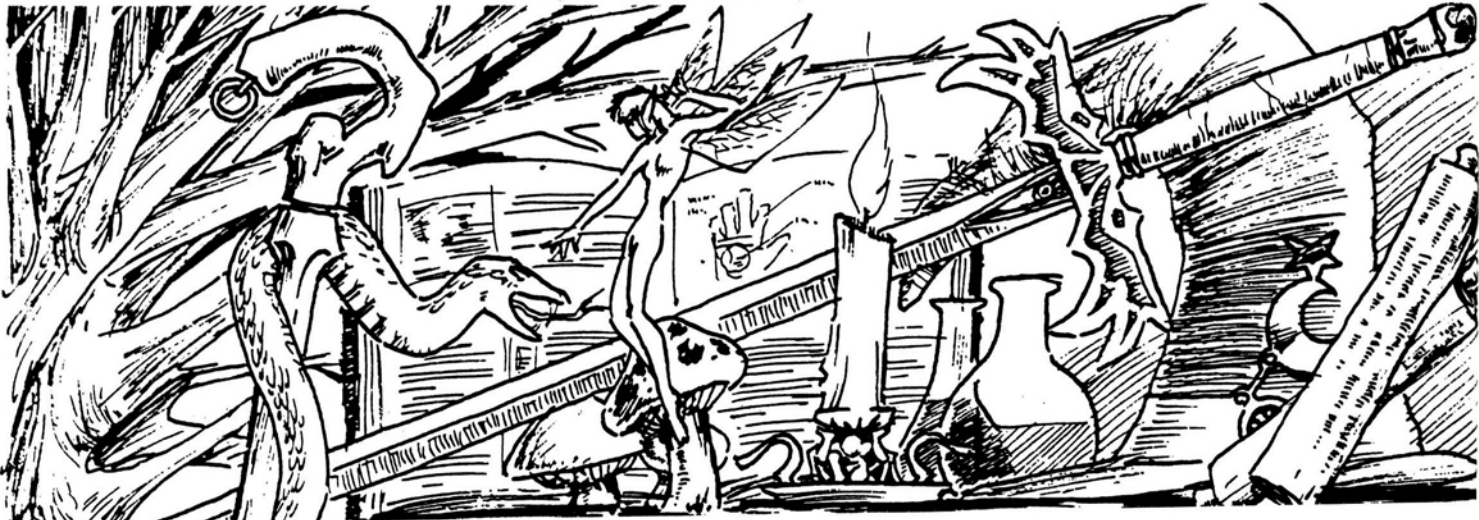
Watch for future articles from **Lion Rampant** on **Ars Magica** in **White Wolf** magazine. For more information write:

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## The Order of Hermes



# Preface

In the long distant days of old, before the dawn of industry and science, there existed a simpler and more natural world, a world which had a different conception of life and cosmos than we do today. It was the medieval world and it was filled with pageantry, mystery, grace, honor, love and great, unspeakable terrors.

The people of this world spoke of themselves through song and poetry, and the beauty of this art remains with us still. We have all heard of the bravery of Lancelot, the ferocity of faerie stags, the terror of mighty dragons, and the foreboding power that true love, destiny and curses had over people's lives. Roland and Saint George were heroes of a different breed than we have today, and were revered as men imbued with divine blessings which allowed them to complete their tasks. It was indeed a different world.

The people of these "dark times" believed in the supernatural, and treated it as a more integral part of life than our scientific and secular society does today. They believed in it and took it seriously in a way we cannot fathom. In this book we assume that they were correct, and that the supernatural does indeed exist, and that faeries, dragons and wizards do indeed roam the world.

Our intention at **Lion Rampant** is to provide you, the roleplayer, with an opportunity to experience the wonder and drama of the medieval world. Within our **Ars Magica** product line, everything is set within this "Mythic Europe" setting. **The Order of Hermes** is our latest attempt to incorporate this mystical version of the Middle Ages into an intriguing and exciting roleplaying setting. Describing the organization, politics, history and current status of an entire secret society of wizards, we hope and believe this supplement will be useful to any who wish to adventure in an environment of magic and fantasy.

While the background of this arcane Order is set in a mythical version of Medieval Europe, it can be used with only moderate changes with any fantasy world. This supplement describes and explains the Order as vividly as possible, giving you the opportunity to bring a wealth of detail about wizards to your Saga or campaign. Though this Order is, of course, only a figment of our collective imaginations, we hope you will find it as intriguing and complex a subject as you have recently encountered. Our ambition was to make it as realistic and complete as possible.

As you read this book, treat it as if you were taking a journey as a young wizard who has only known your master's laboratory and is now being introduced to the vast and complicated world of magic. It will not be an easy journey, but it will be easily worth the effort, for what you will learn shall stand you in good stead later on. Open the pages of this tome carefully, for you are about to delve into a world of arcane mystery and unparalleled wonder.

## How to Use This Supplement

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This book describes the Order of Hermes on all levels, from the lives of individual magi, to the Order's history, to its current political composition. The purpose of the supplement is two-fold: first, to help players develop magus characters with interesting backgrounds and possibilities for personal development; second, to provide the information necessary to run a Saga in which Hermetic politics play a significant role. Though the background provided can be modified for any fantasy world, it was designed to bring out the flavor of the Middle Ages and is most fully utilized to this end.

## For the Player

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As a player, you can use this information to build a complete and engaging magus character. First you should read through the book, getting an idea of what the Order is like. Then you should choose a House for your magus and use the information found in the Houses section as a guide to creating the character. Your House determines much about the master you had, and because your master had almost complete control over your personal and magical development during your apprenticeship, your House has already had a great deal of influence on who you are by the time you start play. Like any young magus, you might have little knowledge of other Houses or of Hermetic politics when you begin, but this information will come to you during play, as your character learns and grows.

The "Life of a Magus" chapter also provides important ideas that you can use in developing your magus. You can best use these ideas by looking them over before you create the character, because decisions you make about your character's background and ambitions are important to your character conception.

If you already have a magus, choose the House that best fits the character conception. Don't worry about finding a House that you fit perfectly, because individual magi within each House always vary to some extent from the norm. You may want to rethink some details about your character based on the information here. You should go through the "Life of a Magus" chapter as well to fill in details about your character.

Even if you do not play *Ars Magica*, you will find that this book can provide some very interesting ideas for your wizard character. If your gamemaster will agree, you can include the Order of Hermes in your campaign, allowing you to fully flesh out your character in the garb of a member of the Order.

## For the Storyguide

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As a storyguide, the background information will allow you to develop the Hermetic environment in which the Saga takes place. Who are the other magi nearby? What attitudes and motivations drive them? What power do they have over the player-characters, and what power can the player-characters exert over local politics? What major crises or concerns have developed in the Saga's locale, and what are the options currently being considered for dealing with these issues? All these questions and more will be for you to determine, using this supplement to provide the raw material and the structure to your creation. Familiarize yourself in general with the entire book, and then pick those topics that excite you the most. You might, for instance, be particularly intrigued by a certain House, by Wizard's Twilight, by an event in Hermetic history, or by a conflict currently involving the Order. Read about that topic in detail, provide your own embellishments, and expand into other areas as the Saga progresses.

If you are not currently a member of an *Ars Magica* troupe, the ideas found in *The Order of Hermes* can be a strong basis for any organization of magic-users. Based in a magical setting where the powers of religion, the sword and the spell can conflict or all be threatened by outside menaces, this supplement can provide you with many ideas concerning the unity, divisions and interactions among wizards in a far flung, complex society.

## A General Background

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In order to help you use this supplement, we have provided a general explanation of the background of the Order. If you have read other *Lion Rampant* products, this will help refresh your memory about some of the basic concepts of the Order of Hermes and its place in the world. If you have bought this supplement as a resource for your own campaign, it will give you a general overview of the Order. Everything described below is discussed in far greater detail in later chapters.

## Covenants

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Some magi, concerned that rivals might steal their hard-won secrets, live alone and in secrecy. The vast majority, however, live together in small communities bonded by vows of friendship and cooperation. A covenant is a self-sufficient collegium of magical learning where magi gather for protection and to share resources. Usually it is located in a magical area, where magical forces are more easily controlled and gathered. While covenants can be of any size, most have fewer than a dozen members. Some magi, however, live in huge covenants where the centralization of power and lore make them formidable, but where complex hierarchies limit the individual magus' freedoms.

## The Order of Hermes

Besides the wizard members of the covenant, there are many others who live there, including guards, cooks, servants, scholars, scribes, artisans, adventurers, and often an assortment of friends and companions. The magi support these individuals and, in return, they are served by them. As a community, a covenant is usually self sufficient and its inhabitants are often highly loyal to their arcane leaders. Though not actually a part of feudal society, most folk relate to the magi in the same manner as they would relate to a liege lord.

The politics within a covenant are entirely dependent on the attitudes and behaviors of its members. Some covenants have a rigid structure, while others are loose collections of individuals, cooperating only occasionally. Some are rife with internal schemes and attempts by individuals or factions to gain power over the others. Most wizard characters belong to a covenant, but it is not entirely unusual for a magi to return to their home only occasionally, spending much of their time travelling. A covenant is what a magus makes of it, so they can vary wildly.

## The Code of Hermes

Central to the Order is its Code, which regulates the activities of magi, both among their peers and in society at large. Magi want protection from their neighbors and sufficient peace to carry out their arcane studies. They know that their lives are potentially hundreds of years long and that those who could most easily cut short this long life are other magi. Therefore, by living within the Order and avoiding mortal combat with each other, the magi assure themselves a broad degree of security. Additionally, there are other powers upon this earth, some with strength equal to or greater than a wizard's own; only with unity can outside challenges be successfully met.

## Tribunals

The middle layer of organization between the Order of Hermes itself and its individual covenants consists of Tribunals. Tribunals are inter-covenant councils formed by representatives from each local covenant, one for each region of Europe. Each magus in the area covered by a Tribunal gets one vote, either directly or through proxy.

Magi may give another magus the power to represent them by giving the representative their "sigils," which are wands or other symbols given them by their masters upon completion of their apprenticeship. Magi also meet less formally in councils to decide less important matters. Covenants typically have council meetings to decide covenant actions, and sometimes magi from different covenants meet to discuss specific issues. The authority of these informal councils is completely dependent on what the participating covenants and magi choose to grant them.

## Wizards and Society

The Order is a threat to the hierarchy of society since magi bow to neither Baron nor Bishop, but it is powerful enough to deter rulers from attacking it openly. The knight's courage and the priest's prayers have supernatural powers of their own, so members of the Order rarely attack their mundane foes in open warfare. Those who cause undue conflict between the Order and society are subject to punitive action.

Young magi often find the restraints caused by society annoying, and they sometimes skirmish with the powers of the mundane world. Older magi, however, usually find ways to pursue the art of magic despite the anti-magical sentiment of society, and scorn those who do not follow their example. Most magi are very wary of the outside world and will go to any length to maintain the shaky peace which has been held for so long.

Fanatic voices within the Order and within the Church have long called for an end to the long-standing truce and a final confrontation between the two to settle their differences. In the *Ars Magica* world of the thirteenth century, more reasonable voices have so far prevailed.

For their part, most magi realize that, while they wield great power, they have no defense against miracles. As long as they stay out of the Church's way, they are largely left alone, but were they to threaten society at large, they would no doubt suffer God's fury. Besides, many in the Order support the work of the Church and agree with many of its teachings. Misunderstanding and/or political intrigue are the bases of any conflict between them, not moral antipathy.



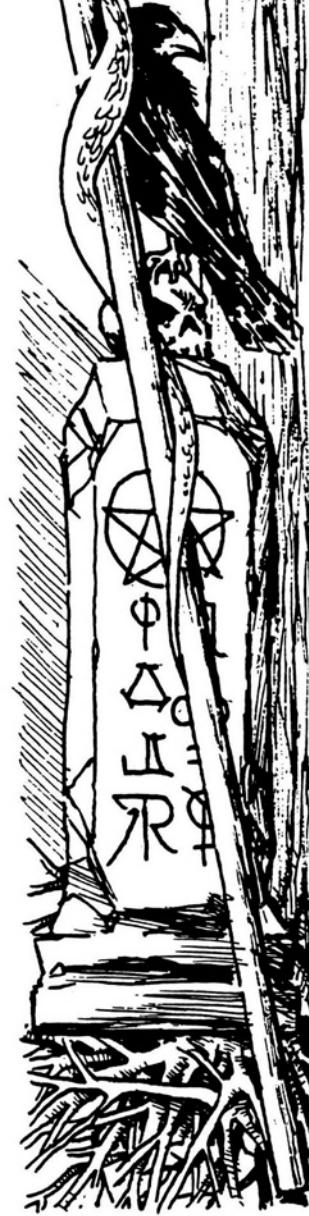
# Introduction

*"For long we have ignored these wizards, thinking them to be misguided spirits, but I have found them to be potent practitioners of the magical arts and to be feared.... These magi have the peculiar belief that they are somehow above other folk, that they have loftier thoughts and ideals, and are aware of knowledge long gone from mortal ken. They are arrogant and haughty and have clearly forgotten our Lord's words about such vanities. I urge you most strenuously Reverend Father, keep a watchful eye..."*

Brother Reginald of Avignon,  
Year of Our Lord, 1182

There are wizards in this world, and they are masters of arcane powers beyond mortal ken. Using traditions of magic nearly as old as history itself, they spend their lives in the pursuit of lore, wisdom and of ever greater power. Conducting their esoteric affairs apart from the rest of humanity, they live in covenants located on the edges of civilization. They are outside the bounds of mortal society, and though they may visit and travel through it, they are never truly a part of it. Belonging to a secret society of wizards, they have members scattered across every land. Though this ancient Order of magi is something of a legend among the common folk, few openly scoff at its existence. This Order is as powerful as it is old, and even those who know it by name, speak of it only in private. The Order of Hermes is not to be trifled with.

The roots of wizardry go back millennia to ancient Cathay, the Nile valley, and beyond, but the continuity of this tradition of magic was broken with the fall of Rome. In the subsequent period of chaos and violence, the practitioners of the ancient magical arts were divided and in hiding, fearful of the hate of the mundanes. Finally after years of bloody warfare between each other and society, several powerful magi decided that working together was the only way the art of magic could continue to grow and survive the perils of the Dark Ages. Over a period of years, a theory of magic was developed, and rules and laws were established that would allow these magi to live in harmony with one another. The magi were still guaranteed their individual freedom, but the Order provided the means by which peace could be kept. Though many of these wizards were descended from the priesthood of the Roman cult of Mercury, they knew that this cult had been based on that of the Greek god Hermes. They took this deity's name for their own to emphasize the deep roots of the newly formed Order. Shrouded in mystery, its membership a secret, the Order of Hermes was born.





## Through Young Eyes

To a young magus just leaving apprenticeship, there is a staggering diversity to be found among magi of the Order. While some lead lives of luxury in isolated towers, others eschew earthly pleasures in search of deep truths and powers. Some live among the mortals, while others ignore society, and still others are ready to back an all-out war against the mundanes. No two magi are ever alike, most hold wildly varying opinions on different matters, and the young wizards must decide what course they should take.

There are many young, curious and relatively vigorous magi newly released from apprenticeship, trying to find places for themselves in the Order, but most power lies in the hands of the more experienced wizards who have acquired high levels of mastery over their magic. There is Grimgroth, for instance, a famous wizard whose political energy and skill are renowned, and who also is regarded as an expert scholar in the field of air magic. While the political status he holds appeals to some, to many it is not worth the years of work that are required for such accomplishments — they have other ambitions. Some magi have no real ambition, live secluded, peaceful lives, and are known only to others of their House.

A few of the older magi are disturbed individuals and have been left scarred by their life experiences. At the covenant of Val-Negra, one can meet the nearly blind magus Erat Caecus, whose brush with diabolic corruption has ruined his reputation and darkened his spirit. At the same covenant lives the elderly Vancasitum, a powerful magus whose magic now threatens to overwhelm him. Already it has almost destroyed him several times, as his power has grown almost too much for his mortal shell to hold. Now he dares not cast many spells for fear of losing control a final time and passing out of this world.

If one wished to exert one's influence on the Order, there are Tribunals to attend. The most famous of these is the Provençal Tribunal which is held at Doissetep, a grim and foreboding covenant. The political maneuvers between members of different Houses and different covenants may leave a young magus baffled and confused, but if they have political ambition, they must learn to master the intricacies of the Tribunals of the Order. The Quaesitor judges are central to the Order for they must be present at all councils for them to be official. With their stern demeanors and authoritative rulings, however, they are disliked by many. Few magi have knowledge of the

Peripheral Code they continually quote, so their words are often distrusted out of ignorance. Young magi are often ill-prepared to understand all the implications of the Tribunal's arguments and votes, and may be overwhelmed by what they see and hear.

For a young magus, it is not unusual to be a little overwhelmed by all the diversity and the various levels of interaction to be found in the Order, but fortunately they have many years to create a place for themselves. If they wish, they may only involve themselves in their House and its affairs, or perhaps only in the affairs of the covenant in which they choose to live — yet the influence of the Order will have already left an indelible impression on their minds and personalities. They may decide to explore the world

and ignore the Order, but rarely can such a feat be done without at least incidental contact with the Order. If they wish to involve themselves in the politics of the Order, however, they will learn of Tribunal etiquette and strategy, of the role played by the Quaesitoris, of the natures and attitudes of the various Houses, and of the deep concerns and issues now making themselves known throughout the Order.





# Life of a Magus

Most medieval wizards consider themselves to be above common mortals. Indeed, some Hermetic scholars take this separation for granted and debate the precise point at which one ceases to be human and becomes a magus. Exactly what the magi are is not really known and, though it is often discussed, no final conclusions have ever been reached. One of the most common debates is this mortal versus mystical question. The precise nature of a magus is mostly due to the individual personalities of a wizard; the only thing all magi really have in common is their ability to do magic. Most magi are very unique individuals, which is emphasized by the fact that they lead lives entirely unlike those of the mortals around them.

In this chapter, the life of a magus is detailed, from the days before their master "discovered" them, through apprenticeship and magushood, to their final years which are so often lived in the shadow of Twilight. We hope that this will give you a clearer idea of how these wizards live and think, and provide insights into the personalities of these unique individuals.

## Before Apprenticeship

*"I fully expected to follow my vulgar father's footsteps onto the battlefield as a warrior for hire, and eventually become a mercenary captain just like him, but I always knew that it was not the life for me. From early on I never lived up to my vulgar father's expectations because I was neither fast nor strong, and he had no respect for my intelligence — which he considered to be nothing more than cunning. Furthermore, I was always alone, other children were frightened of me; I could not be the leader as my vulgar father was. I had no friends, and wherever we lived people would whisper about my tainted heart. My father hated me for what they said, though he would always shout them down. Never did I know that I had any options other than becoming a mercenary like him. When I look back upon those distant and pain filled years, I am thankful to my Hermetic father Coracol for rescuing me from it. I was destined to be a magus from birth, and if I had not come into the Order, I would have died ignominiously fighting for some nameless Baron over some sort of petty squabble. I would have lived and died without the knowledge that I was somehow different, and without any knowledge of my real powers. What could be a more terrible curse?"*

-Caecus of House Tylalus

Each magus has a unique story to tell of their "life before the Order," of the life they led before becoming an apprentice. Most of them regard their apprenticeship as the beginning of their true lives, since few fit in with normal society. Indeed, some magi consider their age to



## The Order of Hermes

be counted as starting at the beginning of their apprenticeship. Almost universally, magi have bad memories of their past before becoming an apprentice and many prefer not ever to discuss it. Some magi, especially those whose magic does not bother non-magical beings, may have had typical or even fortunate childhoods. For the majority, however, the years before apprenticeship are painful and perhaps best forgotten. Even those magi with good memories of childhood do not discuss it out of fear of offending those who do not.

The major problem faced by most magi in the time before their apprenticeship is that which they value above all else, their magical Gift. The Gift is apparently given to a person before or at birth, and its presence in a person can cause grave discomfort in almost all non-magical creatures, even humans. Many magi tell of being shunned and constantly being barked at by dogs, of frightening horses, and of scaring away game (though cats, on the other hand, seem unusually amenable to magical beings). Far worse than the Gift's effect on animals, however, is its effect on people. Though people cannot say exactly why someone with the Gift disturbs them (as humans tend to be magically insensitive), they tend to intuitively dislike and distrust magical people. While many children's parents might overcome this aversion, their peers generally do not. Most magi were ostracized, teased, tormented, or beaten by other children, and even by adults. Naturally, such treatment can lead to a miserable childhood and can often help explain the warped personalities of some wizards.

In addition to the Gift, many magi were unusually intelligent as children. Perhaps the Gift encourages the development of intelligence, or perhaps it is because magi always choose the brightest youths as apprentices. In any case, there are few places in medieval society for such intelligent and curious children who insist upon questioning the status quo. For those fortunate enough to be born of noble parents, intelligence may have been a blessing that led to education in preparation for life as a priest, but for commoners, intelligence encourages a child to ask too many insightful questions that adults cannot or will not

answer. Intelligence can cause a child to be unsatisfied with the life in which they are brought up. A serf with the intelligence and wisdom to realize what it is to be a serf can be a severe danger to the rigidly structured feudal society and thus can be a danger to themselves as well.

Additionally, some magi actually had overt manifestations of their Gift upon their bodies or in their minds. The Gift is known to warp both, and all should know what effect such malformations as the evil eye or the hunchback can have on the superstitious. Any child

unfortunate enough to display immature magical abilities will likely be punished severely, feared, hated, and possibly killed.

A minority of magi actually grew up in covenants, the offspring of grogs, servants, or even magi themselves. These apprentices are usually quite strange, for they are isolated from normal society, and because the magical aura of the covenant sometimes warps or exaggerates their Gift. These young magi are far more likely to have been accepted while growing up by those around them, and may have even been included in the community of wizards from when they were babes. However, the strange social environment of the covenant can have adverse affects on the young minds of those too openly exposed to it, and there are few in a covenant with the

wisdom to attempt to shelter them. Such burdens of past experience, however, are but part and parcel of what it is to be a magus, and most magi consider it to be a small price to pay for their powers.

### Your Years Before Apprenticeship

To get a better idea of what your wizard was like before becoming a magus, you must first determine at what age you were taken as an apprentice. Apprenticeship typically lasts at least fifteen years, so subtract 15 or so from your beginning age to find out how old you were. Having done that, now answer some of the following questions about yourself.

- How did your Gift manifest itself when you were young? In what ways were you different from "normal" children, and how did they react to your strangeness?"
- What was your family like? Into what social class were you born? Noble? Serf? Artisan? Did you live in the country or in a city? What was your parents' occupation?
- How well did you fit into your family? To your place in society? To how others treated you? What early events or circumstances helped to shape your personality or attitudes? What skills did you pick up from your mundane life before you became an apprentice?
- If you grew up in a covenant, who were your parents and why were they at the covenant or why did they leave you there?

## Apprenticeship

*"My apprenticeship was traumatic and sometimes filled with terror, but I respect my pater for teaching in the way that he did, for it may have been the only way such a youth as I could learn the art of magic. I can still remember the day I first met Coracol."*

*"I was but a youth of fourteen and was wandering alone down a street on the west side of London, far from the home of*

my vulgar father. The next day I was to begin duties as a mercenary in my vulgar father's mercenary band, and I was dreading finally having to take up the sword as he had always

revealed to me his name, Coracol, his identity, a magus, and my destiny, to become his apprentice. Thus began a long and arduous apprenticeship."

planned for me. Then from the side of the road, a thin, old man wearing a tattered robe came up to me. He approached slowly, looked me in the eye, and softly spoke to me, asking about my life. I drew my dagger, thinking him to be possessed, but I listened to what he said. I was disturbed and puzzled for most strangers shunned me for they were disturbed by my Gift, so I was shocked to find someone talking to me like this. He asked about my family, my future, my plans and my problems, and for some reason I answered them all. After a few minutes he said, "Things never stay the same," and left."

"That night, I woke to see him standing above my pallet, with a small flame magically upheld over his upturned palm. I let out a yell of surprise and terror, but my family sleeping in the same room did not hear. No matter what I yelled or how hard I shook them they would not awake. He spoke to me and said that they would not awake, that I was to gather the things I wanted most to keep and come with him. I looked at him for a moment, dumbfounded, but then I did as I was bid."

"Was it his confidence, a sense of adventure, or some enchantment of his that made me obey? I still don't know. I gathered some things into a small trunk and we left. Outside, there was a gathering of dark, silent people on mules, with three mules waiting for us. We put my trunk on one mule, mounted the other two, and set off. For days we rode in silence, the old man cutting me off whenever I tried to speak and refusing to answer my questions, and his servants would not speak to me either. Finally we arrived at my master's covenant far in the hinterlands of northern England. There, finally, in his sanctum he

### Children with the Gift

Some magi believe that a child born in a magical area has a greater chance to possess the Gift, while others believe it can only be bestowed by a faerie blessing. Many magi now subscribe to the theory that the Gift is passed along bloodlines, perhaps occurring only once every few generations. Some magi believe that all these Gifted bloodlines must contain some of the blood of the old ones, who, legends say, frequently mated with mortals. They claim that all mortals with magical powers, including all magi, are descended from these legendary beings. However, the theory that the mother needs to have been exposed to a magical aura is also gaining acceptance.

Because an aging potion causes a magus to become sterile, it has been difficult to prove that the Gift is hereditary. The theory of the blood lines being traced to the old ones is impossible to validate, especially since many magi doubt the old one's very existence. If the Gift follows bloodlines, however, that may be the reason that there seem to be fewer young people with the Gift now than there were centuries ago. For hundreds of years, many of those with the Gift have become magi and rarely had children. Their bloodlines were therefore thinned. Another possibility is that the growing influence of the Dominion has reduced the appearance of the Gift. In either case, the number of apprentices is likely to continue to drop over the years. Those less eager to see danger ahead, however, state that there are not fewer apprentices now than before, simply more Hermetic magi looking for them.

Some Hermetic scholars have speculated that all humans have an innate capacity for magic. There are many magi who have no apparent magical power; they have what is known as the "gentle Gift." It is theorized that perhaps they don't have the "Gift" at all, and what Hermetic theory labels the "Gift" is something different. If these people without the obvious traces of magical ability can learn magic equal to that of other magi, perhaps anyone could be taught magic. It might be that Hermetic magic simply does not have the capacity to bring forth the innate abilities of most people, but that some other approach could bring out magic ability in anyone. Such speculation, however, has not yet been verified.

"Coracol was always hard with me. While I thought he was only being cruel and petty, he was actually teaching me to be strong enough to deal with all the unpredictability of magic. We all know full well that magic rarely turns out exactly as intended, and that sometimes surprise at an unforeseen result can slow our reaction to potential danger. By being as inconsistent and as harsh with me as he was, Coracol taught me to put up with whatever came and to be ready for unexpected difficulty. It is he who made me as tough and vigilant as I am now."

"The seminal event of my apprenticeship, however, was not under Coracol's direction. One night, while he was in council with the other magi of the covenant, I snuck into his private chamber to peer into his most precious tomes, and inside one of his trunks I found a large crystal. I gazed into it, and seemed to fall an endless distance into darkness, filled with tiny sparkling lights and spinning spheres. And there was something else I saw, something wondrous and terrible, and of it I have never been able to speak more about, though I remember it well. When Coracol revived me from unconsciousness hours later, I could not remember what I had seen, and my eyes had been damaged. My vision and my appearance have never recovered."

"That's how I received my Hermetic name, for thereafter Coracol called me 'Caecus,' which in Latin, of course, means Blind. He always was a cruel, but unfailingly truthful master. I shall always revere him for what he did for me, but I would not care to have to serve him another sixteen years."

## The Order of Hermes

*"When I was first free of him, I envied the other magi who had not suffered under masters like Coracol, but now I see the wisdom in his teachings. In fact, my own apprentice, whom I call 'Dog,' is learning that wisdom now. So it is that I am now a magus of the Order."*

*-Caecus of House Tytalus*

Being taken away by a magus to parts unknown is always disturbing and frightening, even if the apprentice is excited and even relieved to be freed from a miserable life. Some are kidnapped by their masters, some are coaxed away by promises of knowledge and power, while still others are actually offered (or sold) to the magi by families who cannot handle the youngsters' strange ways. (These families generally claim that their children ran away to avoid the stigma of dealing with magi, so the apprentice may not even know of the deal.) Typically a magus will remove the child from their home and then demonstrate to them their magical powers. After then speaking with the child for a time, they will ask if they wish to come with them to become their apprentice and to learn such magic for themselves. Though most apprentices do come willingly and freely, the Code does not require it. Strictly speaking, magi are allowed to obtain apprentices in any manner they wish.

Once in the covenant, the apprentice first has to learn new habits and knowledge before even beginning to work with spells. First, they must learn to fit into the hierarchy of the covenant, how to interact with the grogs, which places in the covenant are forbidden to them, and where the kitchen is. They also have to learn Latin, how to read and write and the basic tasks required of them to help their master in the laboratory. For those who were illiterate when they arrived at the covenant (and that's most of them), these tasks are especially arduous and demanding. The first year of apprenticeship is often disappointing, since the apprentice generally studies and performs menial tasks without ever learning any of the exciting secrets mastered by the magi around them. Often the apprentice does not even have any understanding of why they must do as they do; it is often called the "year of frustration."

If there are other, older apprentices in the covenant, this time can be even more oppressive, as the older ones torment the youngest apprentice, perhaps trying out some of the spells they are learning from their masters. This first year is so hard on apprentices that it is customary for masters to restrict them from leaving the covenant except under direct supervision. There are few, if any, apprentices who do not at times have the desire to run away during this time. Indeed many apprentices try to do so in this first year, though inevitably they are retrieved by their master or someone sent out to fetch them.

The study of Latin teaches the apprentice the vocabulary and mental discipline necessary to begin the first step of the study of magic. Once an apprentice has developed the necessary mental skills, the master can

begin magical training. Most magi try to begin teaching magic as soon as possible to mold the youth's Gift while it is young and pliable.

Learning magic is at first a wondrous thing. All magi can remember the first spells they cast. When they realize that they have power within them restricted to a tiny few in the world and that they are going to receive the training necessary to realize that power, many begin fantasizing about being mighty wizards. During the second year, apprenticeship becomes easier because the apprentice sees concrete and amazing results from their long hours of study — it is commonly called the "year of wonder." But after the initial awe wears off, the apprentice still faces more years of menial labor and taxing mental effort in the pursuit of mastery — these are together called the "years of toil."

Much of an apprentice's life has little to do with learning magic. In addition to spending long hours learning reading, writing, Latin, and mathematics, they must tend fires, stir bubbling cauldrons, and run innumerable errands. These menial tasks serve a double purpose: teaching the apprentice patience and helping the master work faster in the laboratory. An apprentice has nearly no free time, for when they are not laboring for their master, they must be studying to learn ever more of the arts. Sleep is a precious and all too rare commodity; apprentices learn to catch it as they can. Their lives and their time are not their own, and the pressure and stress has been known to break those who are not determined and hardy enough.

A magus' life is largely determined by apprenticeship. While apprentices have innate inclinations that partly determine the kinds of magic at which they will excel or fail, early experience in magical training can also create lifelong affinities or deficiencies. Fifteen years spent under the tutelage of a single master, however, shapes not only the person's magical abilities but their personality as well. It is from the master that an apprentice learns what it is to be a magus, even if the master is by no means typical of magi in general. A master teaches their apprentice more than the art of magic, for the apprentice must learn from them how to be a human being and a mature magus, for the master is usually an apprentice's only role model. It is because of the profound influence that masters have on their apprentices that the magi of the thirteenth century still closely resemble the Founders of their house who lived hundreds of years before them.

While most of apprenticeship is spent in tedious study or menial labor, it is certainly not without its dangers. Few apprentices become magi without some sort of magical mishap. Magic is highly unpredictable and fickle, and before the apprentice learns control and caution they attempt tasks beyond their power and understanding — similar to how a child might insist on finding out why they should not touch a hot stove for themselves. Masters who have not yet learned their

apprentices' limits can set them with tasks that are at best impossible or at worst deadly. Because apprentices must be taught to keep a clear head in the face of danger, however, such experiences are invaluable, and the risks that masters allow their apprentices to take are usually not fatal — though some magi are known to “cycle through” apprentices. For those apprentices whose curiosity is not satisfied by their master's slow tuition, however, the risks of apprenticeship can be considerably more serious.

## Peculiarities of the Gift

Most people in medieval society who do possess the Gift either never learn about it or are taught from an early age to suppress and hide their powers. Even those with enough spunk to go against society will develop their magical powers in ways that are incompatible with Hermetic magic, and that are usually far weaker as well. Once a young person with the Gift is found by a Hermetic magus and taken into apprenticeship, a new stage of their life begins. Their magical abilities are nurtured and encouraged to blossom, and their master does everything possible to get the apprentice to demonstrate and use their powers. Sometimes this has disastrous results, as the apprentice has not yet learned to contain their power, yet this pressure is essential for the apprentice and the master to learn the full extent of the apprentice's powers. Without this early testing, the apprentice would never be able to tap their strongest, innermost aspects of the Gift.

If the apprentice has already begun to explore magic, either independently or in a tradition antithetical to Hermetic theory, then the master must either weaken this power or find a way to fit it into Hermetic training. Sometimes that is not possible, and the apprentice always retains these early powers. Invariably, however, this non-Hermetic power leads to weaknesses in Hermetic magic, such as a deficiency in one or more arts. Therefore, the master spends a great deal of effort and time endeavoring to wean the apprentice from their dependence on and association with their first experiences with magic. If the master cannot conform the apprentice's powers to Hermetic magic, they typically command the apprentice to not use those powers, and threaten dire consequences

if they do. Sometimes, they will use magical means to get the apprentice to forget that they ever had such powers, as well as the means to use them. There are stories of magi suddenly regaining their memory and having access to magical powers they never realized they had. This event can result from Twilight, and it might produce problems for the magus, who has never learned to combine their Hermetic and non-Hermetic powers. Such combinations are always dangerous, though they can give a magus new and broader powers.

Generally, however, the master will work with the apprentice very diligently, training them with new magical techniques in the hope that the new powers will overwhelm their earlier powers. For instance, an apprentice who has already developed the power to affect plants might be taught the art of Herbam immediately, in the

hope that their earlier powers would be transformed into an affinity for Herbam, instead becoming a block to the apprentice's growth in that art or its antithesis arts.

The Peripheral Code guarantees an apprentice at least one season's worth of training every year. If a master gives an apprentice less training than this, or if the training is far below expected standards, other magi may take the apprentice as their own to give them the training they deserve. The apprentice must consent to the change, and the master has one year's warning in which to begin training the apprentice as expected. The Peripheral Code makes this effort to protect apprentices

because people with the Gift are rare and valuable. The magi of Hermes agree that such people should not be wasted on stingy or incompetent masters.

The process of apprenticeship generally ends only in reaching magus status or in death. No apprentice can return to the life they left. Society will not accept them back. The Order will only accept those that become full magi and cannot allow the failures the chance to misuse their secrets. Sometimes an apprentice proves somehow incapable of continuing Hermetic studies, either because of an innate lack or because of an accident in magical training. These half-magi are generally accepted as consortis since they cannot be allowed to return to their lost homes. It is an old adage that an apprentice must either succeed in the attempt to become a magus or die in the attempt.

### About Your Apprenticeship

Your apprenticeship was the most important time in determining who you are as a young magus, so put some serious thought into what it was like for you.

- Who was your master and what were they like? How were you treated and what was your training like? What did your master expect you to become, and what did you actually become? Were you a disappointment? How much of your master's reputation follows you into your life as a magus, and what kind of reputation was it?
- Besides your master, who was important to you during your apprenticeship? Another apprentice? A different magus? A scullery maid? The grogs?
- What were seminal events in your apprenticeship? Magical disasters? Crises that your master went through? How have these affected you?

## Becoming a Magus

*"It took me sixteen years to finish apprenticeship because I failed the Gauntlet on my first attempt. There I was, standing in a room with many magi from House Tytalus gathered around me, and Coracol wheeled in a massive chest. It was the project he had been working on for months; and it was covered with bronze bands, bolts, locks, nails, nobs, and clasps. 'Open it,' he commanded."*

*"I threw everything I had against that chest. Rego magic to open it, Muto magic to warp it, even Perdo magic, my specialty, to weaken it. Nothing worked; every attempt made the chest glow, but it would not open. To add to my embarrassment the chest was enchanted to laugh every time a spell was cast on it, so each one of my failures was rewarded with mirth. I cannot think back to that time without shuddering at the memory of that laugh, and to make it worse, all the congregated magi watched in mute silence. After nearly an hour, I gave up. That might have been the hardest thing in my life, giving up the Gauntlet and facing another year with Coracol. Once I had conceded defeat and knelt before him, demonstrating that I was still his apprentice, Coracol strode over and opened the chest by hand. It had not been locked."*

*"I got a second chance at the Gauntlet the next year, though only two members of House Tytalus were present. Coracol was a bit more serious about it that time. He summoned an air elemental called the Breathsucker and locked me in a room alone with it. The thing might have sucked the breath right out of me if I hadn't stolen a dozen pawns of raw vis from Coracol over the previous year, stashing it away for just this purpose. With the elemental defeated, I had proved myself, and Coracol was especially pleased to see I had won by wit and not brute force, and I still believe that he might have been smiling."*

*"After a short ceremony, I was declared a magus and was welcomed into the Order and the House. Coracol gave me my sigil, declared his nick-name to be my true Hermetic name, and welcomed me as a sodalis. As soon as the other two magi left, I packed my goods and set off for ill-fated Tagelyn. I had had enough of Coracol and his merciless heart, and now I was free to leave him forever, not that I shall ever forget him"*

*-Caecus of House Tytalus*

Apprentices and masters have one central conflict: the length of apprenticeship. Masters often would like to keep their apprentices for very long times since they can help in the laboratory. In fact, as the apprentice's knowledge grows, they can provide ever more valuable assistance, and parting with them becomes harder and harder. Apprentices, on the other hand, want to be recognized as full magi and gain their freedom. To settle this universal conflict, the Order of Hermes has settled on fifteen years as the proper amount of time to retain an apprentice. Anyone keeping an apprentice much longer than that can be reprimanded and forced to give up the apprentice. Generally in such as case, House Quaesitor makes an attempt to find another House to "adopt" the apprentice

and to bring them into Order. Failing that they will adopt the apprentice into their own House, thus allowing them to become a magus, but such magi are never as respected as the others in their House, no matter what their achievements.

Once the apprentice can manipulate each of the fifteen arts, create a parma magica, engage in certámen, and cast a number of formulaic spells, they are considered ready for testing. The test is called the Apprentice's Gauntlet, and should the apprentice pass, they are then inducted as a magus. Those that fail (and survive the failure) may try again after one year's time and each year after that until they succeed.

## Ceremony of Initiation

Once one has passed the Apprentice's Gauntlet, an apprentice is ready for the rite of initiation. This ceremony usually takes place at a Tribunal, because it requires the presence of a Quaesitor and at least one member of the master's House other than the master. Since full Tribunals take place about every seven years, special Tribunals of Initiation are often held once or twice in between regular Tribunals so that apprentices do not have to wait too long. Often the Tribunal is a strictly private affair and only members of the House and the Quaesitor are invited; sometimes the master and apprentice will even journey to the Domus of the House for the rite. If the apprentice has chosen to enter another House and has successfully passed that House's requirements, the ceremony requires a sponsor from the House who adopts the apprentice as their filius, plus another member of the House who serves as a witness. The Quaesitor, of course, is still required as a witness.

There are a number of different stages to the ceremony:

- **Declaration of Competence-** The master first declares that the apprentice has fulfilled their studies, has passed the Apprentice's Gauntlet, and is ready to become a magus. This is usually a formal announcement made to the gathered council of magi and may take the form of a long speech as the magus relates how their apprentice has performed over the years. Often it is filled with humorous anecdotes, emotional testaments, and even heartfelt appreciation for the apprentice's friendship and loyalty. It may be the first time the apprentice ever really learns what their master thinks of them.
- **Swearing the Oath-** The Quaesitor asks the apprentice whether they will uphold the Code of Hermes, and the apprentice takes the oath by repeating the Code from memory and swearing to follow it (the oath is shown on p. 38 of this book). The Quaesitor then says, "I, [name], filius/filia of [parens' name], a Quaesitor in good standing, hereby recognize you as a magus of the Order of Hermes. What shall be this Magus' name?"

## Life as a Magus

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- **The Hermetic Name-** The apprentice's master replies, "This is [Hermetic name], filius/filia of [master's own name], follower of [name of master's House]." The Quaesitor then formally welcomes the apprentice to the Order by name, perhaps adding a few words of personal welcome as well. The Hermetic name is officially chosen by the master, though many masters allow their apprentices to choose their names.
- **Giving of the Sigil-** The master, now a parens, presents the apprentice, now a magus and a filius/filia, with their sigil. The sigil is usually a wand of some kind, crafted in secret by the master. It typically bears arcane symbols related to the apprentice's magical specialties, the apprentice's House, or other aspects related to the apprentice's identity as a magus. The newly initiated magus keeps this sigil for their entire life as a symbol of their membership in the Order of Hermes. This sigil also represents the magus' vote at Tribunals. Whoever holds this sigil can vote as this magus' proxy.

After this ceremony, the sodalis of the newly initiated magus welcome them to the Order with a celebration whose nature depends largely on the magus' House. Typically, however, the older magi give short speeches about their experiences as wizards and offer informal blessings to their new sodalis. The drink of choice in the area is often consumed in considerable quantities.

Though this ceremony can vary widely from House to House, it is generally a happy time where proud masters can present to their society of peers their finest achievement — their apprentice — which is the closest thing to a child that a wizard can ever have. It is also a sad time however, for it means the ex-apprentice and master must part ways. It can be difficult, for they have been so close for so long and may have developed a bond of deep affection.

## Leaving the Home Covenant

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It is traditional for a newly initiated magus to seek a covenant other than the one at which they were trained. For one thing, after fifteen years in one place, most are eager to travel, see the world, and to test their talent to the limit. For another, most magi consider it important for a young magus to find a new home where they can learn independence and develop in a way different from their parens. Nevertheless, a few young magi prefer to stay in the covenants of their masters, where they are already known and where they are, perhaps, more comfortable. Some young magi travel the width and breadth of the Order seeking a covenant that is right for them, and others join with a group of fellows who are also newly released in order to bring a new covenant into being.

*"When Coracol took me as his apprentice, I dreamed about the power I would one day have. I pictured myself returning to my home, showing my vulgar father how mighty I would be, destroying those who had mocked me, perhaps leading greater armies than my father ever had and controlling vast tracts of land with thousands of peasants working for me. Apprenticeship, with its long hours of drudgery, pushed those dreams out of my mind for I thought of nothing but passing the Gauntlet. Then, when I finally became a magus, I again dreamed of great things: establishing a covenant with other young magi; becoming their leader and then the leader of the Tribunal, perhaps even becoming Primus of my House; gaining great prestige and making myself, my House, and the Order strong. Things did not go as I planned, however, when my first covenant, Tagelyn, was destroyed, and I was forced to flee with my fellows to the misty isle of Hibernia, where again I began to dream of a new future in a primitive land. As our covenant grew, I participated in Tribunals and considered myself capable of anything. Then demons decimated my home and I nearly lost my soul in the struggle. Now I have left Hibernia to live in Val-Negra covenant in the Pyrenees, and I have not yet dared to dream again. This ancient covenant has already been destroyed by the decay of time, so, I hope, not much more can go wrong. As I look back, I find it strange to realize that only now, after decades of life as a magus, do I see myself as a true wizard. Only now is my life finally beginning."*

—Caecus of House Tytalus

## Settling In

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A new wizard's first years are usually spent creating a place for themselves in a new covenant and perhaps in a new land as well. The young magus must find their place in the covenant's hierarchy (if it has one) and attempt to learn the peculiar customs and traditions the covenant may have. These are years of testing, and a number of magi are unable to survive once they are on their own. They may have enough ambition to try anything, but not enough power and wisdom to handle the challenges to which they set themselves. Though they indeed have great powers compared with the mortals, the challenges they face are far more dangerous as well. Older and wiser magi may often advise caution during these first years as a magus, but most young wizards are too self-confident and excited to play it safe.

These first years are vital because the young magus is unknown to the Order. This is a time of building a reputation, making lifelong enemies and friends, and giving direction to one's career as a magus. The young magus may well find themselves instantly caught up in local politics. The established magi see this new wizard as one more vote in the Tribunal, so they will try to sway



them to their particular causes and cliques. This first year of magushood is commonly called the "year of reckoning."

Joining a covenant requires swearing an oath to support the covenant and not to attack others within the covenant. It is by no means a casual relationship, so magi must choose their covenants carefully.

If the covenant is an established one, the magus typically needs to perform several years of potentially dangerous service for the older magi. Since they likely have little knowledge that is new to the older magi of the covenant, all these new magi can provide is their courage and expendability. Thus the dangers that a young magus faces are increased even more.

## Laboratories

Each wizard usually owns an expansive laboratory and has living quarters adjoining it somewhere within their covenant. This is known as a wizard's laboratory and is the only home most magi will ever know. These mysterious chambers are storehouses of magical and scholarly treasures; they are filled with vials of liquid, bags of powder, dusty tomes, mildewed scrolls, blackened candles, innumerable burning braziers, bronze scales, arrays of knives, marble mortars and pestles, colored inks, peacock feather pens, and sundry magical devices of many different varieties. Looking into a wizard's laboratory can reveal much of their personality and interests, for it is a reflection of their most intense pursuits and endeavors. Magic is such a personal pursuit that each laboratory is unique, and one magus cannot work efficiently in the laboratory of another without getting well-accustomed to it first.

While some magi are very well organized and have tidy and clean laboratories, others have laboratories so cluttered and full that it is difficult to imagine how they are able to accomplish anything at all. Magi are often measured by how elaborate and expansive their laboratories are, and many magi go to great lengths to keep their own laboratory as up-to-date and complete as possible. Thus laboratories in some of the wealthier covenants have grown to be of huge size, with elaborate mechanisms, and large numbers of different assistants. However, it can be assumed that the basic laboratory is nearly as good as the most extravagant (though more is said on this subject in the *Ars Magica* supplement — Covenants).



## The Sanctum

Each magus has a sanctum, a place where other magi are not allowed. The sanctum usually includes both the laboratory and the sleeping quarters, though it may include only one of these, or it may include much more. Sancta are merely the areas which wizards set aside for themselves by marking it off with mystical symbols, and other magi may not enter that area without their permission.

According to the Peripheral Code, the sanctum must be clearly marked by a circle inscribed within a square, with lines connecting the square's opposite corners. It is important that the mark be clear because anyone entering this sanctum without permission can be killed by the owner. Entering a sanctum without permission is tantamount to attacking the owner, so the owner is presumed innocent of wrong-doing in defending themselves from the intruder. This is why most magi feel uncomfortable in other magi's sancta, for they may be killed or injured by that magi with impunity and will have no grounds for retaliation. Only magi on the most friendly terms will visit each other in their sancta, and this act of faith and friendship is seldom overlooked by other magi in the covenant.

Magi are very protective of their sancta, and they often put traps within them to protect their labs while they are away.

Because magi are so reluctant to enter another's sanctum, magi who can afford the space usually have anterooms where they can meet with visitors outside the sanctum but still within their chambers.

## Covenant Relations

Almost all magi join a covenant at some point in their careers, and most remain members of one covenant from the time they leave apprenticeship until they drift into Twilight. A covenant provides a magus protection, camaradery, shared wealth, and a foundation upon which to organize their lives. Though a covenant may include magi of different or even opposed opinions and training, each covenant of magi generally develops a unique loyalty among themselves. The covenant is treated as a political unit within its Tribunal, so its

successes, failures, and crimes are reflected on all the members. Furthermore, the other magi are the first ones to which one can turn in times of trouble. Fellow members of a House might be willing to help, but if they live at distant covenants, they are slow and possibly less than willing to come to one's aid. Because the covenant forces magi of various backgrounds and capabilities to work together, they are a major source of growth and change within the Order, as well as within individual magi. Those covenants that are composed entirely of magi from a single House tend to become stagnant and unproductive, but they still make up nearly one third of the existing covenants.

## House Relations

Relations to one's House fall into two general categories: those of duty and those of convenience. Which it is depends on both the nature of the magus and the nature of their House.

Each House expects different things from their members. Some, like House Tremere, expect loyalty even to death, whereas the leaders of House Ex Miscellanea have almost no contact with the Ex Miscellanea magi, let alone control over them.

Increasingly magi are ignoring their fealty to their House, and simply ignoring whatever bonds they do have with it. Though all magi must work with their House to some degree or another, it is not at all difficult to ignore it most of the time. Relations of convenience are common among all the Houses. Simply put, magi like to be with those who are like them, and they find that others in their House tend to have the most in common, thus they tend to naturally spend time commiserating with them. Even if others in one's House do not share interests in magic, more subtle attitudes prove even more important in letting one be comfortable with other magi. It is exceedingly difficult for a magus to escape their training, and it is almost impossible for a magus to escape their connection with their own House.

## Friendship

Magi call other magi "sodalis" ("comrade" or "fellow member") when they wish to simply use a tone of general familiarity and unity without any personal

connection implied. They call trusted non-magi "consors" ("associate") which indicates a level of trusted companion and helper. However, the most significant title of friendship, implying a deep level of trust, "amicus" ("friend"), is reserved for very few, probably one, perhaps none.

Relations between magi are commonly described as duties: duty to fellows in a covenant or House, to superiors, to one's parens, to one's apprentice. When a magus thinks or speaks about their connection with other magi, they usually use the word duty, for that is simply the context in which all relationships are thought. A magus is not loyal to their sodalis in their covenant because they are friends, it is out of duty. True friendship is rare.

Magi are often too wrapped up in their studies to form real friendships, and many magi are highly suspicious of those who might learn secrets that can be used against them. Their powers and backgrounds also make them ill-suited to be friends with mortals, even trusted consortis. When a magus decides or comes to realize that someone else is an amicus, therefore, it is a noteworthy event. Usually this bond of friendship is formed only after long years together, but can occur as a result of confronting some common crisis or challenge. When circumstances force two magi to trust each other and work closely together, such as when a covenant is shaken by suspicion and violence because of an uncovered conspiracy, then the two magi who work together to solve the crisis may become amici.

Magi from one covenant often travel together, sometimes in groups of three or more, and doing so often builds a bond and a friendship that can develop into true friendship. The dangers inherent in travelling in these dark times and the necessity for relying upon one another are the principle factors in the development of such a relationship.

Since becoming amici is so rare, the Order has developed rituals to affirm the bond. These rituals are private, so much so that some magi keep it secret that they are amici. Since the rituals are not public, there is no standard tradition as to how the ritual is performed, except that the magi cut their wrists and place them together, so that blood is mingled. The two amici then exchange vows of mutual, lifelong support and trust. To betray one's amicus, while it carries no legal penalty, is seen as a vicious breach of faith, probably indicating a deeply flawed spirit. Legend has it that the bond be-

### About Your Attitudes as a Magus

Answer these questions about your magus.

- How do you feel about the common folk? The nobility? The Church?
- What do you hope to gain by studying magic?
- What is your eventual goal? How do you intend to use your magical powers?
- What do you fear most, both in your magical career and in the outside world?
- What kind of relationship do you have with your mater or pater (ex-master), now that you are a full magus on your own?
- How confident are you about your understanding of magic? Are you arrogant or humble about your powers?

tween amici is actually supernatural, especially if both are magi, and that betrayal carries with it an undying curse. There are unsubstantiated stories of amici who can hear each others' calls of distress when they are in great danger, or who somehow can sense each others' presence.

Magi sometimes become amici with consortis, with friends of the covenant, or even with grogs, but this is exceedingly rare. More often, a consors or grog is declared an amicus of a covenant, rather than of a particular magus. Since this bond is less personal, the ritual is public. Sharing of blood is not practiced in this ritual.

The concept of the "amicus" has spread to non-magi who associate with the Order, such as companions and grogs. The ritual they use, if any, is up to them. Grogs, especially in northern covenants, have taken to forming bonds after surviving deadly battles together. The wounds suffered in combat are sometimes used for the exchange of blood. Those grogs that do perform this ritual call each other "blood brother," and there is evidence that the ritual has even been taken up by mortals outside the Order's covenants.

## Finding an Apprentice

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Different magi have various reasons for taking apprentices. The most practical simply want help in the laboratory, but many want their apprentices to carry on the tradition taught to them by their masters. Some want to increase the power of their Houses by training new magi to join them, while others are concerned only with more personal traditions. Undeniably, it is a boost to one's pride to see a young magus who has learned everything about magic from you. Magi realize that, even with longevity potions, their lifetimes are limited, and training an apprentice grants one a sort of immortality. For the same reasons that mortals have children, magi train apprentices.

When a magus goes in search of an apprentice, they sometimes need look no further than their own covenant. Because the covenant is usually in a magical area, whatever Gift any person has is more easily apparent and is perhaps stronger as well. A magus simply has to search through the children of the covenant, find a child with both the Gift and a precocious intelligence, and they may have found their apprentice. Magi who can find these apprentices, however, consider themselves highly fortunate. Much more often, a magus has to travel far to find an appropriate child.

The task of finding an apprentice can be quite difficult for a magus, as there seem to be fewer and fewer people who have the Gift. In some lands, especially where the Dominion is strong, it seems almost impossible to find youths with the Gift. Even when magi can find magical youths, many of them lack the mental capacity to learn Hermetic magic. Finally, some magical people develop their abilities independently. This immature exercise of power sometimes ruins them for Hermetic

magic, making traditional magical power inaccessible to them. These individuals, at best, can become consortis and possibly develop their powers further under trained guidance, but they will never become true magi.

As the magus explores the land around the covenant, they listen for rumors of children who are intelligent, strange, "cursed," "blessed," "faerie touched," or just out of place. This search often takes magi face-to-face with strange events and mysteries, even when they do not find a suitable child. When a magus is looking for an apprentice, they become very aware of the gift in others and can sense it much more readily than they normally do. Whether this is simply a facet of increased concentration or something supernatural is often speculated upon by the magi in the evening discussions during a Tribunal or council. In any case, they often can sense the degree of gift in others around them and this is often a great boon in finding an apprentice.

Even when the child is found, the problems may not be over. Many children do not wish to leave their homes, or if they do, their parents do not want to part with them. In such cases, some magi leave the child alone, but many have turned to kidnapping because potential apprentices have become so hard to find. With a little Mentem magic, a kidnapping can be arranged very easily, but unless the apprentice develops a true desire to become a wizard, the apprenticeship will certainly fail.

Even when the child wishes to become an apprentice, the family, fearing for the child's soul or their own income, usually objects. Except in barbarian lands, it has become typical for magi not to risk even approaching the parents. They simply take the child and use whatever means are necessary to keep the parents from finding out what happened to their missing children. Since those with the Gift rarely fit in with others, many families do not miss these children much once the initial shock has passed. Many magi speculate that it is as if, somehow, the family always knew that the child's destiny was elsewhere.

## Finding a Familiar

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A familiar provides a companion that is even more lasting than an apprentice, generally accompanying the magus throughout life in a relationship far deeper and more personal than any mortal could understand. Gaining a familiar, therefore, is a highly personal and important task. Finding a familiar is even harder than finding an apprentice, because the animal and wizard must genuinely respect each other, whereas an apprentice needs only the requisites of intelligence and the Gift.

Finding a familiar can be relatively easy if the arcane aura around the covenant has produced some magical animals from mundane offspring. As with finding an apprentice, however, magi consider themselves very lucky indeed if they can find familiars so close to home.

More often, the magus must travel far through magical wilderness to locate an appropriate animal. Magical animals themselves are not too difficult to discover, but the familiar must be something special, the kind of animal that will maintain the wizard's respect down through the years. In addition, the animal itself must somehow feel an affinity toward the magus. That is why familiars so often resemble their masters. Without this genuine affinity, an animal will never survive the ritual that would turn it into a familiar.

Over the years, familiars and their masters develop an amazing ability to work together, almost as if they knew exactly what the other was thinking. They become as comfortable and confident with each other as most people are only with their own bodies. Some magi's relationships with their familiars have been described as resembling that of an old married couple, complete with age old arguments that are never resolved and a web of idiosyncrasies that blend into a harmonious whole. It cannot be denied that sometimes a magus and familiar become one and cannot be parted — if one should die the other would soon follow.

## Years of Power

In one's early years, a magus has little magical power to perform grand deeds and little political influence to shape the course of the Order's growth, and in the later years, old age and Twilight bear down on one. The middle years, sometimes called the "years of power," are when magi accomplish their most important feats.

What a magus does with power once it is gained depends on their personality. Luckily for the mortal folk, most are not interested in dominating the world. World domination would take time away from their studies. Some simply want to study for the sake of knowledge. In the Order of Hermes, however, knowledge translates directly into power. Even those who are complete bookworms and do nothing but study can still grow immensely in power. While some wish to follow their idiosyncratic interests (which usually intensify as the magus ages), others wish to become famous or influential in the Order, involving themselves in politics rather than grand adventures. How each magus decides to use and expend their power and prestige is entirely dependent on who and what they are.

The magi in these middle years, while they still have the energy of youth to act boldly, yet with enough experience to act effectively, are the ones that move the Order. It is their stories that are passed along and that become legends within the Houses and the Order as a whole. The magi who can remain in the "middle years" the longest become the greatest legends.

## Titles of Honor

There are a variety of honorific titles found among the wizards of the Order. Though the Order is quite

loosely organized, the bestowal of these titles has become a strong and vital tradition. The use of such titles is the only hierarchy that crosses House boundaries, though several Houses have their own internal hierarchies as well. The various titles that can be bestowed are "Arch-Mage," "Primus," "Praeco," and "Quaesitor." While the title "Arch-Mage" is almost purely one of honor, the other three titles entail special powers and duties.

## Becoming an Arch-Mage

One of the most precious achievements magi can gain is recognition among their fellows. Official recognition comes with the title "Arch-Mage." To become an Arch-Mage, one must challenge a magus who is already an Arch-Mage in a contest and defeat them.

To begin with, to challenge an Arch-Mage, one must have trained an apprentice who is now a magus, invented a spell of at least seventh magnitude (Level 31+ in game terms — one magnitude can be thought of as 5 spell levels), and have accomplished some deed that is of significant import to be known among the magi of the Order. Each Arch-Mage has a certain challenge at which a magus must defeat them in order to gain Arch-Mage status. The first time an Arch-Mage is challenged, they determine the nature of the contest, and the contest remains the same through the Arch-Mage's life. This contest can be as specific as "certámen in the arts of Creo Herbam" or as broad as "a contest of fire-magics." The contest must involve magical powers in order to be valid. A magus who defeats the Arch-Mage at the contest is then granted the title "Arch-Mage" at a special ceremony attended only by other Arch-Mages.

In their pursuit of Arch-Mage status, some magi go to great lengths, studying possible weaknesses in their foes and spending years in preparation for a specific contest. Intrigue, spying, and trickery are common tools for those who crave the title "Arch-Mage."

If a magus' parens is an Arch-Mage, it is traditional for them to challenge their parens before challenging any other Arch-Mages. If a magus should not do so, they would not be recognized as an Arch-Mage until they did so, and would be challenged to certámen whenever they would be so bold as to use the title for themselves.

Other informal rules are:

- No magus may challenge a single Arch-Mage twice.
- No Arch-Mage may be challenged more than once per year, and if there is more than one magus waiting to challenge a given Arch-Mage at the beginning of a year, the Arch-Mage may select which challenger to accept. Otherwise the Arch-Mage must accept whichever challenger comes first.
- No Arch-Mage may grant the title to more than seven magi. An Arch-Mage who has lost seven challenges may no longer be challenged. It is a disgrace to have lost all seven challenges, so magi work hard to win their later contests. In fact, it is considered bad etiquette



### Clothing

Clothing is a highly regimented way of asserting one's status in the Middle Ages. From the king's furred purple cloak, to the priest's ornate black vestments, to the scholar's humble grey robe, distinctive clothing labels a person as belonging to a specific group. Though magi do not follow mortal fashion, they do adopt unusual dress to set themselves off from the common crowd, even if they wear these garments only when in the company of other wizards. Since few of their peers care much about how one looks, the magi wear clothing that ranges from the stark and simple to the outlandish and bizarre. Magi wear whatever pleases them and their tastes can vary widely.

For those with simple tastes, a robe tied with a belt is common. These robes generally have hoods, which are used for staying warm during cold weather and can be used as "pockets" when they are down. (Unusual as this practice may sound, medieval university students also commonly employed their hoods as "pockets" in which they would carry their books.) Even simple robes are likely to be embroidered with designs of personal importance to the magus, such as the symbol of their covenant, their House, or their preferred forms of magic. While some magi certainly have a distinct lack of taste, others manage to make themselves look both dignified and formidable in their wizards' garb.

Magi with a taste for the bizarre often use bright dyes and detailed embroidery to decorate their robes. They may have the wealth to dress expensively, but often lack the social taste to dress well. As a result, they can wear some truly strange garments, with tassels, arcane symbols, bells, high collars, and clashing bright colors. The colorful dyes used in outlandish clothes are incredibly expensive, though some magi of House Verditius have developed ways of manufacturing highly colorful dyes (some that even scintillate, and can change in hue) which they trade for raw *vis*.

Pockets have not been invented (incredible as it may sound), so magi carry their magical paraphernalia in numerous small pouches cached around their person (often on a belt). Some wear leather or silk sashes, draped from left shoulder to right hip, that

hold clips for tools, pouches of raw *vis*, loops for holding magical devices, and so on. Many magi have two separate sets of clothing, belts, sashes and pouches — one for work around the laboratory and one for when they are traveling or in times of danger.

The distinctive clothing of a magus is sure to draw attention among mortals, so magi traveling incognito generally revert to plain robes or the typical dress of the area. Since their knowledge allows magi to pass for scholars, a simple, scholarly robe is the most common disguise. The problem with traveling incognito is that mortal bandits, thieves, pickpockets, bullies, and town guardsmen are likely to rob, assault, or pester them. While the case of mistaken identity is often most dangerous for the offenders (who must then deal with an enraged magus instead of a helpless old scholar), many magi prefer not to hassle with poor treatment. They wear their wizardly robes with calm pride and silently dare others to interfere with them. Such a tactic can let one travel unmolested, but if it attracts the attention of haughty knights or overzealous clergy, it can lead to unnecessary confrontations.

The clothes of the magi are often enchanted, either being magical devices or simply garments improved by magic. Wearing one's magic devices hides them better than carrying them under cloaks.

Many magi have their clothes washed regularly, especially the robes they use in the laboratory, which become infused with the various smokes and ointments found there. Others have no time for something as trivial as cleanliness. Magi who wash their clothes regularly are cleaner than the majority of mortals. Those few who do not bother to have their clothes washed often carry strange smells with them wherever they go which may increase the attention they receive when they travel.

Muriena prefers a simple robe that allows her to be accepted among mortals. Caecus wears pants and a tunic, practical clothes for someone who was raised to be a warrior and who, once, styled himself as something of an adventurer. Grimgroth wears an elegant and elaborate purple silk robe whose grand appearance adds to his already commanding presence when he speaks at Tribunal.



## The Order of Hermes

to challenge a magus who has already lost six contests, since the seventh loss turns their Arch-Mage status almost into an honorary title. Those who beat an Arch-Mage for their seventh loss are grudgingly allowed the title, but they are not well-accepted in the company of their peers. It is so uncommon for magi to challenge Arch-Mages with six previous losses, that some magi consider it in bad form even to challenge those with five losses behind them, since the sixth loss is almost always the final defeat.

Of the nearly eight hundred magi in the Order, only thirty-eight are Arch-Mages. Of these, a disproportionately high number are from Houses Tremere, Tylalus and Flambeau, and there are currently no Arch-Mages from Houses Ex Miscellanea or Mercere. These thirty-eight powerful magi gather every several years at informal councils where they discuss what they, as mighty wizards, can do to further the Order. The only Quaesitoris present are those that happen also to be Arch-Mages, and they participate like any other magi, so the council has no legal power. They keep their decisions secret, and many lesser magi fear that these councils combine magical and political power, unbalancing the Order and making it possible for a handful of wizards to exert much control over the Order's progress.

Sometimes an undeserving magus becomes an Arch-Mage through luck or deceit. Though the title can never be revoked, the other Arch-Mages usually ostracize or persecute those whom they do not accept as worthy of their titles. This harassment can escalate to the point where the subject wishes they had never attempted to attain this lofty title. Because the title of Arch-mage is strictly without formal powers, whatever influence it has on a character is entirely up to the storyguide. In general, however, it should be understood that Arch-Mages are feared and respected throughout the Order, and notice of the arrival of an Arch-Mage is notice of the arrival of a powerful and important magus.

### Becoming a Praeco

A Tribunal brings together members of competing covenants, followers of different Houses, and magi of opposing philosophies and motivations. Somehow these wizards must cooperate enough to vote on decisions of importance to themselves as well as the Order, and such interaction would be utterly impossible without the guidance of a Praeco. The Praeco runs the Tribunal, keeps order, and sees to it that the Tribunal progresses productively. Since Praeconis have a good deal of power, they often push their personal agendas through, though theoretically they are supposed to be neutral.

A Praeco has so much power that it would be infeasible to select one through voting or any other means. The magi involved would take far too long in deciding which of them would be the one to wield this power. Instead of voting, the magi of most Tribunals

give the title of Praeco to the oldest magus in the Tribunal. The Tribunal is held in the Praeco's covenant and the Praeco has no vote in the Tribunal's decisions. However, as "chair" of the Tribunal, they hold broad and expansive powers. Generally this system is tolerated because most Praeconis have reached a certain wisdom in their old age and have a broader perspective on affairs than most wizards—though they are far more likely to support those who persevere to support the Order and the status quo. See the the Politics chapter for the rights and powers of a Praeco.

### Becoming a Primus

Before the Founders of the Order faced death or final Twilight, they named successors to lead their Houses once they were gone. These successors were named "Primi," and they were charged with watching over their Houses and guiding them in the ways of their Founders. The Primi fulfilled their roles with varying degrees of success. One of them, Quendalon of House Merinita, actually altered the very nature of his House, but not without an extended struggle (see the Houses chapter for more details).

These Primi, in turn, named their own successors, who named their successors, and so on. Soon, however, the followers of the Houses wanted a bit more influence in the naming of new Primi. According to the Peripheral Code, the Primus retains the absolute right to name a successor, but in practice most use some form of voting to do so. Since the Primus' power is mainly within the House itself, the Houses are free to develop their own traditions in regards to their Primi. When a Primus dies without naming a successor, their first apprentice becomes the new Primus.

The Primus does have one power recognized by other Houses: Renunciation. The Primus, and only the Primus, may Renounce any follower of their House, ejecting them from that House. The magus is then called an "orbus" ("orphan"), since they are cut off from their Hermetic parent. An orbus has one year to be adopted into another House, and one that cannot gain acceptance in any other House is Renounced from the Order altogether. Once membership in the Order is lost, one's life is unprotected and generally short. The magi do not want an enemy of the Order who knows the Order's secrets to survive.

Within their Houses, Primi have whatever powers they have developed for themselves. Their final threat is Renunciation, but they generally use political pressure to accomplish their ends. While Primi have no officially designated rights or limits, historically they have levied taxes (in raw *vis* or silver), assigned magi to carry out various tasks, appointed magi to various "offices" within the House, settled legal disputes among followers, and directed their entire House toward some definite end (such as when Cercistum of House Tremere led his House

in all-out war against House Diedne in the eleventh century). What the followers of a House let the Primus get away with depends on the House and the charisma of the Primus. In House Tremere, the Primus rules as the representative of Tremere himself and disobedience is unthinkable. In House Ex Miscellanea, on the other hand, most of the members do not even know the name of their current Prima (a feminine version of the word sometimes used to denote a female "Primus").

Selection of the Primus also varies from House to House. Though the Primus has the right to name anyone, most have adopted some method in which other magi of the House have a say. In House Jerbiton, for instance, the magi vote on who should be the next Primus, with Arch-Mages getting three votes each and the Primus receiving ten. In House Criamon, the magi who are interested gather at the Cave of Twisting Shadows, where they enter into a shared dream state, accompanied by the ghosts of past magi. The cavern then fills with images and phantasms of all kinds, terrible and wonderful. The first magus to interpret the symbols to mean that they are to be Primus simply stands up and says, "I'll be the Primus." In a House where political power is unimportant, such a system has always worked.

## Becoming a Quaesitor

Though the Quaesitoris have a House of their own, they also grant Quaesitor status to those of other Houses who are wise and objective enough to accept the role. No one may apply to be a Quaesitor or request Quaesitor status; the leaders of House of Quaesitor meet in secret councils to select those to whom they will grant the status. The main criteria sought by these councils are wisdom, fairness, a concern for the Order, knowledge of the Code and the Order's history, and a desire to work for the benefit of the Order as a whole. Currently there are over twenty Quaesitoris who belong to other Houses, and there is always at least one Quaesitor from each House. See the House Quaesitor in the Houses chapter for more information, p. 101.

## Wizard's Twilight

*"It was like picking a scab: hot, prickly, painful, refreshing, releasing, relieving. How could I have called myself a magus before I saw the world through the eyes of Twilight?"*

-Caecus of House Tylalus

For magi, death is not certain, so perhaps they have some right to call others "mortals," as if they were not. What is certain is that all magi will leave this life, but while all on the face of the world are pursued by Death, the magi are also threatened by Wizard's Twilight. Many magi, especially those who attempt magics too powerful

or unpredictable for them to control, are overcome by the *vis* they are trying to direct, and sometimes this loss of control sends the magus away from the mortal world. Those who have passed on because of Wizard's Twilight cannot be summoned as ghosts, so Hermetic theory generally agrees that they have not died in the normal sense.

A magus generally goes through a number of Twilights in their lifetime. A period of Twilight might last minutes or days as uncontrolled magic courses through the afflicted magus. Though some magi manage to remain conscious and even in limited control of their bodies, most are unconscious, in spasms and fits, or both. These survivable Twilights can give magi new insights into their arts, but they can also leave physical deformities and mental alterations. As the years pass and a magus experiences more and more Twilights, he or she becomes more vulnerable to final Twilight, when the magus escapes Death by leaving this world through another exit.

## Twilight Points

Each character has Twilight Points. Like Decrepitude, they may not be removed by any known means. Any magus who gains a total of 24 Twilight Points passes into final Twilight and departs from the world. There are various ways to gain Twilight Points.

No magus will gain Twilight Points until he or she begins using a longevity potion. At that point, the magus' life depends on magic, and magic thus holds more sway over the magus. (At the storyguide's discretion, magi may accumulate Twilight Points from some other powerful, continuing exposure to magic, such as using a spell to keep oneself stronger than normal over an extended period of time.)

In the first year of taking a longevity potion, the magus gains 1 Twilight Point, with another gained on the twentieth year, the fortieth year, and so on.

Twilight Points also come from studying the art Vim. Each time a magus' score increases to a multiple of 5 (5, 10, 15, 20), the magus gains one Twilight Point.

Storyguides can assign more points as the result of botches with spells, or other dramatic, magical effects. Generally 1 point and an accompanying side effect are plenty.

Many points can be gained by going through temporary Twilight, as explained below.

## Temporary Twilight

When a magus with Twilight Points encounters powerful, uncontrolled magic, the storyguide may have the player roll for temporary Twilight. As a rule of thumb, the storyguide may require this roll for double botches (or worse) with spells or studying raw *vis* in the laboratory, but any exposure to powerful, wild magic can



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precipitate Twilight. Follow these three steps to see whether you suffer Twilight and what happens if you do:

- 1) Roll for Twilight. Make a stress roll and add your

character's Twilight Points. If the total is 24+, you enter temporary Twilight. If not, you avoid Twilight and there is no unusual effect. Carry on play as normal. (You may still suffer from the effects of a normal botch, if a botch is what made you roll for Twilight in the first place.) Confidence points may not affect this roll.

- 2) Roll for Twilight Points Gained. When you enter temporary Twilight, make a simple (1d10) roll and add the result to your character's Twilight Points. If the result is 24+, the character has entered final Twilight; role-play out the end of the magus' mortal existence with all appropriate flash and pathos. Your character may hang on for hours or even days, but you will definitely be beyond the scope of human knowledge and wisdom, no longer a human being as we understand the term. If you have fewer than 24 Twilight Points, you will recover from this Twilight; continue with step 3.

- 3) Roll for Control. Make a stress roll + Intelligence. You may add +3 if you are Strong-Willed, and you may use Confidence points. The storyguide rolls a stress die + the strength of the supernatural power that dominates the area to represent the intensity of the Twilight. The storyguide may add other bonuses to this roll if the Twilight should be more intense than normal (e.g. the result of a quadruple botch). If you roll higher than the storyguide, you

have enough control over the experience to avoid the dangers and learn something: roll on the Good Effects Chart. If your roll is equal to or less than the storyguide's, the Twilight is too powerful for you to

assimilate: roll on the Bad Effects Chart. If you botch, roll on the Bad Effects Chart and suffer an especially powerful version of the affliction indicated. These rolls can also be used as guidelines for deciding how long the Twilight lasts (longer for higher intensities) and how much control you retain over your body (more if your roll is higher than the intensity). There is, however, no strict correlation between internal (psychic) and external (bodily) control, and your actions during the Twilight should be role-played out to fit the character and the story.

### Good Effects

**Experience Points in Affinity:** Roll a simple die and add that many experience points to an Affinity you have. If you have no Affinity, or if your Affinity is opposed to the circumstances of the Twilight, you may gain a new Affinity. Divide the simple roll by two, and that is the number of purchase points used to determine the score of this new Affinity. E.g. Caecus goes through Twilight while attempting to heal a consors of a dread disease (Creo Córporum), and he rolls this effect. Experience in his Perdo affinity does not make sense because he was using Creo magic, so he gets a new affinity. The player and storyguide

agree it cannot be Córporum because he has a deficiency in that art, and it cannot be Creo because that does not fit the style of a Perdo magus. The storyguide gives him an affinity in healing, and his

**Exempli Gratia:** Each magus has a unique experience in Twilight, which is determined by the kind of magic the magus uses. Grimgroth has led a political life and has not avidly pursued powerful magics as many magi do, so he has suffered only two Twilights in his long years. The first time was when peasants, under the influence of a demon, attacked him and his small group as they were travelling to Doissetep for Tribunal. He attempted a powerful spontaneous spell and failed utterly. He fell on the ground screaming and writhing, while his companions, without him to help them, had to resort to violence to fend off the peasants. He apparently recovered and continued to the Tribunal, but he was markedly changed: short-tempered, babbling from time to time, and prone to wandering away from the Tribunal now and again. Finally, after the last vote, he fell into a deep sleep and had to be carried home to Mistridge. When he awoke, he remembered only snatches of the Tribunal. His mater, Consuelia, has since told him that he was most likely in Twilight throughout the Tribunal, and that only his strong will and sense of purpose let him use even a portion of his faculties during that time. Most of his actions, however, including his votes, were probably beyond his direct control. Since that Twilight, Grimgroth has shown a greater understanding of political affairs within the Order, but one after-effect of the Twilight is that he is likely to fly into an unreasonable rage when certain topics related to that Tribunal are mentioned.

He suffered another Twilight resulting from a Muto Mentem certámen with a Criamon magus. This time he fell into uncontrollable fits of laughter, guffawing, tittering, whooping, braying, snickering, and occasionally letting loose with inhuman cackles. Clavius was about to use a spell to calm him, but Samantha, Grimgroth's familiar, launched herself at him, stopped him, and then stood guard over Grimgroth. He laughed for over an hour, recovered, showed signs of disorientation for a week, and has been "normal" ever since. Some, however, have noted that he is much more sullen now than he had been.

player rolls a 7 on the simple die. That means 4 purchase points for a new affinity, which becomes a score of 2 with 1 experience point.

**Experience Points in Arcane Ability:** Make a simple roll and apply that many experience points to an arcane ability. It could be Faerie Lore if you enter Twilight in a faerie forest, or Certámen if the Twilight results from a certámen.

**Experience Points in Magic Theory:** Make a simple roll and add that many experience points to Magic Theory.

**Increase in Art:** Roll a simple die and multiply by 3. Treat the result as if it were the score of a book that you have studied for a season (see p. 101 of *Ars Magica*). The art raised depends on the circumstances of the Twilight or it could be your personal specialty. Your score increases at least 1 point in any event.

**Increased Understanding:** Normally a magus can only write a book that describes an art up to half his own score. If you get this effect, you understand your highest art more clearly and can write a tome that describes that art (and only that art) up to two-thirds of your score. (E.g. Caecus with a Perdo score of 22 could write a tome that describes Perdo up to level 14.) Each successive time that you get this effect, the fraction goes one step closer to 100% (i.e. 3/4, 4/5, 5/6, etc.) The great magical tomes of the Order have almost all been written by magi who have undergone Twilights and brought back insights to share with the rest of the Order.

**Special:** Whatever effect the storyguide deems appropriate. You might gain a small magical ability or improve one you now have. Anything relevant to the circumstances could happen.

**Bad Effects**

Note: Like Twilight Points, these effects cannot be removed by any earthly means.

**Automatic Magic:** Your magic oozes out of you of its own accord. Your very presence causes small magical effects of some type appropriate to your magic or to the Twilight itself. For example, Caecus might cause

things near him to crack, decay, age, become weaker, etc. because he has a strong Perdo affinity. These effects are limited in strength and distance and can never be directed by will. They may come and go or vary greatly in power from day to day.

**Blatant Gift:** From now on, your magical aura is stronger, always closer to the surface of your being. You gain the Blatant Gift (*Ars Magica*, p. 24). If you already have it, roll again. If you have the Gentle Gift, you lose it, but do not gain the Blatant Gift.

**Deficiency:** You suffer a Minor Magic Deficiency with one art, probably one that is somehow opposed to your best arts (*Ars Magica*, p. 25). If you already have a Minor Magic Deficiency in that art, you now have a Major one. If you already have a Major Magic Deficiency in that art, you get a deficiency in another art.

**Mental Defect:** The surge of magic has warped your mind. If you have a mental flaw, such as an obsession or fear, it might be exaggerated. Otherwise, a quirk might grow worse and become a bona fide flaw, or you may pick up some defect related to the circumstances of the Twilight.

**Physical Defect:** The power of magic coursing through you has permanently injured your body. You might gain a Decreptitude point, lose some hearing, become lame, or simply be disfigured. (Use flaws as guidelines.)

**Special:** Anything that, in the judgment of the storyguide, fits your unique magical bent or the Twilight, such as suscepti-

bility to the supernatural power dominating the area (if other than "magic").

**Wild Magic:** You gain the flaw Wild Magic (*Ars Magica*, p. 25). If you already have it, roll again.

Good Effects Chart	
1-3	Increased Understanding
4-5	Experience Points in Affinity
6	Increase in Art
7	Experience Points in Magic Theory
8	Experience Points in Arcane ability
9	Special
10	Roll Twice: One effect on this chart; for the second effect, roll normally to see if it is Good or Bad.
Bad Effects Chart	
1-2	Blatant Gift
3-4	Deficiency
5	Wild Magic
6	Mental Defect
7	Physical Defect
8	Automatic Magic
9	Special
10	Roll Twice: One effect on this chart; for the other effect, roll normally to see if it is Good or Bad.

*"Learn magic, for it is the only truth in this world. Become magic, and you will become truth. Fear not what others call the Wizard's Twilight, for that dim illumination might be not dusk but dawn."*

- Criamon

## Story and Character

### Considerations for Twilight

Wizard's Twilight is a highly variable and personal event for each magus, and as such it can add much to a story or character. The rules here are designed to cover the basics so that players whose characters suffer from Twilight feel that they suffered from bad luck, not from a mean storyguide. Likewise, those whose characters benefit will not feel like the storyguide has given them special favors; the dice determine it. On the other hand, the more that you, as the storyguide or player, are willing to determine about a given Twilight, the more appropriate you can make it to the characters and stories involved.

One simple question is timing. If a magus undergoes Twilight during a battle, it is best to tell the player that the afflicted character falls into fits and leave it at that. Let the rest of the players enjoy the fight without slowing everything down for the character in Twilight. If, however, a magus experiences Twilight while the other characters are free to interact, you may wish to detail the event and draw it out for full dramatic effect. The affected character can fight for control while the others try to ease their fellow through the experience.

The immediate effects of Twilight are up to the storyguide. Sometimes a magus is simply knocked unconscious or paralyzed, but other Twilights send magi through violent fits. The uncontrolled magic often leaks out of a magus in Twilight, causing strange magical effects. A magus in Twilight because of a Muto spell might change forms randomly or suffer bizarre, shifting distortions to their body. These effects could even spread to the magus' vicinity, causing minor transformations of surrounding rocks, animals, and people. Storyguides can determine the nature of a given Twilight to suit the dramatic needs of the story and the general tone of the Saga (e.g. high fantasy vs. authentic medieval flavor).

Feel free to alter the effects that the dice indicate, or make up your own. The random charts provide a default system to use when the player and storyguide cannot agree on what should happen to the character. In addition, most Twilights leave some kind of mark on the character called the "Touch of Magic." This mark could be a physical discoloration, a quirk, a tic, or any other minor but interesting detail. An example is Grimgroth's tendency to become enraged at the mention of topics debated at the Tribunal where he was in Twilight.

#### Ghosts and Twilight

A magus lost to the world through Twilight does not leave a ghost behind. No Hermetic magic can contact the magus lost to Twilight. In fact, magi that die and return as ghosts still have Twilight Points, and the process of summoning or controlling them can cause them to go through Twilight. For this reason, the ghosts of magi from centuries before are quite rare; most have left the world by Twilight, either before or after death.

### Other Uses for Twilight

Wizard's Twilight does not always happen entirely by chance. It can be more common under certain, rare conditions. For example, you may want to include in your Saga some of the following things:

**A powerful magical item** that often causes Twilight— This potent device relies on the user's ability to control magic, so it can only be used by wizards. The effects are so powerful, however, that any botch made while using it (or perhaps any "0" rolled) causes the magus to roll for Twilight.

**A magical trap**— A magus writes a "spell" into a spell book that actually sends one into Twilight. It is a trap for those who steal his book and use the "spell."

**Supernatural encounters**— Demons and faeries can precipitate Twilight because the potent magic they use does not mesh perfectly with Hermetic magic. Magi who are trying to discover the secrets of faerie magic may find themselves going through Twilight as a result.

#### New -1 Flaw

**Twilight Points**— During apprenticeship, you suffered an encounter with wild, strong magic that has given you Twilight Points. You can gain more points even before you start taking your longevity potion. Divide a simple roll by 2 to see how many points you have. Decide the nature of your experience, as any temporary Twilights you undergo will likely be related to it.

### A Word About Wizard's Twilight

*"Great chains of iron bind mortals to this small, dull world, and all but the most fortunate few content themselves with what pitiful freedom these chains permit them. The Gift, which allows you to work magic, is the strength and will to strain these chains to their limit, and to break them. Already you have broken seven of the smaller chains, and even though the heaviest ones are as strong as ever, you count yourself as free as the wind and powerful as the sea. But in years to come, you will burst bond after bond, and with each success you will move farther and farther from this world of matter to which you are now held. Finally, one day, if your destiny plays itself out, you shall sunder the final chain, travel without hindrance wheresoever you will, leaving your amici and sodalis behind. We who follow Criamon will nod with understanding, while those of lesser wisdom will weep at the sight of shattered links of iron."*

—Verderis of Criamon,  
explaining Twilight to his apprentice

**Exempli Gratia: Wizard's Twilight**

Caecus has gained Twilight Points from the following sources:

Vim score of 12	2
Longevity potion for 20+ years	2
Peering into his master's crystal when he was an apprentice	4
<b>Total Twilight Points</b>	<b>8</b>

Caecus faces a demon that has pursued him from Hibernia and is trying to kill him to keep him from sharing what he has learned about Hell with magi in Languedoc. Grabbing a handful of magical powder (*raw vis*), Caecus foregoes finesse and lets fly with a spontaneous *Perdo Vim* spell. He rolls a 0, and with his 7 points of *raw vis*, he must make 8 botch rolls. Two of them come up 0's, and the storyguide tells Caecus to roll for Twilight.

Herolls a 1, picks up the die, rolls again and gets a 10, doubled is 20, +8 is 28. Caecus goes into Twilight. Privately, the storyguide decides that Caecus has accidentally made a supernatural connection with the demon, something that few minds can survive without damage. The storyguide says, "Both Caecus and the demon fall to the ground, writhing, spitting, and screaming."

The storyguide then decides that the longer it takes Caecus' companions to kill the demon, the more intense the Twilight will be, so he does not let Caecus roll for control yet. Caecus also has to roll to see how many Twilight Points he gains: 2, for a new total of 10.

Some of Caecus' companions try to aid him, though he shows no response. One, a favored grog, tries to talk him out of it, and the storyguide decides that this could help Caecus control the Twilight or distract him dangerously. The grog makes a Com roll and adds +3 for the strong friendship between him and Caecus, but the total is still only 7. The storyguide

rules that a middling result has no effect either way. The other characters dispatch the helpless demon, but it takes them long enough that the storyguide decides to add +1 to the intensity roll.

Caecus rolls  $8 + 3$  (Int) +  $4$  (Cnf) = 15 for control, while the storyguide rolls  $6 + 3$  (magic aura) + 1 (demon's contact) = 10 for intensity. Caecus may roll on the Good Effects Chart, but the storyguide does not reveal the roll. Since this is Caecus' first Twilight, he has no firm idea of whether he will suffer or gain from the experience (even if the player can make a good guess). The storyguide also rules that, with the



demon dead, Caecus can stop throwing a fit, but he remains incoherent and helpless for hours. When the characters get Caecus to Val-Negra and the other magi examine him to see if he is all right, Caecus and the storyguide roll a die to determine the effect and talk over the result.

The die comes up 4: Experience Points in Affinity. It would be logical to give Caecus experience with his *Perdo* affinity, since he was attempting a *Perdo* spell, but that does not take into account the unique contact with the demon. An affinity with Destroying Demons would make sense, but it would also overlap with the *Perdo* affinity Caecus already has. The storyguide finally lets Caecus decide between a +2 bonus

for destroying demons (which would be on top of his *Perdo* affinity) and experience in Occult Lore. Caecus' player decides that he would have spent more time focused on his own abilities than on the demon, and so picks the +2 demon-slaying bonus. As the "Touch of Magic," Caecus suggests that he gives of a faint whiff of brimstone when working magic, and the storyguide agrees.

Caecus regains his strength at Val-Negra and comes through the experience stronger, but one step closer to that eventual, final Twilight.



# History of the Order

The history of the Order of Hermes stretches very far into the misty reaches of the ancient past. The Quaesitoris have traced the Order past the Roman cult of Mercury, through the Greek cult of Hermes, back to ancient Egypt and Persia, Babylon and beyond. They claim that the Order of Hermes is a temporary manifestation of an eternal institution, and that its form may change, but its essence remains constant. However, even if this eternal organization does exist, it did not take its current form until the eighth century, after the fall of Rome.

## Ancient Origins

The Order of Hermes was founded chiefly by magi who had descended from the Roman cult of Mercury, which in turn took its wisdom and knowledge of the mystic powers from the Greek cult of Hermes. The Seekers, a group of magi who investigate the past in search of the origins of magic, believe that these ancient Greek wizards had some contact with those beings known to the Greeks as gods. Evidence of wizards in ancient Egypt and still more ancient Babylon suggest that even the cult of Hermes was a descendent of a previous order from the early history of the Mediterranean cultures. Again, these Egyptian and Babylonian sorcerers, say the Seekers, had contact with what the commoners called gods who taught them the basic elements of a theory of magic. Any history as to the origin of Babylonian and Egyptian magi, however, is purely legend. The Seekers call this "history" the legend of the old ones.

## The Cult of Mercury

Though the Order is directly descend from Roman society, it is named after the cult of Hermes, the Greek god of magic. When Rome began to build its empire, it borrowed a great deal of culture and religion from the Greeks, who centuries before had achieved a highly advanced culture. Roman culture borrowed such things as religion and magic, both of which came from the original cult of Hermes. The members of the early Order of Hermes, however, were once priests of Mercury (though, by that time, they used this title in name only). They were able to work powerful magics in prolonged rituals involving many participants. It is

the Roman traditions of the cult of Mercury that are most used in the Order of Hermes, and which give it much of its character. Of the twelve magi who founded the modern Order in A.D. 767, ten were descended from the Roman priests of Mercury.

The cult of Mercury was never one of the more powerful cults in Rome, and the magic its priests employed never figured largely in the political history of the empire. It is thought by some Hermetic scholars, however, that the spells it cast were essential for retaining the long-lasting integrity of the empire, even though the emperors never acknowledged this aid publicly. Those scholars further speculate that the rise of Christianity in Rome, and thus the downfall of the cult of Mercury, is what brought about the end of the empire.

The magic used by the cult required difficult and lengthy rituals that incorporated scores of priests, sometimes even hundreds, spread across a dozen cities. It is said that these rituals held at bay many of the darker denizens of the world, and that others gave some priests the power to investigate these darker powers and to explore the world in a way similar to what magi do today.

Priests of Mercury traveled all across the world in search of lore, and the remains of small temples have been found dotted across Europe, as well as the southern and eastern continents. These temples are frequently sites of considerable magical powers and all those that have been found have been explored and excavated. Indeed, some covenants are built on the sites of old temples, as is the famous covenant of Doissetep.

### Plentarch and Mercuric Magic

In the second century B.C., the high priest Plentarch of the Pompeii temple codified the rituals of the cult into thirty-eight spells, each of which had to be studied and mastered separately. The cult's theory of magic included nothing of general use, such as the current techniques and forms, but was centered on explaining in highly mystical terms why the procedure for each spell was necessary. Most of these spells were elaborate rituals that required scores of wizards who were tightly bound to each other by training and purpose — the more that were gathered, the more powerful was the spell. The tomes that described these spells, however, have now been lost. They are still avidly pursued for they could possibly teach much about

the true nature of magic. The ancient temples of Mercury are the primary targets of all prolonged searches for such tomes.

### The Fall of the Cult of Mercury

Since the cult of Mercury required so many dedicated priests to cast even a single spell, as well as broad financial support for the expensive ritual components, it lost much of its power as Rome slowly decayed. The cult fragmented as different groups of priests chose different sides in the civil wars, and by A.D. 300 most of their stronger spells could no longer be cast because of the lack of cooperating priests. Many temples, including the ones in Rome itself, decayed to the point where they became little more than carnivals, where citizens could have their fortunes read and their curiosity tickled with minor magics.

The gradual rise of Christianity slowly eclipsed the older religions of Rome, and the cult of Mercury was further weakened as more and more people turned away from it and no longer provided the money needed to purchase the expensive components of its spells. In the 4th century, when Emperor Constantine the Great made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, what was left of the cult of Hermes rapidly moved out of the cities and into the wilderness — out of political power and into seclusion. It had already lost so much of its religious vigor that its members

were interested in little else but increasing their personal influence and knowledge of the art of magic. As a Roman institution, the cult ceased to exist. As a loose organization of spell casters, however, it remained.

### The Fall of Rome

When Rome finally fell to the barbarians, the cult of Mercury was formally disbanded and the members who were left were forced to survive on their own in the brutal society that remained. They were no longer a priesthood, but were instead solitary sorcerers who were able to cast only a few minor spells, except when they were able to come together with their peers. They became known as wizards or magi, as their connections with the cult of Mercury were forgotten. The wizards



### Legend of the Old Ones

"Read closely these words my sodalis of our Order, for they speak much of who you are and who you can be. The arcane mysteries I shall reveal in these pages will tell you much of what you need to know. If you should scoff at what I will say I beseech you to do so softly and without full measure, for you may be overheard....

"In the days before the fall of Rome, before the glory days of Greece, and before even mighty Egypt, there was a great civilization located on land that is now hidden beneath the waves of the Mediterranean Sea and forgotten. A mighty race of gods lived there, creatures who used magic as if it was a mere toy, a people whose lives were woven around magic, whose lives were, in some ways, created out of magic. Their palaces and cities were beautiful gardens, constructed of crystal and light, and a plethora of flowers grew there, now all lost to the ken of humanity. Their lives were filled with music, dance, and all the earthly delights, and they knew not pain. Not satisfied with ordinary pleasure, they intensified it with their magic and enjoyed pursuits so esoteric and fantastic that we cannot begin to understand them. Their study of magic was centered around creating new pleasures and sometimes simply pursuing knowledge itself — for that too, as well we know, is a most sublime pleasure. They labored not at all, for they only worked on whatever they wished, so that it was but play. They played at work and worked at play. For millennia, they resided in their garden cities, living forever, totally engaged in their games and their delights.

"Then one arose among them, one who was different. At first he was as full of laughter as the rest of them, but as he grew to adulthood, his differences became understood. He was not as skilled at using magic, and though at first they could not compre-

hend it, he was what we would understand to be uncomely. The others of his race did not like to be near him and did not include him in their games and lovemaking. He was an oddity among the gods, an outsider, and was shunned. They called him Tarhuti, which in their language meant 'the outsider.'

"Beneath Tarhuti's brow grew a curse of jealousy and a tormenting ambition. Once he grew to adulthood, Tarhuti found he could no longer laugh, nor could he cry, and that he no longer saw himself as one of the others. His rage grew to encompass all that he was, and he could be nothing else but his anger. He never played with the others, but spent his time on his studies, attempting to increase his magical power. He was engaged in the pursuit of ever more potent magics, for he understood that to be the only real power.

"Hate grew ever stronger and blacker in him, hate of those for whom pleasure was enough, of those who did not carry his curse of ambition. Gradually he directed his studies towards finding satisfaction for his hatred.

"Tarhuti decided that his only satisfaction would be to kill the others, and spent seven hundred and seventy-seven years in the caves beneath the lake of salt, a marsh that stood between what are now the Pillars of Hercules. He constructed a mighty spell, the first of formulaic magic to ever be created, and blew away the natural dam that had protected the valley from the vast cold seas of the west, and a huge torrent of water flooded the valley. Through the waters coursed all of Tarhuti's hate, turned to vile poison through his potent magic. Within days, the cities of the gods were destroyed, and their civilization was forever gone. Through their magic, however, a few of them somehow managed to live on. Tarhuti also lived on, still in the caves beneath the lake, a lake that had become a sea. The Greeks and

themselves encouraged this, for the powerful Christian church did not tolerate the old religions, and so their past was largely forgotten. However, the terror and turmoil of the age brought many hatreds and fears to the surface and many wizards were hunted down and killed; a process of extermination that was supported by elements of the Church.

Among the magi, a period of transition began and slowly the study and use of magic were transformed. First, the magi needed to modify the magic they knew, which relied on large gatherings, a temple, and other such resources no longer available to a lone magus. Using other sources (possibly Greek or Egyptian), the wizards, immediately after the fall of Rome, began using another kind of magic, magic more suitable to use by an individual. They still used rigid spells, however, like the

formulaic spells of Hermetic magic which they had to learn, memorize and master prior to being able to cast it at will. Generally these spells were weak and were rarely much stronger than third magnitude.

Naturally, the magicians still tried gathering into groups to share their knowledge, but on the whole these groups were short-lived. Each magician had precious secrets not to be shared with others, leading to jealousy and distrust. A wizard who could slay a fellow wizard would then be free to loot the magical treasury of the deceased, and therefore mortal combat was common. Because of this danger, wizards in the early Dark Ages rarely came together and most lived their lives in solitude, in fear of both mortal society and of other magi. One wizard was never able to trust another, and without the benefit of sharing information, their knowledge grew

other people of the East still tell legends of a great flood, referring to this ancient disaster.

"Some of these beings became gods of the Egyptians and Greeks, while others spawned the Dragons. All were fascinated by their former servants, the humans, and watched their progress with the intense fascination that only boredom can breed. Some searched for Tarhutis, but they could never capture him, and they could never meet him face to face unless he revealed himself to them, which he did only to laugh. Because of his hatred and the studies that he had done, he was powerful, so even together the gods could not defeat him. So they slowly began to play again, only they began to play with the lives of their former servants — the humans, and they became gods to many civilizations.

"But as time went on, life became ever more tedious, and even the humans could not amuse them for long. Slowly, they stopped interfering in human affairs and began only to watch them from afar. Still their boredom grew even more intense. Soon they began to sleep, arising only one day a year, to see what had occurred among the humans.

"Our magic, the magic of Hermes, is directly descended from these gods. It is their magic that we now can only harness, but never create. And even our Gifts of magic come directly from the old ones, for these gods sometimes bedded mortals and produced progeny that was half god and half human. These children have passed the blood of the gods down through the millennia, and we fortunate few have enough of that divine nature to work with the magic created by our ancestors.

"The Dragons are also descended from them, for some of the gods took beastly forms in their search for new pleasures. The children they bore are the Dragons, Worms, Drakes, and Serpents of today. Perhaps a few of the mightiest Dragons are actually old ones who have never given up their new forms.

"The gods sleep on, and all who know the truth hope that they will sleep on until the end of time, for if they stirred from slumber and walked once more upon the earth, they could well destroy all of civilization, and likely the Order along with it. Always remember, despite how they might appear, they are not human, but are most monstrous indeed.

"Today, it is said, they sleep upon Mount Olympus, the forest of Tertius Quid, and some say at Stonehenge as well. The dwellings of the gods do not exist in time as most things do, but rather return to time periodically as they so will. Only if you visit those places at the right moment, will you be able to enter their palaces and gardens, and meet with them, though through most of the year you will find only desolation. No one has ever reported an encounter with the old ones, so it must be assumed that they kill all those who intrude on their home. All wizards must be careful when they visit these places, for an improperly intoned spell could awaken them out of time, and bring them to earth once again so that we all would have to face their full fury.

"It is my understanding that Tarhutis came to be known to the Egyptians as Tahuti, or Thoth, as he is also named. On this god are based the myths of Hermes and Mercury. In any case, Tarhutis was the first magus, for it is he who created the first spell — a spell of destruction. His creation of the spell that destroyed his world shows that he pursued power as we do today. He was one of us, yet he destroyed everything. What can it say about us that our true ancestor was the destroyer of all? Let us all look into our hearts and see how much of Tarhutis' blood courses through them and see if we can learn from the lesson."

—Arch-Mage Infamitus,  
in his tome "The True Origins  
of the Magical Traditions"

very little over the years. As even apprentices could not be fully trusted, the numbers of magi in the world dropped sharply. For a time it seemed as if the tradition of magic, sprung from the gods (in legend, at least), carried to the Babylonians, nurtured by the waters of the Nile, refined by the Greeks, and brought to great glory by the Romans, was coming to an end. The Dark Ages were dark indeed for the great tradition of magic.

## The First Tribunal

Early in the eighth century, the sorceress Trianoma had a vision: the magi of Europe united once again. She believed in the future that she foresaw, but she did not know how she could overcome the distrust and history of

violence prevalent among the users of magic. She traveled across Europe speaking with various wizards, and most supported the idea in theory, but few trusted their fellows enough to be willing to work together. Furthermore, the varied approaches they used to master magic kept them from being able to share much of their magical knowledge, so cooperation was not seen as particularly valuable. Why the fiercely independent and hostile magi of the times trusted her enough to listen to her words is unknown, but several poems have been written of her journeys.

After years of searching, she found some solution to her problem. She discovered the wizard Bonisagus living in seclusion in a cave in the Alps, working on a universal theory of magic. His studies had already revealed to him a way to create a simple magical shield that protected one



## The Order of Hermes

from magic (now called simply the “parma magica”). Trianoma saw how these discoveries could allow her to form the Order she envisioned. The parma magica would allow magi to meet with little fear of being attacked, and a universal theory of magic would give them a reason to work together. Trianoma encouraged other magi to visit with Bonisagus and share what they knew with him. Díedne, a wizard from the druidic tradition, proved very valuable because she taught Bonisagus a way to create new spells at a moment’s notice without having to learn a ritual beforehand. This concept eventually developed into spontaneous magic. Using this and other knowledge, Bonisagus developed a broadly applicable theory of magic, now known as Hermetic theory.

While Bonisagus unified the magic of the magi, Trianoma masterminded their political unification. She brought twelve of the most powerful magi of the time together for the purpose of forming an Order. After years of negotiations, threats, and recriminations, they wrote the Code, named their Order after the Greek god of magic (whose cult they knew to be a predecessor to the Roman cult of Mercury), learned the parma magica and studied Bonisagus’ theory of magic. At Durenmar in the Black Forest in A.D. 767, the twelve magi swore to uphold the Code of Hermes, and the Order was officially formed.

Trianoma was the first Praeco at that very first Tribunal, and her influence can easily be seen throughout the document that the magi simply call “the Code”.

Since these twelve magi could work together and share what they learned, they grew quickly in power. Their truce and common frame of reference allowed them to teach each other their lore and rapidly their knowledge grew — a new age of magic had begun.

These wizards realized that with the power of magic at their hands, the only other mortals they needed to fear were other magi. Systematically, they sought other wizards out and offered them membership in the newly formed Order. All they asked was for the wizard to abide by the simple Code of Hermes, and to allow themselves to be adopted into one of the Houses that had been formed — each which was based upon and named after one of the Founders.

Those who joined the Order could be trusted, but those who refused to join were still a threat to those who

did, and the Order eliminated them or drove them off. It is because of this massive effort to consolidate wizards into the Order of Hermes that currently most of the wizards in Europe are Hermetic magi. Nevertheless, independent wizards and even groups of wizards continue to exist. They remain a threat to the Order because they are not bound by the Order’s Code.

## Hermetic Magic

Apprentices who learn Hermetic magic take for granted the symbols, conventions, and structure used throughout the Order. They do not realize what a

tremendous feat Bonisagus accomplished when he took the knowledge and power of several varied types of magic and designed a single system to encompass them all. It was this work of unprecedented and perhaps irreproducible genius that made the Order of Hermes possible. It became a system in which fire wizards can share information with water mages, and necromancers can cast spells designed by shape-shifters.

The categorization and regularity of Bonisagus’ system of magic is a mixed blessing. It is much easier for a Hermetic magus to understand magic of all types than it is for a non-Hermetic

wizard. Non-Hermetic wizards usually get an intense education in a very specific kind of magic, such as water magic or shape-shifting, and typically have no ability in magic outside their specialties. On the other hand, true innovation is more difficult within the structures of Hermetic magic. For each apprentice trained by a Hermetic magus, there is probably a better way to teach them magic, some way of understanding magic that would be ideally suited and balanced to their own true nature. Such a system of magic could turn that apprentice into an equal of one of the Founders. But it is impossible to determine what that system would be for any given apprentice, and a new system would have to be constructed for every new apprentice. Hermetic wizards, therefore, must use the same system for all their apprentices. It is a workable system, and it allows magi to share information with each other, so its limits are but a small penalty to pay — it is the sharing of information that makes the Order strong.

There are still aspects of magic that fail to fit into the

### The Seekers

Those magi who believe in the old ones and seek to learn from their power call themselves the Seekers. They believe that if they can find the old ones, they will have access to great knowledge and untold might. Because they share a common purpose, they sometimes work together; but because they are all trying to reach the same goal, they also can be violently competitive. The competition, at times, has led to the destruction of laboratories, familiars, and apprentices, sometimes even to Wizard’s War. If any of the Seekers have found anything concrete, they are not telling anyone, especially not other Seekers.

Seekers can be of any House, though currently there are none from Criamon, Bonisagus, Jerbiton, or Mercere. The thirty or so avowed Seekers are mostly from the Houses of Tremere, Quaesitoris, and Ex Miscellanea.

rigid categories of Bonisagus' design, which is why apprentices usually develop specialties, affinities, and antipathies in their arts, and why some manifest unique abilities beyond the scope of Hermetic magic. The members of Ex Miscellanea, some of whom are only nominally Hermetic magi, and those non-Hermetic magi who survive despite the hegemony of the Order, all prove that there is more to magic than Bonisagus' theories.

*"We are but simple schoolchildren copying the works of the Masters and occasionally introducing our own petty innovations into their brilliant spells and words. Who among us can compare to those who founded the Order, whose magic knew only the bounds of their imaginations and wills? Who among us could construct devices like the Chariot of Verditius, the Staff of Seven Fires, or the Eyes of Quendalon? Who among even my own House could invent a magical ritual as world-altering as the parma magica? We have grown weak, and our only chance to feel power is to copy those who went before us as closely as our small minds can manage."*

—Avarret, current Primus of Bonisagus

## The Early Days of the Order

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Relations with non-Hermetic magi has changed through the centuries since the Order's founding in A.D. 767. Before the Order, naturally, there were no non-Hermetic magi (or only non-Hermetic magi, depending on your point of view). Still, there was a distinction between Roman-descended wizards and more "primitive" wizards primarily from Celtic and Nordic traditions. Those descended from Roman magical traditions considered themselves superior (as, no doubt, did each definable group), and it was this group of Latin-speakers who formed the core of the Order. Two wizards from other traditions, Bjornaer and Díedne, joined the Order as well, but the effort to recruit members was most strongly aimed at those who followed the Latin tradition. The Founders generally thought that including the more barbaric wizards in the Order would only lead to internal strife, as the acceptance of non-Roman people had weakened the Roman Empire, and they did not value the knowledge that the non-Latin wizards would be able to offer in any case.

Once the Order had consolidated, it turned its energies to those it considered dangerous, the non-Hermetic magi. Since non-Hermetic magi were not bound by the Hermetic Code, they were seen as threats. In these dark times Tytalus, Flambeau, and other magi avidly hunted down these wizards. Bonisagus' parma

magica made these wizards stronger than their non-Hermetic enemies, and they enjoyed repeated victories.

These bloody years of fighting with other wizards gave rise to many tales of great deeds and wondrous battles, but within seventy years or so the battles died down. The druids who did not join House Díedne had retreated into impenetrable faerie forests, and the wizards of the northlands proved too powerful on their home ground to be destroyed. Most other wizards in the central parts of Europe, however, were killed, driven into hiding, or forced to join the Order. Over the centuries, fighting hedge wizards has become less and less important (as well as less feasible, given the decrease in the population). Some non-Hermetic magi carry on, but most are simple, unassuming hedge-wizards who survive by not attracting attention to themselves and posing no threat to the Order. Unfortunately, the common folk remember those days of magical war and, through their legends, fear of the wizards has been passed down over the generations.

Hermetic magi still fight those outside the Order when there is a need, but the days of actively hunting outsiders are long past. Still, rumors have sprung up that the hedge-wizards that have survived outside the Order have slowly been drawing their plans against the Order, and when the time is right, they shall rise up and launch an attack in vengeance for the wrongs inflicted on their ancestors centuries ago.

## The Domination of House Tremere

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In the ninth century, House Tremere, through skillful use of certámen and political intrigue, nearly dominated the Order, ruling several Tribunals and steadily growing in power. Led by Tremere himself, who was still alive and masterminding the attempt, this effort to control the Order nearly succeeded. Most magi supported him either out of fear or the belief that it would bring stability, and few would directly oppose him out of respect for his status as the only remaining living Founder. The plot was finally stopped by a group of unidentified magi who broke the minds of Tremere's chief lieutenants, thereby ruining his chain of command. After this event, other magi were more watchful of political events and more eager to improve their ability at certámen. To this day, House Tremere is carefully watched and the ambitions of its members and its Primus in particular are closely watched by elements of the Quaesitoris and by magi throughout the Order. They and their sister house, House Tytalus, are thought to be too ambitious and too competitive for the good of the Order. This event in history proves the dangers inherent in the domination of one house over the Order, and it is unlikely that it would be allowed to go to this length ever again.

## Corruption of House Tytalus

Near the end of the tenth century, the Primus and several other leaders of House Tytalus were found to be diabolists. They had been engaged in a campaign of corrupting magi of other Houses and gaining ever more power through the use of magics and spells which they had gained from consorting with Demons. While they believe that they were simply using the demons to further their own powers, and had not risked their souls nor had given the Demons anything substantive, this was not believed by others within the Order. Amid much fear and accusation, they were tried and executed by a special convening of the Grand Tribunal. This corruption of powerful magi increased the Order's fear of devils and added to the suspicion that had developed among magi. Some mark this event as a precursor to the Schism War, for it indeed sent a wave of fear and anger throughout the Order. Some say this is a result of the powers of Hell which the Tytalus magi had gained, but most believe that it is simply due to the nature and tenor of the times and compare it with certain periods of instability in Roman history.

## The Schism War

Just after the turn of the Millennium, open conflict broke out within the Order, a prolonged series of skirmishes, battles, and assassinations that have come to be known as the Schism War. It was a period of great destruction and growing rifts.

Some Houses and many powerful magi wanted to restrict the interaction among the Houses so that corruption in one House would not lead to the downfall of others. The corruption of House Tytalus was, no doubt, the main cause for this paranoia, but intrigue, competition, and skirmishing in general added to the atmosphere of distrust. Magi refused to attend Tribunals, or to agree on the decisions passed by Tribunals, saying that they were "influenced by Hell." Differences of opinion turned into frequent Wizard's Wars and raids, and some

groups of unscrupulous magi took advantage of the confusion and began to simply raid covenants and ransack them for their treasures.

The confusion eventually led to a free-for-all and old feuds that had been quietly simmering for years were renewed. Sides shifted continually and the fighting took many lives. Some Houses retreated to avoid the violence, while others increased their violent activities to deter attackers or just to pursue personal grudges amid the chaos. Many covenants closed themselves off from the world and spent their energy increasing their defenses, and to this day a covenant in the Rhine Tribunal exists

that refuses to believe the Schism War is over and have used the years to increase their defenses to ludicrous levels. The Quaesitoris lost effective power as the magi stopped obeying their orders, and it looked to most like the Order of Hermes was about to fall into total disorder. All that was required was one more wave of chaos and violence and it would follow the same path as did Rome 500 years before.

Then House Tremere declared open and total war on House Díedne. House Díedne, composed of descendants of the druids, had always been much removed from the other Houses, and it was generally distrusted. Tremere's Primus, Cercistum, called on House Flambeau to help rid the Order of these non-Latin troublemakers, and the Flambeau magi joined in the battle with relish. The Quaesitoris, seeing a chance to regain power by gaining the alliance of the two most powerful houses, backed House Tremere and declared

House Díedne Renounced. Most of the other Houses retreated for safety, but many individual magi with grudges to settle joined the assault.

In the subsequent war, House Díedne was entirely eliminated, its covenants were destroyed and most of its members were put to the flames — but its leaders were never found. It was the most complete and widespread orgy of destruction the Order has ever known. Vast forests were burned, cities were completely razed, mountains were flattened and tremendous battles were waged across the country side. The magi of House Díedne used the magic in their own bodies in one enormous spell to strike back at their enemies before they

### Magic of Pendule

The non-Hermetic magus Pendule has become something of a legend in the Order. Because he refused to join the Order, he had to meet in secret with Hermetic magi, whom he taught many of his secrets. To this day, no one knows why he taught his version of magic to others; perhaps he simply wanted to share what he knew before he died.

Pendule's magic was much more sensual and personal than Hermetic magic. For instance, the use of color was a powerful magical technique and he expected wizards to be transformed by their own magic rather than merely trying to dominate it. Those Hermetic magi who learned magic from him have passed this knowledge on to their apprentices and others. While they still use Hermetic magic, they have special abilities and powers that Hermetic magic does not encompass. Only about twenty magi actually use Pendule's magic, though some of his concepts have found their way into standard Hermetic texts. Because so few magi use his magic, other magi know little about it. Some even suspect that Pendule was a diabolist and that all those who study his wisdom become corrupted.

died (a secret that perished with them). The leaders of the pogrom hoped that the far-reaching spells they had used had weakened all of House Díedne to the point where they would soon die, but many still suspect that the leaders of House Díedne had retreated into a faerie forest or escaped by ship into the sea. If that is the case, they might return at any time, bent on revenge.

With House Díedne destroyed, the Schism War was effectively over and order was slowly restored. The Quaesitoris with the new power they had gained with their powerful but satiated allies, insisted on settling all remaining conflicts peacefully. Most magi were eager to stop fighting once they had seen the incredible destruction that can result from war. Few magi missed House Díedne, but all were sobered by the fact that a House had been destroyed and no one had lifted a hand to prevent the injustice — it could happen again.

The fall of House Díedne was such a shock that within three years, the remaining magi settled their differences peacefully and soon the raids and the fighting were over. It may be that conflicts from those times remain unsettled in the minds of some, conflicts that could arise again should the Order fall once more into crisis, but the horror of the Schism War will never be forgotten.

### Recent History

In the last one hundred years, most of the major events have been within the Houses and not of great interest to the Order as a whole. The major concern of the Order is the increasing strength and expanse of the Dominion and the loss of magical areas due to the growth of the mundane population. Many magi are becoming impatient with isolating themselves from the mundane world and they call for a concerted effort to stop the mundanes from encroaching further into magical areas. Some advocate diplomacy, but nearly all admit that a recourse to war may be necessary. Others believe that this would be foolhardy, and advocate a further retreat from the world and a complete withdrawal from the lives of the common mortals.

Within the Order, a growing concern over the restrictions of Hermetic magic has developed. There are those magi who say that Bonisagus' system of magic has stifled the imaginations and limited the wills of every magus since the Founders, and that the Order of Hermes

is in a steady decline that can only result in stagnation and death. Secretly, these magi strive to find a new understanding of magic, one that will open them and others to the potential of power and wisdom that Bonisagus' system cannot tap. They must strive secretly, however, because it is generally understood that a sudden change in the way wizards work magic would lead to a bloody battle of power unseen since the Schism War. That war was fought because House Díedne refused to use magic in the same way as the magi of other houses did (they did not use formulaic spells of any kind), and it is obvious that similar divisions of the methods of magic could lead to similar wars. Wizards using new-found power would no longer be able to share their knowledge with the Order and splits would develop between those

who head blindly into a new way of magic and those who cling tenaciously to the past. Inevitably, only a show of deadly power would prove one type of magic victor over the other, and the Order would be so weakened that its enemies would overtake it. Those who talk of finding new ways to do magic are shunned and feared. Those who insist on it are cast out. Even some magi who believe Hermetic magic to be in inexorable decline refuse to look for a new system, preferring a gradual extinction to an ultimate battle.

### Current Boundaries

When the Order of Hermes was founded, most of the magi came from what is modern-day France and Germany, where Latin-based magic had survived most strongly. Wizards in the

more barbaric lands such as Scandinavia and the British Isles were left out, partly because the Latin-descended wizards held them in contempt and partly because the wizards of this area had little desire to attach themselves to an Order founded by Latin magi.

In the centuries since, the Order has expanded slowly but steadily. By the thirteenth century, the Order reaches from Hibernia (Ireland) to the Russian steppes to Greece to the Spanish Peninsula, with occasional magi and covenants living beyond even these impressive borders. The Order is still centered in France and the Holy Roman Empire (as Germany is now known), but as the Order grows, many of the new magi find their way out to the edges of the world, such as Hibernia.

An important reason for the spread of the Order is the perpetual search for raw *vis* (latent magical power

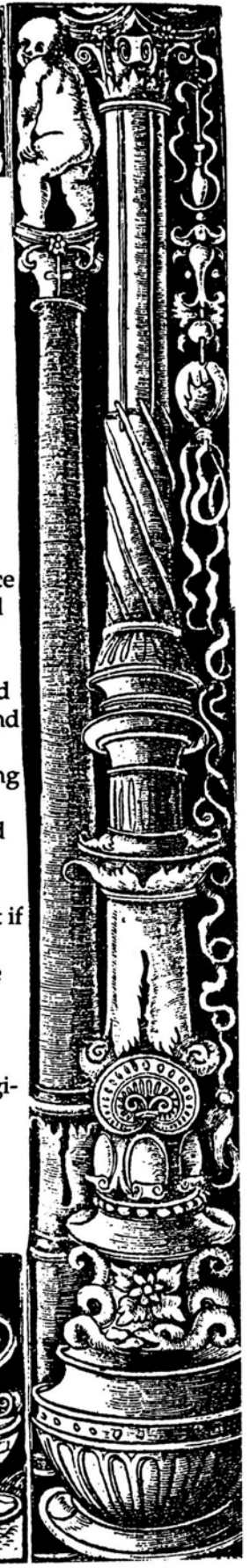




### Legends of the Order of Hermes

There are as many legends among the wizards of the Order of Hermes as there are in any culture. These myths demonstrate the peculiarities of this mystical society and allow you to appreciate and understand some of the stranger beliefs and attitudes of these wizards. Though they certainly may have some truth to them, these myths are thought by many to be "only myths." Still, a few wizards always seem to be obsessed by them and spend much of their time trying to prove their validity. Though one magus may believe wholeheartedly in one "legend" (or as they would put it, theory), they may have disgust and contempt for those who believe in others. Such is the nature of the human mind.

- Legend of the Old Ones — Hermetic magic comes from the old ones, ancient beings of incredible power whose civilization was destroyed millennia ago. They were last known to humanity as the gods of Greece and Egypt and now they sleep away the centuries in hidden tombs and mountaintops. Perhaps they will awaken one day to claim what was theirs, but they may need the help of those who would aid them.
- Legend of the Mundanes — Soon the Dominion will cover the world and magic will be a thing of the past. With magic and the faeries, beauty and delight will also depart and all will be but work and misery. Even the gentle magic of a moving song or a mother's love will disappear, leaving dull, unintelligent humans as final masters of a gray and dying world.
- Legend of the Faeries — The faeries are the true owners of the earth, and humans are degenerate faeries. Hermetic magic is a pitiful attempt to regain the magic power that humans lost when they lost their faerie powers. The faeries so far have ignored humanity out of contempt, but if magi continue to raid the faerie forest and if church bells continue to drive the faeries back, they will soon turn against us. If we humans are lucky, they will kill us. Otherwise they may retain us for their amusement.
- Legend of Degeneration — As the Order has grown in number, it has shrunk in quality. Magi of the thirteenth century are weak and unimaginative compared to the Founders, and the Order shows only signs of continued decay. Some predict that the magi will simply become less and less powerful until the Order is overrun by society, while others believe that one day a daring magus will challenge the tenets of the Order and of Hermetic magic, destroying the Order and re-building it anew.





# Politics

Since magi are independent minded and rugged individualists by nature, they have little need for organization and politics. The Order of Hermes, therefore, is very loosely organized; it serves as the only guarantee against anarchy and is only supported in as much as it does prevent anarchy. Indeed, there are always those who propose that the Order be disbanded; of course they usually do so at Tribunal....

Because of this looseness of structure, there are relatively few rules to govern a magus' life, and in many cases transgressions of these rules may be overlooked, or even more likely, never discovered. In order to provide a minimum amount of structure, however, there are certain concerns that bring magi together to settle their differences. These concerns are usually dealt with at formal Tribunals of magi and are discussed within the framework of a system of rules and laws, which are universally known as the Code.

The main thing to remember is that the rules that govern the Order are mainly established through tradition and precedent (i.e., past decisions of Tribunals). The Code of Hermes, though a vital document to the Order, is not by any stretch of the imagination complete. It is the highest law of the Order, but it describes only the bare minimum of laws. All other laws are simply traditions or precedents based on the Code, and do not carry the same authority as do the strictures of the original Code. (Editor's note- The difference between the Code and other Hermetic traditions is similar to the difference between the United States Constitution and the more mundane laws passed by a fractious Congress.)

## The Code of Hermes

All Hermetic magi have sworn to follow the Code. All other laws, traditions, prohibitions, rules, and decrees derive all their power either from the Code or from voluntary obedience. Any breach of the Code, as the Code itself states, is punishable by death. Though death is not often used as a punishment, it is always the punishment threatened if a magus should not agree to the terms of any lesser punishment. Simple as it may be, the Code of Hermes turned a dozen competitive magi into an Order that has survived and prospered for over four hundred years.

A copy of the Code is found in every covenant, even those with minimal libraries, and it is revered as a document of great value. Many covenants actually read it before every council meeting so as to remind themselves of why and how they are gathered together. An apprentice must be able to say the Code from memory in order to become a magus.



## The Order of Hermes

### The Code of Hermes

I, Bonisagus, hereby swear my everlasting loyalty to the Order of Hermes and its members.

I will not deprive nor attempt to deprive any member of the Order of his magical power. I will not slay nor attempt to slay any member of the Order, except in justly executed and formally declared Wizard's War. I hereby understand that Wizard's War is an open conflict between two magi who may slay each other without breaking this oath, and that should I be slain in a Wizard's War, no retribution shall fall on he who slays me.

I will abide by the decisions made by fair vote at the Tribunal. I will have one vote at the Tribunal, and I will use it prudently. I will respect as equal the votes of all others at the Tribunal.

I will not endanger the Order through my actions. Nor will I interfere with the affairs of mundanes and thereby bring ruin upon my sodalis. I will not deal with devils, lest I imperil my soul and the souls of my sodalis as well. I will not molest the faeries, lest their vengeance catch my sodalis also.

I will not use magic to scry upon members of the Order of Hermes, nor shall I use it to peer into their affairs.

I will train apprentices who will swear to this Code, and should any of them turn against the Order and my sodalis, I shall be the first to strike them down and bring them to justice. No apprentice of mine shall be called magus until he first swears to uphold this Code.

I concede to Bonisagus the right to take my apprentice if he should find my apprentice valuable to him in his studies.\*

I shall further the knowledge of the Order and share with its members all that I find in my search for wisdom and power.\*\*

I request that, should I break this oath, I be cast out of the Order. If I am cast out, I ask my sodalis to find me and slay me that my life may not continue in degradation and infamy.

The enemies of the Order are my enemies. The friends of the Order are my friends. The allies of the Order are my allies. Let us work as one and grow hale and strong.

This oath I hereby swear on the third day of Pisces, in the nine hundred and fifth year of Aries. Woe to they who try to tempt me to break this oath, and woe to me if I succumb to the temptation.

\* Not spoken by Bonisagus or his followers.

\*\*Spoken only by Bonisagus and his followers.

Because the Code is so terse and free of detail, the Order has developed a Peripheral Code to explain, expand, and embellish it. The Peripheral Code is the collection of laws and precedents within the Order created by Tribunals since the occasions of the first speaking of the Code, and its interpretation is debated much more frequently than is the interpretation of the Code itself.

**I, Bonisagus, hereby swear my lifelong loyalty to the Order of Hermes and its members.**

Bonisagus was the first magus to swear to the Code, so when it is written, his name is used. When the oath is actually taken by someone who is becoming a Hermetic magus, they insert their own name where Bonisagus' name appears here.

**I will not deprive nor attempt to deprive any member of the Order of his magical power. I will not slay nor attempt to slay any member of the Order, except in justly executed and formally declared Wizard's War. I hereby understand that Wizard's War is an open conflict between two magi who may slay each other without breaking this oath, and that should I be slain in a Wizard's War, no retribution shall fall on he who slays me.**

This is the most important clause in the Code. Note that the magi regard losing one's magical power as even more serious than death. This clause ended the strife that had plagued the wizards in the eighth century. A Wizard's War is carefully defined by the Peripheral Code; see below. Flambeau was largely responsible for including provision for a Wizard's War in the Code.

**I will abide by the decisions made by fair vote at the Tribunal. I will have one vote at the Tribunal, and I will use it prudently. I will respect as equal the votes of all others at the Tribunal.**

When the Order began, there was only one Tribunal. The Peripheral Code states that this clause refers to all official Hermetic Tribunals. Voting is regulated by sigils. Each magus has one sigil, given to them by their master, and whoever holds a magus' sigil by permission may vote as that magus' proxy at that magus' Tribunal.

See below for how the structure of Tribunals has evolved.

**I will not endanger the Order through my actions. Nor will I interfere with the affairs of mundanes and thereby bring ruin upon my sodalis. I will not deal with devils, lest I imperil my soul and the souls of my sodalis as well. I will not molest the faeries, lest their vengeance catch my sodalis also.**

This vital clause has been variously interpreted through the years. At first it was taken to mean that magi must not interfere at all in mortal affairs. Such a stipulation, however, has proved to be infeasible, especially as

the mortal population has grown. Now it is interpreted to mean that only those interferences that could result in retribution are prohibited.

The prohibition against dealing with devils, however, is still strictly enforced. The corruption of House Tytalus in the tenth century has made Hermetic magi so afraid of Hell that even talking with demons can be ruled a punishable offense.

House Merinita has tried to enforce the provision against molesting faeries, but faerie lands provide such large sources of raw *vis* that, again, this prohibition extends only to those offenses that endanger the Order or a significant number of magi.

**I will not use magic to scry upon members of the Order of Hermes, nor shall I use it to peer into their affairs.**

This clause prevents magi from reading each others' minds, using clairvoyance spells to look into each others' sancta, and generally using spells that gain information about other magi. All these spells, of course, may be used with the permission of the magus being "spied" on, but such permission may not be forced, even through certámen. The Quaesitoris, however, can exercise their right to spy on magi when the safety of the Order or its members is in question. Other magi resent this use of their power, so the Quaesitoris do not use this right often (or at least do not let themselves get caught at it).

**I will train apprentices who will swear to this Code, and should any of them turn against the Order and my sodalis, I will be the first to strike them down and bring them to justice. No apprentice of mine shall be called magus until he first swears to uphold this Code.**

Technically, this provision includes a promise to train apprentices, so that those who do not do so are in violation of the oath. This interpretation, however, is not enforced. Still, magi do see training apprentices as a duty to be performed even if one will not personally profit from it. The only restriction this provision now imposes is that all apprentices must become Hermetic magi.

The Peripheral Code outlines what is seen as fair and unfair treatment of apprentices.

**I concede to Bonisagus the right to take my apprentice if he should find my apprentice valuable to him in his studies.**

This clause was not spoken by Bonisagus, nor is it spoken by his followers. The Peripheral Code rules that the followers of Bonisagus have the same right as he did to take the apprentices of others.

**I shall further the knowledge of the Order and share with its members all that I find in my search for wisdom and power.**

Of the Founders, only Bonisagus spoke this provision, and now only his followers take this part of the

oath. This clause compensates the other magi for the apprentices taken by Bonisagus and his followers.

**I request that, should I break this oath, I be cast out of the Order. If I am cast out, I ask my sodalis to find me and slay me that my life may not continue in degradation and infamy.**

This clause underscores the importance of following the Code. Those who break the Code can be Renounced, in which case a Wizards' March is called against the offender.

**The enemies of the Order are my enemies. The friends of the Order are my friends. The allies of the Order are my allies. Let us work as one and grow hale and strong.**

This unenforceable provision was an attempt to unify the magi. In practice, magi make their own enemies and friends, and the Order is generally divided as to who qualifies as enemy, friend, and ally. Even though this provision is not enforced or universally followed, it remains as the ideal within the Order.

**This oath I hereby swear on the third day of Pisces, in the nine hundred and fifth year of Aries. Woe to they who try to tempt me to break this oath, and woe to me if I succumb to the temptation.**

Bonisagus took the oath on February 21st, A.D. 767, which is the third day of Pisces in the nine hundred and sixth year of Aries, according to Hermetic reckoning. Hermetic astrologers place the Age of Aries as beginning in 139 B.C. Each new magus states the current date in place of this one as they take the oath. It is traditional to use the astrological date, rather than the common one.

## The Peripheral Code

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Over the years, the magi of the Order have interpreted the Code in various ways, producing a large amount of writing about how various disputes have been settled. These writings are used as precedents for settling later disputes. The magi, however, do not swear to uphold the Peripheral Code, as they do swear to uphold the Code of Hermes. The Code, however, does include a provision for following the rulings of the Tribunal. Since additions are made to the Peripheral Code mostly based on the rulings of the Grand Tribunal, technically these rulings are as binding as the Code itself. In practice, however, the Peripheral Code is open to debate and varying interpretation. On the occasion that a local Tribunal makes a general ruling on the lives and affairs of magi, it has to be reviewed and passed by the Grand Tribunal before it becomes a part of the Peripheral Code. However, some Tribunals have made their own idiosyncratic rulings on various subjects and have taken it upon themselves to enforce them. Though this is frowned upon by the Quaesitoris, it is not prevented.



The Peripheral Code covers such details as familiars, apprentices, the formation of covenants, appropriate punishment for personal offenses, and so on. Over the years, the Quaesitoris have added many different interpretations to the Peripheral Code. Because the Quaesitoris are often adversarial, other magi generally will not obey them unless their rulings are backed by the Peripheral Code. Therefore, the more precedents the Peripheral Code maintains, the more powerful the Quaesitoris are.

### Excerpts from the Peripheral Code—

Note that rulings are entered every thirty-three years, the times when the Grand Tribunal has been held. (The first years of the Order, though, were filled with many Tribunals as the magi tried to build a firm base of laws and traditions.)

- “906th year of Aries (A.D. 767). No Wizard’s War shall be declared unless one magus notifies the other on the night of the full moon. On the rise of the next full moon, the Wizard’s War shall commence, and it shall end at the rise of the full moon thereafter. Those who continue in the conflict after this time shall be considered rogue and shall have a Wizards’ March declared against them at the next Tribunal”
  - “912th year of Aries. The provisions of the Code of Hermes that refer to Bonisagus apply equally to all members of his House.”
  - “912th year of Aries. The provisions in the Code of Hermes referring to the Tribunal apply equally to any other Tribunal that has power over the magus and that is presided over by a Quaesitor. A Tribunal must include twelve or more magi from no less than four covenants.” (As the Order grew, one Tribunal was no longer able to effectively govern all of the magi.)
  - “938th year of Aries. Certámen is to be respected as a means of settling disputes decisively. In certámen, the challenger must first choose and state the technique to be used, and the defender must then choose the form. Any magus refusing to engage in certámen or refusing to abide by the results of the certámen is betraying the spirit of the Code and is to be punished. Those who refuse to accept certámen challenges, therefore, or refuse to abide by the decision of a certámen may suffer more violent coercion by the offended magus and shall be punished by their Tribunal.
- “No magus may challenge another magus to certámen a second time unless the magus to be challenged has challenged the first in the meantime.
- “Magi may use raw *vis* to aid them even in ritual certámen.”
- “971st year of Aries. No certámen shall force a magus to give up his rights, nor force a magus to break the Code of Hermes nor the Peripheral Code. The rights protected from certámen include the rights of a Praeco leading a Tribunal, the rights of a Primus ruling a House, and the rights of a Quaesitor protecting the Order.”
  - “971st year of Aries. If a master is providing an apprentice with less than three months’ worth of training per year, any other magus, with the apprentice’s permission, may take the apprentice as his own.”
  - “1,004th year of Aries. The magus Hercilion, who has lately assumed a position of court wizard with a baron, is hereby reprimanded and ordered to leave said position before the rise of the next full moon. The Grand Tribunal has found that such a position endangers the Order because other mundane rulers will soon want their own court wizards, and they may become angry at those who refuse such a role. Hercilion will also certainly find himself involved in the baron’s wars. Should the baron win his wars, his enemies will blame the Order for their defeat. Should the baron lose, he will blame the Order. The Code clearly prohibits activity that endangers the Order in this way. Furthermore, it is a disgrace to see a magus serve a mundane — it is beneath the dignity of a true Hermetic magus. If Hercilion removes himself from the baron’s service before the next full moon, he shall receive no punishment other than the shame he surely must feel at having been a servant of a mortal. Henceforth, no magus shall ever serve a mundane as a servant or hireling”
  - “1,037th year of Aries. No Quaesitor shall hold power to officiate at a Tribunal unless he bears a document declaring, by name, that he is a Quaesitor in good standing and is known to at least one magus in the Tribunal. This document must be signed and dated by the Primus of House Guernicus, and said document shall be invalid if it is more than seven years old.”
  - “1,070th year of Aries. The magus Hernis, Filius of Dorin, follower of Tytalus, was Renounced for having declared three Wizard’s Wars within the space of fourteen months. On careful investigation, the Tribunal at Durenmar found that his causes were not sufficient to warrant Wizard’s Wars. The voting sodalis agreed that if Hernis had cooperated with the Tribunal, he would have been punished but not Renounced. His stubborn refusal to cooperate, to heed earlier warnings, or to admit his errors forced the voting members to Renounce him. He was subsequently executed by Fax Ignis of House Flambeau. Such abuse of the traditions of the Order shall not again be tolerated.”
  - “1,136th year of Aries. It was determined at the Tribunal at Val-Negra that the magus Pisitulus of Flambeau used poor but excusable judgment in slaying the magus Forcus of Tytalus, who was approaching Pisitulus’ sanctum with apparent but not obvious intent to threaten Pisitulus’ laboratory and apprentice. Pisitulus was punished by the loss of his familiar.”
  - “1,136th year of Aries. The sanctum of each magus shall be marked with a circle inscribed within a square, with straight lines connecting the square’s opposite corners. This marking shall be in plain view so that those

entering the sanctum know that it is indeed a sanctum. A symbol representing the identity of the sanctum's owner shall accompany the sign."

## Crime and Punishment

The execution of justice in the Order of Hermes reflects its loosely organized nature. While justice is a serious matter, the magi have so far proved to be too individualistic to agree on a formal system of courts and laws. The Tribunals handle the justice, with guilt and sentences determined by vote, guided by the Code of Hermes and the Peripheral Code. While punishments do vary widely, they are nearly all "voluntary" with the threat of the ultimate punishment, death, reserved if the magus should not agree to what has been decided. Usually the punishment of summary execution is assigned to an Arch-Mage who is willing to perform the task and who is sometimes assisted by several other magi. They are given the belongings of the executed magi as compensation. If the magus to be executed is an Arch-Mage as well, then frequently different arrangements are made, for usually only a full Wizards' March can provide the desired results.

## High Crimes and the Wizards' March

The High Crimes of the Order are those described in the Code; those that endanger the Order itself. Slaying a magus or destroying a magus' magical ability, dealing with demons, and raising the wrath of mortals or supernatural beings against the Order are all considered High Crimes. Those who commit High Crimes are subject to the one punishment that the Code describes, death. The sentence of death is carried out through a Wizards' March.

A Wizards' March is an official declaration that a magus has been cast out of the Order. As an outcast, the wizard is a threat to the others in the Order, and it is the obligation of all wizards to hunt down and slay the outcast. Those who fail to fulfill the obligation are generally not punished, but most magi are eager to pursue the wrong-doer because the outcast's magical belongings go to any who partake in executing Hermetic justice. By tradition, as stated in the Code, the outcast's parents is especially bound to find and slay the criminal.

While magi often prefer to settle their own grievances, occasionally they will inform those beyond the Order of Hermes that a given magus has been cast out. Most magi have made some enemies among the mortals, and these enemies would be quite pleased to know that slaying the outcast would not result in retaliation from the rest of the Order. For most mortals, however, slaying a magus, even a fugitive magus, would be quite impossible.

## Low Crimes

Any crimes that do not break the Code of the Order of Hermes are Low Crimes. These crimes are defined by the Peripheral Code, as are precedents for their punishments. The principle that guides justice for Low Crimes is "an eye for an eye." You do not break your oath to uphold the Code of Hermes if you destroy another magus' familiar, laboratory, and library in the pursuit of some of that wizard's secrets. You do, however, risk retaliation. The system of dealing with Low Crimes has varied from century to century and still varies from area to area.

Where the Order is least organized, nearly anything goes. Weaker magi and lesser covenants fall prey to the greed of those who are more powerful, and as long as the Order does not feel threatened by this conflict, the rule of might prevails. Where the Order is more organized, such as where a powerful and just covenant holds sway, systems of proxy retaliation have developed. Under this system, powerful magi are willing to step in and retaliate in place of weaker magi who have been wronged. Still, political influence plays a huge role in deciding whose acts of aggression are punished and whose are not. In areas where the Order is most powerful, most kinds of violent conflict do not occur, for no one dares to step over the bounds of accepted behavior.

Suppose, for example, that a magus has conducted a raid on a weak covenant and looted its magical stores. As long as the aggressor did not slay any magi, these acts would not violate the Code of Hermes. In an area where justice is dependent on individual action, the magi of the raided covenant would be expected to perform any punishments they deem appropriate without assistance from any authorities. If they were weak enough to fall prey to a lone magus while on their home ground, however, they would not be likely to have the power to retaliate in full. In an area where justice is a public matter, the injured covenant could petition larger covenants at a Tribunal and ask that retaliation be executed by proxy. More powerful magi would then be likely to punish the offender in the service of justice.

The Peripheral Code lists various aggressions and discusses their relative severity. In general, these are the things that a magus values, in order of decreasing importance: the Gift, life, one's familiar, one's apprentice, one's laboratory and other magical property, one's privacy, one's time. Note that exceptional versions of some things might not fit into this order, so that a well-trained and loyal apprentice could be judged equal in value to a mediocre familiar.

Punishments for Low Crimes fall into two categories; retaliation and reparation. Retaliation is damaging the aggressor in amount equivalent to the damage the aggressor has done. For instance, a magus who kills the familiar of another magus could be punished by loss of their own familiar. If they have no familiar, they might

## The Order of Hermes

be punished by loss of their apprentice plus their laboratory. Reparation is forcing the aggressor to make up for the aggression. Often retaliation and reparation are combined. For instance, it is common for a covenant that is retaliating as a proxy for a weaker covenant to force the aggressor to give some of their magical tomes to them. The aggressor is punished by loss of valuable books, the victim is satisfied to see the aggressor punished, and the proxy covenant benefits by the addition of knowledge to its covenant. Often, some of the books will also go to the covenant that was attacked.

### Wizard's War

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Those who designed the Code of Hermes recognized that magi would often have personal feuds, the resolution of which could not be satisfied by conduct allowed by the Code. They therefore included a provision that allows a magus to step temporarily out of the Code and to engage in a lethal feud with a blood enemy. Any magus who has been wronged and who will not feel satisfied until the perpetrator is slain can declare a Wizard's War. While in Wizard's War, two magi may slay each other without breaking their oath to the Order of Hermes. The declaration of Wizard's War must arrive to the intended victim on the night of the full moon and open hostilities may not begin until the rise of the following full moon. These restrictions are designed to make Wizard's War difficult, a course to be undertaken only by those to whom all other options are unsatisfactory.

Those who declare a Wizard's War too often are seen as a threat to the stability of the Order, and Wizards' Marches may be called against them.

### Tribunals

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A wizards' council is any gathering of magi who have come together to make a decision. Within a covenant, councils are regular occurrences, but sometimes councils are called with representatives from various covenants. Legally, any decisions may be made by any number of magi, even one. In practice, however, the more magi involved in a decision and the more covenants represented, the more respect any decision will have. According to tradition, major decisions about the actions of magi, including the declaration of a Wizards' March, are only valid if made at a council.

A Tribunal was initially a term reserved only for what is now known as the Grand Tribunal — the first and original Tribunal of the Order. Now, however, it refers to any one of thirteen different, officially recognized and regularly held council meetings of the Order, as well as the specific geographic areas over which these council meetings hold sway (*Exempli gratia*— the Tribunal of Normandy).

Making a decision at a Tribunal is not the determinant of its legitimacy. If a council of three magi declares

Wizards' March against another magus and then slays said magus, this action will surely be noticed by other magi in the area. The other magi will investigate the cause for the March, and if the cause was valid, the magi who called it will receive no punishment. Should the reasons be found to be flawed, however, those magi might be the target of another Wizards' March (probably called by a larger number of magi). Likewise, a faulty decision made by a hundred magi is still a faulty decision, and if it can be proven faulty, the decision will be reversed. Wizards' Marches which are called by one of the local Tribunals are usually reviewed by the members of the Grand Tribunal, to see if it was called for valid reasons — even if they find it was incorrect in its ruling, however, it is usually too late for the offending magus.

A decision is almost always assumed to be valid if it is determined at a Tribunal. The Peripheral Code defines a Tribunal as a gathering of at least twelve magi representing at least four covenants, with a Quaesitor in good standing presiding over the votes. There are thirteen Tribunals in the Order, each having jurisdiction over a specified area. All magi within that area are members of the same Tribunal, and every seven years they meet at the covenant of the Praeco (see below) to hold a Tribunal. It is at this Tribunal that decisions involving more than one covenant are made. All decisions made at a Tribunal are binding on magi from covenants in the area designated as being under the Tribunal's control.

Tribunals are always exciting affairs consisting of a great deal of infighting, casual professional conversation, debates on important issues, reclusive magi coming out of their forests and caves, decisions of great import determined, and, usually, a ritual of initiation for apprentices who are ready to become magi. The time of a Tribunal is both dreaded and long anticipated by magi.

Note that the word "Tribunal" refers to the actual meeting of the magi as well as that geographic area over which the meeting has jurisdiction. Tribunals are generally named after the area over which they have power.

### Customs of the Tribunals

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A Tribunal is generally held every seven years, though magi may call a special Tribunal to deal with specific, pressing issues. The first Tribunal of the Order was in the 906th year of Aries (A.D. 767), and the other, smaller Tribunals that grew out from it meet every seven years, using year 906 as their starting point. In the thirteenth century, there will be Tribunals held in each of the thirteen areas in the following years: 1207, 1214, 1221, 1227, 1235, 1242, 1249, 1256, 1263, 1270, 1277, 1284, 1291, and 1298. In addition, each local Tribunal will hold two extra Tribunals in the years 1260 and 1293 in preparation for the Grand Tribunals held in the following years (see below). The Tribunals of 1227 are moved one year out of place so that they can serve to prepare for the Grand Tribunal of 1228. All of the details of scheduling are determined by House Quaesitor in consultation with the

Grand Tribunal. Note that the Tribunal timing goes by the Zodiac calendar, which begins in March. (Editor's note: Although the ancient Roman calendar also began with March, during the Middle Ages, the beginning of the year varied from place to place. It was not until 1582 that Pope Gregory officially established a calendar which began the year with January.) All covenants will be notified of Tribunals at least six months ahead of time.

The magi gather at the covenant of the senior magus (Praeco) in the area to discuss matters of import to their covenants, the Tribunal, and the Order. Each has sigils from magi who have entrusted them with their votes.

During the day, the magi at the Tribunal gather informally, eat meals together, and discuss issues in preparation for the coming evening. At dusk, the Tribunal officially convenes under the direction of the Praeco. The first task is to determine what shall be discussed and done at the Tribunal. Any magus from the area may suggest any topic and all will be touched on, though those of little interest to the Praeco may be given little attention. Magi announce at this time whether they have apprentices to be initiated as magi. Once all the topics and rituals of initiation have been announced, the Praeco determines the order in which they will be dealt with. If the Praeco wants an apprentice to be able to vote, they will have the ritual of initiation first. If not, the Praeco can withhold the ritual until all voting is over.

The magi talk, debate, pose questions to each other, and sometimes even engage in certámen to settle disputes immediately. The meeting continues until the Praeco disbands it, or until dawn, whichever comes first. If there are more votes to be taken, the magi remain through the day, resting, relaxing, and preparing for the coming night of discussion. The time spent away from the council table is usually full of informal discussions and debates, and a variety of different "trade talk" as the magi finally get the chance to interact socially with those of their own kind.

Eventually, the magi run out of things to discuss and vote on, or the Praeco determines that the Tribunal has ended. At that point, some magi remain for a while to meet informally or formally with other magi (though they can no longer depend on the hospitality of the Praeco's covenant). Others simply return home with reports of the Tribunal's decisions.

Some magi come to Tribunals for specific issues which they wish to discuss. Others want to maintain the power of their covenants. Many come simply to meet other magi, see old friends, talk about magic, make connections and so on. If the player-characters come from a Spring covenant, or possibly a Winter covenant, they might come to a Tribunal to represent the covenant and see what is happening in the area. If they come from a Summer or Fall covenant, it is unlikely that the leaders would allow underlings to represent them, in which case the player-characters could come along simply to learn about the area and to run errands and such for the older magi who have come to represent the covenant.

## The Leader of the Tribunal

The Praeco leads the Tribunal, making sure that the discussion and voting run as smoothly as possible. (See the section on "Becoming a Praeco" in the Life of a Magus chapter, p. 22.)

The Praeco cannot vote, but in exchange has three rights: to silence magi at a Tribunal, to remove magi from the discussion area, and to eject magi from the Tribunal.

The Praeco can silence any magus except the ruling Quaesitor at any time and for any length of time. Silenced magi may vote, but they may not speak. Sometimes a Praeco declares that only one magus from each covenant may speak and each represented covenant must choose their speaker.

The Praeco can also remove people (except the Quaesitor) from the discussion area. Those who are removed cannot vote, though they can leave their sigils with anyone remaining in the discussion area. These people may be called back in any time the Praeco wishes.

The Praeco's ultimate power lies in their ability to eject anyone, except the Quaesitor, from the Tribunal. Ejected magi may leave their sigils with someone else, but they cannot participate in the Tribunal and they may not be called back. The magi generally stay nearby, however, for the final vote called by the Quaesitor (see below).

By overusing these powers, a Praeco can prevent discussion of certain topics or let only magi of one opinion speak on a given topic. They can even draw the Tribunal to a close at any time by silencing all the magi present for the remainder of the Tribunal. Though the silenced magi could vote, no one could call for a vote in the first place, so the Tribunal is effectively over.

At any time (except after being silenced or ejected), a magus can call a "vote of procedure." For the vote of procedure, all magi removed from the meeting room can return, each magus gets one vote, and all may speak. (Magi ejected from the Tribunal altogether may not return.) They can then vote to overrule any action taken by the Praeco, such as silencing a certain magus. The Praeco may not vote nor use any powers during a vote of procedure. Two-thirds of the magi present must vote to overrule the Praeco or the Praeco's order stands. Remember that a silenced magus may not call for a vote of procedure.

Another check on the Praeco's power comes at the end of the Tribunal when the Quaesitor always calls in those magi who have been removed or ejected and asks them if they wish to hold the Tribunal again, this time with the next oldest magus present acting as Praeco. No one can be silenced during the ensuing discussion. If at least three-fourths of the magi present vote in favor of holding the Tribunal again, the Praeco becomes just another participant (and may vote), while the next oldest magus present reigns as Praeco. Such a vote is very rare.

An old Hermetic adage has it that one should sooner try to contradict a law of magic than to contradict a Praeco.

Since Praeconis are the oldest magi in their Tribunals, they often have passed through several Twilights and may be near their last one. Most are idiosyncratic and some are almost crazy, but the Order has yet to invent another way to choose a Praeco. In the Provençal Tribunal, the magi of Doissetep have effectively excluded Vancasitum from acting as Praeco. He is from a powerless covenant and has lost any esteem he may previously have enjoyed, so the Tribunal, now held at Doissetep, continues without him. This is an extreme case, and it is motivated as much by Doissetep's desire for power as by Vancasitum's incompetence.

## Voting

Voting is done through the use of sigils. Each magus has one, and those magi who cannot attend the Tribunal may give theirs to magi who do attend. The magi who carry others' sigils can vote with them, serving as proxies for the other magi. Magi can even give the sigils they carry to other magi, who can then vote with them. The only restriction is that the last magus to vote with the sigil must be the one to return it to its owner and give an accounting of how it was used, so magi generally only use sigils from magi who live at their own covenants. Giving one's sigil to another magus is an act of trust and is usually only done for member of one's own House or covenant.

All votes at the Tribunal that apply beyond the Tribunal itself are made according to the number of sigils held by the delegates, including their own. All votes that determine actions within the Tribunal meeting, such as whether to overrule the actions of the Praeco, are decided by one vote for each magus actually attending the Tribunal.

## The Quaesitor

The Quaesitoris do not vote. They oversee the Tribunal to make sure that the Code of Hermes and the Peripheral Code are followed. If more than one Quaesitor is present, the senior Quaesitor presides and makes all rulings, while the others serve as consultants with no direct power. These consultants may not vote, but they may let other magi use their sigils.

If the magi have a legal question, they turn to the Quaesitor, who rules on the legality or illegality of a given action or vote. The Quaesitor may also step in at any time that they think the assembled magi are violating the Code or the Peripheral Code.

The Quaesitor's one power is to declare the entire Tribunal invalid. To be official, a Tribunal must be overseen by a Quaesitor, and if the Quaesitor refuses to accept the Tribunal, none of its decisions are legally binding.

## Topics of Debate

The following concerns are those most likely to be addressed at Tribunals:

- **Individual Conflicts**— Magi often have conflicts that must be handled at the Tribunal. Sometimes one magus will accuse another of breaking the Peripheral Code or even the Code of Hermes and will demand some kind of punishment for the offender. Tribunals often turn into trials when these matters come up.
  - **Conflicts over Land and Resources**— Various areas provide magi with much needed raw *vis* or other magical resources, and magi have been known to fight over the rights to these lands. Some lands are open, freely used and exploited by any who happen by. Others are recognized as the sole property of certain covenants or individual magi.
  - **Agreements**— Magi often come to agreements in specific issues so that they can work together, or just to prevent hostility. A friend of the faeries, for instance, might ask that a certain faerie land be recognized as an ally of the wizards in the area so that no one will raid the place. Those most likely to benefit from raids on these places will likely oppose such a move.
  - **Joint Efforts**— Sometimes a threat arises which requires the combined efforts of different magi and different covenants. In such cases, the magi may agree to share their resources somehow in the attempt to face the menace.
  - **Covenant Dedication**— Once in a great while, a covenant may find itself focused on a single objective. If the covenant vows to pursue the goal, and if the Tribunal rules that the goal is worthy and that the magi are sincere in their pursuit of it, the Tribunal can dedicate the covenant to that objective. The dedicated covenant usually gains some financial or magical support, as well as access to any tomes which pertain to their goal. Specialists will often join the covenant to help it in its task. Dedication is considered permanent unless the objective is completed. A covenant might never reach its goal, in which case it continues pursuing it in perpetuity. (Some goals, by their nature, are not truly attainable.)
- A notable example of covenant dedication took place in 1199 in Hibernia. After repeated confrontations with the minions of Hell, the covenant Ashenrise was almost completely destroyed by demons. The surviving members took a vow to protect Hibernia from demons and learn all it could about Hell and its minions. Since other covenants had had trouble with demons as well, the Tribunal dedicated the covenant. Now Ashenrise faces the goal of gaining the power and knowledge to fight devils wherever they may appear on the island.
- **Representatives for the Grand Tribunal**— If the Tribunal precedes a Grand Tribunal, the representatives for the Grand Tribunal are chosen. See below.



- To Send an Issue to the Grand Tribunal— The magi of a Tribunal may vote not to decide on a certain issue, but rather to send a representative to the next Grand Tribunal where it can be decided by more knowledgeable or powerful magi. Since each representative can only bring up one issue to the Grand Tribunal, such a move is rare, and the issue must be very important.

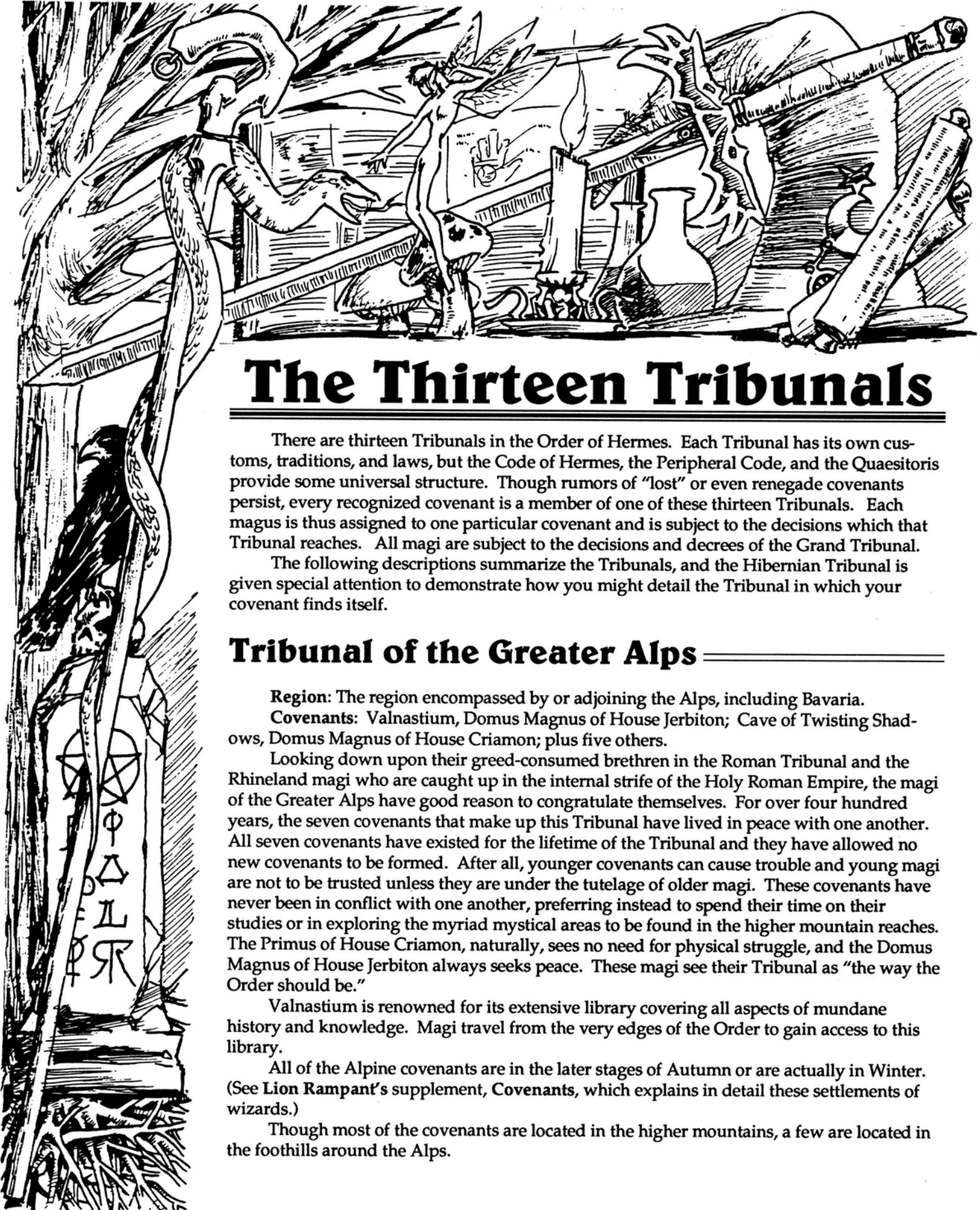
## The Grand Tribunal

The Grand Tribunal meets every thirty-three years at Durenmar, the Domus Magnus of House Bonisagus and the political center of the Order (located in the Black Forest of Germany). Its decisions have power over the entire Order and they are all entered into the Peripheral Code. In the thirteenth century, the Grand Tribunal will meet in the following years: 1228, 1261, and 1294.

Each of the thirteen Tribunals of the Order selects three representatives for the Grand Tribunal. In a Tribunal one year before the Grand Tribunal, each magus declares how many sigils they have been promised if they are to be representatives. The three who have the most sigils then attend the Grand Tribunal in the following year. They carry all the sigils of those who will entrust their sigils to them, an average of about twenty each. Since there are thirteen Tribunals in the Order, there are thirty-nine representatives voting at the Grand Tribunal, plus the Primi (see below).

The Grand Tribunal is much like a normal Tribunal, except there are a few special rules:

- The Primus of House Bonisagus acts as Praeco.
- Each magus may suggest only one topic for discussion and voting. The magi take turns suggesting topics, in order of the one who carries the fewest sigils to the one who carries the most. The representatives may announce Rituals of Initiation, which are then performed at the Grand Tribunal, but this is extremely rare because the magi represented no doubt want more important topics covered.
- The Primus of the Quaesitoris always presides.
- The Primi of all the Houses attend. They may vote with their own sigils even if they are not representatives of their Tribunals. Often they have their own private council meetings, during which they discuss matters of importance to the relations between the Houses. Matters that can be satisfactorily arranged in these meetings are not brought to the attention of the Grand Tribunal as a whole. Increasingly over the years, this council of Primi has more and more power, however the Grand Tribunal still holds the ultimate authority. Rulings of the Grand Tribunal may overrule the decisions of the thirteen lesser Tribunals.



## The Thirteen Tribunals

There are thirteen Tribunals in the Order of Hermes. Each Tribunal has its own customs, traditions, and laws, but the Code of Hermes, the Peripheral Code, and the Quaesitoris provide some universal structure. Though rumors of "lost" or even renegade covenants persist, every recognized covenant is a member of one of these thirteen Tribunals. Each magus is thus assigned to one particular covenant and is subject to the decisions which that Tribunal reaches. All magi are subject to the decisions and decrees of the Grand Tribunal.

The following descriptions summarize the Tribunals, and the Hibernian Tribunal is given special attention to demonstrate how you might detail the Tribunal in which your covenant finds itself.

### Tribunal of the Greater Alps

**Region:** The region encompassed by or adjoining the Alps, including Bavaria.

**Covenants:** Valnastium, Domus Magnus of House Jerbiton; Cave of Twisting Shadows, Domus Magnus of House Criamon; plus five others.

Looking down upon their greed-consumed brethren in the Roman Tribunal and the Rhineland magi who are caught up in the internal strife of the Holy Roman Empire, the magi of the Greater Alps have good reason to congratulate themselves. For over four hundred years, the seven covenants that make up this Tribunal have lived in peace with one another. All seven covenants have existed for the lifetime of the Tribunal and they have allowed no new covenants to be formed. After all, younger covenants can cause trouble and young magi are not to be trusted unless they are under the tutelage of older magi. These covenants have never been in conflict with one another, preferring instead to spend their time on their studies or in exploring the myriad mystical areas to be found in the higher mountain reaches. The Primus of House Criamon, naturally, sees no need for physical struggle, and the Domus Magnus of House Jerbiton always seeks peace. These magi see their Tribunal as "the way the Order should be."

Valnastium is renowned for its extensive library covering all aspects of mundane history and knowledge. Magi travel from the very edges of the Order to gain access to this library.

All of the Alpine covenants are in the later stages of Autumn or are actually in Winter. (See *Lion Rampant's* supplement, *Covenants*, which explains in detail these settlements of wizards.)

Though most of the covenants are located in the higher mountains, a few are located in the foothills around the Alps.

## Hibernian Tribunal

**Region:** Hibernia (Ireland) and nearby isles.

**Covenants:** Circulus Ruber, Ashenrise, Elk's Run, Vigil, Cliffheart, Lombard, Caefloron.

Hibernia is a highly magical place with much unsettled land and a large populations of faeries. Magi have been attracted to the Emerald Isle, because here they can escape much of the Dominion and have access to its rich magical resources.

The Tribunal faces two grave problems: the invasion of Hibernia by the Normans from England and the infestation of devils and diabolism.

The invasion by Normans has split the Tribunal into three groups: those that want to aid the Normans, who are more "civilized" than the natives; those that want to help the Hibernians, who are more amenable to magic than the Normans are; and those that think the magi should stay out of the war. No agreement is in sight, and as the invasion progresses, the conflict is likely to worsen.

The threat of devils and diabolism is more pressing at the moment. Recently, the magi of this Tribunal discovered that a powerful magus from Cliffheart was a diabolist, and though a Wizards' March was called against him, he escaped. Soon thereafter, the covenant of Ashenrise was nearly destroyed by demons. It has since been officially dedicated to researching ways to fight demons and protecting the island from their attacks.

Since the island is small, it is easy for magi to travel to the Tribunal; it draws a higher proportion of its magi than any other Tribunal in the Order. Many of them come just to meet old friends and talk about the atrocious behavior of the younger magi, while some are deeply involved in the political events threatening the Tribunal from within as well as from without.

## Iberian Tribunal

**Region:** All of Iberia (the Spanish peninsula) including the southern lands, which are controlled by the Moors.

**Covenants:** Barcelona covenant, Duresca, and eight others.

This Tribunal is best known for its involvement in the *Reconquista*, the reconquest of Iberia from the Moors. The magi have gained great wealth and copious amounts of tomes from the libraries of the Muslims, but as a result they have become overly involved in the local battles. Several magi have died in the *Reconquista* and one covenant was entirely destroyed by Moorish sorcerers. Two covenants of this Tribunal, located on the southern coast of the peninsula, actually support the Moors and have twice opposed the Christian invaders with their magical powers. At one time, magi found themselves on opposite sides of a battle, casting spells at one another.

The Tribunals of 1194 and 1200 ended in dissension, as the two factions have not been able to reach any

agreements. The two covenants allied with the Moors see the Christians as primitive barbarians engaged in the destruction of an exquisite and sophisticated culture, and the other covenants as vultures hanging around to snatch what the Christians do not destroy. They tend to quote a great deal from the histories of the fall of the Roman Empire and have a tendency to think of themselves as the last remnants of that great institution — they call themselves the "Roman covenants." They believe that Muslim culture is the real descendent of the Roman Empire, not the shaky Germanic alliance that calls itself the Holy Roman Empire, and many Hermetic scholars have begun to agree with this claim. The discoveries of these two covenants, and of others that have raided Muslim libraries, have added greatly to the Order's understanding of the early history of the Cult of Mercury, of ancient philosophy, and of medicine.

Those who support the *Reconquista*, on the other hand, hold that those who speak Latin and related languages are descended from Rome and that the Muslims are like the barbarians who sacked Rome centuries ago. In addition, many of these magi are of House Flambeau, and they still thirst for revenge against the people who killed their Founder's master.

This dispute between the two factions has become so divisive that magi from both factions have independently petitioned the Grand Tribunal to act on this matter and to decide for the Order if magi will be allowed to support either the Christians or the Moors. At the Grand Tribunal of 1195, the debate was not settled, and it seems unlikely that it will ever make a firm decision about a war that rages so far from the center of the Order. The members of the two "Roman" covenants have threatened to revoke their memberships in the Order of Hermes and to join a mysterious group of Muslim magi if they are not allowed to aid the Moors. However, the delight expressed by members of House Flambeau when they have heard of such statements makes it doubtful that they would survive such a move. The covenant of Doissetep has offered to mediate this dispute, but because of its intensive involvement in the early reconquest efforts of the Christians, this offer has been refused by the "Roman" covenants.

A temporary truce is now in effect and both sides have agreed to not support their mundane allies "overtly or with any sort of magic that can be detected by mortals." This essentially means the conflict will continue, but it will now be out of the eyes of the nobility. The magi, however, will still give advice to their allies, will provide subtle magical aid to the armies, and will doubtless engage in expeditions against one another. Since policing the agreement is next to impossible, it may not be long before the magi engage in open warfare again.

A second noteworthy aspect of the Tribunal is the Barcelona covenant. This covenant actually exists secretly within the city and they offer to help magi enjoy the delights of this beautiful city, for a modest price. This



## The Order of Hermes

covenant is composed entirely of Jerbiton magi, and House Jerbiton supports it very strongly. Although it has only four members, it dominates Iberian politics. Though its political inclinations favor the Christian armies, it pushes for peace between the "Roman" and the "Reconquista" covenants.

### Tribunal of the Levant

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**Region:** Christian Palestine, as well as scattered covenants throughout the region, including Asia Minor, Egypt, and Syria.

**Covenants:** Sixteen.

Palestine is important to magi because it is not just a holy land, but a magical land as well. Thick with arcane lore, esoteric history, and strange mysteries, this ancient land has proven to contain much of benefit to the Order. Though raw *vis* is scarce in some places, magi have unearthed magic devices of great power, some with capabilities not yet fully tested. The ancient cultures left behind much of value and the magi in Palestine are searching these things out.

Several Seekers are here, looking for knowledge or magic devices that would help them contact the old ones, who, they believe, were worshiped as gods by the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians. Criamon magi who have come to learn of Muslim philosophy and to speak with Sufis are also common here. Many of the other magi are simply young wizards who can do as they wish here, without the overbearing presence of more powerful magi. For many, central Europe has become too crowded to be comfortable.

These covenants have also found a wealth of knowledge from Muslim sources. Some have established cooperative relations with Muslim sorcerers, while others prefer the company of philosophers and mystics. Details of these interactions, however, are sketchy because news is slow to travel to and from this Tribunal. Even the redcaps are daunted by the large distances that must be covered to get to this corner of the Order.

The covenant Al Arama regularly trades with three covenants from the Roman Tribunal, shipping secret stores of raw *vis* in exchange for fine materials from Europe (such as Flemish cloth and Scandinavian furs) and magic devices from the Verditius magi.

### Loch Leglean Tribunal

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**Region:** Scotland and the northern isles.

**Covenants:** Fourteen.

Up on these highland moors are a great many covenants, many more than one might expect from such a desolate place. This is simply because the highlands of Scotland are so highly mystical and the local populace is so accepting of wizards. Indeed, two covenants are actually clans of Scots, though of course only a few chosen members within the clan actually have the Gift, and the leader of the clan often has no magic at all.

Ex Miscellanea has by far the most members, and more come each year, as the other Houses establish more and more of a presence in the lowlands to the south. House Merinita has a growing presence here as well, the magi being attracted to the large populations of faeries.

The politics of the Tribunal include a lot of clan rivalry, and while intrigue is well-known here, so is outright fighting. Still, the magi stick to the Code and restrict their attacks to property damage and the deaths of warriors.

### Normandy Tribunal

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**Region:** France, including Burgundy and the Low countries

**Covenants:** Fudarus, Domus Magnus of House Tytalus; plus eleven others.

This land is heavily populated and highly civilized, though culture has not reached the heights of sophistication to be found along the Mediterranean coast. When old covenants were first established here, there was much more open space and many more magical areas. Now the land has come under the weight of the mundane world and its Dominion.

When the Normans conquered England in 1066, the magi of this Tribunal hoped that the pressure would ease as the invaders settled the island, and many of them moved to England once there was a fairly large population of French-speakers. Now, however, the tables have turned and France has been invaded by England. The magi here are despairing of ever finding relief from the growing pressures of mundane society. Perhaps if the French were to push south into Languedoc, as some have been suggesting, things would get better.

The covenants of the Normandy Tribunal have had to hide very well from the mundane society, and many of them are growing tired of it. The loudest voices in the Order for striking at the mundanes, to hold them back, come from these magi. Many followers of Tytalus are distressed to see petty mortals restricting the growth and freedom of their Domus Magnus.

### Novgorod Tribunal

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**Region:** Slavic lands to the east and Nordic lands to the north of the Holy Roman Empire, including the Kingdom of Poland and the Russian Principalities.

**Covenants:** Six.

This Tribunal is spread out over vast, cold lands. Large areas to the north are not settled by the Order because the Order of Odin still prevents Hermetic magi from living in peace there. To the east are the Mongols, whose cavalry is unbeatable on the plains and whose wizards use strange magics of unpredictable power. Only six covenants altogether have survived in these hostile lands, but more magi are moving here as sources of raw *vis* dry up in central Europe and the intense

politics within the Order grow worse. Those who do make the move have to put up with a large drop in the level of sophistication, and they are well-advised to bring their own glass-blowers, engineers, smiths, and so on.

Many magi of Ex Miscellanea are here, some being native wizards who have only heard of the Order in the last century. Some Merinita magi have ventured to these lands to make contact with the faeries here; they are of a type previously unknown to the House. Magi of Bjornaer have begun arriving, following stories of vast wilderness where they can roam at will and avoid the encroachment of humanity.

Due to the great distances and poor roads of this land, the redcaps all ride horses, but even so their messages travel slowly.

## Provençal Tribunal

**Region:** Languedoc, including Gascony, and the Pyrenees.

**Covenants:** Mistridge; Windgraven; Doissetep; Val-Negra, the current Domus Magnus of Flambeau; Lariander; Bellaquin; Berinor; Bentalone; and three others. (See *Ars Magica* for descriptions of Mistridge and Windgraven. See the *Covenants* supplement for descriptions of Doissetep, Val-Negra, Bellaquin, and Lariander.)

The cultural center of the Order, and perhaps the true political center as well. There are a great many covenants in this area, especially among the Pyrenees. Their interaction breeds a great dynamism which brings about many new developments in politics and magic theory.

House Jerbiton has a strong following here, and many of the magi tolerate or even encourage dealings with mortals. The magi believe that all of Europe could share in Languedoc's high culture and they want to be able to share in it as well. The covenant of Bellaquin is a striking example of the extent to which some wizards have been interacting with mundanes.

In addition to Jerbiton magi, this Tribunal has a good mix of other Houses. The Tribunal has enough covenants to offer possibilities for those interested in politics, and enough wild, mountainous lands to provide privacy for those who do not want to deal with society.

Recently, the Tribunal has been worried about the heresy in Languedoc. The Believers, as they call themselves, have failed to give up their heretical ways despite

the best rational efforts of the Church, and many predict that the Church will soon enlist King Pere of Barcelona or the King of France to launch a Crusade. Pope Innocence III assumed the Papacy in 1198 and the Tribunal has yet to see how he will deal with the heresy. Should there be a military assault on the heretics, Hermetic covenants could come under attack as well.

## Rhine Tribunal

**Region:** The Holy Roman Empire north of the Alps (Germany and the Rhine valley).

**Covenants:** Durenmar, Domus Magnus of House Bonisagus and the location of the birth of the Order; Crintera, Domus Magnus of House Bjornaer; Irencillia, Domus Magnus of House Merinita; and six others.

When the Order was founded, this area was mostly wild and not very civilized. Many covenants were founded here, including several in the Black Forest. Unfortunately for these covenants, including three Domi Magni, civilization has grown to full force here over the last four hundred years and they now find themselves in the Holy Roman Empire. The faerie forests that once covered the area have shrunk, though the Black Forest continues to daunt would-be settlers, and the magi find some refuge there.

Two powerful families are currently vying for control in this land and the magi have begun to participate in these battles, albeit secretly. They

point to the concessions that they have won from the nobles, such as the preservation of faerie forests and magical areas around certain covenants, but still the Quaesitoris frown on their growing involvements.

Durenmar, Domus Magnus of House Bonisagus, is a sorry sight, slipping into Winter. Other covenants in the area disregard the covenant's historic importance and have begun expanding into its territory, depriving them of much-needed raw *vis*. In the covenant itself, intrigue is rife. Avarret, Primus of Bonisagus, heads the covenant and carries two "honorary" sigils, which count as votes within the covenant. He has assigned two magi to the positions of "Right Hand" and "Left Hand," and each of them carries an honorary sigil as well. In addition, the Primus can award honorary sigils to those magi who serve the covenant well, though these sigils may also be taken away.



Irencillia, Domus Magnus of House Merinita, is taking advantage of the mortal strife by launching secret raids against mortals who have settled on lands that would otherwise belong to the faeries. They have been especially protective of a stretch of woodland they call the Maddenhofen Woods.

Crintera, Domus Magnus of House Bjornaer, has little influence in the area, serving only as the center of the House's power and the meeting place for the Gathering of Twelve Years.

## Roman Tribunal

**Region:** The southern part of the Holy Roman Empire, the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples (these three areas cover the Italian peninsula); Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, plus one covenant on the northern coast of Africa.

**Covenants:** Verdi, Domus Magnus of Verditius; Harco, Domus Magnus of House Mercere; Magvillus, Domus Magnus of the House of Quaesitoris; Rellantali; and four others.

Long-ago, this area was rich in magic and power and the Cult of Mercury held sway over beings mundane and magical. As Christianity grew within the Roman Empire, however, the cult of Mercury began to decline. Today the area controlled by this Tribunal is the poorest known land in terms of raw magical power. Nevertheless, several covenants remain here, originally proud to be in the land that the Cult of Mercury once dominated, and now surviving by adopting the ways of the mortals around them.

Over the past three centuries, as the Dominion grew and magic waned, the magi of these covenants began trading for raw *vis* from other areas. At first they sold their services, access to their libraries, and the fine goods that this center of civilization provided. Over time, however, they learned it was easier simply to buy raw *vis* with silver, which was relatively easy to come by in this land of wealthy merchants and large cities. As magic has dwindled and the magi's financial prowess has grown, they have begun offering more and more for *vis*. Recently, they have been known to pay as much as 300 deniers per pawn of Vim *vis*. Three covenants keep up regular trade with Al Arama Covenant in the Levant, with ships carrying magic devices and manufactured items east and secret stores of *vis* back west.

The pursuit of mundane wealth brought two threats to the Tribunal: increased competition among the covenants and increased exposure to mortals. At first the magi were cautious and discreet in their dealings with merchants and nobles, but to give themselves a competitive edge over the other magi, many began working more blatantly for mundanes, selling powerful magic devices, aiding nobles in battle, and curing those sick and ailing people who could afford their exorbitant fees. Magi of other Tribunals saw this development as dangerous to the Order, involving magi too deeply in mundane affairs,

and finally in 1061, the Quaesitor Iernilus came to arbitrate the problem. Under his guidance, and over the course of seven years, the covenants negotiated a treaty that restricted their interactions with mortals and limited the types of magical services they could provide. Now the magi work in secret and always through mundane intermediaries. Competition among the magi, however, is as strong as ever. They are constantly striving to find loopholes in the treaty so they can make a higher profit and they generally break provisions of the treaty when they believe they will not be discovered.

The Verditius magi of the area have managed to keep up a steady income of *vis* by selling their fabled magic devices to other magi, but even they have taken to hawking small magics for the mundanes. Many minor magical devices are usually crafted so that they will function for less than ten years before the magic disappears. This prevents the misuse of these items by mundanes and ensures that they do not become commonplace.

The treaty stipulates that the magi hold their tribunals in the city of canals, Venice. The city is a neutral ground that no covenant could provide. In Venice, the mercantile capital of the western world, every covenant maintains a townhouse and retains a legion of street urchins and spies. The grogs and other hirelings rely on their relationship with the magi to protect them and so engage in a great deal of thievery and debauchery apart from their normal duties. Many magi spend a great deal of time amid the high culture and sophistication that can only be found in Venice. As of yet, the presence of magi and their hirelings in the city is not widely known, though a few of the more powerful merchants have had dealings with them.

The various magi and covenants are constantly engaged in a battle of intrigue, sabotage, and spying against one another. This constant conflict has reached such heights of chaos and intensity that it has become an event of renown. When magi speak of a conflict between two wizards as being "Venetian," they mean it is too intense and a little bit out of control. In Venice itself, the conflict is beginning to get a little out of hand and the retainers from each covenant are beginning to act more like gangs than turbs. Their secret war once even escalated into a pitched battle in the streets around the townhouse held by Covenant Rellantali.

Many of the magi who belong to this Tribunal do not have a covenant, or belong to one in name only. Instead, they have set up shops in various cities and pursue their studies there. Therefore, they are more at home in a city, even a bustling mercantile city like Venice, than other magi elsewhere generally are.

The more traditional covenants in the Roman Tribunal are hidden in mountains or on isolated islands. Even so, many magi spend most of their free time traveling from one city to another, reveling in the sophisticated culture which they encounter. Most of the covenants in

this Tribunal maintain lavish townhouses in a few of the larger cities of Italy, which their magi and consortis are free to use whenever they come to town.

The Tribunal itself has degenerated to the point that no useful discussion can be accomplished when the magi gather. A group of three highly regarded Quaesitoris from other Tribunals are currently traveling to Venice to see what they can do about this mess, but it is widely believed that the conflict has progressed too far to be halted by outsiders. The Quaesitor Jarane, however, is among those venturing to Venice, and if his reputation serves him accurately, perhaps there is hope after all.

The internal warfare that has recently plagued the Holy Roman Empire has meant an increase in profits for the magi of this Tribunal.

### Stonehenge Tribunal

**Region:** England, Wales

**Covenants:** Cad Gadu, Domus Magnus of Ex Miscellanea; Blackthorn; and nine others.

The most powerful covenant is called Blackthorn, an evil band of magi that recently rose to power in the Tribunal, possibly through assassination. They now live in an enormous network of magical caves in Wales. This site used to hold Tagelyn Covenant before it was attacked and forced to flee by Blackthorn. Luckily for the other covenants, Blackthorn has now become more introspective and less interested in dominating the Tribunal.

One reason Blackthorn was able to gain control so easily is that there are few large or well established covenants in the Stonehenge Tribunal. Most magi either live alone or live in small, disorganized covenants. The few well-organized covenants that do exist are interested in other things besides Hermetic politics, especially those composed of Ex Miscellanea magi. Attendance at Tribunals is so low that even the required quorum of twelve magi from four covenants sometimes cannot be met.

Two new covenants have recently been founded in the Tribunal, and they have shown interest in reviving its political energy. Most magi, however, believe that most of England will soon be lost to the Order of Hermes simply because the burgeoning population is steadily clearing the forests and settling on formerly magical lands.

### Tribunal of Thebes

**Region:** The Byzantine Empire (the Greek Peninsula, the islands of the Aegean Sea, and Asia Minor)

**Covenants:** Eight

The center of this land is Constantinople, one of the most extravagant and extraordinary cities in the world. Its rulers are the direct followers of the eastern Roman Emperors who ruled from this city and made it great, and they consider their city and their lands to be the Roman Empire. Constantinople was the capital of its half of the

Roman Empire when Rome fell to the barbarians. While Rome and its lands were recovering over the past centuries, Constantinople has remained a vigorous commercial city and an important bulwark against Muslim invasions of Europe. The magi of this Tribunal travel regularly to Constantinople and one covenant is even found within its walls.

Other covenants are located on the Greek peninsula and the islands of the Aegean Sea. Though Greece fell from glory long ago, much of the magic remains. The innumerable sheltered valleys still hide satyrs, nymphs, dryads, and other creatures that in ages past were well known to the inhabitants.

Many Seekers have come here to find the old ones who posed as gods for the ancient Greeks. More and more, Seekers have been coming to this land, so someone must be

discovering something, but they are not revealing what they have found. Several magi of House Jerbiton are here, either learning about the eastern culture or piecing together ancient history. A few Bjornaer magi are here as well, enjoying the beauty of the valleys and the privacy granted by the mountains.

### Transylvanian Tribunal

**Region:** Most of Bulgaria (especially the more mountainous areas), and the Kingdom of Hungary (including the Kingdom of Croatia)

**Covenants:** Coeris, Domus Magnus of House Tremere; and four others.

#### Treaty of the Roman Tribunal

These are some of the more important provisions of the treaty. This treaty is officially part of the Peripheral Code and can be used to provide precedents in other Tribunals, but it has no legal power outside the Roman Tribunal.

"No magus may take silver, gold, or other goods as payment for arcane services directly from a non-associate mortal." (The magi must work through intermediaries who work for them, generally consortis.)

"No magus may reveal any other magus as a member in the Order of Hermes or a worker of magic in general, nor cause suspicion to fall on any sodalis." (This provision keeps magi from exposing the identities of competitors who are working incognito.)

"No magus may become involved as a mercenary in a battle of more than five men, nor more than three knights." (This provision keeps magi from becoming a threat to the political powers that be.)

## Covenants of Hibernia

These covenants are described here to make it easier for you to play in Hibernia and to give you ideas for developing your own Tribunal.

### Cliffheart

A covenant of sedate magi located on an island off the southeast corner of Hibernia, this covenant rests on a ledge on the side of the cliff that entirely circles this isle. The only physical access to Cliffheart is a precarious path reaching directly out of the ocean, up the side of the island, to the windswept perch above.

The major passion of the Cliffheart magi is excavation and archeology. They travel little except to investigate old ruins, a practice that is their main source of raw *vis*. They are rumored to possess magical artifacts of Atlantean origin. What is certainly known is that they have learned much about the Tuatha De Danaan, the ancient race of faerie-like people who once ruled the island and live on in secret communities. Generally, Cliffheart is respected among the covenants of Hibernia. They are, however, strictly isolationists who pay little heed to the matters of the outside world.

Much to Cliffheart's shame, one of their magi was recently revealed to be a diabolist. He escaped the Wizards' March that was called against him and his whereabouts are unknown. An investigation by Quaesitoris has found no evidence of diabolism among the other magi of Cliffheart, but this disgraceful turn of events has led these magi to become even more reclusive.

### Elk's Run

Of a somewhat different temperament are the magi of Elk's Run. Established only thirty years ago, the covenant consists of younger and more ambitious magi. Nestled in a large, isolated valley to the west of Lake Derg, it consists of a group of small towers surrounded by miles of pasture and fields. In a grove of trees to the west stands the council hall of the covenant.

It is widely thought that the wizards of Elk's Run have been intemperate in establishing relations with the Norman conquerors of Hibernia. In their lust for territory and continental luxuries, they have, in some eyes, sold their souls and futures to the enemy who already is slowly clearing away the mystical forests which have stood since before human memory. To others, they are merely taking the traditional role of the Order of Hermes, finding

accommodation with whichever ruler happens to claim a land. Lately, Elk's Run has been engaged in a series of disputes over claims to mystical sites. They wish to lay exclusive claim to certain areas far from their home, while other magi argue that only areas near the covenant may be reserved for one's exclusive use.

### Circulus Ruber

The name means "red circle," which is the symbol of this covenant. The eldest covenant in Hibernia, it has members whose ancestors helped Pralix fight Dav'Nalleous centuries ago. This Covenant of the Red Circle has gone through many changes in its history and has even changed sites several times. Currently, Circulus Ruber is located in southern Hibernia in the Galty Mountains. It is a solidly built citadel, essentially one enormous tower, standing on a lonely rocky hill in the Yaelin Forest. On the outer limits of their territory, each tree is marked with a red circle. Inside this region, a living shadow stalks, and it is unwise to travel here without a guide from the covenant. Most visitors wait at the covenant's guest house on the edge of the forest until a guide comes for them. Those that venture past the red markings alone are rarely seen again, though certain physical remains are sometimes found.

Wendelhone, the Praeco of the Hibernian Tribunal, lives at Circulus Ruber along with several other aged magi. Approximately half of the magi, however, are of a younger generation that finds itself in a constant ideological battle with the elder, ruling magi. This battle has sometimes left the confines of the covenant and has affected all the magi of Hibernia, for the rift between the generations is a deep one that affects all these magi's decisions at Tribunal.

### Ashenrise

Decades ago, the founders of Ashenrise lived in a covenant in Wales named Tagelyn. Buried beneath the ground, the lower reaches of its caverns extended deep into the earth, reaching, perhaps, even to the lairs of demons. They lived in peace with the Welsh people and slowly matured as a covenant, though they were still young. Then the covenant from which many of the wizards had come, Blackthorn, turned against them. Combining magical (and perhaps diabolic) powers with aid from a Norman army, Blackthorn routed the magi of Tagelyn. The young magi were forced to flee to the edge of the world, the misty isle of Hibernia. In their flight, a magus and many grogs were killed or captured. Their tragedy was made all the more bitter when they realized that all along, Blackthorn had meant to take the caverns, and that they had used these younger magi simply to test the caverns' safety before taking them for themselves.

Though Hermetic law had been broken, they had no legal recourse because Blackthorn controls the Stonehenge Tribunal. To this day, the magi are slow to speak of their sad history; their hatred for the Norman rulers of England and for Blackthorn has remained unabated.

They renamed their covenant Ashenrise, symbolizing what they hoped would be a rise from devastation. Indeed, they grew quite strong in numbers and knowledge, and they felt safe in their new home; but again, tragedy struck. This time, demons rose up out of the ground and nearly destroyed the covenant, slaying many magi, grogs, consortis, and covenfolk. One of their number, Caecus, was nearly overcome by diabolic influence, for which he was nearly executed at a special Tribunal.

Since the demonic attack, the covenant has re-established itself, and the Tribunal has dedicated it to learning ways to combat diabolism and protecting Hibernia from devils. Caecus, however, has moved on and can now be found in Val-Negra covenant in the Pyrenees.

## Vigil

Vigil, an Autumn covenant, has dedicated itself to keeping watch on the Order to prevent its fragmentation. It is renowned for the luxurious lifestyle led by its members and for the alternate theory of magic they have developed. The magi of this covenant are as enigmatic as the faerie forest in which they live.

The physical structure of Vigil consists of several low buildings surrounding an extensive network of gardens, all located in a large forest in the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains in northern Hibernia. This magical glade is glorified in several tales by Hibernian bards. The covenant is protected on one side by a faerie forest and on the other by an extensive network of animal scouts and guards. The grogs at Vigil seem inordinately happy and satisfied, perhaps as a byproduct of the peacefulness of the glade in which the covenant lies.

Probably through extensive use of magic, as well as a habit of treating redcaps very well, Vigil maintains a watch over the entire Order. The magi are very concerned about disunion, though so far they have watched much more than they have acted.

One possible source of disunion can be found within Vigil's very walls: a new theory of magic. The magi are loath to spread details about this new theory, but they have entertained visitors from as far away as the Transylvanian Tribunal who wish advice on certain specific magical questions. Most likely, these magi do not want to share what they know for fear of adding one more source of internal change and

conflict to an already shaky Order. Perhaps they are waiting until they have perfected this new theory so they can present it fully formed to all the covenants of the Order.

## Lombard

A sturdy fortress in the Wickow Mountains on the east coast of Hibernia houses the three Flambeau magi who compose this covenant. These three firebrands engage in constant skirmishes with the Normans, who are trying to drive the clans of rebellious Irish out of the mountains. These mountain clans serve as an extensive grog base for Lombard and the magi work very closely with them in their military campaigns. The Hibernian Tribunal of 1193 warned these magi to stop interfering so directly in mortal affairs, but it will take more than warnings to slow their aggressive tactics. The Irish bards sing their praises very highly.

Famous (or infamous) for their rustic natures, these wizards are forest-loving, wild, untutored Flambeau wizards who have little appreciation for the pleasures of civilization and are intensely opposed to any kind of intrusion of it upon the mystical wilderness of Hibernia. Their relentless cause, which they bring up at every Tribunal, is to prevent the magical areas of Hibernia from being overrun by the cities and farms of the Norman population on the east coast. They hate the covenant of Elk's Run and do very little to hide their feelings.

All in all, Lombard is a dynamic and unobtrusive covenant whose passions are its sole guiding light.

## Caefloron

A solitary and private covenant which consists solely of the wizard Caefloron and his filii, they live in a large, walled garden filled with strange magical plants. He has granted only a few magi entrance to his home, and while their reports differ in detail, all include descriptions of outlandish plants of types unknown anywhere else in the world. His reputation as a master of plant magics is virtually unchallenged within the Order, but little else is known of him. His guards and scouts are short, swarthy people who apparently have their own community within his walls. Perhaps they are faeries or members of a forgotten race.

Caefloron always sends one representative to the Tribunal, but they often abstain from all but the most important votes.

### The Thirteen Tribunals of the Order of Hermes as of 1338 A.A. (1199, A.D.)

<u>Name of the Tribunal</u>	<u>Covenants (Domus Magnus)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Magi</u>	<u>Total</u>
Greater Alps	Valnastium (Jerbiton)			
	Cave of Twisting Shadows (Criamon)			
	5 others	7	100	100
Hibernian	Circulus Ruber		12	
	Cliffheart		5	
	Elk's Run		6	
	Ashenrise		6	
	Vigil		5	
	Lombard		3	
	Caefloron	7	4	41
Iberian	Barcelona		4	
	Duresca (Q. scrolls)		7	
	2 "Roman"		14	
	6 others	10	48	73
Loch Leglean	14 covenants	14	100	100
The Leavant	16	16	50	50
Normandy	Fudarus (Tytalus)		5	
	11 others	12	45	50
Novgorod	6	6	40	40
Provençal	Doissetep		23	
	Mistridge		5	
	Bellaquin		12	
	Val-Negra (Flambeau)		6	
	Lariander		6	
	Windgraven		4	
	Berinor		7	
	Bentalone		8	
	3 others	11	13	84
Rhine	Crintera (Bjornaer)		6	
	Durenmar (Bonisagus)		15	
	Irencillia (Meri)		11	
	6 others	9	58	90
Roman	Harco (Mercere)			
	Magvillus (Quaesitor)			
	Verdi (Verditius)			
	5 others	8	??	??
Stonehenge	Blackthorn			
	Cad Gadu (Ex Miscellanea)		5	
	9 others	11	40	45
Thebes	8 covenants	8	60	60
Transylvanian	Coeris (Tremere)			
	4 others	5	40	40

This has always been a very strongly magical region and thus a haven for many magi. Strangely, despite the presence of the Church, the Dominion has not made itself felt across this land. The Dominion appears on holy days and in towns, but even then only during the day — other times a magical or Faerie aura often holds sway. The wealth of raw *vis* here rivals that to be found in Hibernia, for the Dominion is not dominant enough to destroy it. These amazing resources in this southern region of eastern Europe has made it the fastest growing Tribunal in the Order.

The drawback to such strong and common magic, however, is that the magi are by no means the only power to be reckoned with here. Magical beasts and people sometimes threaten the magi's very lives, and Satan's mark is clear in certain areas. Undead are quite common in these dark mountains, and vampires and ghouls of various horrid types haunt the night.

News from the Hermetic travelers in the area suggests that some of the Tremere magi, who are numerous here, have been turned into undead, or perhaps turned themselves into undead. Maybe they seek the eternal life that even longevity potions cannot give them, but the evil effects of such a transformation are not known. The Quaesitoris have tried to investigate in detail, but without the cooperation of Coeris, they have found it hard to gather any reliable information in this dark land.

Coeris rules this Tribunal with no effective opposition. The Domus Magnus' chief concern is to allow the followers of Tremere to become strong and mighty. Anything that might inhibit their increase of power is voted down at Tribunal.







# Outside Relations

As much as many Hermetic magi wish they could be left completely alone, they have to share the world with a growing mundane population, non-Hermetic magi, faeries and demons. Finding a way to deal with these other groups has been an important goal for magi through the centuries. Many traditions have emerged describing how a magus should behave when around non-magi, and many strictures and additions to the Code have been created as well. Though magi are largely left to themselves in how they relate to the world, they are expected to follow the basic strictures and traditions because the non-Hermetic world can so strongly affect other magi.

## Relations with Society

When the Order was young, discussions of the proper relationship between magi and society were quite common because the magi had not yet set a firm precedent. Jerbiton and his House frequently held meetings with the aristocracy in the area (the barbarian rulers and their landlord advisors who were descended from the Roman aristocrats). Charlemagne was unifying much of Europe and Jerbiton saw in his rule the possibility to the recapture the glory of Rome. The Order of Hermes, he thought, would play an accepted, if not large, role in that society. According to the records of House Jerbiton, Charlemagne met with Jerbiton from time to time and they were coming to some measure of agreement; but when Charlemagne was crowned emperor by the Pope, he became beholden to the Church, which would brook no competition with another group of "miracle-workers" and scholars such as the Order of Hermes. Jerbiton continued to meet with Charlemagne secretly, but was unable to reach any agreements more far-reaching than peaceful co-existence. When Charlemagne died, leaving his empire in chaos, the Order gave up on political dialogue with mundane powers and began its practice of non-interference. After that time, it became very rare for wizards to serve in noble's court, whereas it had previously been rather common.

In the century following Charlemagne's death, the Church and nobility were so disorganized and so heavily engaged in petty wars that the Order was mostly free to do as it pleased. In later centuries, however, society has become more and more organized once again, and the Church especially has gained a power over Europe that it never had before. This development presents a problem for the magi; as society has grown more powerful, it has likewise grown less accepting of the Order of Hermes. The Order has dealt with this mostly by continuing its policy of non-intervention. The non-intervention policy has kept the Order from incurring the wrath of society, but some see conflict as inevitable. Furthermore,

it becomes harder and harder to avoid interaction as the mundane population grows. Many magi and covenants are flaunting the non-intervention policy and carrying on active relations with mundane rulers. Some have even gone to the point of assisting these mortals in battle, particularly in Spain with the Knights fighting the Moors.

Gradually, more and more magi are coming to accept that the Order cannot continue as it is. One option is to declare a war and to use the organization and might of the Order to crush society altogether. It would be necessary to destroy civilization utterly as well as eradicate almost all of the nobles' castles to ensure that they have no place from which to recover their power. All realize that such a move would cost the Order much in terms of lives and wealth, and some even claim that such an attack would be futile. Some magi argue that divine power, which no magic can counter, would certainly protect the faithful and destroy all those who threatened them. Besides, most magi realize that they would not make good rulers and someone would have to take power after the nobles were eliminated. The symbolic and prophetic book, *Travels of Fedoso*, hints at a coming cataclysm. Perhaps the book is predicting just such a battle between the Order and society.

The other option is for the magi to "disappear," insinuating themselves secretly within society. Though it would take generations, they could develop ways of living among the mortals while still carrying on their studies. Their magic would be weakened by the Dominion, but at least they could live on in safety. Some have gone so far as to say that the wizards could remove all evidence of their presence, demolishing their covenants, destroying Church records of magical activity, and so on. Then, within a few generations, the mundanes would regard the wizards as nothing but legend.

Others suggest that the magi of the Order could go to live in Faerieland, emerging only occasionally to see what was happening in the world. Even though the faerie forests are being destroyed, they argue that Faerieland is eternal and cannot be destroyed. However, no one truly understands what happens when a magus lives in faerie lands and this option may not truly be possible.

It is likely that the option eventually chosen would involve some of the latter two; some magi would go in hiding and others would go to the faerie forests. Perhaps, some day, when the world is ready to accept them again

as they did in ages past, the Order could arise once more, this time working in unison with humanity and sharing their wisdom with all.

## Non-Hermetic Magi

Despite all the advantages of membership in the Order, a surprising number of the spell casters in Europe remain independent. Why? The reasons vary, depending on the individual wizards, but some patterns are clear. The following are types of magicians not likely to be members of the Order.

Most sorcerers are simply not powerful enough to pass even the rudimentary entrance requirements of House Miscellanea. Astrologers, diviners, alchemists, mystics, and people with any of a great number of natural magical talents may be considered wizards, but

usually their powers are just too limited to allow them to be Hermetic magi. Their powers are also too weak to make them a threat, so the Order lets them practice in peace. These limited wizards are relatively common and some still do serve as court wizards, a practice forbidden to Hermetic magi.

Once someone who has been blessed with the Gift begins to practice any kind of magic, their minds and souls become attuned to that form of magic. There are a great many Gifted people in the world who never had the fortune to run into a Hermetic wizard early in life, so they began to explore magic on their own or under the tutelage of a lesser wizard. Though they could have learned Hermetic magic, their early explorations forever

blocked off that avenue to them, or at least greatly limited their abilities to learn Hermetic magic theory.

Some people with the Gift make bargains with demons so as to learn how to develop their powers, and some of them actually become devil-worshippers. They know that their practices would not be tolerated by the Order, so they avoid it. These sorcerers are dangerous to the Order, although they usually use their powers against mortals rather than magi. Unfortunately, their diabolic connections give them access to deep resources of destructive and deceptive power, so finding and killing diabolists is at once difficult and perilous.

Among the Jewish population in Europe, the ancient tradition of the Kabbalah still grows. The Kabbalah is the use of ancient codes and symbols to achieve



## The Order of Hermes

mystic wisdom and to work magic. So secretive are these wizards that the Order did not know of them until the eleventh century, when there was a small battle between Hermetic magi and Kabbalists in Barcelona. The Kabbalists negotiated a deal by which they were given perpetual rights to practice magic without any interference from the Order of Hermes. Kabbalists are quite common among the Jewish population, but rarely use their powers openly. Many Kabbalists study the magical lore, but have no Gift and are completely unable to cast spells. Some Hermetic magi use the example of the Kabbalists to argue that only by living secretly within society can the Order be preserved in the face of encroaching civilization.

Some magi are heirs to long, independent traditions of magic, such as the shape-shifters from whom Bjornaer broke away so she could join the Order. Many with powers similar to Bjornaer refuse to enter the Order, which would mean, at least symbolically, breaking with their traditions. Some of these wizards know few details about the Order and might be willing to join House Ex Miscellanea if they knew how open it was to alternate forms of magic, but some are attached to their traditions so strongly that even joining that House is out of the question. Other magical traditions generally recognized by Hermetic magi include shape-shifters, elemental masters and witches. There were druids in Hibernia during the early years of the Order, but they seem to have retreated to the faerie forests. Perhaps they will re-emerge someday.

It is Hermetic policy to force these wizards to join the Order or kill them, but if they are not violent and dangerous, they are often allowed to live in peace.

Though Scandinavia was Christianized in the eleventh century, a strong devotion to pagan gods remains and their followers can work some powerful

magic. Fortunately for the Order of Hermes, their magic works best in the frozen lands to the north, often directing cold and ice to deadly effect, so they are not much of a threat in warmer climes. The name "Order of Odin" has been given to these magicians and priests by the Hermetic scholars, but these wizards seem to include several different and possibly mutually hostile traditions, rather than a unified group. Hermetic magi have learned little from what few prisoners from the Order of Odin

they have managed to capture. Some of them, however, do say that they and their brethren are trying to free Loki from the chains in which the other gods bound him. The Seekers are eager to find out how symbolic or literal this goal is, especially because Norse prophecies say the world will come to an end when Loki is freed.

The Order of Odin is clearly an active enemy of the Order of Hermes. The territories of the two Orders overlap only in the Novgorod Tribunal, but occasionally wizards of one Order will raid the territory held by the other.

## Relations with Faeries

Magi have always been fascinated with the faerie world and have often tried to establish ties to it, but only House Merinita has enjoyed regular

success at such endeavors. Other magi find the faerie world too confusing to be dealt with rationally. (Indeed, some magi say that House Merinita really has no official connections to Faerieland and that they invent all their stories of visiting the Faerie Queen's court and so on.) One central difficulty is that the magi cannot identify any true rulers of the faeries, and those who take such titles as

### One Magus' Report on Non-Hermetic Wizards

*"A matter of great gravity has come to my attention, and my fellows throughout the Order would do well to give some attention to the news I will now report.*

*"It seems that a certain wizardling, schooled outside our precious Order, who was known as a relatively weak magician given to selling petty potions and baubles to the nobles in the area, was recently caught within our covenant walls, in the laboratory of my colleague, Nemitore. When Nemitore found him paging through his grimoire, the hedge-wizard, or so he had seemed to be, threw up a mighty spell that filled the room with choking smoke, flying shards of glass, and flaming coals that bounced from wall to ceiling to floor, all in a mad chaos that lasted a full minute. The hedge-wizard had disappeared by means unknown by the time the clouds dissipated, nor was he found at his shack in the woods, nor has he been seen since.*

*"This individual has proven to be more powerful than we had imagined and should he be working with others, they would be able to stage quite an attack on us. And what was he looking for in my colleague's laboratory? Magical knowledge, perhaps, or perhaps political information, or records of how the Order operates, knowledge that could be used to coordinate an attack against our weakest areas, such as the redcaps. We have overlooked the menace of allowing non-Hermetic magi to practice and now it is time to re-evaluate the danger they may pose to us. The wizard who invaded Nemitore's laboratory may have been in league with others, or with the Devil himself. What I call for, in the grand tradition of the Founder of my House, is a systematic destruction of all potential magical enemies of this Order."*

—Caritopulus of House Flambeau, A.D. 1198.

His call has received little response so far, as he has a reputation for exaggeration and paranoia.

"Faerie Queen" may just be playing games. The fact that the faeries were allies of the infamous House Diedne only makes them seem less trustworthy as potential allies.

The Code of Hermes specifies that magi must not endanger their sodalis by provoking the faeries. Other than that, magi are on their own to establish whatever relations with faeries that they wish and that they can. It is not uncommon for a covenant to have some kind of official contact and perhaps a treaty with the faeries of a nearby forest or mountain in order to more easily arrange for the procurement of *vis*.

## Demons

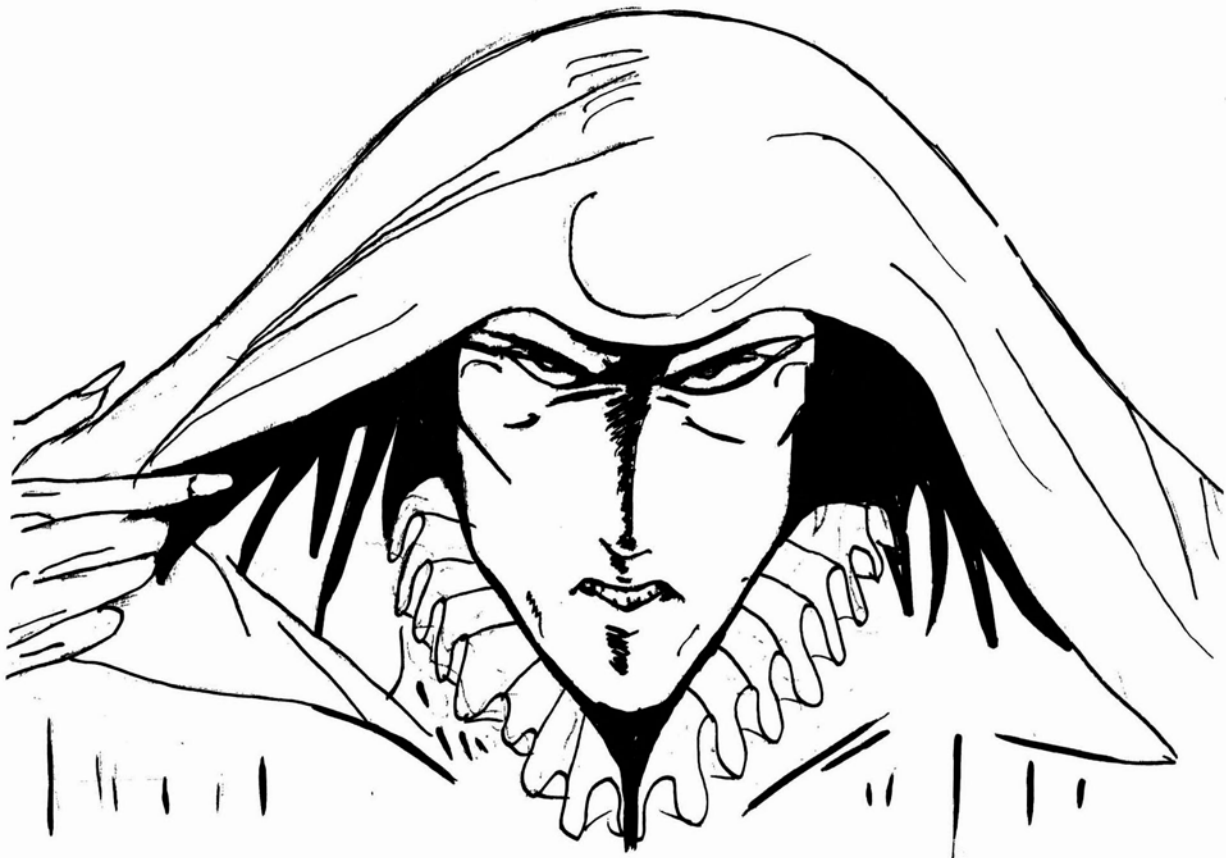
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If any magi have any dealings with demons, they do not tell others about it. Such activity is strictly against the Code and those who are found to be dealing with demons are spared only under extreme circumstances. Nevertheless, a few magi do fall to Hell's temptations. Devils try to make it as easy as possible for magi to work with them "just this once" because they know that corrupting the Order would be a grand victory for them.

### A Magus Speaks About the Growth of Mundane Society

*"We have been pushed to the edges of the earth by the encroachment of mortal society and it only continues to expand, destroying faerie forests and dampening our magical areas. They grow ever stronger, while we produce little more than inferior copies of the magic of old. Any fool can see that the conflict is inevitable between the Order and the mass of unruly, violent, stubborn, and superstitious mortals. If it is inevitable, let the conflict be now, before the mortals grow even stronger and we decay even further."*

*-Nermin of House Flambeau*





# Houses of Hermes

In the Order of Hermes, each magus can trace a chain through their master, through their master's master, and so on back to the original Founders of the Order. These Founders had different and often opposing understandings of magic and its place in the world, and their ideas and practices have been passed down over the centuries from master to apprentice.

Collectively, the magi who trace their arcane lineage back to a single Founder are called a House. The ideologies and theories of the Founders survive in their Houses. One House promotes strength through hierarchy, another provokes conflict in the belief that only conflict can bring human potential to its best, while a third House continually tries to renew and maintain the connections between the isolated Order and the growing civilization around it. The Founders gave the Houses their direction, and the Houses have, to some degree or another, carried on the Founders' work and wisdom ever since.

For some magi, the House is an important part of their identities. Muriena, for example, sees herself as a follower of Bjornaer first and a member of the Order of Hermes second. Her magic and her attitudes conform closely to that of her House and she will be proud when she can train her own apprentices in her long, proud lineage. Grimgroth, on the other hand, sees himself as a magus first and a follower of Jerbiton only incidentally. His loyalty is to his covenant, his friends, and the Order. While he sees his House as among the most reasonable, he values all his sodalis and works to preserve the Order. Caecus is yet another case. He sees little connection between himself and his House. His attitudes, he thinks, are entirely his own and the result of his personal history. Anyone looking at him objectively, however, can plainly see that these "individual" attitudes are entirely in the tradition of an upbringing in House Tytalus.

A House fills the intermediate level in Hermetic politics between the individual magus and the Order as a whole, just as the Tribunal forms an intermediate level between the individual covenant and the entire Order. A House has no direct say over Hermetic politics, but the members of the House can vote in unison when they have a common cause.

Some Houses have strong identities with rigid expectations of their members' conduct, while others are loose and open to many different kinds of magi. Within the Houses, some magi are closely tied to the House while others are members in name only. When you choose a House for your character, remember that a person often rebels in some way against their family, and in the same way an apprentice will often rebel in some way against their House. No wizard entirely fits the definition of a magus of their House. A very few magi may have even rebelled completely from their master's point of view and are very different from the other members of their House. This rebellion can lead to interesting character conflicts and

developments. Lastly, some magi decide not to join their master's House, but petition another House for entrance. In such a case, these magi have some of the habits and abilities of one House, yet also do their best to become an ordinary member of a different House.

Members of a House meet together as a group at times. Some have set schedules, such as the Gathering of Twelve Years held by the Bjornaer magi. Others call irregular meetings and do not require full attendance. In any event, the Houses do try to maintain contact among the members to share knowledge of interest to their House and just to enjoy the company of like-minded spirits. Additionally, a united House is a stronger House, and all magi remember the lessons of the Schism Wars; what happened to House Díedne could happen to them.

It is tradition in the Order to offer hospitality to a member of your own House and to avoid any kind of conflict. If a member of your House is being attacked or harmed, it is your duty to come to their aid. Though this creed is not always followed, it is generally upheld.

Magi can enter Houses other than those of their masters, either at the end of apprenticeship (which is rare) or during one's life as a magus (which is even rarer). They have to petition for entry, and some Houses require tests of ability and oaths of loyalty. In addition, some Houses require years of service upon entry into its fellowship. In general, though, a House is pleased to get a new member, provided that the magus will be an asset to the House.

## House Format

Each House is described using the following format:

### General Description

- **House Name**
- **Quote:** A noteworthy quote from a magus of that House.
- **Motto:** The motto chosen by the Founder.
- **Symbol:** Likewise chosen by the Founder. Magi traditionally mark their important belongings, such as their grimoire, with this symbol.
- **Introduction:** A description of the House as outsiders would know it. (Magi with Hermes History scores of 3+ would likely know this basic information about all of the Houses.)
- **History:** The history of the House, from its Founder to the present. Some Houses have gone through major changes in the four hundred years that have passed since their founding.
- **Notable Magi:** A few notes on important magi from the House's history.

### Current Status

- **Membership:** The number of magi in the House. Medium-size Houses have about 50 members.

- **Domus Magnus:** The head covenant of the House and its location.
- **Primus:** The current leader of the House.
- **Current Concerns:** What the House is doing currently.
- **Current Practices:** A description of the House as it is today, including the nature of the magi and their relation to the Order in general. Customs in regards to admitting magi and apprentices are dealt with here if they are different from the norm.

## Characteristics of House Magi

- **Magi Temperament:** This section is for players who are developing magi of this particular House. Your magi need not conform in all areas. In fact, having a misfit magus can add interesting conflicts to your character's development.
- **Mentality of a Magus of that House:** How the magi of this house have been trained to think about themselves, magic, and the Order.
- **Priorities:** What these magi hold valuable.
- **Outlook:** How these magi tend to see magi of other Houses and other important groups, such as faeries or the Church. Most of these opinions are extreme and emphasize differences among the Houses. Despite these differences, magi of "opposed" Houses can get along. Because their connection as sodalis is more important than their differences, opposing points of view add more interesting interaction rather than predetermining hostile feuds. These outlooks may be viewed as how members of a given House talk when they are together, making fun of the wizards of other Houses. (Editor's note: This is similar to the way Republicans and Democrats get along in the United States today. They generally have respect for differing points of view and the democratic process, for example, even if they differ on policy, rather than a deeper, more violent division like Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.)
- **Intra-House Relations:** How the magi of this house get along with others in the House.
- **Virtues & Flaws:** Those virtues and flaws that are necessary or common among members of this House.
- **Abilities:** Abilities considered important in the House.
- **Magic:** The spells and kinds of magic that are common in the House, sometimes including notes on Wizard's Twilight.
- **Example Magus:** A magus who could be encountered somewhere near Languedoc. The description is mostly for role-playing and background, so specific statistics are not included.
- **Story Ideas:** Ideas for putting these Houses into action in a Saga.

## House of Bjornaer

*"Just as the cone can cast on the wall both the shadow of a circle and the shadow of a triangle, so you can cast on this world the shadow of a human or the shadow of a hawk, the shadow of a wolf or the shadow of a hundred things. Now you cast the shadow of a mighty wizard, but some day you shall cast the shadow of a corpse."*

—Bjornaer, spoken to his first apprentice

**Motto:** Power Over Self Is Power Over Others.

**Symbol:** A cone viewed obliquely from above.



Each Bjornaer magus is taught to take the form of an animal known as the wizard's Heart-Beast. Cultivating understanding of one's animal aspect is held as more important than learning Hermetic magic. Descended from a Germanic, rather than a Roman wizard, this House is held in contempt by some magi. The secretive and introspective nature of the Bjornaer magi prevents them from overcoming this bias.

### History

Bjornaer came from a prehistoric line of shape-shifting wizards, people whose only magic was the ability to take different bodily forms. She broke with her tradition (thereby becoming an enemy of her master and the line of shape-shifters in general) to learn Hermetic magic and become part of the Order that was then forming. She studied with Merinita to learn Latin and the basics of Hermetic magic and then formed her own House. She never was able to get more than a spark when it came to Ignem magic and many of her followers are deficient in fire magic even today.

Bjornaer was one of two Founders who was not from the Roman tradition of magic. (The other founded the now extinct House of Díedne.) As such, many of the other magi looked down on her and her powers, but Bonisagus was eager to incorporate her, since her different approach to magic promised to teach him much. He knew that the more varied the magicians from whom he learned, the more comprehensive would his magical theory eventually be.

When Quendalon and Myanar, the first two Primi of House Merinita, fought for control of their House in A.D. 801 to 802, Bjornaer and her filii supported Myanar. Myanar was true to Merinita's nature-oriented magics, whereas Quendalon wanted to turn the House to faerie ways. When Quendalon won out and ousted Myanar and his supporters from the House, Bjornaer nominally adopted them into House Bjornaer. For the next century, therefore, there were non-shape-changers in House Bjornaer, but this sub-lineage of magi is thought to have died out. Perhaps they were cursed by Quendalon and his faerie allies, and there is rumor that they were hunted down and killed one by one by Quendalon and his ilk.

During the Schism War, the followers of Bjornaer retreated to their Domus Magnus, afraid that the violence would include them. Fear of and hatred toward non-Latin magi could have spread to them if they had not kept out of the conflicts. Some thought they would side with House Díedne, but the two Houses had little in common, other than that their Founders were descended from non-Romans. To this day, House Bjornaer is suspicious of the other Houses and many of its members expect the Schism War to break out anew.

Over the centuries, House Bjornaer has become accepted in the Order and the members of the House have become more and more adept at standard Hermetic magic with each generation of apprentices. Some within the House, however, say that House Bjornaer has likewise lost some of its shape-changing prowess over the years.

The loose organization of shape-changers from which Bjornaer learned her original magic still remains to this day. They regard the Order in general, and House Bjornaer in particular, as mortal enemies. Their ability to hide in their various shapes has made them particularly difficult to find and destroy.

### Notable Magi of Bjornaer

**Bjornaer**—She was poorly accepted in the Order because of her "barbarian" background, but was respected by some for her wisdom and magnetism.

**Gettra**—She was able to copy the forms of other people flawlessly and effortlessly. During the 12th century, she impersonated many magi around Europe and caused much confusion in pursuit of still-unknown goals. She disappeared when her plot was discovered, so she has never been brought to Hermetic justice. Most think that she has since died, though she may be living to this day in some borrowed shape.

## Current Status

### Membership: 43

**Domus Magnus:** Crintera, in the Rhine Tribunal.

The covenant has few relations with the magi of the Tribunal since members of House Bjornaer prefer to live in wilder areas.

**Primus:** Urgen. He argues that the Order must hold back a burgeoning mundane population to protect the wild lands and he is calling on the followers of Bjornaer to involve themselves in Hermetic politics to accomplish this goal. Some accuse him of secretly harassing mundane populations with "animal attacks" to drive them off.

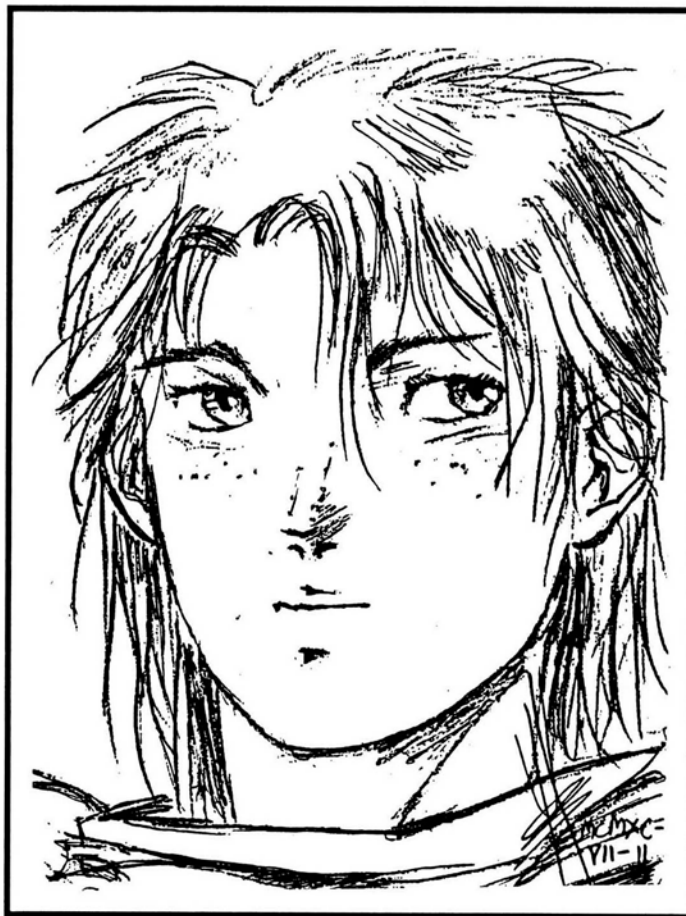
### Current Concerns:

To preserve the wilderness, though Urgen does not have enthusiastic support for his cause.

## Current Practices

The emphasis that this House puts on self-control and self-transformation makes it less active in Hermetic politics than most other Houses. When they do take stands at Tribunal, it is generally to protect their rights from the infringement of others and to protect their wild lands. They are very aware of their status as a non-Roman house and carefully watch those who are exceedingly violent or rabidly xenophobic. Most of the members have carefully constructed refuges for themselves if the worst should happen and other magi turn against them; they are ready to flee at a moment's notice. It is a well known fact that members of House Bjornaer are the hardest to track down when a Wizards' March is called against one.

Followers of Bjornaer often travel in the wilds to gain the isolation that aids their introspection and to find places to roam in beast form. Over the centuries, they have had to move regularly to find uncut woods and uninhabited lands. Lately, many have traveled to Hibernia and Scotland, others to the Novgorod Tribunal, and others to mountain ranges within heavily populated Europe. Very few of them are left in central or southern Europe outside of the mountains.



In this House, younger magi universally respect older magi, even if the younger magi are more powerful casters of magic. Followers of Bjornaer recognize that blatant, external power is not a worthy criterion for respect and that older magi may well have learned much that is not apparent on the surface. Since a hierarchy based on age never changes and one's superiors are one's superiors until they die, there is very little political intrigue within the House. It is considered improper to interrupt an elder while they are speaking, and Bjornaer magi are known to chastise other magi for doing so.

Followers of Bjornaer congregate every twelve years at Crintera for a secret meeting called the Gathering of Twelve Years, during which time they perform rituals associated with maintaining their lineage, remembering their ancestors, and solidifying the bonds within the House. It is generally believed that during the Gathering, House Bjornaer uses ancient, non-Hermetic magics that Bjornaer kept secret and passed on to her House. These magics might have nothing to do with shape-shifting, and some say that House Bjornaer eschews politics because it can curse and manipulate others in the Order through more subtle means: rituals performed at the Gathering. If anyone from another House has learned anything concrete about this meeting, however, they are not talking. The only thing that other magi know is that

Bjornaer magi take this congregation very seriously indeed. When questioned about the meeting, Bjornaer magi neither deny nor affirm anything.

Apprentices who have Heart-Beasts are made members of the House at the Gathering and are thereafter considered magi, even if they have little or no ability to wield Hermetic magic. The Hermetic training that they lack is not seen as essential to being a wizard. To magi of other Houses, of course, these apprentices are still just apprentices, not magi with their own sigils. Gaining a Heart-Beast is all that is required for membership, so this House has no Apprentice's Gauntlet.

Amici of Bjornaer magi are sometimes invited to the Gathering, but they cannot participate. They must wait



## The Order of Hermes

in the outer halls of the covenant during the rituals and many of them serve as guards to protect House Bjornaer while the magi are occupied.

The line of shape-shifters from which Bjornaer broke away still holds Bjornaer's House as enemies and members of this tradition have been known to attempt to break into Crintera to disrupt the Gathering. They consider their Bjornaer cousins to be traitors and alternate outright attacks with subtle attempts for reconciliation.

Traditionally, no one may join House Bjornaer except through apprenticeship because only in apprenticeship is one able to gain the Heart-Beast. One who has studied magic in another House has lost the ability to manifest the shape of the Heart-Beast. Exceptions, however, have been made occasionally over the last few centuries. These magi gain nominal membership, but they are never fully accepted in the House.

### Magi of House Bjornaer

#### Mentality of a Bjornaer Magus

You have been trained in magic to become more powerful, which means to project a more powerful shadow of your essential self onto this temporal world. Already your master has brought out of you your other true shape, your Heart-Beast. There are other, lesser shapes that also lie within you, and you will learn how to bring them out. You will learn other types of magic as well. Your mighty Founder, Bjornaer of the Many Shapes, came to the Order to learn other ways of magic besides shape-shifting, and it is because of this wise decision that you are so much more powerful than the weak and limited shape-shifters who have descended from the less far-sighted of Bjornaer's tradition. But never let these other types of magic lure you away from your true calling, the shifting of shapes. If you find yourself tempted to use magic to do your work for you instead of using it to make you capable of doing it yourself, remember that you will only become weak and lazy, and as your so-called "power" grows, your will and heart will shrivel, until your magic takes you over and uses you for its own ends, or destroys you altogether.

#### Priorities

- 1) Increasing one's own power, especially a repertoire of shapes
- 2) Supporting House Bjornaer
- 3) Protecting wild lands
- 4) Supporting the Order

#### Outlook

- **Bonisagus**—Their magic is impersonal but useful at times.
- **Criamon**—They have no control over the wisdom they seek, but at least they do seek wisdom and not just force.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—They, too, know ancient secrets and never interfere with House Bjornaer.

- **Flambeau**—Children do play with fire, after all. They are an intemperate and chaotic bunch and not to be trusted.
- **Jerbiton**—Their continued contact with the mundanes has sapped their strength.
- **Mercere**—Useful messengers, they are the only true supporters of the Order.
- **Merinita**—Eternal thanks to she who taught us Hermetic magic; curses upon the traitor Quendalon and the impure House he has created.
- **Quaesitor**—As long as they protect the integrity of our House and the privacy of our Gathering, support them and their cause. When they turn against us, as turn against us they will, they must be ignored.
- **Tremere**—Always challenging, rarely learning. They are crafty and deadly and must always be watched least they try again what they did to House Díedne.
- **Tytalus**—They have tried to learn our secrets and they fail to recognize the seriousness of their transgressions. Do not trust them.
- **Verditius**—They rely on their tools rather than on themselves. They are not true magi like the followers of Bjornaer are.
- **Faeries**—Corrupt and dangerous manifestations of Nature; avoid them as much as possible.
- **Mundane society**—Boring and ugly, they do not understand the beast that is within them and try to hide from it.
- **Non-Hermetic Shape-Shifters**—Simple, limited, and brutal; they are envious of our knowledge.

#### Intra-House Relations

You are to respect your elders within the House and obey them, but they will rarely call upon you for aid. Remember that they want to help you grow in yourself and tasks which they may expect of you will probably teach you important lessons.

Never forget the Gathering of Twelve Years, lest the House wane. Troubled times are in store for the Order and if need be, House Bjornaer may have to take a new shape and survive on its own if the rest of the Order falls. The Gathering will keep you and your fellows strong for whatever tribulations lie ahead.

#### Necessary Virtues & Flaws

(for all Bjornaer magi, and only for Bjornaer magi. The cost of these virtues & flaws is +2 if your Heart-Beast is battle worthy, like a bear, stag, venomous serpent, or wolf. If the Heart-Beast cannot fight effectively, the cost for all of these virtues & flaws is +1.)

**The Heart-Beast.** Each Bjornaer magus has at least one Heart-Beast, which is the form of an animal that the wizard can take at any time, without casting a spell. The master actually probes the apprentice's heart to see what shape lies within, so the form of the Heart-Beast is not a matter of choice, but one of the apprentice's nature. Rare apprentices actually have

the ability to take more than one form, or to take the form of an inanimate object (in which case the form is called the "Heart-Shape"). Some followers of Bjornaer view their Heart-Beasts as their "true forms," while the human body is a secondary form. Over time, Bjornaer magi retain more and more aspects of the Heart-Beast in human form, including personality and physical shape. Each Bjornaer character has a personality trait of "Bear," "Tree," "Eagle," or whatever the Heart-Beast is. A high score in this trait means that the character is closely attuned with the shape and identifies strongly with it. These characters may also have the trait "Human" to represent how strongly (or weakly) they identify with their human forms.

**Will Over Form.** This arcane talent, like a magical affinity, counts as a bonus on spells that turn you into a different shape. The score also serves as a bonus on natural resistance rolls to physical transformations. You can also use the talent to revert either to human form or to the form of your Heart-Beast when you have been turned into another shape. Each hour you can make a stress roll + Will Over Form. If you roll a 9+, you can revert to human or Heart-Beast form. You must buy a score in this ability just as you would a normal talent. Some Bjornaer magi spend so much time in their beast form that they no longer interact with other wizards or mortals, but simply roam the forests as an animal. Indeed, this is so common that it has become a problem for the House, for it has lost many of its most promising members in this fashion.

**The Hidden Shape.** Hermetic magic cannot detect the "true shape" of a Bjornaer wizard. Spells such as Sight of the True Form reveal only the wizard's current shape, as if that were their natural shape. Magic of other kinds, such as faerie magic, might be able to detect your true form, at the discretion of the storyguide.

**No Familiar.** Bjornaer training keeps you from ever having a familiar. Some Bjornaer magi work with magical animals, but the animals are independent allies, not familiars.

## Common Virtues & Flaws

**Inoffensive to Animals, +1.** Your connection to animals lets them be comfortable around you.

**Special Circumstances, +1.** You get +3 to cast and resist spells while in wild, uninhabited lands.

**Blatant Gift, -1.** Your master has drawn magic from deep within you and non-magical beings are disturbed by you.

**Minor or Major Magic Deficiency (Ignem), -1 or -3.** Bjornaer never learned this art well and this deficiency has been passed from master to apprentice for hundreds of years. Apparently something about Bjornaer training makes learning fire magic difficult. Most Bjornaer magi have this deficiency.

**Stingy Master, -1.** Your master focused on philosophy

and Bjornaer magic over Hermetic magic, so you have only 130 points each for purchasing spells and arts.

**Susceptible to Faerie Power, -4.** Your connection to nature gives faeries more than normal power over you.

## Abilities

Since Bjornaer magi spend a lot of time in the wilds, either in beast or human form, abilities that allow them to survive there are highly valued. These abilities include Athletics, Climb, Survival, Track, Swim, and Stealth. On the other hand, those abilities dealing with the Order, such as Hermes History, Hermes Lore, and even Magic Theory, are often low.

## Magic

Bjornaer magi, naturally, excel at spells that change their shapes.

When Bjornaer magi are overcome by final Twilight, they most likely become their Heart-Beast, complete with the animal's intellect. The change is irrevocable. The form serves as a last refuge from the magic that would otherwise be overwhelming. The Heart-Beast left after a Bjornaer undergoes Twilight generally has a Magic Might of at least 30.

**Form of the Avenging Beast, Muto Córporum 20 Self, Sun.**

The shape of your Heart-Beast becomes more powerful and deadly. If you have a battle-worthy Heart-Beast, you receive +5 on all Atk and Dam rolls and +15 on Soak rolls. If the Heart-Beast is not battle-worthy, it gains a +3 Atk and Dam and +10 on Soak. In addition, you receive no penalties from wounds or fatigue until you are unconscious, incapacitated, or dead. The appearance of your Heart-Beast becomes ferocious, fearsome, larger, and slightly distorted. Inert forms, like trees or rocks, become more threatening in appearance, but they gain no combat abilities.

## Example Magus of Bjornaer

**Marien, Filius of Syristes, Follower of Bjornaer**  
**Status in the Order:** Marien has only been a magus for a few years and his apprenticeship under a Bjornaer master isolated him from other magi, so he has no reputation within the Order.

**Description:** He is a small, thin, young man with reddish tints in his unruly brown hair. Though his face is smooth, his eyes speak of wisdom and maturity beyond his years. He dresses in a simple brown cloak tied with a rope and rarely carries anything with him. He constantly turns his head toward sounds and movements around him, but does so confidently, not furtively.

**Personality:** Curiosity guides Marien's life. For years and years, he was with his master and rarely saw anyone else. Now he is free to travel across Europe, see the famed cities of Languedoc and the Mediterranean coast, meet magi of other Houses, and generally find out

## The Order of Hermes

about the world. He is full of questions, excited by new experiences, and slightly naïve. Nevertheless, he always keeps his wits about him.

**Favored Magic:** His Heart-Beast is a fox, which is the only shape he has learned to assume. Besides shape-changing, he likes mental magic very much and has an affinity for it. As a young magus, he has only weak spells in his repertoire. He usually travels at night in the shadow of his fox form.

**Background:** Marien was a peasant lad in eastern France (in the foothills of the Alps) who was sent by his impoverished mother to live with an old woman as her servant. This old woman was Syristes, who revealed herself as a maga and took Marien as her apprentice. Marien studied in seclusion, learning everything from Syristes and seeing other magi only occasionally. He relishes magic and is proud of his House, but now he wants to take some time to see what else the world has to offer.

**Quote:** *"Have you ever been to Barcelona?"*

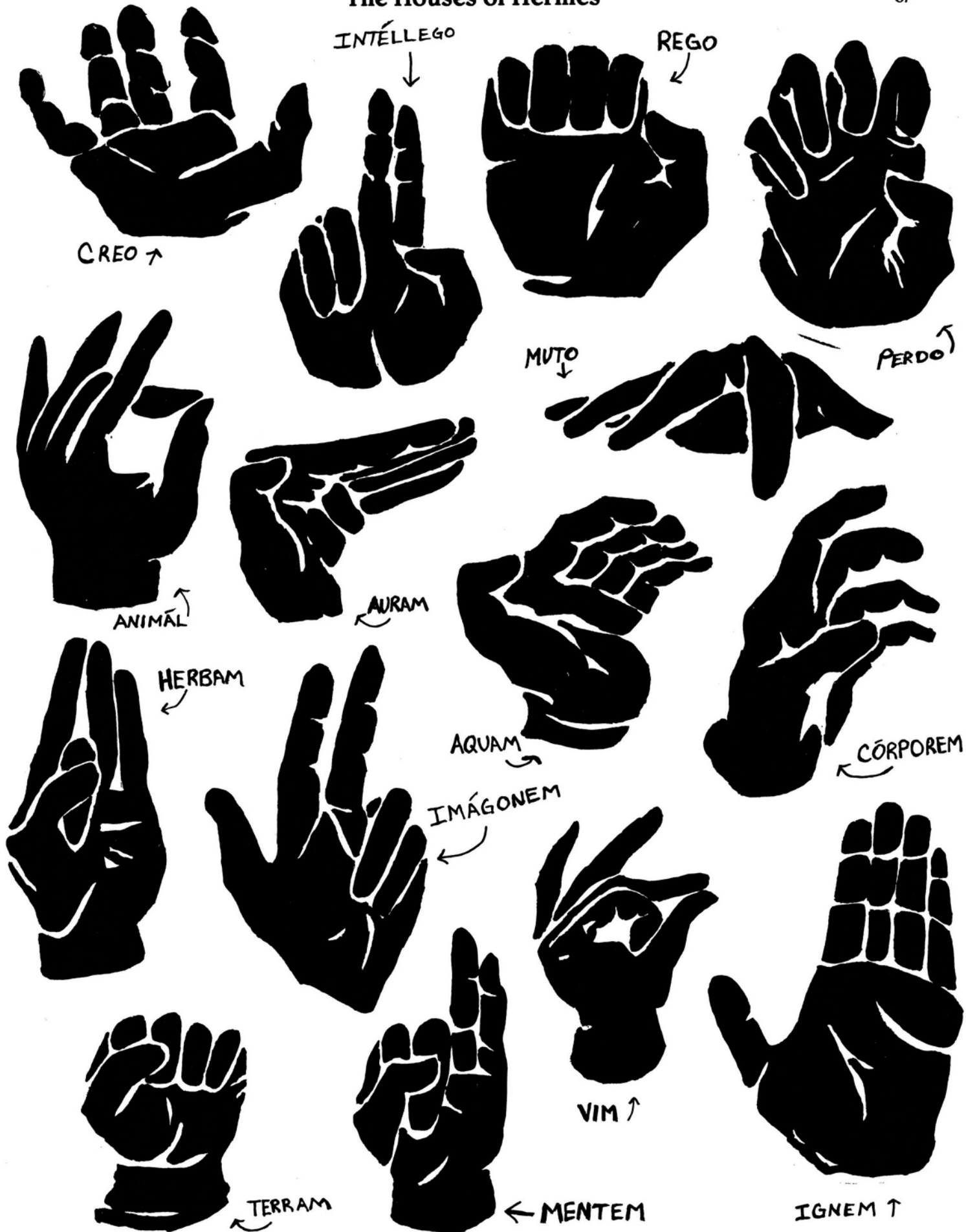
### Story Ideas

- A non-Hermetic shape-shifter (capable in 5 different forms) sets up a trap for a player Bjornaer magus in order to test them and perhaps to kill them if they are weak. If the trap fails they will reveal themselves and speak with the magus. Perhaps they will become friends.

- A player-character Bjornaer magus has to go to the Gathering, and they invite a few other trusted characters along. During the Gathering, the non-Bjornaer characters interact with other non-Bjornaers from other covenants, who are also there as protectors, when evidence of a spy is discovered. The characters must discover who the spy is to protect their own reputations and their friend's status within House Bjornaer.



The Houses of Hermes



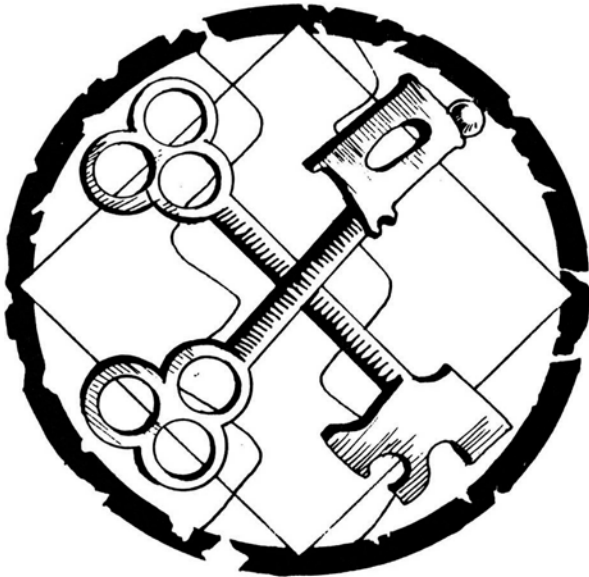
## House Bonisagus

*"Brothers and sisters, I bring you the potion that will cure our sorrows and bind our wounds. No longer need we conspire against each other; for now we stand together on the common ground that this knowledge has provided us and we can make peace. May all of you and all your filii use what I will teach you wisely."*

—Bonisagus, announcing to the assembled wizards his invention of Hermetic magic

**Motto:** Perseverance and Wisdom are the Keys to Knowledge

**Symbol:** Two keys, crossed



House Bonisagus is small, but it is the most highly respected House in the Order, because Bonisagus and his filia Trianoma were central to the founding of the Order. The magi of Bonisagus are brilliant theorists of arcania and inventors who carry on the tradition of invention set by their founder. They are not given to adventurous lives, but spend their time trying to invent more and better spells and to improve the Order's understanding of magic.

### History

In the early 8th century, the magus Trianoma discovered that Bonisagus was developing some potentially powerful magic, such as the *parma magica*, a magical technique previously unknown to wizardry. Trianoma saw the potential of Bonisagus' magic as the thing she needed to make real her burning dream: a union of wizards. Although she was already a wizard, Trianoma became Bonisagus' student, like an advanced apprentice, and then she discussed her plans with him.

Bonisagus liked the idea of a union of wizards since he was not fond of the warfare that often raged between magi before the Order was founded. He was a gentle man and believed in her words of peace; he agreed to help her carry out her plan.

Trianoma solicited the aid of other wizards, who came to Bonisagus to share what they knew. Bonisagus had a reputation for being harmless and extremely honorable, so they trusted him with their secrets. Within several years, Bonisagus had used what he knew of the various forms of magic to produce a rough theory of magic in general. With only subtle modifications, this theory is currently used to organize and understand magic in the thirteenth century.

Many wizards had thought about forming an organization of some sort after the fall of the Cult of Mercury in Rome, but the magi had not been able to share their knowledge because their approaches to magic varied and they did not trust each other much. The advent of Bonisagus' *parma magica* would allow unfriendly magi to meet with some assurance of safety and his system of magical organization would allow all magi to share their knowledge and work together.

Because of Bonisagus' central role in the founding of the Order, his House is given a great deal of respect. Actually, it was Trianoma who provided the impetus to form the Order; Bonisagus was too passive to have formed it on his own. It was the dynamic combination of Trianoma, the dreamer, schemer and consummate politician, and Bonisagus, the patient and brilliant magical theorist, that made the Order of Hermes possible.

Though Trianoma participated in and usually led the Tribunals out of which arose the Order of Hermes, she does not have a House of her own. As a student of Bonisagus, she considered herself and her apprentices to be part of Bonisagus' House. To this day, she and her apprentices are members of this House, though they still have somewhat different motivations and mind set than the others.

### Notable Magi of Bonisagus

**Bonisagus**—The great developer of Hermetic magic and the *parma magica*.

**Trianoma**—Coordinated and propelled the founding of the Order and supervised its most basic foundations.

### Current Status

**Membership:** 28

**Domus Magnus:** Durenmar, in the Black Forest, where the Order was founded. Because of this covenant's historical significance, many magi from other Houses live here besides the followers of Bonisagus. It is a huge fortress rising up on a large rock that overlooks a forested valley. The nearest settlement is only 15 miles away,

though once Durenmar was 200 miles deep into the wilderness.

**Primus:** Avarret, a conservative who wants the other Bonisagus magi to stop their dabbling and focus on the course of activity set by Bonisagus. Some followers of Bonisagus want to go beyond the limitations created by the Hermetic system of magic, but Avarret considers this a waste of time, perhaps because he is more gifted at continuing Bonisagus' thoughts than at creating new ways of understanding magic.

**Current Concerns:** At the Primus' suggestion, the followers of Bonisagus are currently trying to invent better rituals to protect covenants, such as more powerful versions of the Aegis of the Hearth or more effective spells of similar nature. Some are attempting to develop spell variations that are effective despite the influence of the Dominion and which do not have the tendency to misfire in the caster's face.

### Current Practices

Some magi in House Bonisagus are interested in politics, following the example of Trianoma. They are as active and visible in the Order as their more academic fellows are quiet and secluded. Like the Quaesitoris, these Bonisagus magi involve themselves in various disputes and developments, using their prestige and wisdom to keep the Order healthy and growing. Unlike the Quaesitoris, they often take the initiative in pushing for changes or rulings. As the European population continues to grow, these magi find themselves more and more trying to settle conflicts between magi and mundanes. They are highly respected and, because they have never taken any side in any sort of inter-house conflict, they are generally trusted as well — almost more so than the Quaesitoris. In general, they are not interested in the minor petty squabbles of the magi, but look to the distant future and the over all health of what they consider to be "their Order."

Over the centuries, the inventions of House Bonisagus have become less imaginative and more derivative. The early years of the House saw the invention of certámen, improved longevity potions, techniques for making magic devices, the quantification of *vis*, and the development of many basic, important spells that are used almost without change in the thirteenth century. In the past century, however, the House has come up with little other than more powerful versions of existing spells

and some very specific insights into magic theory. Some magi say that Bonisagus' theory of Hermetic magic is inherently limited and that House Bonisagus has taken this theory almost as far as it can go. The only possibility for true advance, they claim, is to change some basic assumptions of Hermetic theory, such as the divisions of techniques and forms. Such a large change, however, could disrupt the Order by releasing new and unpredictable magics into the world. Since no one knows what a new system of magic might be like, no one knows what effects it could have on the Order. For example, a new system of magic that could circumvent the *parma magica* could give its users great power over other magi and destroy trust within the Order. For this reason, some fear even research into such possibilities, but several magi within House Bonisagus and several more in other

Houses are avidly searching for some new way to understand and control magic.

House Bonisagus uses a formal examination as its Apprentice's Gauntlet. The prospective magus must answer a series of questions developed by their master and their master's colleagues in the House. About one out of ten apprentices fail this test once or twice before becoming magi.

One can gain entrance into House Bonisagus only by providing some important magical discovery or invention.

### Magi of House Bonisagus

#### Mentality of a Bonisagus Magus

If you are one of the theoretical followers of Bonisagus, you see yourself as bearing the heavy duty of improving the theory and practice of magic. Luckily, you have many resources at your disposal, such as the respect and aid of all other magi in the Order, the best magical training to be found in the world, and, of course, your own innate brilliance. You are sure that you understand magic better than just about anyone outside your House and you expect magi to respect you appropriately.

If you are one of the politically involved followers of Bonisagus (effectively a "follower of Trianoma"), you see yourself as bearing the duty of maintaining the Order that those of your House originally founded. Your excellent training and the respect others have for you are two of your biggest assets, but you still have to work hard to anticipate and control political changes within the Order.

#### Classic Puzzles in Magic Theory

There are certain feats that Hermetic magic cannot perform and over the centuries, Bonisagus magi have attempted to develop magic that could do one or more of these tasks. The first magus to solve one of the puzzles below will be famous, perhaps as much as Bonisagus himself.

- Affect the lunar sphere or anything above it.
- Alter something's essential nature.
- Cure permanently without raw *vis*.
- Restore physical energy so that one can cast more spells.\*
- Create true human life.
- Restore the dead to life.
- Halt or reverse aging.

\* House Merinita has a spell that does this, but only with Faerie magic, and only with the use of raw *vis*.

## The Order of Hermes

### Priorities of a Theoretical Bonisagus Magus

- 1) Furtherance of Hermetic knowledge
- 2) Bringing honor to House Bonisagus
- 3) Achieving personal fame

### Priorities of a Political Bonisagus Magus

- 1) Preservation of the Order
- 2) Bringing honor to House Bonisagus
- 3) Achieving personal Fame

### Outlook

- **Bjornaer**—They keep their magics a secret. Perhaps they should never have been allowed in the Order.
- **Criamon**—Undisciplined wizards lost in their own complex symbology. Why don't they give up the symbolism and deal with magic as it is?
- **Ex Miscellanea**—Intolerable fools who do not recognize the usefulness of Hermetic magic.
- **Flambeau**—It is a shame that they put such a subtle art as magic to such base uses.
- **Jerbiton**—Reasonable fellows; their knowledge of philosophy is to be respected, though not as much as one respects knowledge of magic.
- **Mercere**—Valuable servants.
- **Merinita**—They might be able to bring new insights to Hermetic magic if they were not so secretive and uncooperative.
- **Quaesitor**—Competent vessels of justice, they protect our rights as the most important House in the Order and prevent too much dissension in the other Houses.
- **Tremere**—As explorers of the possibilities of certamen, they are quite intelligent; politically they can be unbearable.
- **Verditius**—Their insights into the creation of magical devices are most valuable, but how can you take such decadent and unfit creatures of the cauldron and brazier seriously?
- **Demons**—Learning to control and manipulate demons and their magic would be an excellent challenge, but the Quaesitoris forbid it. Such a shame.
- **Faeries**—Faerie magic appears impressive only because it is not understood, but some day we will quantify it and control it just as we have mastered the elementals.
- **The Church**—Anything that interferes with magic is offensive, and what coherent understanding of magical power do they provide that could compete with the wisdom of Hermes?

### Intra-House Relations

Your status in the House depends entirely on your magical accomplishments. If you are a political magus, you will be accepted but not much respected or honored. If you are a theoretical magus, you will be judged by the inventions you produce. You will find intense competition with your fellows as they, too, attempt to produce the most exciting and useful inventions.

You will be Renounced if you ever interfere seriously with the goals of the House. If you simply fail to produce interesting inventions, you will be quickly forgotten, but not punished.

### Necessary Virtue

**Hermetic Prestige, +1.** Simply being a Bonisagus magus gives you this prestige.

### Common Virtues & Flaws

**Knack with Magic Theory, +1 or +2.** Due to the excellent training you received as an apprentice.

**Book-Learner, +1.**

**Inventive Genius, +1.**

**Magical Affinity, +1 to +4.** Your master encouraged a specialty in you in which you could excel so that you could bring new insights to House Bonisagus. Fellows in the House expect you to push this specialty to its limit.

**Driving Goal, -1.** To become the unchallenged expert in your particular magical specialty.

**Gangling, -2.** You are so obsessed with your work that you do not eat enough or get any exercise.

**Obese, -1.** Life in a laboratory has let you get flabby.

**The Blatant Gift, -1.** Because of your intense involvement with magic.

**Minor or Major Magic Deficiencies, -1, -3, -4, or -5.** Your master focused you so strongly on your magical specialties that they neglected to correct difficulties you had in other areas. In the mind of a follower of Bonisagus, a magus who excels at some specific type of magic is much more valuable than a generalist. You can spend your entire life exploring the magic that you are good at, so there is no need for you to be able to do everything.

### Abilities

Magic Theory, of course, is the most highly regarded ability within the House; perhaps the only highly regarded ability. Mundane knowledges are mostly scorned, though philosophers and scholars are sometimes valued as well as artists and troubadours. For political magi, social talents and skills are very important.

### Magic

Your master encouraged you to learn spells related to your specialty so you would know everything you need to know about that kind of magic. Spells that deal with magic or other spells, such as **Scales of the Magical Weight**, are also necessary to be an efficient experimenter.

Twilight is more common than death in House Bonisagus.

### Example Magus of Bonisagus

**Azaer, Filius of Davnavolus, Follower of Bonisagus**  
**Status in the Order:** Azaer is well-known in the Languedoc Tribunal for his vocal participation at the last Tribunal (which was his first). Additionally, he has been

travelling among the covenants trying to gain an understanding of the magi's needs and goals, so that he can help the Tribunal grow with little conflict with mundane society. Many see him as an overactive youth, but some genuinely respect his dedication and intelligence.

**Description:** Azaer is a young magus, only thirty-seven years old. He is full of energy, both physical and mental. His skin has an olive tone to it and his hair is brown and curly. He proudly wears the symbol of Bonisagus on his robe over his heart. Since he rarely interacts with mundanes, he generally wears a flowing blue robe with various magical symbols embroidered into it.

**Personality:** Still young, Azaer is an idealistic. He believes that he can do great things for the Order by throwing himself into its politics. In fact, he feels that it is his duty to do so. He tries to get along well with all magi, but those who are selfish or cynical try his patience severely. When he is confronted with stubborn and (in his mind) small-minded opposition, he can fly into a self-righteous rage. He will have to learn to control this fury if he is to become a major political force in the Order.

**Favored Magic:** Azaer is highly talented at the art of illusions, but he has relegated magical research to a hobby so that he can concentrate on political action.

**Background:** Azaer began apprenticeship in the Regaldone covenant in the Thebes Tribunal under the tutoring of a theoretician. His master, however, soon realized that the boy was too energetic and social to spend his life in a laboratory, so he sent messages to other

Bonisagus magi asking which of them might wish to take Azaer as an apprentice. Davnavolus of the Bellaquin covenant took him as his apprentice and taught him the nature of Hermetic politics. Azaer now is a member of the covenant Berinor, also in the Languedoc Tribunal.

**Quote:** "Yes, yes, true, true, but look at it *this way...*"

### Story Ideas

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- A new Primus comes to power and sets quantification of faerie magic as the goal for House Bonisagus and the Order of Hermes in general. Magi throughout the Order are encouraged to learn what they can of faerie magic and send what they find to Durenmar.

- A Bonisagus magus discovers something that could disrupt the Order, such as a way to penetrate the *parma magica* easily, and he goes into seclusion until he can find a solution, such as a better version of the *parma magica*. The characters could be friends of his whom he asks to protect him while he is in hiding, or they could seek him out, since he is breaking the Code by not sharing his discoveries with the rest of the Order. When they find out why he is in seclusion, they must decide whether to reveal this knowledge to the Order, to keep it a secret, or to use it for their own ends.

- A follower of Bonisagus dabbles independently in demonology since it is an intriguing problem. Originally, she has no interest in what the demons can offer, but slowly she becomes corrupted. The characters must save her, her covenant, and/or the Order from her own curiosity and corruption.



## House Criamon

*"When Molinar entered the room, our awe was not contained. His wrinkled visage gave life to the symbols etched into his skin: life upon the living. His bright eyes told his tale to us and soon his voice would allow us the details. Each of his hands formed the symbol of Vim, as did ours. He slowly drew his fingertips together, symbolically unifying all magic, as did we. I could see the marks of the Twilight on his palms; two on his left, one on his right. Then he approached the table around which we were standing and he sat down. We did not. The honor of hearing his tale would not be defiled by our own comfortable existence.*

*"It was a long while before he spoke.*

*"It seems that the Order is as the moon; it started as a small consideration, then it waxed, grew, encompassing all around and shining forth onto the mortal world. It had a face, it was alive with patterns, individually beautiful, but when viewed as a whole, my... it was astounding. Now it is waning, the light is weak, the script being masked in darkness. When the moon can no longer be seen, all upon it will perish. We can no longer stay on the moon. We must go to the earth, where we watch the phases of the heavenly bodies and watch as the symbols grow and die. To be afar, yet still see. That is the Wizard's Twilight.'*

*"Molinar breathed slowly for a moment, then rose. He saluted us, and we him. My eyes' envious gaze at the Twilight marks was not unnoticed by him. His eyes spoke to me, 'Worry not, young Preságe, your Twilight will be soon.' His thoughts filled my heart with eagerness; I have not yet experienced Twilight.*

*"He left us to ponder his words. Even as I write this, my talent for dark prophecy is reeling with the images he left. I haven't yet the answer, but when I do I will seek out Molinar, the Magus of Three Twilights, and he will speak to me again."*

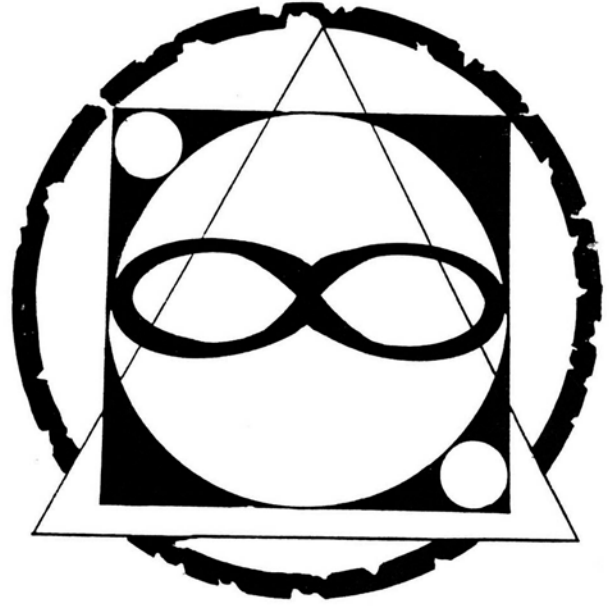
—From *Tales of an Adept*,  
by Preságe of House Criamon

**Motto:** The World Within is the World Without.

**Symbol:** The symbol for infinity ( $\infty$ ), within a circle, within a square. The square represents all the members of the House, the circle represents the Central Clutch, and the infinity symbol represents the current leader of the House.

Undeniably the strangest of all the magi who founded the Order was Criamon. He considered magic a pathway to discovering the "Enigma." From his writings, the Enigma sometimes seems like a universal principle, sometimes like a metaphor for human thought, and sometimes like a deity.

His followers in the Order all pursue knowledge of the Enigma and they have developed a philosophy to describe this search that is incomprehensible to outsiders. They consider magi who are interested in power or mundane knowledge to be petty. They call using magic



to gain mundane power "cutting butter with a broadsword." As brilliant as they are, their discoveries are so obscure that they are rarely of interest to magi of other Houses. The arcane symbols they mark on their bodies add to their reputation of outlandishness within the Order.

The current Primus of Criamon predicts climactic struggles within the Order some time in the next century, perhaps even resulting in its destruction.

## History

Criamon had little to do with the founding of the Order. He saw the Order as a positive step because once it was founded he would no longer fear the intrusions of other magi. He was instrumental in getting the Code to recognize the importance of a magus' privacy, something that Criamon magi guard jealously. Criamon was lost to the world some time in the 9th century, probably to Wizard's Twilight, but the Criamon magi are not sharing the details of his passing, as indeed many of them do not know the details themselves.

Criamon's successor as leader of the House was Juliasta, one of his filiae. Intent on gathering new material for her research, she broke the pattern of secrecy by traveling among the prominent covenants of the time and sharing information with the masters of various fields. She gave her House the broad base of knowledge that other Houses enjoy, but House leaders following her went back to Criamon's secretive ways. Nevertheless, a minority of Criamon magi follow Juliasta's example and seek to open the secrecy of this House.

Verderis, the third Primus of the House, wrote *The Travels of Fedoso*, a long tale in simple verse that tells the story of a youth travelling about the land, encountering mystical obstacles and allies, and eventually coming to rest on a mountaintop. It has been accepted as a classic in

the Order and many apprentices (including all those of Criamon) learn Latin by reading it. The tale is obviously allegorical, but what it represents is still a common topic of debate.

Some say that it represents the apprenticeship of a magus, the mountaintop being a symbol for magical mastery. Others say that the land through which Fedoso travels is his own mind, and others say the story is a prophetic tale of the Order itself. (It seems to have predicted the diabolic infestation of House Tylalus and the Schism War, depending on how it is interpreted.) Many of the younger magi in the House make attempts to retrace the travels of Fedoso and attempt to reach their own "mountaintop."

A few magi shun the work and refuse to teach it to their apprentices, fearing that the hidden symbolism might influence them without their knowledge. They say that the tale may have caused the diabolism in Tylalus and the Schism War instead of predicting them. These critics are few and far between and most magi have excellent memories of the poem from their "year of wonder" as an apprentice.

In the eleventh century, Nuinsil travelled among the Muslims in southern Iberia, northern Africa, and the lands to the east. Here he shared his wisdom with sufis, scholars, and other wise men. Before this journey, the philosophies of the followers of Criamon had become stagnant; now, with the influx of new ideas, the followers of Criamon are once again involved in vital debates and explorations. Many Criamon magi travel to Muslim lands to speak with the wise there, hoping to learn more. They are very concerned with the gaining of wisdom and will go to great lengths to learn as well as to mature.

### Notable Magi of Criamon

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**Criamon**—An illusion-master, Founder of the House.

**Juliasta**—The first Prima, who gathered magical information from other Houses.

**Verderis**—Author of *The Travels of Fedoso*, his name is legend among the apprentices of the Order and many dream of repeating this imaginative and wonderful journey.

**Iamitu'krielle**—A magus from the 9th century who disappeared but reappears periodically, speaking strange prophecies. She is easily recognized by the ponderous bronze-headed staff she bears and the mark of infinity branded on her forehead.

### Current Status

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**Membership:** 62

**Primus:** Pusitim, a scrawny old man who interprets the *Travels of Fedoso* to mean that a catastrophe will soon strike the Order. He only lets a few influential followers of Criamon know just what the cataclysm may be, but he gives hints to nearly everyone.

**Domus Magnus:** Cave of Twisting Shadows, in the Rhine Tribunal. Somewhere hidden in the Alps is a deep cave where Criamon lived and formed his Central Clutch. It remains the seat of power in House Criamon, where the Primus lives and conducts research with the best minds in the House. It is filled with the ghosts of former Criamon magi, and the Primus of the House can, at will, call any dead Primus (except Criamon himself) and have the ghost possess him so that the former Primus can cast spells, discuss philosophy and magic, and so on. If a Primus is lost to Twilight, they cannot return as a ghost, so a Primus nearing Twilight is ritually executed to assure that they remain in this world, at least as a ghost.

**Current Concerns:** All Criamon magi are urged to be on guard for the events which have been prophesied that will soon shake the Order and to report them to the Cave of Twisting Shadows. From time to time, a Clutch or individual follower of Criamon may be given an obscure assignment related to the impending events.

### Current Practices

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Criamon magi are not much interested in sharing information with those outside their House. Indeed, even within the House these magi tend to follow private lines of research. As much as they might protect themselves from peering eyes, their knowledge is not of much interest to others, even to other Criamon magi, because it is highly individualistic and filled with personal symbols and riddles.

Criamon magi do not seek power in its typical sense, seeking rather the underlying meaning and nature of magic. To what precise end these secluded magi aim their arcane studies few understand, but occasionally they speak of coming to know the universe, understanding the meaning of life, and going beyond the limits imposed on them by their bodies and minds.

Power, in and of itself, is not important to them, whether it be magical or mundane. They treat it with the disdain that most magi treat money. Power is useful because often wisdom is incorporated with it, or it can allow the magus to obtain more wisdom, but alone it is more silly than sex.

They have produced many strange and unique spells, but since these enchantments were created for research and learning, other magi take little interest in them.

The secrecy of the House has led many to speculate that Criamon magi are often diabolists, but hard proof of these allegations has not been found. Generally, such suspicions are groundless and based only on the alien nature of Criamon magi.

Criamon magi are easy to identify because they are given permanent markings on their bodies when they become magi. Sometimes these markings designate the type of magic in which the magus is most gifted and at other times, they refer to more obscure qualities, but they

## The Order of Hermes

always use symbols foreign to the Order at large. Many older Criamon magi are so covered with these symbols that there is not a patch of skin that does not have a pattern upon it.

The Apprentice's Gauntlet consists of solving a difficult riddle to the master's satisfaction. The apprentice has one year to answer the riddle, but must present their answer to a council of Criamon magi. The most respected form of answer is not a long rambling explanation, but a one word summation and encapsulation of all that the apprentice has thought and felt about the riddle.

Entrance to the House is gained only by those who solve several classic riddles, but few even attempt to gain entry in the first place.

### Magi of House Criamon

#### Mentality of a Criamon Magus

Your master has given you the greatest of gifts: magic. The only thing greater than magic is understanding, and that cannot be given. That you must seek. Magic is your best tool for carrying out your search. While mortals are trapped by their limited bodies, their weak eyes, and their stunted minds, you are free to overcome all your limits. Magic is not petty; use it not for petty ends.

You have been taught to use magic as a means to wisdom. Be sensitive to everything that is happening around you, for you never know what messages are carried on spring breezes, whispered in travelers' inns, or formed in the clouds above. While others are seeking power, seek something deeper: understanding. Power is a meaningless manifestation of the primitive life urges of the bodies which we do not really feel. Wisdom is the only true solace for the sorrow which this understanding brings, for it reveals the lightness of our own enlightened self core.

You no doubt have some peculiar view of the world, a way of seeing shared only by your master and a few other Criamon magi, if by anyone else at all. Follow your dreams and ideas, for they will be a surer guide than any words given you as advice.

#### Priorities

- 1) Seek personal wisdom
- 2) Seek wisdom for your Clutch
- 3) Seek wisdom for your House
- 4) Aid the Order

#### Outlook

- **Bjornaer**—At least they become emotionally attached to their magic and become a part of it rather than use it.
- **Bonisagus**—They see magic as a machine rather than as a part of oneself and are thus machines themselves.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—Some of them have the right heart to appreciate the Enigma, but they are not disciplined enough to seek it.
- **Flambeau**—Petty and childish.

- **Jerbiton**—Wizards who are interested in the mundanes? What an incalculable waste!
- **Mercere**—Poor, stunted magi; how poignant that they are around those who can study the Enigma but are denied the ability themselves.
- **Merinita**—If any House knows something we of Criamon do not, it may be this House.
- **Quaesitor**—Nosy, but important for protecting your privacy and your rights.
- **Tremere**—They worry too much about who is above whom rather than what is within whom.
- **Tyталus**—They could be quite wise if they saw the conflicts in themselves instead of with others.
- **Verditius**—Can we really call these crafters "magi"? Their spirits are shallow and their needs obscene.
- **Seekers**—They are misguided in looking for wisdom and power outside themselves.
- **The Church**—Those that speak, speak foolishness. Those that listen can hear the Enigma's call.
- **Nobility**—Petty, petty, petty.
- **The Common Folk**—Who?
- **Faeries**—Perhaps they are magi of old who have entered the Enigma.
- **Demons**—They have been denied access to the Truth, and out of envy they try to deceive us and keep us from discovering the Enigma.

### Intra-House Relations

Be ready to serve your fellows in the House, and even if you do not understand what is required of you, carry it out and be aware. Your parents will call on you frequently, as you will some day call on your own filii. Age and seniority inevitably signifies wisdom; always obey your elders.

If you have left your Clutch, you must use your time away from other followers of Criamon wisely. Your job is to find ideas, thoughts, and experiences, and to carry them some day back to your Clutch. Experiment, explore, experience.

Most Criamon magi stick close to their Clutches, working mostly with the same magi for decades, though some move about to other Clutches where they could learn or teach more. Young Criamon magi are especially likely to leave their Clutches and go out into the world. They live and work in covenants with non-Criamon magi and try to learn about the world. The plan is that by gaining real-life experience, they will have a richer life of research when, in their later years, they join a Clutch and spend their time steeped in the mysteries of magic.

### Common Virtues & Flaws

(Affinity with Mentem, Imágonem, or Intéllego, +3. More precise affinities, such as with passions or ghosts, are also common among Criamon magi.)

**Twilight Points, -1.** See p. 24

**Blatant Gift, -1.** Your magic is strong and evident.

**Stingy Master, -1.** Your master concentrated on philosophy over magic.

**Strong Personality, +1.** Lack of social contact has allowed your personal traits to grow unchecked.

**Cursed, -1 to -4.** Delving into your own magic has caused some damage, which could be the equivalent of a curse.

**Disfigured, -1.** Arcane marks on your face give you a bizarre appearance.

**Obsessed, -1.** You may be obsessed with something related tangentially or symbolically to your quest for knowledge, or you may simply be a bit off balance.

## Abilities

Criamon magi favor activities relating to the mind or to magical mysteries. Thus they often have high scores in abilities such as Faerie Lore, Occult Lore, Humanities, etc. You may wish to take a very high score in one ability that means something special to your character. For instance, if you are fascinated by the power that one person can wield over another, you may have a brilliant Intimidation score while other social abilities are weak.

Criamon magi have one ability special to them, an arcane knowledge called Enigmatic Wisdom. Other magi may learn this ability if they care to and they can find someone to teach it to them. Each Criamon magus must have a score of at least 1 in Enigmatic Wisdom, representing the knowledge necessary to solve at least one riddle and pass the Apprentice's Gauntlet.

**Enigmatic Wisdom**—Understanding the world in all its manifestations as a Criamon magus does. Whenever you roll for Wizard's Twilight (see p. 24), add your Enigmatic Wisdom to the roll. If you do go into Twilight, you may add your score to the roll for control over the experience and may subtract it from the roll to see how many Twilight Points you gain (though you will always gain at least 1). Thanks to this ability, Criamon magi go into Twilight more often but survive it better than other magi. This ability can also be used to impress other

Criamon magi, to interpret phantasms caused by the Waking Dream (see below), and to understand arcane and mysterious situations (such as a faerie festival). Your enigmatic understanding might seem strange or even ludicrous to the uninitiated. Specialties: faeries, interpreting dreams, explaining the Enigma, writing verse, interpreting *The Travels of Fedoso*. (Per, Int)

## Magic

Followers of Criamon prefer spells of Imágonem, Intéllego, and Mentem. Anything that allows them to

learn more, speak with spirits, divine the past, and control their own minds is seen as valuable.

Because of their intense association with magic, Criamon magi are much more likely than other magi to suffer Wizard's Twilight. Through their knowledge, however, they are sometimes able to turn this threatening experience into a chance to grow. See Enigmatic Wisdom, above.

**Sign of Unfolding Wisdom:** Muto Córpoem 10

Touch, Spec.

The caster's finger becomes capable of drawing an indelible mark on another's (or their own) body. The spell permits the drawing of one symbol, which might be very large or very complex, and can be of many different, vivid colors. Criamon masters

and parentis use it on their apprentices and filii to symbolize achievement of wisdom.

**Waking Dream:** Intéllego Mentem 15

Reach, Sun., Ritual, Creo, Imágonem

This spell looks into the target's mind and creates phantasms to represent the thoughts, fears, desires, and so forth found within. One after another, phantasms form, taking their shape from the mind of the spell's target. A rational target will produce realistic images, while a more dreamy target will produce fantastic, symbolic, and abstract images. Visionaries may well produce prophetic images. The more concerns one has, the more phantasms appear.



### Riddles & Markings

Each Criamon magus is given a riddle or saying from their parens to contemplate and study. The parens will give their filii a new saying when they understand the first one. Most of these sayings are invented by the parens for the individual student, but some are classics given to many students. A magus typically spends one to seven years on a given riddle, but Criamon magi who are outside of their Clutch may take longer. Those magi whose parentis have died may get riddles to study from the Primus. Some examples of these sayings are:

Break the mirror and see your reflection within!  
Pity you, not them — forgive all.  
Turn your art inside out to use it well.  
Trust all else before you trust yourself.  
Seek the double stream of salt-water.

As a Criamon magus, you have been given a riddle (which either you or some other player must invent). Part of your goal is to understand this and to truly take its meaning to heart, though you will not be able to explain with words what the riddle means, especially not to someone else who understands it. Solving a riddle requires a combination of thought, feelings, and real-life experience. Criamon magi often look to the world around them for clues about their inner life and their riddles. (Storyguides should

include events in their stories that might relate to the riddles of Criamon player-characters.) When you think you understand your riddle, you may approach your master with the answer, and if you succeed, you will be given another riddle. Solving the riddle should be roleplayed out in the way with which you are most comfortable.

These puzzle-sayings are integral to Criamon apprenticeship and a standard saying is used to teach each art. When an apprentice solves a saying, the master puts a mark on their body as a symbol for having passed one stage in mental and magical development, so every Criamon magus has at least sixteen marks, one for each art learned plus another for the riddle solved in becoming a magus. A parens continues to mark their filii for puzzles solved as a magus.

For every puzzle-saying solved, a character gains 1 experience point in Enigmatic Wisdom (see below). (The fifteen introductory sayings that an apprentice learns magic from do not count because they teach magic, not wisdom. The puzzle solved to become a magus is already part of your Enigmatic Wisdom score.)

A master also puts marks on the apprentice's face during the ritual that transforms the apprentice into a magus. These marks are usually personal symbols relating to the apprentice's specialties in magic or philosophy.

Seeing your thoughts as phantasms, you have the chance to confront and possibly overcome them. You must interact with the phantasm in a way appropriate to it; if successful, you will overcome it, understand it, accept it, or whatever is appropriate. In game terms you must make a personality trait roll against the phantasm, and the phantasm rolls with a bonus equal to another personality trait or some number set according to the gravity of the phantasm. Once a roll is made, either successfully or unsuccessfully, the phantasm disappears and the character can face another. A successful confrontation changes the mind of the dreamer accordingly, such as freeing him from a fear or obsession. An unsuccessful confrontation may well worsen the situation. (Some personal traits are nearly impossible to overcome, including most that are serious enough to be regarded as flaws.) This experience must be thoroughly role-played, not merely roll-played.

Anyone experienced with this spell (or with interpreting dreams) might be able to interpret the phantasms, while the target might be at a loss to understand what the symbolic images stand for. Within House Criamon, this ritual is used in trials to determine the inner nature of the magus in question.

There is no Muto requisite for the spell because the dreamer's mind is changed through the normal "magic" of the mind, not through Hermetic magic.

**Exempli Gratia**—Visorn undergoes the Waking Dream in an effort to confront the fear he has of a Faerie Lord. The image of the Faerie Lord appears looming over Visorn and a host of smaller concerns gather around him. Visorn gathers his resolve and yells at the faerie phantasm, trying to demonstrate his bravery. The player rolls Visorn's +2 Brave + 3 Cnf against a roll of a die +9 (set high because the Faerie Lord had given Visorn a supernatural fright when last they met). Visorn fails the roll, and the phantasm vanishes, but Visorn's master says that, by viewing the Waking Dream, he has discerned that Visorn should travel to the faerie hills of Uzby, there to learn more about why the Faerie Lord frightens him so.

**The Enigma's Gift:** Creo Vim 30  
Touch, Inst.

Causes the target to undergo a Wizard's Twilight. To cast it, you must simultaneously make a stress roll on Enigmatic Wisdom of 6+ or suffer Twilight yourself, instead of the target. The spell is sometimes used as a punishment and if the victim survives they are deemed worthy and no longer guilty of past transgressions.

Criamon magi interpret their use of a Creo Vim spell, which are very rare, to be evidence that they know more about magic than other Houses do.

### Example Magus of Criamon

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**Helintia**, Filia of Hurimbel, Follower of Criamon

**Status in the Order:** Helintia is almost unknown in the Order because she has spent most of her life studying with her Clutch and traveling in Muslim lands. Now she is traveling across Europe for reasons unfathomable and other magi are beginning to notice her bold confidence.

**Description:** She is a thin woman with wrinkled face and hands. The bottom half of her face is marked with arcane symbols, but the upper half is untouched. (Traveling in the Orient, she wore a veil, so she could have marks on the lower half of her face without their being noticed.) She looks about fifty, but is actually sixty-seven.

**Personality:** She tends to be taciturn and morose, not much fun to be around. Though she rarely holds anything against anyone, she can be thoughtlessly rude. All in all, the mundane, physical world is a boring and dreary place for her; she is searching for something else.

**Favored Magic:** She favors Intéllego spells that further her knowledge of the great mysteries, as well as summoning spells that let her speak with those from the afterlife.

**Background:** Life as a magus has put her in touch with knowledge that weighs heavily on her heart, yet mysteries still remain. One central mystery obsesses her, the nature of human will, and she believes that all other mysteries are closely related to this one. She sees other magi as frivolous, blind beggars who waste their knowledge for the pursuit of power and passion rather than to delve into the sublime mysteries. Most magi fail to understand the ecstasy of tearing free that final clue from a ghost, the clue that solves an otherwise inexplicable mystery. Pity on them. Most of the time, she keeps her discoveries to herself because others generally do not care to hear, but she is also given to long speeches on the knowledge she has uncovered as well as the errors of her colleagues' ways.

**Quote:** "Go ahead. If your anger requires it, you may strike me. You cannot, in truth, do me serious harm — for this is but one life."

**Note:** The riddle she is currently trying to solve is "Stop yourself from doing and all will be done." She has been trying hard to solve this riddle for sixteen years now and she has become more withdrawn as a result of this apparent failure. Any attempts made to help her figure out this riddle will be met with scorn; the uninitiated cannot even begin to see the depth of this riddle.

### Story Ideas

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- Characters, especially those of house Criamon, discover the way Criamon died.
- A Criamon character undergoes a quest to discover the meaning of their puzzle-saying.
- A Criamon magus pays the characters to consult a strange oracle or weird, giving them directions and perhaps the key necessary to gain access to the oracle's wisdom. In addition to asking the obscure questions suggested by the Criamon magus, the characters may ask a few of their own.
- A character troubled by a personal worry visits a Criamon Clutch to undergo the Waking Dream.
- A Criamon character is visited by a superior in the House who questions him intently on his other studies and activities to see if he is pursuing wisdom as a good follower of Criamon should.
- Iamitu'krielle comes to the covenant and gives a warning of impending doom, then disappears. The characters must decipher the symbolism she used to understand her warning and save themselves. They must refer to *The Travels of Fedoso* and journey to a magical place to get the answers.

## House Díedne

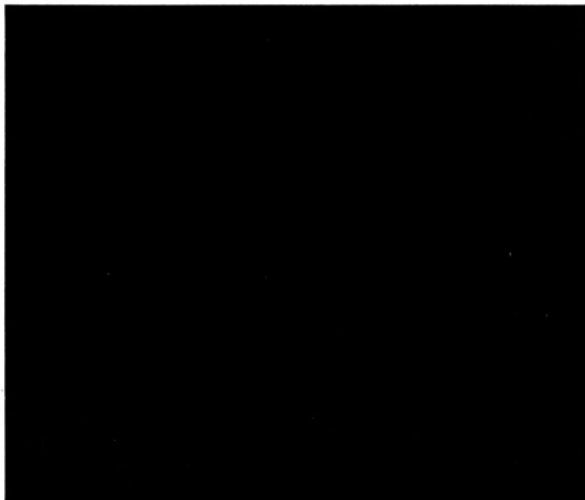
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*"We shall last as long as the wind blows hot on the backs of your necks, as long as the storms pound your tower walls, as long as the waves smash the sides of your ships, as long as the merciless sun looks down upon your abominations, sees your sins, and calls out for vengeance. We will return to haunt you."*

—The Primus Llewellyn, words carved into a stone at the last site he and his band were seen

**Motto:** Blessed be the Earth and All Who Serve Her

**Symbol:** The symbol of House Díedne has been inked out and banned from the History of the Order by the Quaesitoris.



House Díedne was destroyed during the Schism War, its last living members seen in the year A.D. 1012. They were descendents of the Celtic druids and had been a large, powerful, and highly secretive House based mainly in France and Spain, but with members and covenants everywhere. When the Schism War broke out and old hatreds were remembered, House Tremere turned against House Díedne. With the support of House Flambeau and the sanction of the Quaesitoris, House Tremere defeated House Díedne and slew all its members that they could find. The most powerful followers of Díedne, however, escaped and were never seen again. Legend says that they found their way to Faerieland, where they may be hiding still. Since one day in Faerieland is often a century in the mortal world, these enemies of the Order may come back any day, with battle and vengeance fresh in their minds. Another legend says that they managed to sail away upon a magical ship and sail the seas still — their ship manned with a crew of skeletons.

## History

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In looking for new ways to perform magic, Bonisagus talked with Díedne, a druid. From her he learned new ways for individual magi to cast small, fast spells. When the Order began, Díedne joined with all her sect, forming a large House, but they never participated fully in the Order.

They began as the only true House in the Order because the Latin magi were all individuals starting their own small Houses, but over the centuries the other Houses grew quickly. In the beginning of the eleventh century, problems plagued the Order. The execution of the Tylalus Primus for diabolism caused fear among the Houses and old rivalries resurfaced. Always distant and secretive, House Díedne became the center of rumors and suspicion. When the Quaesitoris investigated all the Houses for diabolism, House Díedne objected and resisted, claiming a right to privacy.

Wizard's Wars and Wizards' Marches became common in this period, and not only against followers of Díedne. Chaos grew, violence increased, and finally outright war broke out. House Tremere, no longer willing to share the Order with those who flaunted it, organized an attack on House Díedne. The Quaesitoris, seeing the inevitable, backed the side they thought would win and declared all of House Díedne Renounced. In a long, bloody struggle, House Díedne was destroyed.

The leaders of the House, however, were never found. Perhaps they were killed in the confusion by the powerful, far-reaching spells of Houses Flambeau and Tremere, but perhaps they escaped to return another day. At first the remaining Hermetic magi were vigilant for the return of Llewellyn and other Díedne magi, but over the years the magi have turned their attention to more immediate concerns. Some magi of House Tremere are still vigilant and are prepared to begin the war anew when and if the remainder of House Díedne are ever found.

## Magi of House Díedne

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The specifics of the followers of Díedne are unknown. Having descended from druids, they specialized in nature-oriented magic. In addition, they excelled at spontaneous magic. Their ability to work formulaic spells, however, was highly limited. If they ever resurface, the magi of Díedne will probably attack the Order with elemental magic and hoards of magically-controlled animals. The fact that the Hermetic magi do not know exactly what these magi are actually capable of (especially after all these years) makes them even more frightening. The escaped members of House Díedne are the bogeymen in the nightmares of the Order's apprentices — and some of the magi as well. (See the *Ars Magica* supplement, *The Tempest*.)

## House Ex Miscellanea

*"We are wizards. If we must be known as Hermetic magi to practice in peace, so be it. In truth we shall remain as we always were, it is they who will change because of us."*

—Melmeris, Second Primus of House Ex Miscellanea

**Motto:** A Whole is Composed of Many Parts.

**Symbol:** A crooked staff



This large and diverse House is strongest in the British isles, where they began. Highly disorganized and composed of the most independent minded magi, they are a House in name only. Most of the Ex Miscellanea magi mix Hermetic magic with their own non-Hermetic traditions. Non-Hermetic wizards who join the Order usually join Ex Miscellanea, which welcomes all who wish to come. Once members of the Order, these magi are protected by the Code of Hermes, have access to Hermetic magic, and, in Ex Miscellanea, are free to follow their own non-Hermetic traditions.

### History

Ex Miscellanea owes its existence to an enemy of the Order, the dread wizard Dav'nalleous. He fought against the Order because it would restrict him and his bloody ways, but, outnumbered, he eventually had to flee to Scotland, where the Order had no members. Unwilling to leave such a threat to brood and grow, the Order dispatched Pralix, a senior filia of Tylalus, to deal with the menace. The wizards provided her with ample supplies of raw *vis* and Verditius gave her the fabled Robes of Dusty Dawn to help her in the battle. (The current Primus of Ex Miscellanea still wears these red silk robes, a symbol of her connection to Pralix.)

When Pralix arrived in Scotland, she found that the native wizards, much simpler and less powerful than their equivalents in the Order, were falling prey to Dav'nalleous' mighty spells. Unwilling to face Dav'nalleous alone, she banded the local wizards together so they could fight him with a united front. It was hard work bringing together individualistic wizards, but she offered to teach them the *parma magica*, which was often inducement enough to get them to join her cause.

From the summer of 814 A.D. to the spring of 816, these wizards hunted Dav'nalleous down and finally destroyed him in the forest of Cad Gadu. Pralix now found herself the leader of many wizards throughout the British Isles, many of whom were less than partial to the rigid Order of Hermes. Instead of returning to her House and Order, she declared herself independent and christened her group the Order of Miscellany. Some say that, true to her training under Tylalus, she hoped to create an Order that would be a perpetual rival of the Order of Hermes.

With a victory turned to defeat, the remaining members of the Order considered their options. Flambeau's House was ready to give battle in grand style, but Tylalus' Primus, Hariste, had been a fellow apprentice with Pralix, and she argued against such a move. In the end, Trianoma, the force behind the original formation of the Order, travelled to Wales to negotiate with Pralix. They agreed that the organization of British wizards was a good thing, but that so was an Order that encompassed as many magi as possible. Finally, Pralix won the admittance of Miscellany as a House with equal rights in the Order of Hermes, even though most of its wizards were of a power and philosophy not matching the standards set by the Latin-descended magi who founded the Order. She called her organization the House Ex Miscellanea.

Ex Miscellanea has remained a House mostly for magi of diverse and unorthodox backgrounds, a loose gathering of hedge-wizards, druids, witches, seers, and so forth. They have adapted their magic to Hermetic ways to gain access to the spells of the Hermetic magi, but by and large they have retained a more spiritual outlook through the centuries.

Many of the members simply joined the Order or remain in it to have access to Hermetic magic and to keep themselves from being attacked by Hermetic magi. Their hearts remain in their respective traditions or beliefs, rather than being in the Order as a whole. Even within the House, many magi feel little connection other than to their masters and apprentices.

During the Schism War, this House tried its best to keep out of conflicts to avoid the violence aimed at non-Latin wizards.

They remain strongest in the British Isles, where Latin ways have never taken a strong hold, but they are found throughout Europe as well. They are especially common on the outskirts of Europe, such as the



## The Order of Hermes

Novgorod Tribunal, where they can contact wizards of other, non-Hermetic traditions and offer them membership in the House.

Other magi in the Order look down on the members of Ex Miscellanea, whose magic is generally weaker than that of more orthodox Hermetic magi. Power aside, the Ex Miscellanea magi get a bad reputation from their uncivilized ways. Some of them cannot even read and write Latin. If diversity is a strength, however, Ex Miscellanea is strong indeed.

It is suspected by House Tremere than some of House Díedne may have escaped their grasp by being adopted furtively into House Ex Miscellanea. It cannot be denied that there are members of this house with a very strong nature bias and with many similarities to the Díedne magi, but to date these suspicions have never been proven.

### Notable Magi of Ex Miscellanea

**Pralix**—The only Founder of a House who was not also an original Founder of the Order. This serves to make the status of this House even less, not that any of its members really care.

**Fireto**—He was the Primus who tried to organize the House and get the members to accept more Hermetic magic and traditions. This campaign came to an abrupt end when he was slain while on a quest for the Spinning Pearls, and it is now generally recognized that his death was actually an assassination by a member of his own House.

### Current Status

**Membership:** 115 (approximately)

**Domus Magnus:** Cad Gadu, in the Stonehenge Tribunal. Since it is unimportant even to members of the House, it has little influence. It is located on a small island in the middle of a marsh in the north east of England, and has been having many problems with an order of Monks who wish to drain the marsh in order to create new farming land for themselves.

**Primus:** Immanola, a crippled woman who is renowned for her patience. She is attempting to gain support from others in her House to save the Domus.

**Current Concerns:** Immanola has read the signs and prophecies that the Order will fall or be severely shaken. She is prepared to call all the members of Ex Miscellanea to the British Isles to separate from the Order and form an independent group again. She will not take this drastic action unless the Order is in serious danger and capable of pulling House Ex Miscellanea down with it. She has almost been convinced by others in her House to move to Hibernia (Ireland), drive the Normans from its shore and set up a haven for magi where they will never be bothered by the Dominion.

### Current Practices

This House is spread out mostly on the outskirts of the Order where they need bother with neither mundane society nor Hermetic politics. Even within the House, members often have little to do with each other. The only true loyalties these magi have, if any, are to discrete traditions of magic within the House. For instance, House Ex Miscellanea has a line of witches within it and these witches are loyal to each other while being largely indifferent to the House and their Order.

Despite the unorthodox ways of Ex Miscellanea, few magi of other Houses fear it as a possible source of dissension. The House itself is too loosely organized to present a united effort in any task and many regard its individual

members as capable only of weak magic.

Masters set whatever Apprentice's Gauntlets they wish. Entrance is granted to any who swear allegiance to the House and are not obviously dangerous.

### Magi Ex Miscellanea

Within the House there are several discrete traditions of magic, as well as many small clusters of like-minded magi and dozens of completely individualistic wizards who share little in common with other magi. To describe the "average magus Ex Miscellanea," therefore, would be impossible. Instead, a few notes are provided for Ex Miscellanea magi in general and then there are more details for three of the major lines of magic within the House.

#### The Name "Ex Miscellanea"

The name of this House represents Pralix's sense of humor; it means "out of hash." Since "Ex" is a preposition, one rarely uses another preposition in front of it. For instance, a member is called a "magus Ex Miscellanea" ("a wizard out of hash"), not "a magus of Ex Miscellanea" ("a wizard of out of hash"). Many of the House's members do not speak Latin well enough to know exactly what their name means. Perhaps that was Pralix's joke on them and on herself.

Members of the House never call themselves "followers." For one thing, the name of their House is not the name of their Founder, so the could not use the phrase "follower of Ex Miscellanea." More importantly, these magi do not consider themselves to be related to their Founder, Pralix. They follow their own masters and their own, unique lineages of magic. The fact that they are members of a House founded by Pralix is a matter of convenience.

## Members Ex Miscellanea in General

### Mentality of an Ex Miscellanea Magus

You regard your personal traditions and interests as paramount. The affairs of other magi are not of your concern. At best, they will leave you alone, since at least nominally you are a member of the Order.

### Priorities of an Ex Miscellanea Magus

- 1) Following your own tradition or interests.
- 2) Preserving the rights of the House.

### Outlook

- **Quaesitor**—Meddlesome, pompous fools.
- **Other Hermetic Magi**—If they leave you alone, you're happy.

### Intra-House Relations

House Ex Miscellanea provides you a place in the Order and thereby gives you the protection of the Code. In turn, your Primus may occasionally ask something of you, but not much. Other than the magi in your line of magic, you need not deal with your sodalis.

### Virtues & Flaws

As per individual or tradition; nothing typical.

### Abilities

Many of these magi have low scores in Magic Theory, Speak Latin, Scribe Latin, Hermes History, and Hermes Lore. Many of them, however, have vast knowledge of non-Hermetic lores.

### Magic

As per individual or tradition; no typical spells.

## Spirit Masters

These magi are adept at controlling magical creatures, such as ghosts, elementals, faeries, demons, and others. They have gathered strange secrets from ghosts and spirits over the years and have become mysterious and weird. They are obsessed with power and often try to dominate beings that are beyond them. Other magi generally suspect them of diabolism, and not without some cause.

### Mentality of a Spirit Master

Your master learned dark secrets from long conversations with the dead and with magical beings, and they shared this secret knowledge with you. Your goal is to gain power over other creatures and gain more knowledge from them.

### Virtue (Necessary)

**Aptitude with Magical Minions, +2.** This aptitude affects all spells that directly involve elementals, magical beasts, ghosts, faeries, demons, and other magical creatures.

## Abilities

Fantastic Beast Lore, Faerie Lore, Legend Lore, and Occult Lore are important abilities. You might also speak an ancient tongue that allows you to converse with those who have been dead for centuries.

### Magic

These magi specialize in spells to summon, control, and ward off ghosts, faeries, and elementals.

## Witches

The Founders of the Order of Hermes pared magic down to its barest, most functional elements. The witches of House Ex Miscellanea, however, remember the passion and tradition of magic and bring emotion to a cold and calculated science. These magi are almost all women, though their leader opened the group to male apprentices in A.D. 1156.

Often their familiars are cats. Their magic is based around dance and music — they use drums, chimes and bells to accompany their singing. They are much more receptive and intuitive than most magi. Unlike most magi, they have lovers and consider sexuality to be central to their magic. Candles, bright colors, dried herbs and flowers, and circles are symbols of tradition and power with them.

### Mentality of a Witch

Magic is the power of life, and you honor life and revel in it through your magic.

### Necessary Virtues & Flaws

**Special Circumstances, +1.** +3 with magic when the moon is full (three nights per month, nights only).

**Bonus with Potions, +1.** Bonus of +5 on all rolls to make potions.

**Slow Spontaneous Magic, -2.** To cast a spontaneous spell, a witch must spend one minute for every potential Level of the spell. The roll is made normally, but the Level of the spontaneous spell is limited to the number of minutes spent in preparation. Preparation includes such activities as burning herbs, chanting, repetitive and rhythmic motions, sprinkling special dusts, and so on. A witch without this paraphernalia cannot cast spontaneous spells.

**Deleterious Circumstances, -1.** Penalty of -5 when the moon is new. For these purposes, consider the moon to be new for three days and three nights per month.

### Common Virtue

**Affinity with Healing, +2.**

### Abilities

**Sing, Play Drums** (or another instrument), and **Chirurgy** are important abilities.

**Beast Mages**

These wizards center their magic around animals.

**Mentality of a Beast Mage**

Animals are strong and powerful. By working with, commanding, and even becoming like them, you can share in their power and beauty.

**Virtues (Necessary)**

**Affinity with Animal, +3.**

**Bonus with Familiars, +1.** You get +30 points when determining the strength of the three cords for your familiar.

**Example Magus Ex Miscellanea**

Dernia the Witch, Filia of Madelle, Member of House Ex Miscellanea

**Status in the Order:** She is known only among the witches of Ex Miscellanea.

**Description:** Anyone who sees her sleeping would see an old, wrinkled woman with graying hair and slightly arthritic joints. Those who see her moving about and talking see a vibrant, middle-aged woman who has maintained her beauty well. Those who have the pleasure of watching her performing her rituals see a young woman, full of energy, within a mature body. She is short, thin, and clear-eyed and wears a long, white dress that conforms closely to the shape of her body.

Her constant companion is Allia, her cat familiar. Allia is old and thin, but spry like her mistress.

**Personality:** Dernia can be closed and distant around other magi because she does not respect their impersonal, intellectual approach to magic. When she is with more lively people, however, she shows wit and enthusiasm. She often prefers the company of intelligent mundanes, even grogs, to wizards. She is also more comfortable around women than men.

**Favored Magic:** Dernia mostly uses *Córporem* and *Mentem* magic, but she also enjoys interesting illusions.

**Background:** Dernia was born in England and became an apprentice to a witch there when she was just three years old, so she knows no other life. She regards the witch's life as normal and she did not even learn about the Order of Hermes until she was in her twenties.

She is well-known among her fellow witches and is seen as the most likely one to take leadership of the group when the current leader dies. In the meantime, she is travelling on the mainland to expand her knowledge. She tells other magi that she is looking for herbs and plants that do not grow in England, but some say that she is also here to meet secretly with non-Hermetic witches. She will readily arrange for the adoption of any spell

caster who wishes to join her House, for she hates the stipulations of the Code that leave those not protected by it at the mercy of the "Romans."

**Quote:** "Keep dancing and you will begin to understand." (Told to those who question her about deep topics.)

**Story Ideas**

- The characters meet a wise and powerful non-Hermetic magus. He is afraid of them because even if they cannot defeat him personally, they might reveal him to Hermetic magi who would hunt him down and kill him. He has knowledge that can benefit them (perhaps in some specific crisis), but will not share it because he thinks they will use it against him. The characters must arrange for him to join House Ex Miscellanea so that he can feel safe. This

feat requires a careful treatment because he is afraid he is walking into a trap. How can the characters convince him to go to the Primus and apply for membership?

- A group of shape-shifting enemies of House Bjornaer have joined House Ex Miscellanea to gain Hermetic protection. They intend to assassinate certain Bjornaer magi and then flee. The characters discover this plot but cannot attack the shape-shifters until they have revealed this plot and convinced a council to call a Wizards' March.

## House Flambeau

*"When Prometheus gave gifts to humans, what was his greatest gift?"*

**"FIRE!"**

*"What tool did Flambeau teach us to use?"*

**"FIRE!"**

*"When the physician sees an open wound filled with pus, what does he use to cleanse the wound and save the patient's life?"*

**"FIRE!"**

*"Who is the pus that poisons the Order of Hermes?"*

**"LLEWELLYN THE ACCURSED!"**

*"What is the only solution to the lies and deceit that Llewellyn has brought to our Order?"*

**"FIRE!, FIRE!, FIRE!"**

—The Primus Entisimon rallying the followers of Flambeau for a Wizards' March against House Diedne during the Schism War

**Motto:** Unto Death We Charge

**Symbol:** An hourglass. Enough time can destroy anything. Followers of Flambeau admire that. Most Flambeau magi wear this insignia somewhere on the body.



The followers of Flambeau revel in the violent use of fire and some of them also enjoy the more "subtle" use of destruction magic. Over the years, the Quaesitoris have taught this House to turn its destructiveness toward the Order's enemies, but they still get carried away from time to time and attack personal enemies in society and within the Order. The magi of other Houses frequently hold them in disdain, seeing them as immature and violent. For their part, Flambeau magi do little to better their reputation — they like being immature and violent.

## History

The wizard Flambeau was born to a family of proud nobles in Iberia. At that time, the Muslims were sweeping north from Africa conquering Christian lands. Flambeau's family lost battle after battle, eventually being driven from the home they had held since the early days of Rome. Flambeau's master took him from this violent area to a cave in the Pyrenees to the north and taught him magic. Both of them then fought with the Christian nobility against the Moors, but to no avail. Flambeau's master had been an expert in the art of destruction. For a time, Flambeau followed suit, but soon found other methods of fighting more to his taste. He began to study fire magic and soon mastered it. His fighting was flexible and brilliant: he could alternately provide an excellent distraction with a brilliant column of flame or remove his opponents and their steeds without a sound. He is known for being the most brilliant wizard of war the Order has ever known.

When Flambeau's master was slain by Moorish wizards, however, Flambeau gave up and fled north across the Pyrenees, which the Moors never permanently crossed. The battles continued and only in the past few centuries have the Christians begun to push the Moors back (often with the aid of Flambeau magi who still remember their past).

Once away from the battles with the Moors, Flambeau turned his magical prowess and taste for combat against other wizards. His deadly attacks on other magi were one factor that made forming an Order attractive to them; before the actually swearing of the Code it is said that he had killed over fifty magi and had done so simply for the challenge. When Trianoma first talked to him about helping to form the Order of Hermes, he was sceptical. He did not want to have his freedom limited by a restrictive Code. As it seemed more and more likely that the Order would indeed be formed, possibly without him, his attitude changed. In addition, he thought he could form the Order into a united military organization so that he would not have to face the defeat that his master suffered. He joined the Order and his demands saw to it that the Wizard's War would be accepted within the Order.

Meanwhile, Flambeau's first apprentice, Apromor, had matured to become a full Arch-Mage. He saw the good in his master's teaching, but much preferred the subtlety that the art of destruction offered. Since then, the magi of Flambeau have generally followed one of these two paths: fire or destruction, different means to a common end. Two distinct personalities have emerged as well, with the fire wizards tending to be volatile and courageous, while the destruction wizards tend to be more persevering and vengeful. Fire is still the preferred art of the majority of Flambeau's followers and it is this inclination for which the House is best known.

## Current Status

**Membership:** 76

**Domus Magnus:** None. The Primus currently lives at Val-Negra in the Pyrenees, so this covenant is considered the Domus Magnus. However it is very hard to reach this covenant, for it is lost in time (see the *Covenants* supplement for more details). When Vancasitum passes on (and that should be soon), the covenant of the next Primus will be regarded as the House's Domus Magnus. Members of the House are too often on the move to worry about having one central covenant and Flambeau certainly never settled down in one place. Indeed, he is noted for having traveled for most of his life and many of his followers emulate this practice.

**Primus:** Vancasitum, an old, worn magus too near to Twilight to do much of anything.

**Current Concerns:** Vancasitum provides no leadership for the House. The only thing approaching a common interest is to aid in the Reconquest of Iberia and to get back at the Moors who slew Flambeau's master.

## Current Practices

Imagine a bunch of assassins sitting around debating the relative benefits of the battle axe versus the poisoned dagger and you have House Flambeau. They are very informal, but their gatherings always include "shop talk." The competition in this House is incredible, mostly to see who can invent the mightiest spell, the one that does the most damage, has the greatest range of effect, or whatever. The magus who invented the spell *Treading the Ashen Path* won a prize from his Primus, but was driven mad when the faeries on whose forest he demonstrated it caught him a few months later. In addition to a competition for spells, they also have informal contests to see who can get the best familiar. The current champion is the late magus Pitsdim, who managed to get a fire drake, much to the envy of his colleagues.

They are not known for studying as much as other magi, but they seem to have as broad a mastery of their arts as anyone else, probably due to the amount of field

practice they get. They are also known for augmenting their spells with generous amounts of raw *vis*, a favorite, albeit dangerous, pastime of some of the more unbalanced magi of this House. Followers of Flambeau are not known for their longevity.

The magi of House Flambeau are very ambitious and often contain an effervescent, youthful energy. Even the eldest magi are jovial and spritely, and enjoy a good brawl and then an orgy of drink as much as their younger kin. Lastly, it needs to be said that, despite appearances, these magi are not stupid. They are intelligent and clever magi; they just have vastly different values and goals from those of most wizards. All too frequently, they are underrated, but it should be noted that this is a very dangerous practice.

House Flambeau is politically powerful, perhaps due simply to their loud and dominant voices. Under a good leader, they can present a united front (being well acquainted with the tactics of warfare) and some have even proven capable orators (to the surprise of many). They are, however, looked down upon by most of the other magi of the Order because of their excitability and relative lack of sophistication.

They try to keep up passable relations with the other Houses, but they are not always successful. One of the tenets of the Order is that no one does anything that could cause the Order serious trouble. Followers of Flambeau, on the other hand, usually feel that, as magi, they can do whatever

they "darn" well please, thank you very much. You might call it an ideological difference that separates them from the rest of the Order.

The followers of Flambeau are the enforcers of the Order, but not by official appointment. They simply enjoy the challenge that it brings them and the chance it provides to demonstrate their full powers. When a *Wizards' March* is called, they are usually the first to volunteer, and, more often than not, the ones who actually slay the renegade magus. This House looks for fights, and when they cannot find one in the Order, they will look to the common world. They have often fought magi of another, more mysterious Order to the north,



called the Order of Odin by Hermetic scholars. Some of them also take part in mundane battles that they happen across, participating more for sport than to back either side over the other. As mentioned before, they are travelers, and will actively seek out trouble — and they are very good at finding it. Some have ventured on the Crusades, and a small group is actively fighting the Moors in Iberia.

The Apprentice's Gauntlet usually includes being left alone, with no equipment or provisions, in a desolate area, and being given instructions to some other area where a Flambeau council is being held. Typically, the apprentice has no idea where they are or to where they must go, except for its name (as it is known to the magi). Once they arrive, they are inducted immediately, for they have passed the Gauntlet — if they do not arrive before the council is over, they have failed (and must find their own way back to their master; some never do). Most apprentices have to pass through the Dominion, though they sometimes have to maneuver through faerie forests or other supernatural obstacles as well. Flambeau apprentices generally have the strength to make it through the Gauntlet, but the area through which they travel is not always so lucky. It has become a tradition for these apprentices to use this as their first opportunity to use their full powers of destruction, performing deeds they will not be allowed to do once they are formal members of the Order. The more destruction they cause, the greater bragging rights they have once they reach the council and the greater their reputation in the House. This has begun to get a bit out of control, but House Quaesitor is reluctant to suggest upon a ruling at the Grand Tribunal for fear of losing a most valuable ally. However, it is said that the Archbishop of Canterbury was outraged when part of the city was razed, and has asked the Pope to declare a crusade against the Order. If this is true, the Quaesitoris will be finally forced to act, but this could create difficulties, for House Flambeau is very attached to its traditions.

A magus of another House can join House Flambeau only by defeating seven Flambeau champions. Certámen is accepted as a legitimate contest, at least against some of the champions. The last magus to gain entry was an air magus who beat his opponents with bolts of lightning.

## Magi of House Flambeau

### Mentality of a Flambeau Magus

You have been given great power in the art of fire or destruction, or both. If you do not use this power for your own advantage, you are a fool or a weakling. There are many in the world who are afraid of power, yours or their own. They will try to keep you from using the power that is your right.

## Outlook

- **Bonisagus**—As long as they keep figuring out better spells, they're all right.
- **Bjornaer**—Stupid little beasts can't use fire.
- **Criamon**—Are they for real?
- **Ex Miscellanea**—Do we really need them in the Order? They're not real magi.
- **Jerbiton**—Why do they waste so much time with mortals? Are they intimidated by powerful magi?
- **Mercere**—They don't hassle us, and we like that.
- **Merinita**—The only good faerie is a charcoaled faerie.
- **Quaesitor**—They're always on our backs. Can we help it if we're capable of torching just about everyone else, wizard and mortal alike?
- **Tremere**—Why settle things with certámen? Is it because they are too weak or scared to have a real duel?
- **Tyталus**—Hurray for those who enjoy a good fight!
- **Verditius**—They sell us magical devices so we don't have to waste our time learning less important arts and spells.
- **Demons**—They're afraid of us, and rightly so.
- **Faeries**—See "Merinita" above.
- **Nobles**—They think they're tough? They're just lucky they usually stay out of our way.

## Intra-House Relations

You can rely on others in your House. They're the only ones who really understand you and your use of power. You'll compete with them to invent the best spells, get the best familiar, and do the most damage to your enemies; but it's all friendly competition. You can still depend on them to help you out when you need battle-allies. You, in turn, are expected to help them out when they call on you. There isn't much of a hierarchy within the House, but you know better than to bother those who are more powerful than you. Sure, you can resist their Pila of Fire, but how about your laboratory and your books?

Councils of House Flambeau meet at irregular intervals. At each council, everyone decides when and where they'll meet again; as there is no standard it is largely a matter of whim. Likewise, the site changes accordingly. It normally occurs in a very desolate spot, where the magi can blast and destroy to their hearts' content (which takes quite a while) in a contest to see who has concocted the most destructive spells. (Vancasium held the council at Val-Negra once. Once. The evidence of the meeting is still quite apparent.) The most honored wizards are those who are perceived to be the most dangerous and powerful, and are afforded respect accordingly. It is at these councils, rather than Tribunals, that apprentices are inducted.

## The Order of Hermes

### Common Virtues & Flaws

**Affinity with Ignem or Perdo, +3 or +4.**

**Infamous Master, -1.** Your master's rage got them into serious trouble and other magi expect you to do the same.

**Stingy Master, -1.** Your master traveled and adventured too much to teach you consistently.

### Abilities

Mundane abilities are not very important to followers of Flambeau. They travel a lot, so they often gain working knowledge of a few useful languages, but they also speak the universal language of flame to those who don't understand them.

### Magic

Flambeau magi primarily use fire spells and use destruction spells secondarily. Spells that are flashy or impressive are particularly popular.

**The Test of Flames, Creo Ignem 20**

Special, Conc.

Six-foot flames leap up from the ground, completely filling a circle 3 paces in radius with you at the center. The flames dance and crackle, making for an impressive show, but they only do +8 damage per round. (You take this damage, too, if you can't resist the spell.) Each round, each person in the circle (including the caster) must make a magic resistance roll against the spell or take the damage. The caster re-rolls the penetration total for the spell every round (like a roll to cast the spell, but with Penetration as a bonus). One can also avoid damage through use of counter-spells.

Followers of Flambeau use this spell as a test. The caster and whoever else is being tested stay within the circle, without *parmae magicae*, as long as they can. The last one to leave the circle is the winner of the contest. If anyone falls to the ground and is unable to get away from the flames, etiquette suggests that the casting magus stop the spell.

This spell is also known as "Inirelte's Certámen," after the magus who developed it as a substitute for standard certámen.

### Example Magus of Flambeau

**Trentus, Filius of Vermbar, Follower of Flambeau**  
**Status in the Order:** Trentus is mocked by those few who know him, but not to his face.

**Description:** Trentus looks middle-aged, but he is over sixty years old. His black hair is cut very short and has begun to gray. His hands and face bear scars, proving that he has felt the not-so-gentle lick of flame himself.

**Personality:** Trentus tends to be impulsive, is given to fits of rage, and has never been known for his reliability — he is often overcome by the intensity of his emotions. He acts first and regrets later.

To Trentus, flame is the ultimate expression of existence. Contained in its beauty, power, destructiveness, energy, and changeability are the answers to all the mysteries in life. He is convinced that all problems can be solved with the correct application of heat and flame — dead enemies don't cause problems. Besides, fire is a lot of fun; creating flames makes him very happy.

**Favored Magic:** He relishes the art of Ignem and prefers *Creo* and *Rego* over all other techniques. He has an affinity with fire spells.

**Background:** Trentus enjoys leaving his covenant and facing danger, where he can be more free with his powers. He suspects that his peers don't mind his absence very much. He has overheard them whisper that his experimenting might be the ruin of them all some day. Hmm, wouldn't that be fun... a fire that could burn a whole covenant to the ground! Someday Trentus might grow out of his obsession with fire and begin to explore the more scholarly aspects of his art. Or maybe he will become so obsessed with destruction and death that only the flames will give him a reason for living. This obsession could easily drive him mad.

Currently Trentus is traveling about Languedoc trying to incite other magi to join him in battling the Moors in Iberia. He journeys there himself, now and again, to skirmish a bit and to keep his spirits up.

**Quote:** *"There isn't anything that would give me more pleasure than burning all the hair off your body — you're lucky I like you."*

### Story Ideas

- Trentus comes to the characters to request their assistance in attacking the Moors in Iberia. He talks of grand battles, freedom to do as one pleases, adventure, the camaraderie of warfare, and the joy of it all. If they join him, he will lead them on grand adventures indeed, burning Moorish cities and challenging their cavalry.

- A Flambeau apprentice is traveling through the area undergoing the Apprentice's Gauntlet and leaving a swath of destruction through the countryside. A large troop of young knights sent by the Baron are looking for him and are quite ready to kill any magus that they might meet. The characters must step in to calm things down. The players' covenant may well be blamed for the destruction, so it is a matter of some urgency.

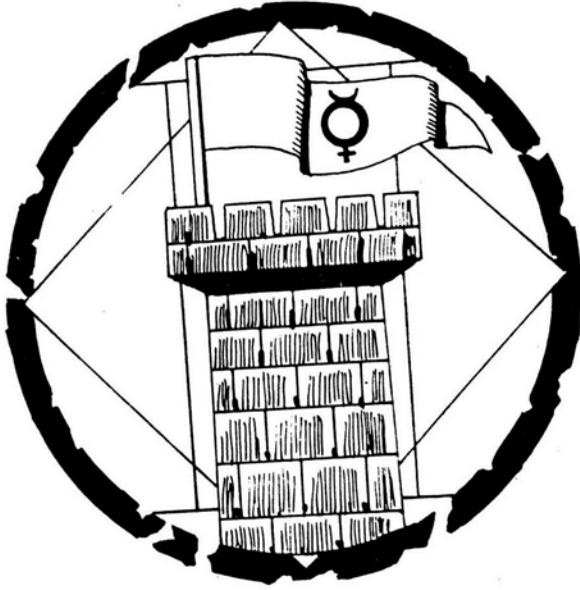
## House Jerbiton

*"Can we trust the power of magic to minds that are shut off from philosophy, music, sculpture, drama, comedy, and the finer pursuits of the human spirit? If we must live with them as equals, we must teach them the finer points of life and we must convince them to learn."*

—Jerbiton, talking to his followers

**Motto:** Art illuminates the essence of Life

**Symbol:** A Tower flying a Pennant



Jerbiton magi are deeply involved in mortal society in a variety of different ways. Some actually visit with notable mortals with whom they are friends, though they often hide their wizardly status when doing so. Others are artists, philosophers, poets, and are deeply engaged with the artistic community as it exists in this day. Magi of other Houses often turn to Jerbiton magi to resolve their disputes with mortals, though many of these same magi regard the members of Jerbiton as only "half-magi" because they have not given up their ties to the world.

### History

Jerbiton was a noble by birth, a member of an old Roman patrician family that had survived into the Dark Ages as a clan of land holding nobles. His family cultivated in him a fine taste for music and other arts, so he felt isolated and distraught when he was taken from home and made an apprentice. Once a full wizard and free to travel on his own, he spent his early years visiting city after city, steeping himself in whatever arts he could find in that dark time. Eventually, he even reunited himself with his family, an act particular to him and the members of his House. When he heard that an Order of wizards was forming, he was excited for he felt that only by cooperating in peace could the magi themselves

develop traditions of art and philosophy based upon their magical arts. It is he who originally convinced Bonisagus to call the different schools of magic the "arts," and it is said that in Bonisagus' last years it is Jerbiton who taught him the beauty of what he had created.

When the Order was formed, Jerbiton was disappointed. He saw that the other magi were not interested in the pursuit of art or in the real conception of their own talents as art. He became disgusted with the other magi and taught his followers that they were more "noble" than the other magi. This feeling of superiority exists to this day, and the House is still known for its superior attitudes. Generally, Jerbiton chose the scions of noble families as his apprentices and this tradition continues to this day.

House Jerbiton has swung back and forth between society and the Order over the centuries. Sometimes they see themselves as wizards who appreciate society, sometimes as mundane citizens who are also wizards. During most of the tenth century, under the Primus Pietre, they isolated themselves from the Order, rarely participating in Tribunals and generally living among the mundanes as much as possible.

During the Schism War, the magi of House Jerbiton concerned themselves mostly with protecting themselves and their storehouse of art and artists from the growing chaos. They were dismayed at the destruction of an entire House, but were pleased when order was restored thereafter.

In the twelfth century, they served regularly as emissaries from magi who wished to negotiate with mundane nobles. During this period, they styled themselves as ambassadors and heralds who had the added advantage of familiarity with the magical arts, and they allied themselves closely with the leaders of the Order. Now some magi have begun to see them drift back towards society once more, removing themselves from the life of the Order once again. As troubles come within the Order and between the Order and society, the followers of Jerbiton are finding it more rewarding to live among the mundanes than to involve themselves continually in the problems of other magi. Many would be willing to forsake the Order altogether if they would not then be Renounced and probably killed by the remaining Hermetic magi.

### Current Status

**Membership:** 82

**Domus Magnus:** Valnastium, in the Rhine Tribunal. Valnastium is a center of vast knowledge regarding the mortal world and its history. Interested magi travel from all across Europe to visit its mundane library.

**Primus:** Andru, a relatively young man, full of energy and a love of poetry and song.

**Current Concerns:** Members of the House are involving themselves deeper and deeper into society, taking advantage of the flowering of culture, especially in



## The Order of Hermes

Languedoc and along the Mediterranean coast. The discovery of ancient Greek texts, preserved in Arabic by the Muslims, has caused great excitement in this House.

### Current Practices

Many Jerbiton magi are artists of some kind. Some use their magic to aid their artistic pursuits, but many say that true art must come from the human heart and that the intervention of magic makes art more flashy but less human and therefore less aesthetically valuable.

Some followers of Jerbiton infiltrate society, posing as beggars, merchants, advisers and such to learn more about political events within society. They regard themselves as secret ambassadors, though others simply see them as spies.

Jerbiton magi often travel in society without their *parmae magicae* so they can relish all about them fully. The *parma magica* hampers all magic, even the "normal" kind of magic to be found in a song or statue. If they used their *parmae*, they would not be able to appreciate the very things for which they are searching.

The Apprentice's Gauntlet is a test of magical competence and mundane knowledge. It can be quite rigorous, so apprentices study hard for it. Entrance into House Jerbiton is granted to magi who can pass the standard Apprentice's Gauntlet and who do not have a history of causing problems in the Order or in society. Many older magi who have wearied of adventure join this House to enjoy the pleasures of society in their old age.

### Magi of House Jerbiton

#### Mentality of a Jerbiton Magus

Your mind and spirit are more important than anything else. You have been taught magic and politics to give your mind power. You have been taught art to give your spirit guidance. Look about you at the other magi in the Order, locked away in their foul-smelling laboratories, letting their minds shrink and harden. No beauty comes into their lives and their spirits starve. Can

you call them human if their most human aspect has been enfeebled? And yet these wizards have great power over others. Is it good that beings such as they should have this power?

You, too, have power, but you have art to illuminate your life and guide your way. There are truths that cannot be put into words. The singer or the dancer can give you more clues to these truths than can any dusty tome.

Other wizards cut themselves off from human life. How can you explain to them the meaningful beauty of a

peasant picking olives, a merchant driving his mule along a dusty road, a knight riding by with his men-at-arms following respectfully, or even a priest in robes striding down the steps of a cathedral? To cut oneself off from other people is to cut oneself off from oneself.

You still see the beauty to be found in the world of people. As long as you can see that beauty, your mind will be free and your heart true. Do not let magic tempt you away from what you know to be beautiful.

#### Priorities

- 1) To appreciate art and beauty
- 2) To create art
- 3) To protect society from the Order
- 4) To preserve the Order

#### Outlook

- **Bonisagus**—The pursuit of magic has sucked away their life and spirit; let that be a lesson to all.
- **Bjornaer**—These primitive brutes have no place in a civilized Order. Perhaps non-Roman wizards should not have been allowed in the Order in the first place.
- **Criamon**—At least they seek wisdom, but their mental word games are just foolishness. Great artists and writers can give clearer insights into eternal mysteries than riddles can.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—More non-Roman wizards from barbaric lands. As long as they keep to themselves, they are not a big problem.
- **Flambeau**—Mature power and infantile minds, this is what all wizards will become if they do not let art and humanity into their lives.



- **Mercere**—Most are not cursed with the temptation of the Gift, so they have retained their blessed humanity.
- **Merinita**—They have given up their humanity to the impostor Quendalon. The faerie songs and dances in which these magi delight are not true art because they are not human. What can a human learn from a faerie about humanity?
- **Quaesitor**—Magi of other Houses desperately need these wise judges to hold them back from excess, but the Quaesitoris should leave us and our dealings with society alone. If anything, our work with society will be the salvation of the Order, not its downfall.
- **Tremere**—Their need for hierarchy at least makes them predictable and avoidable — thank goodness.
- **Tytalus**—They skirmish with nobles and taunt priests. They do not realize how serious a “game” they are playing.
- **Verditius**—They are, unfortunately, as caught up in magic as magi who cast actual spells.
- **Demons**—They warp the human spirit. They must be watched for and fought at all times.
- **Faeries**—Childish beings not worthy of serious study.
- **Nobles**—Some of them may be haughty, but they produce the only people of grace and eloquence in the world. Since they are above the common people in status and ability, they have the freedom to pursue philosophy and the arts.
- **The Church**—Almost all art comes from the Church, including architecture, song, painting, and sculpture. In addition, many monks are fine scholars and excellent conversationalists. Although priests may not always be amenable to meeting magi, they, too, have their place.
- **The Peasants**—By supporting their betters in the Church and the nobility, they serve all humanity.
- **The Believers**—Their heresy is devoid of artistic expression, but filled with human compassion. They may be Philistines, but they are kind Philistines.

## Intra-House Relations

You are generally free to do as you please regarding other members of the House, though you must respect the territories of others. The magi of the Barcelona Covenant, for instance, are protective of the city, and when visiting Barcelona, you must follow their dictates. You can trust them to act for the benefit of society and the Order, even if it means controlling your actions.

You are encouraged to travel and visit with other magi of the House to learn from them and see what the world has to offer.

If your Primus demands it, you are to follow orders. Being a wizard demands discipline, and if he requires you to use that discipline for the benefit of the House, the Order, or society, you are to comply.

## Common Virtues & Flaws

**Gentle Gift, +1.** Jerbiton magi prefer apprentices in whom the Gift is not noxious to others. Otherwise you would have problems fitting into society.

**Free Expression, +1.** If you are an artist.

**Well-Travelled, +1.** Many magi of this house are especially familiar with cities.

**Noncombatant, -2.**

## Abilities

(Area) Lore, Church Lore, Speak (Local Languages), Church Knowledge, and (especially) Humanities are all important knowledges for Jerbiton magi. These magi also develop social skills and talents to help them get along in society. You also need a score in an art, such as sculpting, if you are to be an artist.

## Magic

Jerbiton magi prefer subtle spells that they can use in cities without others noticing, especially mental spells. Some use spells to augment their artistic creations, but most prefer to work with mundane tools to avoid separating themselves too much from their art.

**The Communion of Peace, Rego Mentem 30**  
Reach, Perm., Ritual

This spell enchants some medium, such as wine, meat, or candles. Those who then share the medium (e.g. drink the wine, breathe the smoke from the candles, etc.) are then affected by the spell. They become slow to anger and willing to listen to those whose opinions differ. Add or subtract up to 3 points from rolls regarding agreeable communication, anger, intimidation, and so on, always adjusting the roll so that peaceful interaction is more likely. Strong prejudices or convictions, extenuating circumstances, or powerful motivations will cancel the effects of this spell on the individuals who have them. One casting of the spell enchants enough substance to effect six people. Reduce the effect if more than six people are affected or if not all the substance is used. Never increase the effect even if fewer than six people share the communion.

Jerbiton magi often use this spell to facilitate dialogues between hostile people or just to make parties more pleasant.

The “reach” range means you must have the substance to be enchanted at hand and the “permanent” duration means the substance will remain enchanted until used.

## Example Magus of Jerbiton

**Arch-Mage Grimgroth, Filius of Consuelia, Follower of Jerbiton**

**Status in the Order:** Grimgroth is well-known in the Order as a wise magus with deep insights into Hermetic politics. He also earns respect because he uses

## The Order of Hermes

his intelligence to keep peace, rather than to pursue personal aggrandizement. Many also know him as a master and scholar of air magics.

**Description:** Grimgroth is tall, gaunt, and serious. His black hair is graying at the temples and the burden of leadership has worn wrinkles into his face. His short, black beard also has begun to gray. He generally wears an ample purple robe with a high collar, broad sleeves, and various implements dangling from his belt. He rarely smiles.

He is constantly accompanied by a white cat with black patches. This is Samantha, his familiar, who keeps a keen eye on the surroundings while Grimgroth involves himself with debates and negotiations.

**Personality:** Grimgroth takes his role as a political leader seriously. He has personally swayed several Tribunals, avoiding violence within the Order and with mundanes. He knows he must maintain a constant vigil to use his power continually for the good of the Order. Still, he retains a dry sense of humor that he shares with those he trusts.

He has had only two apprentices, but very nearly only trained one because of his experience with his first. The infamous Lupus Mortus was his first apprentice, who betrayed Grimgroth and joined House Flambeau against

his wishes. For his next apprentice, Grimgroth broke the traditions of his House and chose a street urchin rather than a noble, which actually worked out much better.

**Favored Magic:** Grimgroth is a master of air magics and of magic theory in general. He has written several famous treatises on air magic, elementals, and magic theory.

**Background:** Grimgroth is the filius of Consuelia, the founder of Mistridge. He has lived at that covenant ever since apprenticeship, though he did travel and visit other covenants from time to time. Over the years, he has become ever more deeply involved in politics, especially since he assumed the leadership of Mistridge.

**Quote:** *"Well, now, it seems we have a misunderstanding here."*

### Story Ideas

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- The characters come to a new city where a particular beggar continually spies on them. They eventually catch her and try to find out why she has been watching them, only to have her reveal herself as a powerful Jerbiton maga. She has been watching them to be sure that they do not mess things up in "her" city.

- A Jerbiton character sees that a local Flambeau magus and a belligerent baron are getting ready to come to violence. Someone must step in to stop the imminent battle, possibly requiring that they find out what special deals would entice the two opponents to make peace.

## House Mercere

*"This entire Order stands on the brink of dissolution and only one force holds it together. The power of the word. How quickly the Houses and wizards have fallen into suspicion, competition, and vengefulness! How quickly would they fall upon each other out of fear and confusion if we did not bring the word back and forth. Fear feeds on ignorance. Ignorance feeds on suspicion. Suspicion feeds on fear. We bring the word from magus to magus so that they can feel safe, so they can know what is happening and why and where. We are the salvation and the truth of this mighty Order."*

—The Primus Aldico addressing his House after twelve redcaps were slain in the Schism War

**Motto:** To Serve the Order and to Keep It One

**Symbol:** A pointed, red cap with a band around the base and a triangle on the band.



This is the House of redcaps, the messengers of the Order. They are best known for carrying messages from covenant to covenant and Tribunal to Tribunal, and serving as intermediaries in all types of inter-house and covenant diplomacy. They are also noted for compiling histories and descriptions of the areas in which they travel. Every thirteen years, they compile a census of the magi and the affairs of the Order and make a report to the Grand Tribunal. A member is always present at every Tribunal so as to be able to give honest answers to any questions that might be had. Many magi underestimate them because they seem to be mere servants of true magi, but those who watch them closely see that they can exercise a good deal of initiative in deciding just how, when, and to whom they deliver which messages. As a source of information they are unparalleled and are a vital service to the Order, especially since their word is trusted and therefore their information is believed.

## History

The wizard Mercere was enthusiastic about the Order and travelled to many wizards to invite them to join, considering it a means to restore the peace that was lost with the fall of Rome. He was renowned for his power to transform things and he taught Bonisagus much of this magic. Several years after the founding of the Order, however, an experiment of his went awry, and he lost all his power over magic. Bonisagus tried for years to restore the Gift to Mercere, but to no avail. Still excited about the new and growing Order, Mercere decided to do what he could to aid it. He began working with Guernicus, Founder of the Quaesitoris, to carry messages among the magi. He soon began working on his own and taking "apprentices" to teach them to carry on after him, none of whom had any magical powers.

Mercere had trained two apprentices before losing his Gift, and they remained in his House and taught magical apprentices of their own. Though they make up a minority in the House, these magical followers of Mercere are very important; they create magical items for use by the redcaps and are the only true members of the Order in the House. Over the years, they have lost the special secrets of Mercere's transformation magic. If they have any specialty, it is with body magics, which they use to protect and heal — the primary precepts of the House.

In the first two centuries of the Order, House Mercere accepted a subservient role in the Order and had little direct influence or initiative. During the confusion of the Schism War, however, they became highly valuable brokers of information, and they used this power to manipulate the battles and help restore peace to the Order. Ever since, they have been more conscious of their power, more willing to use it, and more skilled at doing so. Though they are the most forgotten and underrated House, they may actually be one of the more powerful groups within the Order.

## Notable Magi of Mercere

**Mercere**—A transformation master who lost his Gift and became a messenger within the Order.

**Aldico**—The Primus during the Schism War who turned House Mercere into a powerful political force. He was primarily responsible for negotiating a peace between the various factions of magi and Houses that began the Schism War in the first place.

**Belín**—A loyal, devoted, hard-working redcap of the 9th century. She always got the message through, never shirked her duty, and put the interests of the Order first. Legends of her adventures have multiplied over the years, promoting her to almost mythical status. Magi and redcaps use her example as an ideal for redcaps and for people in general to follow. Of a disloyal consors, one might say, "He's no Belín."

## Current Status

**Membership:** 97, including 15 wizards

**Domus Magnus:** Harco, in the Roman Tribunal.

The redcaps have become quite caught up in the mercantile competition among the Roman covenants. This covenant holds the most complete geographic library in Christian Europe, filled with practical information gained from first-hand experience. None but those of Mercere may use this library, but occasionally a section of a tome may be copied for the use of certain magi if the Primus believes it will aid the Order. Many Magi in the Order would love to spend some time in this famous repository of lore.

**Primus:** Insatella, an old woman who served as a redcap mostly in the Rhine Tribunal. She has magical powers, but is very reluctant to use them so this is not commonly known.

**Current Concerns:** To bring news to those in the Order who strive for unity and peace, and to bring less news to those who might use it for their own benefit and to the Order's detriment.

## Current Practices

Redcaps are officially considered magi. They have sigils and may vote at Tribunal. Usually, however, they abstain out of deference to true magi. They are accorded all the rights of magi, so they are not to be harmed. It is known that some of these redcaps have been trained in special techniques of combat and their fighting ability (both armed and un-armed) seems to corroborate that rumor. Some of the redcaps actually do have magical powers, for the spell casting members of this House often spend time travelling as redcaps as well—few other magi ever realize which redcaps have the Gift and which do not.

A typical redcap travels about a specific area bringing messages from covenant to covenant. They travel to a covenant, bring all the news that they have, and then stay as long as they are welcome and care to rest. Covenants that want to slow the spread of news to other covenants may offer luxurious accommodations to induce redcaps to stay longer and thus deliver messages to other covenants later. Three nights of lodging is

customary: one to rest, one to feast and enjoy the covenant's hospitality, and one to recover from the previous night's hospitality before taking once more to the road. Many redcaps share important but unofficial news during this time, so those who treat them poorly might not hear all that is to be heard. This service is invaluable to magi, spread out as they are so far from one another, and is the means by which the Order is kept united.

Though redcaps are bound to deliver all messages that magi give them, they do have some control over who learns what and how. Unless they are carrying urgent messages, they can decide in what order to visit the covenants in their areas, thus letting some learn of news later than others. (They are, however, required to visit all covenants. They cannot simply cease bringing messages to a certain covenant.) They also decide in what order to deliver messages and how to do so at any given covenant. They can present news that they feel is important with drama, demanding to speak before a council of magi. If they want certain news to be disregarded, they can simply slip it in among a list of official announcements while speaking with a single magus, hoping that they will not share it with others in the covenant. Messages can also be delivered in writing or speech and those that a redcap wants forgotten will be given only aloud. (Note that a redcap can require that a covenant make a copy of any written message so the redcap

can carry it to the next covenant.) Redcaps have been known to lose messages, become "indefinitely delayed" by weather or other difficulties, or even to invent false messages when they feel the need. Lying in the pursuit of one's duties, however, can get a redcap demoted to the status of a scribe's assistant and repeated or serious offenses can result in Renunciation.

In addition to delivering messages, a redcap watches the land and its people for important events. When their messages are not urgent, they can spend weeks just wandering the countryside, getting a feel for the people and trying to find out what might be of interest to the House and the Order.

### Notes on Mercere Characters

You can run a redcap either as a companion or as a magus. (The "companion" vs. "magus" distinction is a matter of game mechanics. In either case, a redcap is recognized as a Hermetic magus who has sworn to uphold the Code, whether or not they have the Gift.)

Though most redcaps travel continually, a redcap character can be a member of a covenant. You would be assigned as a scout and guide for the covenant, as well as a messenger for a small area nearby. Your long-term goal is to learn about the area by working with the covenant, and when you are experienced, you will assume more regular redcap duties. All redcaps are nominally members of individual covenants, though they typically spend little time there.

A wizard of Mercere could also be a player-character, especially one who is a bit more independent and mobile than most.

In either case, be aware that a follower of Mercere will have many responsibilities outside of the covenant. The possibilities for political stories are good but adventuring may be limited.

In some lands, followers of Mercere wear the distinctive red caps with blue triangles that gave them their name. People recognize them as "wizards" because of these caps and therefore let them pass unmolested. It is the duty of all magi to punish visibly any who attack or hinder a redcap, and the redcaps have let this be known in these lands. (In addition, redcaps are typically quite capable of handling attackers themselves.) In other lands, however, such as where the Church and nobility are stronger, these caps would only reveal the actions of magi and invite trouble from those who would challenge the Order. Here the redcaps pose as wanderers or pilgrims, or avoid cities and towns altogether.

Scribes are members of the House who are no longer fit to travel. They compile and copy the knowledge that redcaps have gathered. They are highly respected within the House and are often consulted because of their wisdom and wealth of knowledge of the many lands of Europe. Some of the largest libraries in the Order are maintained by redcaps and most are located in covenants of House Mercere. These libraries normally contain only mundane tomes, but magi are beginning to realize more and more how vital such information can be (especially as the mundane world increasingly intrudes upon them).

Those followers of Mercere who use magic are called "wizards of Mercere" to distinguish them from non-magical redcaps. They spend most of their time in laboratories crafting magic items to protect the redcaps on their journeys and brewing longevity potions for them. The House has a rule, however, that each member must serve as a redcap for one year out of each decade, provided that they are physically capable of doing so. These wizards must periodically get out of their towers and travel the lands, though they are often given assignments in safe territories.

Some redcaps ride horses, some ride mules, and some walk. The choice depends on terrain and personal preference. Redcaps occasionally serve as guides for magi, but they will not go out of their way to do so unless

the mission is important to the Order. The Apprentice's Gauntlet consists of finding one's way through foreign and possibly hostile territory and delivering a memorized message. Entrance is granted to magi who can pass the standard Apprentice's Gauntlet.

## Magi of House Mercere

### Mentality of a Mercere Magus

You are more than just a messenger for wizards; you are a guardian whose keen senses recognize important events and relay the knowledge to those who most

need to know. Your vigilance and perseverance will help keep the Order strong and healthy, and, you hope, keep the world a little more sane.

You will meet many magi whose desire for personal gain shortens their sight and threatens others in the Order. Do not oppose these magi directly, but for the good of the Order you must see to it that their plans are thwarted. Make sure that other magi know of their folly and let them confront the wrong-doers.

You believe that by keeping the Order strong, you keep yourself and your House safe and prevent the chaos from returning. You were taught from the very beginning the duties of service and loyalty, and you will never forget these early lessons.

Like all others in this House, you have a wanderlust that keeps you from

being happy staying in one place. Even the wizards of Mercere often travel to various covenants rather than staying perpetually at one.

Ideally, you will be quiet and contemplative, like Belín. You will watch, listen, learn, and tell, rather than involving yourself directly in the affairs of the world and the Order.

### Priorities

- 1) Harmony within the Order
- 2) Integrity of House Mercere
- 3) Personal integrity



## Outlook

- **Bjornaer**—They keep to themselves and cause little trouble.
- **Bonisagus**—Their responsible political action combined with Mercere's actions are the Order's only hope.
- **Criamon**—Divisive and secretive, but at least they do not bother other magi.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—They have little to do with other magi and that brings them under suspicion. They would be the first to turn against the Order in a crisis.
- **Flambeau**—Their uncontrolled violence disturbs and endangers the Order. They travel around so much that they can be difficult to find.
- **Jerbiton**—Their skill at politics is vital to the survival of the Order.
- **Merinita**—Their faerie ways make them unpredictable and possibly a source of dissension.
- **Quaesitor**—Without them, the Order would fall apart. Work closely with them to ensure they know everything of importance. Do their bidding if they ask of you to discover information of particular importance, even if you must betray the trust of the undeserving to do so.
- **Tremere**—Though they vie for power, at least they do so within strict limits of behavior. They can be respected for their faithfulness to the Code.
- **Tyталus**—Trouble-makers. Their games could bring ruin to the Order.
- **Verditius**—They offer vital services to other Houses and try to keep the peace. More magi should be like them.
- **Demons**—A dire threat to the Order's integrity. Be constantly alert to their machinations.
- **Nobles**—One can negotiate with them, sometimes.
- **The Church**—Difficult to negotiate with but to be respected for their sense of justice. They are the cause of most of the Order's problems with society.

## Intra-House Relations

House Mercere is well-organized and you have a distinct place in that organization. Carry out the duties that are assigned to you and report as often as you can to your home covenant. If you do well, you will rise in the ranks and become responsible for more and more important messages. Share everything with fellows of your House so that you and they can do a better job. Never hide your failures from your superiors or your troubles will only increase.

As you prove your value to the House and Order, and as you assume more dangerous responsibilities, you will be given magical devices to help you. Most of them are designed to protect you on your journeys through hostile lands.

## Necessary Virtue

Redcap, +4 for companions, +3 for magi.

## Common Virtues

Well-Travelled, +1.

Code of Honor, +1.

Jack-of-All-Trades, +3.

## Notes on Redcaps

Redcaps often learn secrets about magi and covenants which they do not share with others outside their House. Anyone using magic to read a redcap's mind could learn a fair bit about other magi in the area, but doing so has been defined as spying with magic and thus a severe breach of the Code of Hermes.

## Abilities

Abilities that allow one to avoid conflict are more important to redcaps than are those that let them overcome conflicts. Valuable abilities include Alertness, Dodge, Pretend, Brawl, Ride, Swim, Stealth, Diplomacy, Intimidation, Quarterstaff Attack & Parry, Chirurgy, Hermes Lore, (Area) Lore, Legend Lore, Speak (Local Languages), and Scribe Latin.

## Magic

Redcaps generally carry a few magical devices to help them in their work. Common spells mimicked by these devices are *The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch*, *Disguise of the New Visage*, *Leap of Homecoming*, *Veil of Invisibility*, *Image from the Wizard Torn*, *Posing the Silent Question*, *Trackless Step*, as well as the *parma magica*.

Wizards of Mercere specialize in making magical devices for redcaps. House Mercere also buys special magical devices from Verditius magi.

## Example Magus of Mercere

**Bernil**, Filius of Dermen, Follower of Mercere

**Status in the Order:** Bernil is universally known in his House and may become Primus one day. He is also known to all in the Provençal Tribunal, which is his territory. He has worked nearly every part of the Tribunal as a messenger and now commands all the redcaps here. He knows the Hermetic and mundane politics of the area intimately. Everyone respects him as a wise and clear-sighted individual.

**Description:** He is lean and tanned from continual travel and his hair has turned completely white. He looks to be about fifty but he is actually nearly seventy years old. Though his body has slowed somewhat, his bright eyes reveal an active mind. He wears simple pants and a tunic so that he can pass as a mundane at a moment's notice.

He rides a sturdy brown mare that has almost grown used to magi, but not quite.

**Personality:** Bernil is usually quiet and alert, watching everyone and everything about him. He now

has the clout to speak up, however, and when he does, his voice is as strong as his opinions. He has no patience with magi whose selfish desires interfere with the progress of the Order.

**Favored Magic:** Not having the Gift, Bernil relies on magic items. He has one ring to protect him from magic and another that can bring him in an instant to his home covenant of Berinor. He also has various healing potions and a bracelet that lets him see into others' minds. His tunic and pants have been enchanted so that they are very hard to cut. This protects him from the worst that blades and arrows can do, but smashing weapons are hardly slowed. When he wraps his cloak about himself, he can become invisible, remaining unseen as long as he moves slowly and is not touched. Finally, a necklace he wears can give him any one of several alternate appearances, including a merchant, a beggar, a milk maid, and a priest. He has some magic dust that flares and makes a loud roaring sound when someone steps over it. He makes a circle of this dust around himself when he sleeps in the wilds.

**Background:** Bernil has delivered messages throughout the Provencal Tribunal, all the while observing the lands and the magi. Now, after years of work on the road, he knows the area well enough to direct all the other redcaps in the area. Recently, he has begun delivering inter-Tribunal messages to the Iberian and Roman Tribunals. He says he wants to expand his knowledge of the area, but most likely his wanderlust simply compels him to seek new places to explore.

**Quote:** "What's this I hear? Where are you headed? Oh, lovely place! Now the baron, he's... And there's this beautiful little pond tucked away in a hollow just north of... And if you run into a young lady named Isabel, tell her... But don't get caught after nightfall around... etc., etc."

### Story Ideas

- A redcap is missing and the characters must find out what has happened to her. Has there been foul play, and if so, is it part of a larger plot?
- A redcap brings news of strange events (magical or political) nearby. He requests that the characters accompany him to investigate so that he can make a full report to Bernil.





## House Merinita

*"There is a magic that predates us, that underlies our spells and theories. The gentle folk of the woods know this magic better than we can dream and with patience and skill we may yet persuade them to share their secrets with us."*

—Quendalon, the First Primus of Merinita

**Motto:** Nature is the Only Truth

**Symbol:** A stylized oak within a circle



Followers of Merinita are closely connected to faeries and faerie magic. They are given to puns and riddles, wandering under the full moon, playing strange tunes on lutes, and wearing brightly-colored clothes. Though these frivolous activities do not win them respect from the staid magi of other Houses, the magi of Merinita do have impressive control over faerie magics which the other magi lack.

### History

In the 8th century, Merinita was something of a legend and a mystery. She traveled alone through the wilderness, somehow communing with the spirits of the wilds. She was recognized as the greatest maga of nature magics of the age, perhaps even of all time.

Trianoma spent a full year tracking her down to invite her to help found the Order. For reasons still unclear, she came out of the wilds to become a member of the Order and to train apprentices. After founding her House and seeing the Order into its first years of stability, however, she returned to her journeys through the wilds of this world. She had the power to take the shapes of various animals, and before she left hinted that she was on the verge of discovering what she called "the mystery of the eternal spirit of the wilds." Some claim to have seen her as recently as 1158 and many believe that she has become one with the wilderness, taking on whatever

shapes suit her ends. The "eternal spirit of the wilds" may well have given her a kind of immortality.

In the absence of their Founder, the House turned to its first Primus, Quendalon. He believed that the essence of nature magic was to be found among the faeries. After many explorations of the faerie world, Quendalon finally entered a deep faerie forest in 799, leaving his successor, Myanar, in charge. After months had passed, they gave him up for lost. He returned two years later after spending what seemed to him like two days in faerieland. When he returned, he had rubies for eyes and said he could now see deeper mysteries that would transform the Order and all the human world. Myanar, in turn, claimed that he was not Quendalon at all, but a faerie changeling and an imposter. After a protracted political and magical battle, the magus who called himself Quendalon regained control of the House and ousted Myanar and his supporters. The outcasts were adopted nominally into House Bjornaer, but most had trouble adapting to Bjornaer magic and their line soon died out.

Quendalon turned his House to faerie ways, which is the way of the House to the present day. As it turned out, his faerie insights did not blend well with Hermetic magic and the other Houses rejected his teachings. He did manage, however, to find a way to combine Hermetic and faerie magic with some success.

To this day, the magi of the House wonder whether it really was Quendalon himself who returned, but it is a moot point. They have his legacy, whomever he may have been, and they have put it to good use.

In 807, when Tytalus apparently lost his challenge to the Faerie Queen, Quendalon laughed openly at those who were left in the House, creating ill feelings between the Houses that have been passed down to this day. It seems, however, that Quendalon was not mocking Tytalus' ambitious attempt to challenge the Queen, but rather found it amusing that his followers thought that his end was tragic. Perhaps Quendalon knew what happened to him. If he did, he never told anyone outside his House, but the possibility that the followers of Quendalon know what happened and refuse to tell the followers of Tytalus only aggravates the ill feelings between House Tytalus and House Merinita.

Over the centuries, House Merinita has felt the advance of civilization more and more painfully. They have seen one faerie forest after another fall to the twin powers of church bells and iron axes. Though they have occasionally joined faeries in protecting their homes, they have never formed a unified force. Some within the House are now suggesting more concerted action against an expanding mundane population.

During the Schism War of the tenth century, House Merinita defended several Díedne magi. They were wise enough, however, not to involve themselves completely. When House Díedne was destroyed, the entire Order (with the possible exception of House Flambeau) was

eager for peace, and there were no official retributions against House Merinita.

In the twelfth century, Mendalus, a powerful magus of Merinita, proclaimed that Quendalon did a disservice to the House and to the Order in general by not following up the wisdom of Merinita. He sought to reconstruct some of that knowledge from Merinita's limited writings and those of the Merinita magi who were renounced by Quendalon. Several in the House have taken up this pursuit, exploring magic of the wilderness, but the vast majority still focus on faeries, not on nature in general.

House Merinita, probably because of its connection to faeries, has enjoyed a notable absence of diabolist corruption.

### Notable Magi of Merinita

**Merinita**—A famed nature magus who may still be living in the wilderness.

**Quendalon**—The first Primus, possibly a faerie changeling. He turned the focus of the House to faeries.

**Mendalus**—A twelfth century magus who rediscovered the writings of Merinita and her faithful followers.

**Zurenzalle**—The famed magus of the twelfth century who passed as a human but was actually an elf. He never aged noticeably and one day, without warning, he simply returned to the woods from which he had come. Only upon examining his laboratory and his private writings did others in the House realize his true nature. Why he came to the world of humans to learn Hermetic magic is still unknown.

### Current Status

**Membership:** 62

**Domus Magnus:** Irencillia, in the Rhine Tribunal. This covenant, hidden deep in faerie woods, was founded when this area was wild and uncivilized. Since then, House Merinita has become more popular in outlying areas and there are few Merinita magi near this covenant. It has little to do with the politics of the area or of the Tribunal as a whole, preferring seclusion above all.

**Primus:** Vinaria. She is deeply concerned about the loss of faerie areas and other magical lands. She has been holding long councils with Primi of Houses Ex Miscellanea, Flambeau, Tremere, and Tytalus. She has tried to gain an audience with Urgen, Primus of Bjornaer, but Urgen has refused.

**Current Concerns:** To protect faerie lands from mortal encroachment and to form political alliance with other magi who want the same.

### Current Practices

Those who distrust the faeries distrust House Merinita as well. Perhaps this House is secretly giving Hermetic secrets to the faeries, who will one day revenge themselves on the magi, or so the suspicious suggest.

Faeries may well have reason to want revenge, since the magi have been known to raid faerie areas for the magic to be found there.

As an Apprentice's Gauntlet, masters often take apprentices into faerie woods to see if they can be accepted by the faeries there, or at least survive them. Entrance requirements are strict. A magus must pass a series of magical and illusory tests, as well as be accepted by a group of faeries chosen by the testers.

### Magi of House Merinita

#### Mentality of a Merinita Magus

There are mysteries beyond mortal ken and they have been opened to you. As long as you remain recognizably human, you will never be able to comprehend the mysteries of the faeries completely, but you will be able to catch glimpses of their eternal, unspeakable beauty, and you will share in their might.

Now that you know the mysteries that faeries offer, you recognize all mundane pursuits as petty. Human beauty, human strength, and human wisdom are all colorless shadows of the beauty, strength, and wisdom to be found in Faerieland.

If you should die, you hope to do so in a faerie forest, where your immortal soul will join with that of the faeries and be eternally reborn into the spirits of the land.

#### Priorities

- 1) Exploring faeries and their world
- 2) Protecting faeries from the predations of magus and mundane alike
- 3) Preserving House Merinita

#### Outlook

- **Bjornaer**—They recognize the strength to be found in the wilderness, but they do not see the glory of Faerieland. Perhaps fear blinds them.
- **Bonisagus**—Their failed attempts to mimic faerie magic proves the faeries have access to something beyond human ken.
- **Criamon**—They run circles in their minds looking for that which the faeries hold out to us.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—They have not been sucked into the temptation of civilized luxury. They are diverse and strong.
- **Flambeau**—Though their flames have sometimes burned the faerie trees, they can be allies against the haughty mundanes.
- **Jerbiton**—They are friends of the mundanes who are enemies of the Order and of Faerieland.
- **Mercere**—We have little use for news of the outside world. They are but loyal and obedient dogs for which we have little purpose.
- **Quaesitor**—They may be useful for those who value politics, but we have no need for them.

## The Order of Hermes

- **Tremere**—They have no appreciation for anything other than their own power.
- **Tytalus**—They amuse themselves with children's games. At least their Founder was more ambitious.
- **Verditius**—Mechanical magic can never match the experience of faerie mysteries.
- **Seekers**—They pine for fallen gods.
- **Faeries**—The most glorious beings on the earth.
- **Demons**—We lust for none of their dark power.
- **Nobles**—Their craving for land has cleared far too many faerie forests already; they must be stopped.
- **The Church**—Its incomprehensible dogma, clamorous bells, disgusting cathedrals, and twisted attitudes toward life make it the vilest of human creations.
- **The Peasants**—They retain enough natural simplicity to enjoy music, dance, and food. They are closer to faeries than other mundanes. If only they would toss their iron into the sea, they might be able to make peace with superior races.

### Intra-House Relations

Your sodalis in House Merinita have taken anarchy to such an extreme that even anarchy is not a dependable rule. Like the faeries from whom they learn, your fellows are sometimes secretive, sometimes random, sometimes dominating. Occasionally, leaders rise who try to gain the support of others for their causes. If others follow them, these magi become leaders. If others ignore them, the would-be leaders give up. Some Merinita magi revere the Primus as an envoy from the Faerie Queen, while others do not even know her name.

Your relationship with your mater or pater is uniquely determined by you and your former master. Perhaps you want to continue to follow even though you are a magus; perhaps you are on your own. There is no standard of behavior on which to model yourself. Even if you are expected by them to continue your service, if you neglect your duties it will not be a disgrace in the House. It will be, however, a personal affront to the one who trained you.

The faeries touch different magi in different ways. House Merinita accepts this fact and relishes the diversity it produces. You are on your own to find your way through this ever-changing House, just as you are on your own in encountering the world of the faeries.

### Common Virtues & Flaws

**Faerie Magic, +1.** As with an affinity, you have a score in this arcane talent that you must purchase with initial points and that you can raise with experience. It represents the training in faerie ways that you have had. It is used as a bonus on resistance rolls against

faerie magic and on rolls or totals related to faerie spells. Faerie spells are those spells developed using faerie principles. No one can cast these spells without at least a 1 in this talent. Some faerie spells are listed in the Magic section below. In addition, this skill applies as a bonus to normal Hermetic spells that deal directly with faeries. The higher your score in this skill, the stranger and more "faerie" you have become.

**Faerie Blood, +2.** Many of the magi of Merinita have some faerie blood. From time to time, a magus of another House takes an apprentice who later turns out to have faerie blood. If Merinita magi find out about this, they will bargain or connive to get the apprentice for their own. Some magi give up their faerie-tainted apprentices willingly if the faerie



nature of the apprentice makes teaching them standard Hermetic magic too difficult.

**Magical Animal Companion, +2.** Your master took you on journeys through faerie lands and on one of these visits you befriended a faerie animal of some type. To turn it into a familiar would be to deprive it of some of its freedom, so you might not wish to do so.

**Wild Magic, -2.** Faerie influence has made your magic a bit more difficult to control than is normal.

**Cursed, -1 to -4.** Encounters with dark faeries or with faeries too powerful for you may have left you with unfortunate defects.

## Abilities

Naturally, Merinita magi excel at Faerie Lore. In addition, many of them have developed talents in music or crafts and try to express what they learn from the faeries through these means. As for social talents and skills, many followers of Merinita lack noticeably in these areas. The freedom and randomness that contact with faeries has released in their spirits is not universally appreciated among the traditional mundanes.

## Magic

Merinita magi use a broad range of spells, including those dealing with illusions, the mind, and all aspects of nature. They prefer transformations above all.

Wizard's Twilight can strike you hard. It could release faerie power beyond your control and warp you mentally or physically. If you can control the experience, however, you may well gain new insights into faeries and their nature.

The following are some of the faerie spells that House Merinita has developed by combining faerie magic with Hermetic theory. You need a score in "Faerie Magic" (see above) to learn or cast these spells and your score counts as a bonus when casting them. When using these spells, you get a bonus or penalty according to the effect that the local supernatural force has on faeries, not on Hermetic magic (see the chart on p. 73 of *Ars Magica*). Thus, if you are in a Dominion with a strength of 4, you will receive -12 on rolls related to these spells. All of these spells, because they incorporate faerie elements, are unpredictable. The descriptions given describe what these spells usually do, but sometimes they take on lives of their own and have different effects.

Faerie spells would be hard or impossible to duplicate using pure Hermetic magic, so purely Hermetic spells that mimic the effects of those below would be at least 5 levels higher.

All of these spells have limited durations, and none can be lengthened through the use of raw *vis*. Repeated use of faerie spells on individuals can cause permanent damage of the strangest type, so use these spells sparingly.

Like the faerie powers they copy, these spells do not excel at immediate damage capability. **Mask of the Beast**, for example, does little to stop an enemy warrior. For better effect, cast it on the leader of an attacking mercenary band while he addresses his troops. Like **Tongues of Ancient Ages**, this spell works best as part of a campaign, striking at morale rather than helping in a battle by striking at the bodies of the attackers.

Merinita magi can create magical devices that copy faerie spells. When they do so, they can add their Faerie Magic scores to their Lab totals.

## Breath of Invigoration, Creo Córpoem 15

Reach, Inst., Faerie

You breathe on the target, who then makes a stress+Stm roll. If the roll is 3+, the target regains a lost fatigue level. If the roll is 9+, they regain two levels. You cannot use this spell on yourself. Unlike any other standard Hermetic spell, this spell requires a pawn of raw *vis* to be effective. This is the only Hermetic spell that effectively restores lost fatigue.

## The Feast of Delights, Muto Imágonem 20

Spec., Spec., Faerie

While you cast this spell, you walk around the perimeter of the area to be affected. You can affect a circle up to twenty paces across. You can only cast this spell as the sun is setting or afterwards and it lasts until dawn. All sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and touch-sensations within the circle are altered. Some become stronger, some weaker. Some change into something slightly different, so that colors can shift randomly. Sometimes sensations change entirely, so that wine can taste blue and music can sound hot. In addition, lively illusions are likely to appear at random, such as faces on trees speaking nonsense riddles or sprites dancing on tables. The minds of the participants are not affected directly, but spending a few hours in an affected area can stir even the most stolid into appreciation and wonder.

Saying a prayer within the circle dispels the enchantment.

It is because of parties held under the effects of this spell that the magi of Merinita find the mundane world boring.

## Mask of the Beast, Muto Córpoem 25

Near, Sun., Animál, Faerie

The target's head turns into that of an appropriate animal. The type of animal depends on the personality of the target and the circumstances. For example, a brave warrior might get a lion's head, a scholar might get the head of an owl, and someone deceiving you could have their head turned into that of a serpent. The new head is human-sized or larger. The target does not feel the transformation happen and can only notice by touch or seeing a reflection. Things worn on the head, such as a helmet, adapt to the shape and size of the new head. Casting Requisites: appropriate forms for any headgear transformed.

## Gaze of the Thousand Pinches, Perdo Córpoem 5

Near, Conc., Faerie

As long as you watch the target and maintain concentration, the target feels one pinch each second in a random part of the body. Each round you roll a stress die to determine the severity of the pinches, and the target makes a Stm + Concentration roll. If you beat the target's roll, they cannot maintain their composure because of the pain and distraction.

## The Order of Hermes

**Tongues of Ancient Ages, Muto Herbam 45**  
Spec., Spec., Faerie

This spell awakens plants, giving them the intelligence, capacity for speech, and limited mobility of limbs that they had in ages past when the faeries ruled the world. If cast with an *Animál* requisite, the spell also grants intelligence and speech to animals. It covers an entire natural area, such as a valley, a hill, or a copse, but only up to five miles square.

The animals and plants are not under your control; they are free to do and say as they please. In general, however, they may seek vengeance against humans who have enslaved, slaughtered, felled, or hunted them. (Dogs are a notable exception, generally remaining loyal to their masters.)

A spell like this is more effective as an attack on the morale of a community than as a military maneuver, but it can have tactical usefulness as well. For instance, you can use it to coordinate a defense of an area and use the plants and animals as spies. (They are not likely, however, to be well-disciplined agents.)

**The Weakling's Revenge, Muto Córporum 20**  
Near, Sun., Faerie

You reverse the target's strengths and weaknesses, making the beautiful ugly, the dim bright, and the clumsy fleet of foot. Reverse the positive and negative signs for the target's characteristics for the duration of the spell. Flaws remain, so that someone with poor hearing will still hear poorly, but any flaws that affect a characteristic directly (such as "Stocky") are reversed along with the characteristics. Size is not affected.

If cast on non-humans, the characteristics rise or fall depending on their relation to the average for that type of creature. For instance, suppose an ogre with a Str of +6 is affected. An ogre's average Str is +4, so he is 2 points higher than what is "normal" for him and his kind. This spell causes his Str to drop to 2 points below the average ogre, in other words, to +2. If the average for ogres was +7 (i.e. if he were a weak ogre, as ogres go), then his Str would go up to +8.

**Awaken the Mirror's Self, Muto Mentem 25**  
Near, Sun., Faerie

The target's personality traits reverse, negative traits becoming positive and positive ones becoming negative. The target may resist with a stress of roll of 15+; use their highest personality trait as a bonus. You can end the spell by speaking the target's name to the target. Confidence is not affected.

**The Faeries' Touch, Muto Mentem 20**  
Eye, Sun., Faerie

The target's emotions, memories, and subjective feelings vary at random over the course of this spell, sometimes growing out of proportion and other times shrinking to almost nothing. This spell affects one's sense

of time, significance, safety, self-worth, etc. It also can call up vivid memories from the past. To others, the target looks highly confused, but the target generally feels entirely lucid if not inspired and wise.

### Example Magus of Merinita

**Urziffil, Filius of Jerga, Follower of Merinita**

**Status in the Order:** Rumors of a wandering Merinita magus have sprung up around this man's life, but as of yet no one has put them all together to form a comprehensive picture of his actions. The rumors consist mostly of a secretive magus who travels the lands terrorizing the mundane populace, while always keeping his victims from knowing that a magus is behind their troubles.

**Personality:** Urziffil displays a broad range of extreme emotions and reactions, but when he talks about the conflict between faeries and mundanes, his eyes narrow, his face goes hard, and he speaks as if he is planning the wholesale slaughter of humanity. Perhaps he is.

**Favored Magic:** Urziffil excels at transformation magics and he generally transforms animals and objects rather than humans. His tactics include scaring the mundanes by altering the things around them, but not transforming them directly because, he believes, attacking people themselves is more likely to cause a backlash.

**Background:** After apprenticeship, Urziffil spent much of his time in a faerie valley south of the Pyrenees. When the woods there were cut down for farmland, he left, and has been wandering since. Nominally, he still has membership in an Iberian covenant, but he is always on the move. Occasionally he meets for "war councils" with like-minded magi, but most of the time he is out gathering information, softening up the enemy, perfecting his skills, and frightening mundanes.

He calls the conflict between mundanes and faeries the "Cause Eternal" and he waxes philosophical with those who will listen. He claims that this struggle, played out in the physical world, is a symbol or metaphor for a cosmic struggle between "method-structure-law" and "madness-beauty-chaos." He is clearly on the side of madness.

Quote: "Not sure where you stand? You have only a little time left to choose up sides before war rages through the land. Best you decide soon..."

### Story Ideas

- A promising apprentice of a character has faerie blood and Merinita magi scheme to gain the apprentice for their own.

- Merinita herself is spotted somewhere and Merinita magi organize or fund a search for her.

- Urziffil causes trouble among the mundanes in the area and the characters are blamed for it.

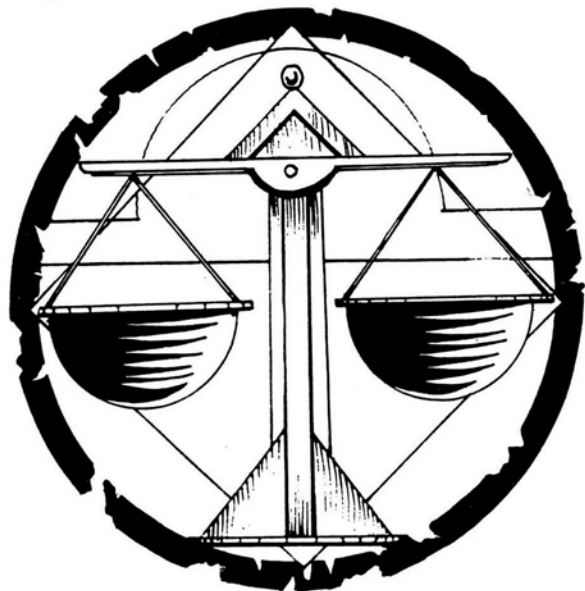
## House Quaesitor

*"If we are to have an Order to regulate and command our actions, let there be no question about it, let there be no weakness in the law, let there be no exceptions for those who feel they are above the Code. If we are to have an Order of Hermes, I will give it order of law."*

— Guernicus, Founder of the House,  
at the first Tribunal

**Motto:** The Law Above the Will

**Symbol:** The scales of justice



The Quaesitoris are the judges of the Order, those who travel from place to place overseeing Tribunals, investigating covenant's actions, and reminding magi of their pledge to uphold the Code of Hermes. Most magi find them intrusive and overly demanding, but without their disciplined adherence to the Code and the Peripheral Code, the Order would have fallen apart years ago. Some magi consider them little better than the inquisitors of the church, while others think they are completely impartial judges with no thought of themselves — the truth, as always, lies somewhere in between. They have uncovered the roots of Hermetic magic in Rome and in ancient Egypt, which gives them a strength of tradition and access to powerful rituals that they guard secretly in their Domus Magnus.

### The Title "Quaesitor"

Its name is officially House Guernicus, but almost everyone calls them "the House Quaesitor." "Quaesitor" means "judge" in Latin. Actually, they are not judges in that they do not usually make rulings. Rather, they record and enforce decisions made by magi voting at Tribunals, and sometimes must interpret the meaning of the Code.

## History

When the Order was being founded, the magus Guernicus showed great skepticism that magi could work together and would allow themselves to be governed by the Code. He estimated the lifespan of the Order would be "three score and ten, or a bit longer thanks to the potions of longevity." Trianoma, the energetic maga behind the movement to form the Order, finally grew weary of Guernicus' skepticism and never ending wise-cracks and asked him what provisions the Order would have to take in order to survive. Guernicus said the Order would need a magus whose sole duty would be to police the other wizards, to keep peace, and to enforce the Code. At Trianoma's suggestion, Guernicus took this role.

Guernicus was a gadfly in his role as judge and many accused him of looking for disputes in an effort to prove that the Order could not stand. While he often used his position to ridicule other magi, it was thanks to his fierce challenges and insistence on regulation, however, that the Peripheral Code was formed. It has provided the magi with a firm, practical basis of rules ever since.

As Guernicus' apprentices began to assume their duties, magi of other Houses complained that they had no say in the enforcement of the Code. They wanted members of their House to have some of the powers that the Quaesitoris had. Guernicus met with several Founders or their Primi and they reached an agreement. Guernicus would grant Quaesitor status to magi from other Houses in addition to training his own apprentices. At first these Quaesitoris were seen as representatives of their Houses, but over the years the Quaesitoris have been careful to select magi who can be objective. After the intense training that these new Quaesitoris receive, few of them are partial to their own Houses. In fact, many even rule unfairly against members of their Houses to show that they are not bound by old loyalties. It is said that the last person one wants as a Quaesitor is a Quaesitor from one's own House. Every House has at least one Quaesitor at all times.

Guernicus' successors were more optimistic and level headed than he, and they judged the Order without his apparent hostility and capriciousness. Still, Guernicus' precedent has guided the Quaesitoris, making the House at times more adversarial than cooperative.

Late in the ninth century, the Primus Fenicil realized that the newly created Order had little tradition on which to base itself and that this lack of a foundation made its rules seem arbitrary and thus not worthy of a wizard's respect. He launched a decades-long campaign to search what records remained of Roman wizardry to find a deeper foundation for the Order. This search led him back to the Cult of Thoth and the writings of Hermes Trismegistus. Based on this history, Fenicil declared the Order of Hermes to be a temporary manifestation of an

## The Order of Hermes

eternal organization and its laws were likewise based on ancient history, not merely recent expedience. Strict adherence to the letter of the law was Fenicil's mandate to his House and the Order.

In addition to discovering evidence of previous magical orders, Fenicil found ancient rituals of great power. Rituals from Egypt and Rome depended on a large and devoted following, not the power of individuals. As such, they can only be cast by groups of people committed to a single cause. Thanks to this research, the Quaesitoris have powerful, secret spells that could not be cast by non-Quaesitoris, unless a group of them were somehow connected to each other and shared a powerful goal.

In the tenth century, a few magi discovered documents that seemed to be written by Guernicus. Found at the covenant of Duresca, they came to be known as the "Duresca scrolls." They described a secret agenda of the Quaesitoris, essentially a plan to dominate first the Order and then the world. These scrolls caused quite a stir in the Order, but they were officially declared fraudulent and destroyed. (Of course, Quaesitoris presided over the Tribunal that ruled on their authenticity.) A few secret copies of the documents remain, but the Quaesitoris have little patience with anyone who brings up the Duresca scrolls. Later in the tenth century, the Quaesitoris avidly pursued the execution of the diabolic followers of Tylalus. With the execution of these criminals, attention was turned away from the Duresca scrolls.

During the Schism War, the House of Quaesitoris was in turmoil. They almost completely lost their control and authority as the skirmishes evolved into outright battles. Then, as House Tremere prepared itself for all-out war, the Quaesitoris made a fateful decision. They fell in with House Tremere and supported the destruction of House Diedne. By the time the last Diedne magus was hunted down and slain, the Quaesitoris had regained their position of power. In fact, they now had shown to what extremes they would go to maintain order and they

pointed out that they could have ended the war earlier if they had possessed more authority. Ever since the Schism War, the Quaesitoris have been much more powerful.

For two hundred years, the Quaesitoris followed Fenicil's precedent of basing their judgments on strict interpretations of the law, assuming that anything more flexible would defeat the purpose of the law itself. Then, in 1148, a well-respected Quaesitor, Simprim, began openly opposing this policy, stating that a law or tradition incapable of change is a burden on the Order rather than a blessing. Many Quaesitoris, mostly younger ones, have come to agree with Simprim. With this split of opinion, the Traditionalists and the Transitionalists were formed. The Traditionalists, led by the Primus Arliandus, hold that the law is more important than individual magi and the magi must learn to adapt themselves to it. Only through such discipline, they claim, will the Order hold together. The Transitionalists, however, see the good of individual magi as foremost, with the law aiding them and changing to fit changing times. They are led by Protantus, filius of the late Simprim.

The Traditionalists and Transitionalists, for example, disagree about how to deal with the growth of the mundane population. The Traditionalists want to keep a pure separation between mundanes and magi, whereas the Transitionalists are lenient about magi who attempt to reach some kind of compromise with the mundanes. The debates are particularly heated over this topic. The Transitionalists say that the Traditionalists offer no new ideas to help the

Order deal with this new problem, only an outdated Code. The Traditionalists respond by saying that the Transitionalists offer nothing either, except criticism of a Code that was designed by better minds and spirits than they will ever be.

### Notable Magi of the Quaesitoris

**Guernicus**—A skeptic with a sense of humor who took the role of Quaesitor because he did not think the

#### The Quaesitoris as Judges

Quaesitoris have the right to investigate problems, interrogating the magi and others involved. Refusing to cooperate with an investigation is a punishable offense, with the severity of the punishment to be decided on in Tribunal based on the severity of the actions.

A Quaesitor does not have much immediate power if other magi decide to ignore them, but they can call down severe repercussions to those who do not follow their rulings. The Quaesitoris can call special Tribunals at which they vote and at which other magi may come only as non-voting witnesses. Anyone causing so much trouble that a Quaesitoris' Tribunal becomes necessary is likely to suffer unpleasant consequences. A Quaesitoris' Tribunal has authority to overrule any standard Tribunal.

The Quaesitoris have a group of magi, many of them Arch-Mages from House Flambeau, upon whom they can call in times of great need. These powerful wizards lay down the law in no uncertain terms when the orders of the Quaesitoris are not followed. This group is commonly known as the "Hopolites" by most magi, a name taken from the warriors of Greek legend, and their arrival in an area is greeted with dread.

(See the politics section for the Quaesitoris' role in Tribunals.)

Order would survive without someone playing that role. The House's unlikely Founder.

**Fencil**—The Primus who first started researching the ancient roots of magic; the one who eventually provided the Quaesitoris with the powerful rituals they now use to help enforce the law.

**Simprim**—The originator of the Transitionalist school.

**Hariel**—A jokester who never took the Order or his house seriously and spent much time trying to ridicule the basic foundations of the Order. Though others quickly tired of him, he was fundamental in enacting change in the early twelfth century. He always declared that he was acting in the best tradition of his House.

## Current Status

**Membership:** 49, plus 23 Quaesitoris belonging to other Houses

**Domus Magnus:** Magvillus, in the Roman Tribunal. This highly secretive covenant has nothing to do with local activities, except through normal, legal channels. No one other than Quaesitoris are allowed in and the inner buildings are only for those who do not belong to another House.

**Primus:** Arliandus, the leader of the Traditionalists.

**Current Concerns:** To hold magi to the Code through these trying times.

## Current Practices

The Quaesitoris are trying to deal with two struggles, the internal split between the Traditionalists and the Transitionalists, as well as the growing conflict between magi and mortals. Throughout these difficulties, they attempt to retain their dignity and composure. However, there are among them young magi who believe that they should follow in the true tradition of the house and offend, challenge, humor, and taunt the most accepted practices of the Order so as to precipitate change. They use the example of Guernicus to support their actions and love to bring up anecdotes of their Founder's antics to confound their staid and conservative colleagues. Most of the members of the House seek to silence these disrespectful magi, or at least prevent them from making their idea known to the Order at large, but this is becoming more impossible as they gain more confidence in their mission. The primus Arliandus dreads the day that one of them shall speak in a Tribunal, fearing they will destroy the respect the other magi have for the members of the House.

Apprentices must prove knowledge of Hermetic law as their Apprentice's Gauntlet. Usually they are locked into a sealed room without food or water for three days, during which time they must complete a written test without getting a single wrong answer. The test is always the same and is nearly 100 pages long.

Magi may not join the House of Quaesitoris, but they can be selected to hold Quaesitor status while remaining members of their original Houses. They are not required to take the test, though they are expected to learn the intricacies of the Code.

## Magi of the House Quaesitor

### Mentality of a Quaesitor

You are a member of an ancient institution of learning, wisdom, and power. Your history goes far back to the ancient Orient and beyond. Your role in this marvelous Order is a special one, that of judge. You have been found worthy to judge the wisest and mightiest of humans and that is a high honor. You still must prove yourself worthy, wise, prudent, careful, and intelligent, however, before you can be allowed into the greater mysteries at the center of your House. Some day, if you are found worthy, you will know what only the best Quaesitoris know and cast rituals of great power. For now, use your wisdom to hold the Order together through these dangerous times.

You may be a young radical within this House, dedicated to rediscovering what you believe to be carrying on in the true tradition of its Founder. The older magi believe you to be intolerably chaotic, but you believe that you are performing a service to the Order.

### Priorities

- 1) Faithfulness to the Code\*
- 2) Constructive resolution of disputes\*
- 3) Personal honor and recognition within your House
- 4) Honor in the Order

\* For a Transitionalist, 1) and 2) are reversed.

### Outlook

- **Bjornaer**—Their secretiveness breeds suspicion and dissension. Do not allow them to get away with shirking the Code.
- **Bonisagus**—Most honored descendants of this Order's Founder. Sometimes, however, they need to be reminded that Bonisagus merely revived an eternal institution and that they are not more important than House Quaesitor.
- **Criamon**—They sometimes believe that their "insights" place them above the law, but they rarely give others trouble.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—Some of them flaunt the Code in their distant, hidden hovels. When the current crises are over, we might have to take a close look at the rifferaff that has made its way into House Ex Miscellanea.
- **Flambeau**—They are ideal allies who help enforce the Code and eliminate violent nuisances.
- **Jerbiton**—They seek to breach the boundary that has separated mundane from magus. If they continue in



## The Order of Hermes

their actions, the Order could become so unstable that it will fall apart entirely.'

- **Mercere**—Most valued and useful redcaps. While we are the Order's conscience, they are its legs, mouth, and ears.
- **Merinita**—They rashly side with faeries against their sworn sodalis. They are difficult to control and to predict.
- **Tremere**—They know the value of discipline. More Houses should adopt their methods of leadership.
- **Tyталus**—Irritating jesters whose constant conflicts distract us from more important work.
- **Verditius**—They work well with magi of other Houses, building stability.
- **Faeries**—Distracting, silly, pointless beings.
- **Demons**—A terrible threat to the Order. Fortunately for all, we are constantly vigilant against them.
- **Mundanes**—We should have nothing to do with them. If we could enslave them all without danger to ourselves, we would.

### Intra-House Relations

As a young Quaesitor, you have a lot to prove. If you can maintain order in the area assigned to you, you will rise in the ranks and be given more territory to oversee.

Be attentive to your superiors and follow their commands carefully. Watch over your lessers and teach them in the ways of the House.

You can call on your superiors when magi fail to respect your legal power, but you will never rise to a position of importance if you cannot handle disobedience by yourself.

### Necessary Virtue

**Quaesitor, +1.** This overall virtue includes the equivalent of "Hermetic prestige," gives you some legal powers, and also puts certain restrictions on you. For instance, you may not vote at Tribunal nor develop bonds to others that will bias your judgments.

### Common Virtues & Flaws

**Affinity with Divination-type Magic, +1 to +4.** Could be as broad a "Affinity with Intéllego" or as specific as "Affinity with Seeing the Past."

**Clear Thinker, +1.** Thanks to rigorous training.

**Higher Purpose, +1.** Guiding the Order in following its Code is an important cause to you and this goal gives you strength in hard times.

**Dutybound, -1.** Only if you are a Traditionalist.

### Abilities

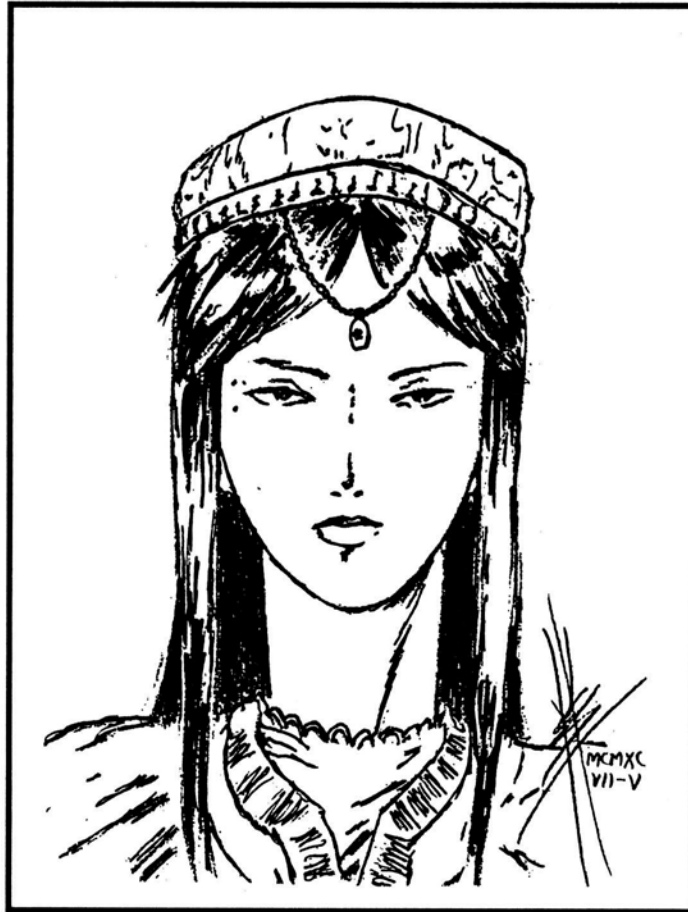
Those abilities that are important for political pursuits are carefully trained in the House of Quaesitoris, including Guile, Folk Ken, Subterfuge, Diplomacy, Intimidation, Intrigue, and Hermetic Law, a new arcane knowledge.

### Hermetic Law—

Judging events according to the Code of Hermes and the Peripheral Code. In addition to memorizing important precedents, this knowledge includes the practical ability to enforce Hermetic law: when to push for a vote, how to present an argument, etc. Specialties: apprentices, dealings with mundanes, Tribunal etiquette. (Int, Prs, Com)

### Magic

Guernicus gave up the pursuit of earth magic to study the art of detection and his followers have excelled at Intéllego ever since. They are also usually gifted at Imágonem and Mentem, to complement the way they usually use Intéllego. Quaesitoris were the ones who provided the Order with such spells as Eyes of



the Past and Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie.

If you go through Wizard's Twilight, you will be put on probation for a year. Your superiors must judge you fit before you can resume normal duties.

In addition to the spells listed below, the House has secret, powerful rituals. Other magi speculate that these rituals give the Quaesitoris unknown power over the Order.

**The Oath of Truth: Perdo Córporem 25**  
Reach, Perm., Ritual, Intéllego

This oath assures that a person will, on pain of death, take or avoid a specified action. You and two others whom you know well join hands in a circle around the target of the spell to cast this ritual. As part of the ritual, you address the target by name and say, "Do you

swear to..." and then state the conditions of the oath. When the target responds "I do so swear," the ritual is complete.

From that point on, the target is under the spell, and will die if they break the Oath. (Stm roll of 18+ to resist, in which case the target is knocked unconscious and receives 3 Decrepitude points.) Even considering breaking the Oath will cause the character to become uncomfortable and a bit disoriented.

Quaesitoris use this ritual to assure compliance to the law, but since it is seen as highly intrusive and heavy-handed, it is only used in extreme cases. According to tradition, the oath-swearer provides the raw *vis* needed for the ritual.

### Chain that Links the Minds:

Intéllego Mentem 25  
Touch, Spec.

Cast over a chain held by you and one or more others, this spell allows you to hold a silent, mental conversation with all those who grasp the chain. The spell lasts until anyone who holds the chain lets go of it. Speaking is voluntary, so there is no resistance roll allowed. Quaesitoris use this spell to discuss private matters of import in the presence of others.

### Example Quaesitor

Tresmillia, Filia of Jersta, Follower of Guernicus

**Status in the Order:** Tresmillia is well-known in her native Iberian Tribunal as well as in the Provençal Tribunal, where she is often brought in to consult in difficult cases involving magus-mundane problems.

**Description:** She is a young, tall, dark, energetic woman with brilliant eyes. She wears a dark, flowing robe, and when she speaks, she swings her wide sleeves dramatically.

**Personality:** She is driven by a desire to resolve the problems growing between the Order and society. A committed Transitionalist, she supports inventive approaches to dealing with mortals. Despite her commitment to her goal, she is not easily angered by those who disagree with her political agenda.

**Favored Magic:** She has a vast repertoire of *Mentem* and *Imágonem* spells that let her deal effectively with mortals, such as *Aura of Rightful Authority*.

**Background:** A child from war-torn Iberia, Tresmillia has always favored diplomacy over violence as a solution to problems within Europe. She looks forward to a time when the Order will be an accepted part of European society. Then, she believes, the Europeans will stop fighting so much internally and be able to turn their efforts to their true enemies, such as the Moors in Iberia.

Despite her youth, she has risen to a position of power within the Iberian Tribunal and one of respect in her House. Her superiors are Traditionalists, and she cannot act completely on her convictions without jeopardizing her possibilities for advancing in the House. She has not yet been allowed to participate in the secret ritual spells of the Quaesitoris, but she intends to do so soon.

**Quote:** "We know what the *Peripheral Code* says. Obviously it should be interpreted as follows..."

### Story Ideas

- Devils have become active nearby and evidence points to diabolists within the covenant. A Quaesitor comes to investigate and the characters must put up with snooping and interrogation while trying to find out what happened themselves. Perhaps the devils

are framing the characters, or perhaps there really is a diabolist among them.

- Tresmillia visits the characters to find out where they stand in a local dispute between another covenant and the Church. She is looking for new approaches to this old conflict. Can the characters offer constructive advice based on their knowledge of local politics? Tresmillia makes it clear that, as a Quaesitor, she cannot enter direct negotiations with mundanes, but she would happily accompany and aid anyone who would try such an approach. Can the characters do it?



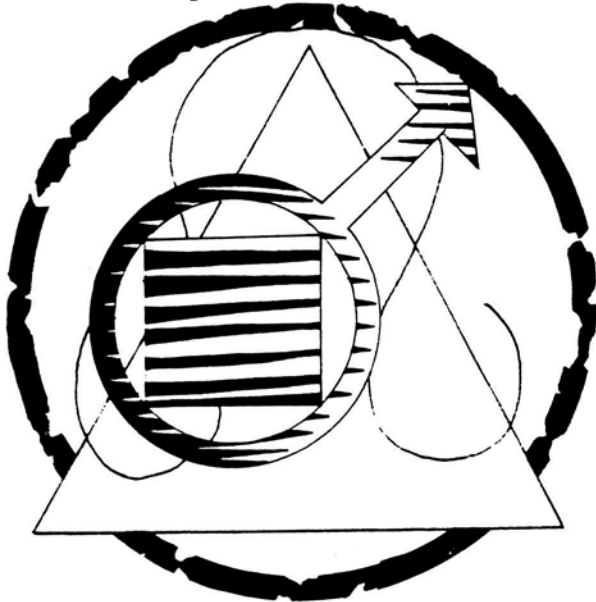
## House Tremere

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*"If you master magic, you can master others.  
If you master your mind, you can master yourself."  
—Tremere*

**Motto:** The Will Conquers All.

**Symbol:** The symbol for Mars with a square inscribed.



Followers of Tremere are strictly hierarchical. Within the House, they abide by carefully defined codes of subordination and dominance and they often expect other magi to fall in line. Their rigid structure makes them strong as a House, and the intense competition makes them powerful individually as well.

## History

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Tremere was the youngest and weakest magus among the Founders. He had studied under Guorna the Fetid, who had been Tylalus' master as well, and some magi today say that the family resemblance between the two Houses is strong. This connection to the famous Guorna gave him the prestige he needed to be included in the Order despite his youth and lack of experience.

Within the Order, Tremere had a problem. Studying under Guorna had given him a taste for fighting, but spell battles would likely endanger him because the other magi were more powerful than he. Somehow he needed a way to best the other magi and to do so he would need to invent some kind of contest at which he would be the expert. He consulted Bonisagus and worked with him, and they invented a way for magi to duel magically: certámen. Bonisagus and his filia Trianoma were happy with the new skill because it allowed magi to fight each

other without deadly spells, and Tremere was happy with it because no other magus had more experience with the skill than he did. Tremere quickly became a master of the new art and he passed his secrets to his apprentices.

Tremere was the last Founder to remain alive and during his lifetime he built his followers into a highly organized political and military unit. Briefly in the ninth century, House Tremere was on the verge of dominating the Order. The other Houses were still relatively new at certámen and they had not applied themselves to learning the new art as the followers of Tremere had. He and his House were taking control of politics, land, resources, and were even influencing the ever evolving Peripheral Code. They even managed to have it decreed that those who refused to submit to a challenge of certámen would be declare rogue and thrown from the Order. He probably would have solidified his hold on the Order even further if a group of unidentified magi had not penetrated the defenses around his covenant and struck his key lieutenants. These trusted aids were affected with spells which drove them to mad and violent behavior yet kept them in enough control of their faculties so that Tremere could not remove them from their posts. Unable to control his lieutenants, Tremere could not unite his House to maintain his control of the Order and he eventually appealed to House Mercere to arrange for a negotiation with the attackers. In a secret and still unknown meeting place, Tremere met with representatives of the magi who had moved against him and with the Prima of House Mercere and the Primus of House Quaesitor. Apparently, they came to some kind of agreement for all hostilities ceased, House Tremere ended its attempt to control the Order, and the magi were restored to their sanity.

The chief concern of the Quaesitor was to keep what has come to be called "the sundering" from resurfacing, so she ruled that all records of this conflict be stricken from Hermetic records and that none were to pass on knowledge of these events. Followers of Tremere were subject to mental searches until Tremere's death to make sure that none of them had learned the identity of the attacking magi. This action has kept House Tremere from holding a grudge against those who brought them down, but one never knows if magi might discover historical clues that will bring the sundering back to the minds of Tremere's followers.

After Tremere's near domination of the Order, magi from other Houses began studying the skill of certámen a bit more seriously, but the followers of Tremere have remained masters of the art. Politically, House Tremere is no longer the force it once was, but its members still hold considerable influence at Tribunals — due largely to their organization and sharpness of mind.

During the Schism War, House Tremere played the central role. Unwilling to accept any affront from House Díedne and any others, they responded to each offense or attack with greater strength. After years of escalating

skirmishes, the Primus Cercistum rallied House Tremere into a full-scale war. With their strong discipline and organization, the aid of House Flambeau, and the sanction of the Quaesitoris, they destroyed House Díedne. They might have continued their attacks on other, lesser enemies, such as House Merinita, but the Quaesitoris stopped them and negotiated peace throughout the Order.

Over the centuries, House Tremere has been sometimes close to and sometimes at odds with House Tytalus. The two Founders had the same master, so they were similar in philosophy. At times, the Houses find themselves close enough to cooperate and at others they become rivals. Magi from other Houses sometimes see Tremere and Tytalus as very similar, but those within the Houses see a clear distinction: followers of Tytalus fight in order to learn more, while followers of Tremere learn in order to fight better.

### Notable Magi of Tremere

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**Tremere**—He went from being the youngest Founder to nearly controlling vast portions of the Order. Magi regard him more with respect than fear now that his actions are centuries past.

**Cercistum**—The Primus who headed the war against House Díedne.

### Current Status

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**Membership:** 72

**Domus Magnus:** Coeris, in the Transylvania Tribunal. They are a center of power in the area.

**Primus:** Unamo. He says that the Order must unite to stand up against the mundanes, who have become unified under a strong, hierarchical Church. He believes that the House of Tremere should head the united Order.

**Current Concerns:** To consolidate power within the House and with allies of other Houses.

### Current Practices

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House Tremere is a hierarchy regulated by certámen. Rank is symbolized by sigils. Each master constructs sigils for their apprentices but does not grant them when the apprentices become magi. Instead, the parens (pater or mater) holds and votes with the sigils until their filii can best them in ritual certámen, or until the parens passes on. Any follower of Tremere can command those whose sigils they hold, as well as voting with those sigils at Tribunals. If a magus whose sigil is held by another trains an apprentice, that apprentice's sigil is also held by the magus who holds the master's sigil. Thus a follower of Tremere has no voting power until they have bested their parens, and their parens has in turn bested their parens, and so on. In beating their former master, a Tremere magus gains their own sigils

and the sigils of their apprentices. This hierarchy means that only fourteen magi currently have their own sigils, and they hold among them the remaining fifty-eight sigils of the other followers of Tremere. With sigils and power so concentrated, House Tremere can present a strong, nearly united force when they need to. Within House Tremere, one's rank is determined by the number of sigils one holds (except that the Primi hold head rank even if their filii win their sigils). A Tremere magus can only vote with the sigils of magi who live within their Tribunal. If one holds sigils of magi from other Tribunals, they are used as a sign of rank within the House, but they cannot be used as votes.

In addition to using certámen to distribute sigils, the followers of Tremere regularly use certámen to settle all manner of pursuits. They regard certámen as the purest form of conflict and despise debates, politics, and battles that could be solved through orderly duels. Naturally, they surpass other magi at this skill and even have secret techniques that help them win their many duels.

Members of the House meet at Coeris every ten years to coordinate strategies for the next decade.

Politically, the House is primarily concerned with power. They fight for their rights and privileges and are unforgiving when others underestimate them in any way. The magi are carefully ranked within the House, and even when dealing with outsiders they take care to use the respect proper to the status of those with whom they deal. They demand, likewise, that others respect them according to their own status.

The followers of Tremere have developed a complex version of chess in which certain pieces have powers over others depending on their level in a hierarchy. Few outside the House bother to learn it, but Tremere magi can absorb themselves in it almost indefinitely if they can find opponents of nearly equal ability.

Recent news from the Transylvania Tribunal says that a small enclave of Tremere magi have become vampires. Apparently, they have given up some of their freedom to seek immortality and increased power. The Transylvania Tribunal is far enough from centers of Hermetic power and House Tremere is still influential enough that it might be a long time before any concrete action is taken. If the vampires are found to be diabolic in nature, they will be destroyed. If they are not, then the Quaesitoris might have to call a Quaesitoris' Tribunal to settle the matter.

The Apprentice's Gauntlet consists of performing well in certámen. To defeat a full magus is too unrealistic a task to expect from a mere apprentice. Entrance is gained by those who can defeat three champions of the House in certámen. Good luck.

**Magi of House Tremere****Mentality of a Tremere Magus**

You see yourself rising rung by rung up the ladder of power. At first you will be under the power of others and the submission required of you may rankle at times, but you must be patient. Your superiors are teaching you what it is like to be subordinate and when you rise to rule over others, you will be able to understand your underlings better thanks to this experience. Submission to superiors will also train your will and self-control and no one can rule others without first ruling the self. Obey your superiors and do everything you can to make yourself a valued underling.

On the other hand, you should not be satisfied to remain a mere underling your whole life. Study magic, practice certámen, use politics to your advantage, and come to rule others. When you have power over others, you are not to abuse it. It will still be your responsibility to your superiors to lead your inferiors prudently. Power over others is the most useful tool in this life and if you misuse this power, you are a fool on the same order as the haughty barons and priests of mundane society. With inferiors, be firm and consistent. Almost anyone makes a good follower if the leader is a good enough leader.

You may be sent out to live and work among the magi of other Houses, weakening your direct ties with your superiors in House Tremere. If so, use your time wisely: grow in magical and political power, pull others under your leadership, and prepare the way should your superiors wish to enter and control the area where you live.

**Priorities**

- 1) Serving House Tremere
- 2) Serving your superiors in the House
- 3) Personal achievement
- 4) Raising the Order above the mundanes

**Outlook**

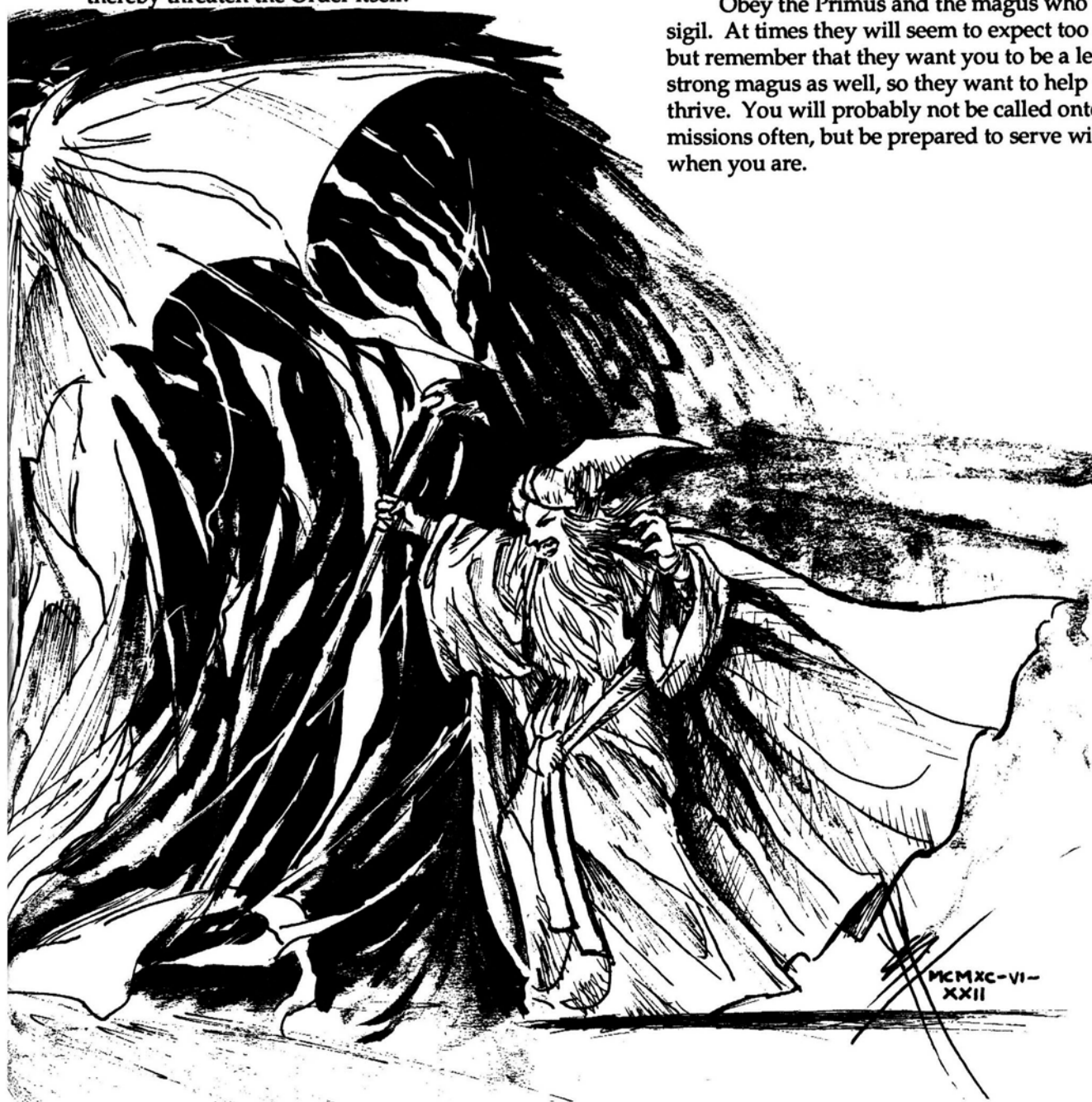
- Bjornaer—They know something about themselves, but are too weak to rule others.



- **Bonisagus**—The magic they invent is useful and they deserve a special place in the hierarchy of the Order.
- **Criamon**—They never lead and never follow; ignore them.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—One can dominate them individually, but they have no internal hierarchy, so doing so is next to pointless.
- **Flambeau**—A good House to have as an ally.
- **Jerbiton**—The knowledge they gather about the mundanes will help us rule the world some day.
- **Mercere**—They know their place.
- **Merinita**—They are controlled by faerie power, rather than controlling it; very dangerous.
- **Quaesitor**—Without them, the Order would fall apart and our power would be nothing. Respect and obey them always; ruin those who disobey them and thereby threaten the Order itself.
- **Tytalus**—An example of what happens when magi have no leadership, no hierarchy, and no self-control. Their skill and energy are wasted on anarchy.
- **Verditius**—They know their place and serve other magi. Value them for their service.
- **Grogs**—Accept no insubordination.
- **Demons**—They know the strength to be found in hierarchy and are therefore very dangerous.
- **Faeries**—Random, anarchic, frivolous, and best avoided.
- **Mundane Society**—The Pope has proven that the world can be brought under one ruler; someday it will be a magus.
- **Nobles**—Some are wise and weak; others foolish and weak

### Intra-House Relations

Obey the Primus and the magus who holds your sigil. At times they will seem to expect too much of you, but remember that they want you to be a leader and a strong magus as well, so they want to help you grow and thrive. You will probably not be called onto dangerous missions often, but be prepared to serve with courage when you are.



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XXII

## The Order of Hermes

### Common Virtues & Flaws

**Knack with Certámen, +1 or +2.** Representing the special techniques you have learned and the early practice you received.

**Self-Confident, +1, +2, +3, or +4.** You have been taught that you are superior to the vast majority of humanity and that House Tremere is superior to the other Houses of Hermes.

**Strong-Willed, +1.** Remember, "The Will Conquers All."

**No Sigil, -1.** Your sigil is held by your parens, or perhaps by their parens. You cannot vote at Tribunal and the magus who holds your sigil can call on you to perform whatever tasks and missions they want. You must defeat the holder of your sigil in certámen to get your sigil. If you have filii, you will not hold their sigils until you hold your own.

**Sensitive to Disrespect, -1.** You are easily offended by those who do not show proper respect to you and your conception of "proper respect" is probably different from that of others. While traveling incognito among the mundanes, you will often be treated as a mere mortal, and this treatment will be extremely trying on you.

### Abilities

Certámen is a must, and other abilities that let you rule others and excel at politics are good supplements to it: Intimidate, Leadership, Folk Ken, Hermes Lore, etc.

### Magic

Your spells are likely those that help you control those you cannot control through certámen: grogs, other mundanes, beasts, supernatural creatures, etc. Rego, Mentem, Córporum, and Animál are common arts.

### Example Maga of Tremere

**Arch-Mage Ladkyis, Filia of Numen, Follower of Tremere**

**Status in the Order:** Ladkyis is something of a legend in the Order, though details of her unique condition are not widely known. For most, she is an oddity.

Since she spends most of her time at her home covenant of Doissetep, few have met her recently. Her reputation as the best worker of body magics has faded, since she has made no new discoveries since her last, fateful Twilight.

**Description:** Though she is obviously wracked by old age and repeated Twilights, she moves her wrinkled body with confidence and ease. Ladkyis always wears the same robe, which is covered with ornate loops, pouches, tassels, and embroidered symbols. She speaks in a monotone.

**Personality:** Ladkyis rarely has a facial expression, though she smiles when she sees old friends and becomes furious when her status is questioned.

**Favored Magic:** She is the undisputed mistress of body magics within the Order.

**Background:** Through daring experimentation, Ladkyis gained the position of most knowledgeable Córporum maga in the Order, which she solidified by challenging all rivals to certámen in the art of Córporum. Unfortunately, there was a price to be paid for excellence, and she paid it seventeen years ago when she went through final Twilight. Ladkyis passed on as a result of the Twilight, but her body, through force of magic, remains. It continues to function by habit, doing everything that a body normally does: eat, sleep,

hold meaningful conversations, and so on. Her mind, however, is gone. She can learn nothing new. Her body merely acts out habits that Ladkyis had built up over the years.

That her mind is dead is not immediately apparent because her body continues normally. She can even laugh at jokes, provided they are jokes she knew before her final Twilight. Any new joke receives only a polite laugh or perhaps confusion. She has a temporary memory that allows her to learn others' names and so on, but she never remembers anything new for more than a day.

The magi of her covenant care for her, since she is unable to plan, but mostly she can fend for herself. She rarely travels, except when other magi wish to study her or consult her on profound matters of Córporum magic.



Though she can learn nothing new, she is still the best Córporém maga in the Order. Those who have talked with her are convinced that she knows much more than she is telling, but that she will never reveal it because no one can gain her trust. To her, everyone that she did not know before her final Twilight will always be a stranger, and with those she trusts, she repeats herself every day, having forgotten what she has already told them.

The Quaesitoris have ruled that Ladkyis still receives the protection of the Code, but her sigil does not count as a vote at Tribunals.

**Quote:** *"I don't believe we've met. My name is Ladkyis of House Tremere."*

### Story Ideas

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- A player's Tremere magus who does not have their sigil is forced to undergo dangerous expeditions to acquire knowledge, *vis*, or other magical things for a superior magus.

- A player's Tremere magus is required to investigate a local covenant and deliver all relevant information to be found. The character's superior hints that this information is eventually meant for the Primus' eyes.

- A small group of Tremere magi attempts to dominate the local Tribunal. First they attempt to ally the player magi and anyone else who can oppose them, and when they have enough allies, they use certámen and unified voting to control the Tribunal and unite the

Tribunal for a specific campaign, which they will naturally lead. For example, they may try to unite the magi behind a campaign to obliterate an evil faerie forest or to assassinate a local baron. To carry out this scheme, they require that some of the Tribunal's resources be diverted to their cause (i.e. to them). They promise the characters a share of the power that they will win. Do the characters go along with the powerful Tremere magi to gain a share of the spoils, or do they stand up to the totalitarian wizards?

- For inexplicable reasons, Ladkyis suddenly leaves Doissetep and undertakes a journey, eventually ending up at the players' covenant. She is followed by several younger magi from Doissetep and a huge company of grogs — sent along to protect her, but not to prevent her from carrying out whatever purpose brought her here. They have as little an idea of what is going on as the players do, but will relate to them what they know of her Twilight. Ladkyis eventually wanders into the council room and sits there, waiting for a council. Once a meeting is actually held in the room, she begins a disjointed discussion with magi who are not present about an issue that is relevant to the characters. What she says is highly interesting, yet it is clear that she has not recovered from her slumber. Whatever happens next, it is certain to include her.



## House Tytalus

*"Hariste, I go now to confront the Queen of the Faeries. I have bested many opponents in many contests, and now I intend to face the Queen in her Lands, to play her Game, and to best her, if it is within my ability. It is the only Game I have left to play. It may be my last, or my first."*

—Tytalus, to Hariste, his favorite filia

**Motto:** From Conflict Comes Growth.

**Symbol:** A spiral turning in to the right.



House Tytalus is small and generally distrusted, but the energy of its members makes up for some of this deficiency. Tytalus taught that conflict and struggle are sources of growth and learning, and his followers continue to put this philosophy into action. They can be found in all levels of contests and strife, within the Order and without: debating at Tribunals, engaging in certámen, skirmishing with nobles, facing magical beasts, and challenging each other in complicated tests of will and wit.

### History

The incessant battles between Tytalus and other magi was one of the reasons that forming the Order appealed to wizards of the eighth century. Tytalus was known as a hot-tempered wizard, prone to challenging other powerful wizards just for the sake of testing himself and learning from his defeats and victories. Initially, he spoke out against the Order because he thought it would restrict magi too much. When its formation became more certain, he admitted his political defeat and joined the other powerful magi of the time in founding the Order.

Once the Order was formed, Tytalus turned his energies outward at those magi who refused to join. He took great pleasure in hunting them down and defeating

them, though he often let them live once they had acknowledged defeat — unlike Flambeau, who did not give up until they were slain.

Tytalus' relationship with his favored filia, Hariste, set a tradition of "beloved rivals" for all his followers to the present. Though their devotion to each other was obvious, they were constantly involved in games and contests of power. To those who did not know them well, they seemed to hate each other.

Tytalus was lost to the Order in A.D. 807 when he went into the Maddenhofen Woods to confront the Queen of the Faeries and beat her at her own Game. (Some say he should have taken Hariste with him and that he would have survived if he had.) He never returned from the forest and the faeries have denied any knowledge of his fate. Some in the House, believing him simply to be trapped there, look forward to the bright day when Tytalus shall return from Faerieland. Thinking that he entered Faerieland for only a few days, he may return when centuries have actually passed. A few Tytalus magi follow his example and head into the faerie woods when they have grown too old or too near Twilight to continue their lives as they would like. There they greet whatever fate awaits them, perhaps the same fate that Tytalus met.

With the loss of Tytalus, the House became more gentle, starting a trend that still continues. Tytalus lived in a more brutal time and his extravagant shows of force would be out of place in the more civilized thirteenth century. Tytalus magi follow his example of conflict and struggle, but they tend to be more subtle in the pursuit of their goals these days.

In the tenth century, the three leaders of House Tytalus, including Tasgillia, the Prima, along with many other members, were found to be diabolists. They had been implanting diabolic symbols in spells which they had invented and then shared with others, thereby exposing magi to demonic influence. Many magi throughout the Order, including several of Bonisagus, had been corrupted when the Quaesitoris uncovered the plot. The diabolists were exposed, tried, destroyed, and struck from official Hermetic records. Since the diabolists were no longer considered magi of the Order, those who had been their apprentices had to be adopted by other magi in Order to retain their status as Hermetic wizards.

Tasgillia's last words to the Tribunal at Doissetep were:

*"The Deceiver plays a subtle game. He wants only one thing, your soul, and because it is the only thing he wants, he will give you anything for the chance to get it. The object of any game played with the Deceiver is to take as much as you can from him without giving him the one thing he wants in return. I failed the contest, but I cannot and will not regret the attempt. Please remember me as one who simply failed a contest that is more vital, and therefore more worthy of play, than most."*

This speech did not increase the trust the Order of Hermes feels (or, rather, does not feel) for House Tytalus.

Followers of Tytalus have since assured the Order that they have learned their lesson and will never again dabble in such things, but many (perhaps most) Tytalus magi regard the affair as an example of a game that proved too subtle for the magi involved. They tried to get secrets from Hell without losing their souls and they failed. They see losing the game as a mistake, but not necessarily playing it.

With the best of the House destroyed, Tytalus became a minor force in the Order. Previous to this catastrophe, Tytalus' energetic spirit had made this House well-known and forceful, but only now is it recovering some of the prestige it once had. It is still the smallest House in the Order because of the strictures and punishments meted out after the diabolist scandal.

### Notable Magi of Tytalus

**Tytalus**—Known for being combative and hot-tempered. He drove off or slew many non-Hermetic magi.

**Hariste**—Tytalus' favored filia.

**Pralix**—Filia of Tytalus, founder of Ex Miscellanea.

**Tasgillia**—The Prima who master-minded a diabolic plot in the tenth century.

### Current Status

**Membership:** 26

**Domus Magnus:** Fudarus, in the Normandy Tribunal. Since this is a small House, its Domus Magnus has little influence in the area.

**Primus:** Bulistie. He strongly defends Tytalus' violent actions and even has defended Tasgillia at times.

**Current Concerns:** To regain lost power and prestige without feeling ashamed for the past; followers of Tytalus are encouraged to take apprentices and prove themselves in visible shows of prowess

### Current Practices

The followers of Tytalus have learned subtlety over the years. While they still thrive on conflict, they have learned that non-violent, or at least less violent, conflicts are most acceptable in the Order and the world in general. Many of them are deeply involved in Hermetic politics, using all the intelligence, will, and trickery they can muster to influence the votes of others. Others prefer to learn from conflicts with nobles, the Church, and faeries. In more barbaric lands, however, some still focus on violent battles with other supernatural forces, including non-Hermetic magi.

The subtlety now practiced by the followers of Tytalus worries some magi of other Houses. A Tytalus magus who puts all their energy behind some political move at Tribunal might not be at all concerned with the outcome, per se, but may be simply looking for a contest

worthy of their abilities. What the Tytalus magi are really after, no one knows. Most suspect that the House has no overall goal, other than to regain lost prestige, but others hold that Bulistie has some secret plan that may soon be revealed to the House. With their practice at conflicts from politics to combat, the followers of Tytalus could be a formidable force if they had a common goal. It is said by some that they still have secret knowledge of magic gained when their leaders consorted with the Infernal powers.

Much to the relief of other magi, Tytalus magi often keep their most subtle battles within the House. After all, there are few outside the House that can provide a Tytalus magus with the subtle challenges that another follower of Tytalus can. Every seventeen years, the magi of Tytalus meet at Fudarus, the Domus Magnus. They use this time to share what they have learned in their various covenants and to get any directions that the Primus may wish to give them, but most of the time is devoted to one, long, involved contest. There are no rules and no boundaries to this contest, except that at the end of the gathering, which is generally about a month long, the magi vote on which of them has "won." Since the criteria of judging the winner are themselves open to debate as part of the contest, no one can say what the vote is exactly based on, but somehow they always reach a majority vote. To any outside the House, the entire process is nearly inexplicable. Young magi especially enjoy these gatherings because they have the opportunity to see their former masters bested by even older and more experienced magi. Many of these young magi are highly competitive with their parents, and the opportunity to see one's parents toyed with and possibly humiliated is not to be missed.

Each master may determine their own Apprentice's Gauntlets for their apprentices. The Primus sets the requirements for anyone who wishes to gain entrance to House Tytalus from another house.

### Magi of House Tytalus

#### Mentality of a Tytalus Magus

You see yourself as helping others to achieve more by challenging them and learning much yourself in the bargain. You feel a kinship with other powerful beings, even with your enemies, because from them you can learn much. You have been taught to distinguish between destructive and constructive conflict, and indulging in destructive conflict is frowned upon in the House as a misuse of a valuable tool.

#### Priorities

- 1) Individual achievement
- 2) Achievement of the covenant
- 3) Achievement of House Tytalus
- 4) Achievement of the Order
- 5) Achievement of worthy beings outside the Order

## The Order of Hermes

### Outlook

- **Bjornaer**—Too introspective to engage in useful challenges.
- **Bonisagus**—Boring and pedantic, slow of mind.
- **Criamon**—They play the game of magic better than anyone and are respected for that.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—Their access to unpredictable, non-Hermetic magic makes them interesting opponents.
- **Flambeau**—Good allies, good opponents, as far as violence is concerned.
- **Jerbiton**—They value cooperation too highly.
- **Mercere**—A valuable part of the Hermetic contest, since they control who learns what.
- **Merinita**—Challenge those who mock our Founder. Defeat them whenever possible.
- **Quaesitor**—Masters of their game, worthy of challenge, yet weakened by attachment to dogma; fun to argue with.
- **Tremere**—Worthy cousins, magically and politically strong.
- **Verditius**—Their weakness has taught them cunning and strength.
- **Grogs**—They recognize the glory of conflict, too bad they're so limited.
- **Demons**—Too dangerous to challenge (probably).
- **Faeries**—Don't try to beat them at their own game.
- **Mundane Society**—Not worth fighting.

### Intra-House Relations

You must always prove yourself to the others in the House and any means you find to do so are acceptable. Your superiors may call on your services from time to time, but there is no dishonor in ignoring them. You had better be ready, however, to face them when they come to draw you in line. When they can no longer coerce you to follow their orders, they are no longer your superiors.

If you ever prove to be a misfit, such as by refusing to fight back against others in the House, you will be labeled a "weakling" and cast out of the House.

You will likely form some strong bonds with others in the House, even if these bonds are based on competition.

### Common Virtues & Flaws

**Strong-Willed, +1.** As a result of surviving apprenticeship under a follower of Tytalus.

**Driving Goal, -1.** To prove yourself against all worthy opponents.

**Code of Honor, -1.** To respect opponents, to fight fairly, to let defeated opponents live when possible, etc.

**Tormenting Master, -1.** Your master does not believe that you have successfully passed the Apprentice's Gauntlet yet, and they periodically trouble you with political moves or indirect attacks.

### Abilities

Tyталus magi favor abilities that can be used in contests with others and they often choose one or two specialties in which they try to excel mightily. As the

House has become more political and mental in its conflicts, it has developed the art of debate. Tyталus magi admit that presentation, personal reputation and emotion can influence the outcome of a debate, but they accept such factors as part of the challenge.

The skill Debate is available to any character, but it is most common in this House. No major decisions are made in the House without a thorough debate.

**Debate**—Proving your view superior to your opponent's through use of facts, logic, and presentation. It has little effect when countering emotions because emotional people are little swayed by logic. Reputation is used as a modifier, where applicable. Depending on the needs of

the story, Debate rolls can be used for precise maneuvers, such as spotting an opponent's non sequiturs, convincing key members of the audience, or it can be used to indicate a general victory. **Specialties:** philosophy, Hermetic law, conversational. (Com, Prs, Int)

### Magic

Tyталus magi prefer aggressive but non-lethal spells. You can learn a lot from killing a powerful opponent, but you learn even more if your enemy can come back to challenge you another day.

Followers of Tyталus consider it a show of excellence to win conflicts with more subtle spells. Since overpowering spells like **Pilum of Fire** take little ingenuity to use, it is considered base to rely on them. A Tyталus magus who can use subtle spells effectively is highly respected.



**The Burning Mark of Shame:** Perdo Córporum 10 Near, Inst.

Each Tytalus magus makes up a unique version of this spell, which burns a reddish mark into the skin of a target (which in periods of exertion will actually exude small amounts of blood). The magus who creates each specific spell determines where the mark is and what it looks like. The burn does not heal naturally and itches for up to a week.

Honor dictates that a Tytalus magus cast this spell only on a defeated opponent and that person is to wear it as a sign of being defeated by the wizard who cast it. If someone (besides the caster) removes the mark, the caster feels that the target has not accepted defeat and must be defeated again, more decisively this time. Tytalus magi who remove a **Burning Mark of Shame** without permission of the one who put it there may be cast out of the House.

**Duel of Minds:** Rego Mentem 20 Touch, Spec.

Allows you and one other intelligent being to engage in a direct battle of mental power. First, you choose one way in which you disagree with the target and then you cast the spell. Roll Int + Concentration vs. Int + Concentration each round (Strong-Willed counts as a bonus), with the victor accumulating one point for each point by which his roll exceeds the other's. The first to accumulate 7 points can change the other's mind so that they agree on the stated issue in the victor's favor. The loser can attempt an Int roll of 7+ one per round, once per day, depending on how great the change of mind is.

Altering another's opinion this way risks that your opinion will be the one changed, so it is seen as more praiseworthy than using a spell that changes another's mind directly.

### Example Magus of House Tytalus

**Caecus, Filius of Coracol, Follower of Tytalus**

**Status in the Order:** In Languedoc he is unknown. In Hibernia, he is infamous as the magus who was nearly executed for diabolism.

**Description:** He appears to be about forty years old (actually 53). His step is slow and some of his muscle has gone to flab. His most striking feature is his eyes: they have no visible pupils and the eyelids are black, cracked, and immobile. (His name means "the Blind," but he can see, although not well.) He wears a simple robe with a belt and pouch. At his side he carries a sax, which is like a large dagger, used for chopping. This weapon and his pale features mark him as a Saxon. He never looks in the eyes of those with whom he speaks.

**Personality:** Caecus has survived the trials of his life thanks to his stern, cynical, sometimes fatalistic outlook. As a magus of destruction, he accepts death; as a member of Tagelyn/Ashenrise, he has seen plenty of it. He has an unusual respect for grogs, valuing their

loyalty, strength, simplicity, and courage in the face of death. He believes that facing death gives them a maturity not found even in most younger magi. Some of this respect for grogs comes from Caecus' vulgar father, who was the leader of a mercenary band.

**Favored Magic:** Perdo (destruction) is his favored art. He likes to see things brought to a close, which usually means the destruction or death of something or someone. He has an affinity with Perdo magic (plus a bonus vs. demons, thanks to a Twilight), and he has a deficiency with Córporum.

**Background:** He suffered long and hard under his master, but always kept his spirit and independence. Once he snuck into his master's private chamber and peered into a magic crystal. It showed him something too strong for his young mind and he was knocked unconscious. When he awoke, he could not remember what he had seen and his eyes had been damaged. (Thus their current state and his Hermetic name.)

After apprenticeship, he went to the new covenant of Tagelyn, which was soon overrun by the evil magi of Blackthorn. He and his surviving fellows fled to Hibernia where they founded Ashenrise. He grew powerful there, but soon enough this covenant was attacked and nearly obliterated by demons. It was during this attack that he was nearly possessed, and in the following trial, he came close to being executed. This brush with corruption has eliminated his sense of humor about demons. He now goes by the name "Erat Caecus," which means "Was blind." The new name refers to the time he spent under a demon's thrall. Mostly, he still goes by "Caecus" and only uses "Erat Caecus" when being formal.

Now he has left Ashenrise and has taken membership in Val-Negra.

**Quote:** "*Finis pulchra est.*" ("The end is beautiful." Said over corpses, as well as in other circumstances in which something has come to its end.)

### Story Ideas

- Tytalus returns from Maddenhofen after an ordeal in Faerieland, but he is somehow changed. Is he, in fact, truly Tytalus? A good seed for a mini-Saga involving Tytalus characters.

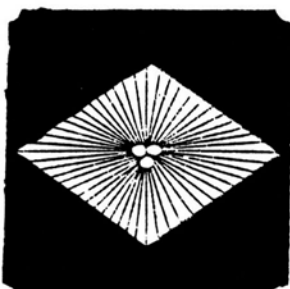
- The local follower of Tytalus causes trouble, robbing the player-characters, encroaching on their territory, or otherwise threatening the covenant. If stopped and caught, she naturally explains that she was just harassing them to expose their weaknesses so they could learn to be stronger in the long run.

- An old Tytalus magus disappears in a faerie forest, and the characters encounter him later. He is not the same.

## The Order of Hermes



Creo



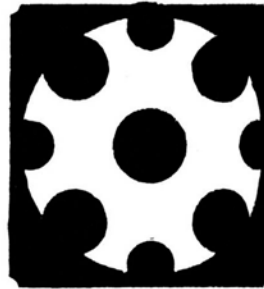
Intellego



Muto



Rego



Perdo



Animal



Aquam



Auram



Corporem



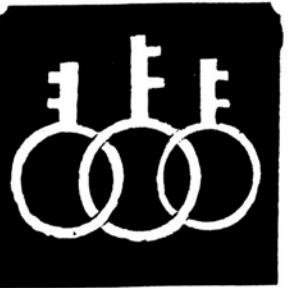
Herbam



Ignem



Imagomen



Mentem



Terram



Vim

### Verditius' Runes

Verditius developed fifteen runes, one for each of Bonisagus' arts. If these runes are carved or otherwise worked into a magical item, they help focus magical power and make the item easier to manufacture. Using one rune gives you a +2 bonus on your Lab total for instilling a power and using two gives you a +3 bonus. The only disadvantage is that these runes can hint at the purpose of the item. Anyone familiar with magic theory (score of 3+) will be able to identify the runes to get a general idea of the item's powers and they can be used in the laboratory to help determine an item's specific abilities. The same bonus that applies to instilling a power is added to a magus' roll to discover that power.

If an item has multiple powers, the complimentary runes must be put together for each power. The various runes will be ineffective if they are intermixed.

Magi sometimes carve false runes into their devices so that casual observation cannot reveal their powers, but rudimentary investigation with Intellego Vim (Level 10+) reveals which are the true runes and which the false. If you really want to confuse other magi, you can work false runes into a power. Instead of getting a bonus, you will receive -3 on your Lab Total for every false rune you use. Casual magical investigation cannot distinguish these runes from true ones and anyone attempting to investigate the item in the lab suffers a similar penalty on rolls to reveal that power.

For example, suppose Retistius wants to make a ring that transforms the wearer's body. If he uses the Muto (change) and Corporem (body) runes, he will get +3 on his Lab total. If he wants to confuse other magi who might come across the ring, he could use the Creo (create) rune instead of Muto. He would get -1 on his Lab total (-3 for Creo, +2 for the correct Corporem rune). If he wanted to be more confusing, he could use, for example, Creo Mentem runes and suffer a -6 on his Lab total.

House Verditius has shared knowledge of these runes with the Order, so magi of any House can use them.

## House Verditius

*"Other magi see these devices as tools, like a sword or a spade. They do not understand what it takes to make magical devices and that is why they cannot make them as well as we can. They do not understand that what they call tools are parts of our minds, extensions of ourselves as surely as our hands and our words. The simple truth is that the crafter must put themselves in what they create if it is to be worthy of them."*

—Verditius

**Motto:** All Things Are Our Tools.

**Symbol:** A hand with a ring on each finger; these are the five rings that Verditius used, perhaps the most powerful magical rings in Hermetic history.



Followers of Verditius can only cast formulaic magic through the use of small magical devices, so in that sense they are weaker than average magi. On the other hand, they have brilliant skill as crafters of magic items and they have turned this ability into a lucrative source of wealth and prestige. They sell magical devices of all kinds to other magi. Though their position appears subservient since they are working for others, they actually have a great deal of subtle power.

### History

Verditius never cast a spell in his life, but as a designer of magical devices, he has never been matched. He was eager to join the Order because it gave him certain protection from other magi. He feared that he was unable to hold his own in magical battles and wanted to be part of an Order that would allow him to practice his craft in peace and safety.

He worked long and hard with Bonisagus, sharing what he knew about crafting magical devices, but every time he became philosophical about the intangible, inexpressible part of magical creation, Bonisagus said that such talk was pointless. Though Bonisagus managed to capture the simplest and most direct instructions for making magical devices, he never could quantify the personal element that Verditius thought was so important. Hermetic theory includes the basics for magic item creation, but it lacks the special touch that the followers of Verditius have learned.

In turn, Verditius tried to learn from Bonisagus the spell-casting ability of other magi, but he failed. He never could manage a single spell.

His apprentices, however, had some success in this pursuit. They learned to cast spontaneous magic, and one of them, Fenistour, developed a way to mimic formulaic spells. She created the first spell foci, which are small magical devices that allow Verditius magi to cast formulaic Hermetic spells. These spell foci are now universal in the House.

Even with the ability to cast formulaic spells, however, the followers of Verditius retained their attitude of defensiveness. They developed the habit of designing magical devices for other magi, a practice that serves a double purpose. On one hand, it makes a direct profit for the House, bringing in raw *vis* or silver. On the other hand, it makes other magi slightly dependent on House Verditius to provide these excellent items, so the House has become highly valued in the Order. Some magi respect the Verditius magi less for being "crafters" instead of philosophers, but House Verditius is happy with raw *vis* and favorable treatment if it cannot gain respect.

During the various crises that shook the Order, House Verditius has played it safe. They refused to involve themselves in the Schism War and they let the Quaestoris handle the execution of the Tylalus diabolists. The recent growing threat, however, is worrying some Verditius magi. As mundane society encroaches on magical and faerie areas, more and more sources of raw *vis* are lost. Verditius magi need raw *vis* for their devices, so they are not all willing to sit by and let other magi handle the situation. Increasingly, they are using their influence with the magi who have grown used to their "toys."

### Notable Magi of Verditius

**Verditius**—Founder, crafter of magic items nonpareil.

**Fenistour**—Invented spell foci.

**Himinis the Mad**—An eleventh century magus plagued by delusions of fear and persecution. He invented a great number of magic items with hidden curses to strike back at the world which tormented him. Many of these items can be found in use or in old treasure chambers, their curses still unknown.

**Tierent**—He perfected ways to capture and coerce faerie creatures, using them to power his magic items.

## Current Status

**Membership:** 58

**Domus Magnus:** Verdi, in the Roman Tribunal. It is filled with automata and small magic items for the convenience of residents and visitors. Every 18 years there is a contest within the House to invent the most efficient, interesting, and useful device; the winning device is donated to the Domus Magnus and its inventor may choose three magic items from among the other entries in the contest as compensation. Having one of your items win the contest is a very high honor. It puts all of that magus' creations into high demand, allowing them to fetch even higher prices (granting the character a reputation of 3+ in House Verditius and 1+ in the Order in general). Verdi crafts numerous magic items for other magi in the Roman Tribunal, which finds them useful in the Dominion. In turn, it pulls in huge amounts of silver and other wealth, which it uses to buy raw *vis* from less civilized areas.

**Primus:** Imanitosi, a reclusive woman who does not want to take part in the struggle to make peace with society.

**Current Concerns:** Imanitosi realizes that magical devices currently being created are simple and limited compared to those of legend, those built in the early years of the Order and before. She is sponsoring a search for lost items of legend, which will be examined by the best of House Verditius to see what can be learned from them.

## Current Practices

The House is trying to increase its ability to create magical devices and thus increase its ability to trade with other magi. Some are willing to open relations with mundane society, opening a market for their items among mundane rulers.

The magi of this House are sometimes referred to as owls because so many of them live out their entire lives in their laboratories, only rarely emerging to see the sunlight or to study nature. They are consummate laboratory researchers, unparalleled by any except those in House Bonisagus. It can be a strange and exotic experience to meet one of these wizards on their home ground, for they tend to have very particular and unusual personalities.

To pass the Apprentice's Gauntlet, one must make a magical device that shows one's skill and ingenuity. No magus may enter House Verditius from another House.

## Magi of House Verditius

### Mentality of a Verditius Magus

You have been taught to put a small bit of yourself into inert matter and bring it to a kind of life. If you can perfect your skills, you will earn respect and honor from

your peers. You will also be able to use these skills to earn wealth from those magi who are less skilled than you. If you are careful, they will come to depend on you more than they think they do and your position in life will be secure.

Over your life, you may amass great wealth. Some will be mundane wealth, providing a comfort unknown except to kings. Some wealth will be magical, with devices that provide services no king can enjoy. This wealth and comfort are your due rewards as a master crafter.

Verditius taught how to change and control things, how to take inert matter and make it a powerful tool. You can apply this lesson to all aspects of your life. Begin with something neutral, such as a person or a situation. Study how you can make use of it and apply your skills. What words need to be said? What promises or threats made? If you are clever, you can turn almost anything into a tool for your use.

You have a playful and creative personality and revel in all that is amusing and fun. Thus, many of the items which you construct may have a joke connected with them or some sort of amusement value (otherwise it would be too boring to make). This sometimes can be of great annoyance to those who purchase these items, not knowing about the "joke" beforehand.

## Priorities

- 1) Perfect your own craft
- 2) Gain honor and prestige in the House
- 3) Gain wealth and prestige as a provider of magic items

## Outlook

- **Bjornaer**—They are too caught up in their primitive magic to see the value in our devices.
- **Bonisagus**—They overestimate their capabilities; after centuries of trying, they still are not able to craft devices like we can.
- **Criamon**—They have no use for power, so they have no use for what we offer. Ignore them.
- **Ex Miscellanea**—They are good customers, bringing in raw *vis* from the barbarian lands. They need our items because their own magic tends to be limited.
- **Flambeau**—They appreciate devices that perform tasks not related to fire so that they do not have to study anything but their chosen specialties.
- **Jerbiton**—They recognize the beauty of artistic crafts, but they are too patient with the mundanes, who are making life ever more difficult for us.
- **Mercere**—They are regular clients because so many of them have no Gift at all.
- **Merinita**—They resent us because we use raw *vis* that is often gathered from faerie forests. Let them resent us; the rest of the Order recognizes the value in what we do.

- **Quaesitor**—Without them, the Order would collapse. Obey and support them.
- **Tremere**—They recognize power when they see it, so they know the value of our products.
- **Tytalus**—They enjoy bargaining; indulge them, but watch them carefully.
- **Mundane society**—They are expanding into areas that used to provide regular amounts of raw *vis*. Something has to be done about them or they will mean the end of the entire Order. On the other hand, if the Quaesitoris would let us sell them magical devices, we could increase our markets and our products.

### Intra-House Relations—

There is no political hierarchy within the House, only the ever-changing ranks of skill, prestige, and wealth. If you create inventive, unique, and useful items, you will rise steadily in these ranks. All that is expected of you is that every eighteen years you bring your best device to Verdi, the Domus Magnus. There you can compare it to the works of others. You are very competitive with your House brothers and will have to watch that they do not steal your customers.

### Necessary Flaw

**Verditius Magic, -1.** You need a small device called a spell focus for each formulaic spell you know. Without the spell focus, you cannot cast the spell. (See "Magic" below.) On the other hand, you have special skills at crafting magic items. Take a new arcane skill, Verditius Magic. (Buy a score in it as you do with any other skill.) The skill is described below. Verditius magi have no problems with the arcane skills, Parma Magica, and Certámen.

### Common Virtue & Flaw

**Inventive Genius, +1.**

**Wild Magic, -2.** Despite centuries of practice, casting spells is still a bit tricky for many Verditius magi.

### Abilities

The only mundane abilities valued in this House are crafts which one uses in creating magic items, such as

metalworking, and Bargain, a new social skill. Magic Theory is paramount for your laboratory work. The arcane skill of Verditius Magic is available only to Verditius magi.

**Bargain**—Getting the greatest return for a service or product or paying the least for something. It involves reading the person with whom you are bargaining and presenting your side in certain ways. A good bargainer can easily overcome resistance in an inexperienced customer. Specialties: textiles, dealing with Flambeau magi, and with superiors. (Prs, Com)

### Verditius Magic—

Add this score to your lab total when it applies to magical devices, including longevity potions. Specialties: potions, any technique or form.

### Magic

When you learn a formulaic spell, you construct a small device, called a spell focus, that helps you cast it. Without the spell focus, you cannot cast the spell. Since you will need a lot of these spell foci, it's best to keep them small; and be sure that they are all different from each other so you can grab the right one if you are in a hurry. To use a spell focus, you must be able to concentrate momentarily on it. If it is a ring, for example, you must be able to feel it on your finger. You cannot

cast the spell if you are unable to feel the spell focus and identify it by touch. (You can't grab a handful of spell foci and cast a spell with just one of them.)

When using a spell focus, you must still perform hand gestures and speak magic words, and you suffer the normal penalties if you do not.

Use your imagination when you invent spell foci. The shape or material should have something to do with the effect. For example, a spell focus for a *Pilum of Fire* could be a small wand shaped like a pilum (Roman spear).

The time it takes you to learn a spell includes time spent making a spell focus. If you make more than one spell focus, you must subtract 3 from your Lab total for each extra spell focus created. If you ever need to create a





## The Order of Hermes

replacement spell focus for one that is lost, you must deduct 3 from the Lab total of whatever you do that season.

### Example Magus of Verditius

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**Retistius, Filius of Miercus, Follower of Verditius**

**Status in the Order:** He won the last contest at Verdi with a small automaton dog made of bronze. In addition to practical guarding abilities (like a gaze of paralyzation), it could bark, wag its tail, and urinate like a real dog (though it was wine that came forth). It now serves as a guard-dog and source of amusement at Verdi. Because of this victory, he is known throughout the House and through most of the Order as a brilliant inventor.

**Description:** He is completely bald and has a wrinkled face and neck. His facial expression, however, is more like that of a child than an old man. He wears two rings on each finger and one on each thumb, several necklaces, and a diadem—all magical devices of various kinds. Some are convenience items, like a ring that adds whatever spices he desires to his food. Others are more practical, like a necklace that can heal him of all wounds (once per day). In addition, he has a strap across his chest and a belt which are both covered with small spell foci of various and bizarre shapes.

**Personality:** Retistius is fascinated by how things work. He has directed some of the new construction in Doissetep (where he resides) to learn how walls, towers, pulleys, ramps, braces, and so on can be built. He also has a keen mind for how groups work, and watches the interactions among the grogs with great interest. He is interested in constructing a bronze grog someday.

**Favored Magic:** He favors simple spells that move things, start fires, create water, and otherwise manipulate the basic elements. He uses these spells in various combinations to achieve startling effects. It is his opinion, that too many magi let their spells think for them. By using simple spells to achieve complicated effects, he keeps his mind active.

**Background:** An intense curiosity and a love for invention made becoming a magus a perfect outcome for Retistius' life. He can spend endless hours in the laboratory figuring out new ways to do old things, more for the pleasure of discovery than for the result.

His obvious talent quickly led him to a position at Doissetep. There are three followers of Verditius at Doissetep and he is the most renowned, thanks to his recent victory at Verdi. While the other two do a great deal of work developing devices for the covenant and its magi, Retistius spends more time fiddling with things, observing, trying new techniques, etc. Sometimes his exploration pays off and sometimes he almost kills himself with his experiments.

The wealth of Doissetep and his own skill at creating magical devices lets him lead a comfortable life of luxury when he is not working furiously in his laboratory.

**Quote:** *"Not to worry. A little heat here, some water there, the slightest spin on that, and we'll have this working perfectly in no time."*

### Story Ideas

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- The characters discover a magical device that seems very powerful and useful. Unfortunately, the device was created by Himinis the Mad and has an insidious curse or secondary effect, which the characters do not immediately notice. The "joke" behind it all may turn out to be very juvenile.

- The eighteenth-year meeting at Verdi is coming up soon and some are saying that Retistius will lose this time to a young, secretive magus nearby. Retistius, acting through an agent who does not reveal Retistius' identity, hires the characters to spy on this magus and find out what he is doing so Retistius can beat him out.



## Order of Hermes Timeline

B.C.	
circa 5,000	Creation of the World (disputed)
4,000??	Destruction of the old one's civilization (possibly mythical)
circa 2,000	Egyptian cult of Thoth, at its height
circa 500	Greek cult of Hermes, at its height
circa 160	Plentarch codifies the spells of the cult of Mercury
circa 150	Roman cult of Mercury, at its height
139	The Age of Aries begins (Hermetic reckoning). The Hermetic calendar is based on the zodiac and counts its years from this year.
A.D.	
4th century	Christianity becomes the official religion of Rome.
410	Alaric, king of the Visigoths, sacks Rome.
412	Cult of Mercury officially disbanded.
711	Muslims ("Moors") invade Spain.
731	Trianoma meets Bonisagus. These two become the political and magical geniuses whose work eventually makes the Orders of Hermes possible.
767	Order of Hermes founded at Durenmar.
770	Mercere loses his magical power and becomes a messenger within the Order. He devotes his House to delivering messages among the magi.
772	Tremere and Bonisagus invent <i>certâmen</i> .
774	Val-Negra covenant founded.
799	Quendalon, Primus of Merinita, enters faerie woods.
801	Someone claiming to be Quendalon comes out of the faerie woods; he takes control of House Merinita in 802.
807	Tyталus enters Maddenhofen Woods to confront the Faerie Queen and is never seen by mortal eyes again.
810	At the Great Tribunal, <i>certâmen</i> is adopted as an official means of resolving disputes
814	Death of Charlemagne, dissolution of his empire
814 to 816	Pralix of House Tyталus, leading the non-Hermetic wizards of the British Isles, hunts down and kills the sorcerer Dav'nalleous. She then declares her group of wizards to be the Order of Miscellany.
817	Admission of the Order of Miscellany as House Ex Miscellanea.
826 to 854	Pendule secretly teaches his magic to select Hermetic magi.
843	Verderis, Primus of Criamon, finishes writing the <i>Travels of Fedoso</i> .
848	Tremere almost dominates the Order, but is stopped by a band of unidentified magi which strikes his chief lieutenants.
875	Fencil, Primus of the Quaesitoris, declares the conclusions of his long study of ancient magical history: the Order is based on a magical tradition that goes back to the very beginning of history.
876	Doissetep covenant founded.
887	Belín, the "ideal redcap" dies. Her reputation has since grown to near mythic proportions
891	Iamitu'krielle of House Criamon apparently passes into Twilight, only to return from time to time with strange prophecies and riddles.
937	Duresca scrolls discovered. They seem to have been written by Guernicus, Founder of the Quaesitoris, and they set forth a plot to control the Order. Three years later, they are officially ruled to be a fraud.
961	Trial and execution of Tasgillia, Primus of Tyталus, found to be guilty of diabolism.
1003 to 1012	The Schism War. Widespread violence and anarchy culminate when Houses Tremere and Flambeau, with the sanction of the Quaesitoris, destroy House Diedne.
1006 to 1047	Himinis the Mad of House Verditius crafts numerous magical devices which have hidden traps. Many of these devices still exist, their curses or traps as of yet unknown.
1009	Nuinsil of House Criamon makes the first of many journeys to Arab lands. These journeys have since become common for followers of Criamon.

- 1016 Bellaquin covenant founded.
- 1018 Open conflict breaks out between Hermetic magi and Jewish followers of the Kabbalah in Barcelona. Prior to this conflict, the magi knew nothing of the Kabbalah. The followers of the Kabbalah negotiate a perpetual truce with the Hermetic magi.
- 1066 William the Conqueror and his Norman army conquer England.
- 1067 Treaty of the Roman Tribunal signed.
- 1067 Mistridge covenant founded by Consuelia.
- 1095 The first Crusade called by Pope Urban II.
- 1148 Simprin, a Quaesitor, starts the Transitionalist faction within his House.
- 1150 Calebais covenant destroyed.
- 1158 Last apparent sighting of Merinita, who is thought to be living perpetually in the wilderness
- 1160 Zurenziale of House Merinita disappears and evidence left in his laboratory proves that he was an elf passing as a human. No one knows what his true goals were.
- 1192 Lariander covenant founded.
- 1195 The latest Grand Tribunal was held.
- 1197 Ashenrise covenant destroyed by demons.
- 1198 Current Pope, Innocence III, assumes office.

Note: Hermetic knowledge of ancient times is sketchy. The Seekers might have more details, but they are not willing to share them.

## Approximate Number of Living Magi, 1338 Age of Arles. (1199 A.D)

House	Magi
Bjornaer	43
Bonisagus	28
Criamon	62
Ex Miscellanea*	115
Flambeau	76
Jerbiton	82
Mercere**	97
Merinita	62
Quaesitor***	49
Tremere	72
Tyталus	26
Verditius	58
Total	770

\* Approximate count

\*\*Includes 82 non-magical redcaps

\*\*\* Does not include 23 Quaesitoris who belong to other Houses.



# Hermetic Glossary

The following terms are in general use within the Order. Many of them are Latin words or phrases. Players can choose to use English equivalents for simplicity, but a little Latin thrown into a magus' vocabulary adds authenticity to the Saga.

**Aerarius Praefectus** [eye-RAH-ree-oos pry-FEK-toos]- "Treasurer." Only larger covenants have treasurers, with autocrats handling the funds in smaller covenants.

**Affinity**- Refers to a natural talent which a magus has with a certain type of magic, be it a form or technique, or perhaps something more specific, such as with all canines.

**Age of Aries**- The current era of the Zodiac calendar which the magi of the Order utilize to measure time. It began in 39 B.C. and the new year begins in March.

**Amicus** [AH-mee-koos]- "Friend." Used only among magi who have become particularly close. It is also sometimes used for companions who are especially trusted by the magi. There are many magi who call no one "amicus." Plural: "amici."

**Animál** [ah-nee-MAHL]- The magical form dealing with animals.

**Apprentice's Gauntlet**- An ordeal that an apprentice must survive or a test that one must pass in order to be accepted as a magus. Various Houses and individual masters define their gauntlets as they wish. Sometimes it is loosely interpreted as the rivalry and conflict among apprentices at a covenant, and sometimes as the trials of apprenticeship in general.

**Aquam** [AH-kwahn]- The magical form dealing with water and other liquids.

**Arch-Mage**- A title of respect for powerful and renowned magi. You must defeat an Arch-Mage at the Arch-Mage's chosen contest to become an Arch-Mage yourself.

**Autocrat**- The one who governs the mundane concerns of a covenant; sometimes a magus, sometimes a mortal.

**Auram** [OW-rahm]- The magical form which affects the air, wind, and weather.

**Certámen** [care-TAH-men]- A magical, non-lethal duel between two magi.

**Concilium** [kohn-KIL-i-oom]- "Council." Usually a small gathering at a Tribunal or within a covenant. Plural: "concilia."

**Consorts**- A non-magus who works closely with a covenant and probably lives there; many companions are *consortis*, but not all. Plural: "consortis."

**Conventus** [kohn-WEN-toos]- Covenant. Plural: "conventi."

**Córporem** [CORE-pore-em]- The magical form that deals with human and human-like bodies.

**Creo** [CRAY-oh]- The magical technique of creation.

**Dominion**- the area under the holy influence of the Church; magic, infernal powers, and faeries all function at reduced ability within the Dominion.

**Domus Magnus**- The head covenant and political center of a House, where the Primus lives.

**Filius/filia** [FEE-lee-oos/-ah]- "Son/daughter." The term designating one's former apprentice, now a magus. Any natural child a magus may have is referred to as a "vulgar" son or daughter, ("filius vulgaris"). Plural "filii/filiae"

**Follower**- A member of a House. This term is used because the first magi in the Houses considered themselves followers of the Founders rather than members of organizations.

**Form**- One of the ten magical arts in Hermetic magic which deal with what the magic affects. These correspond to the direct object in a sentence.

**Formulaic Magic**- Magic by use of standard gestures and words that will almost always bring about a specific effect, the same each time.

**Founder**- One of the twelve original magi who swore to abide by the Code and thereby formed the Order of Hermes, plus Pralix, the Founder of House Ex Miscellanea.

**Gift**- The ability that is born in a person which allows them to manipulate magic in some way.

**Grand Tribunal**- The meeting of representatives from all thirteen Tribunals and the Primi of all twelve Houses, held every 33 years at Durenmar, the Domus Magnus of House Bonisagus.

**Grog**- A mercenary hired by magi to serve them as a bodyguard or warrior; "grog" is popular slang, the official term is "custos."

**Herbam** [HAIR-bahm]- The magical form which deals with plants and trees of all types.

**Hermetic Name**- The name given an apprentice upon becoming a magus. Most magi use the names their vulgar parents gave them only when traveling incognito.

**Hibernia**- the island which is more commonly known as Ireland.

**Holy Roman Empire**- extends from Danish-German border in the north, halfway down the Italian peninsula in the south, and from France in the west up to Poland and Hungary in the east.

**House**- All those wizards who claim descent from a single Founder.

**Iberia**- the land of the peninsula in southwestern Europe containing Christian Hispanic Kingdoms in the north as well as Moorish lands to the south. (Editor's note: Spain and Portugal did not finish reconquering the Iberian peninsula until 1492, three centuries after the setting for this supplement.)

- Ignem** [IG-nem]- The magical form which deals with fire, heat and light.
- Imágonem** [i-MAH-go-nem]- The magical form which deals with illusions and phantasms.
- Intéllego** [in-TAY-le-go]- The magical technique of perception.
- Magus**- "Wizard." Used almost exclusively to mean "Hermetic wizard." Non-Hermetic wizards fall under general terms such as "sorcerer," "magician," or even "wizard" (when spoken in a language other than Latin). Plural: "magi."
- Mentem** [MEN-tem]- The magical form which deals with minds, thoughts and spirits.
- Muto** [MOO-toe]- The magical technique of transformation and transmutation.
- Mortal**- A mundane.
- Mundane**- A human who lacks the Gift that allows one to work magic. Most grogs and companions are "mundanes," as are the vast majority of humanity.
- Orbus**- "Orphan." Any magus who has been Renounced from their House.
- Orient**- from the Latin word for "the east," in the thirteenth century, the Arab lands of the Levant and the surrounding territory (such as the Holy Land, Egypt and Asia Minor) are considered the "Orient."
- Parma Magica** [PAR-mah MAH-gi-kah]- A spell-like ritual that protects someone from magic, usually used continuously by a magus. Plural: *Parmae Magicae* [PARM-eye MAH-gik-eye].
- Parens**- The neuter term used by magi to refer to their former master. (See *Pater/Mater*.) Plural: *Parentis*.
- Pater/Mater** [PAH-tare/MAH-tare]- "Father/Mother." One's former master, used once one becomes a magus. One's natural parents are referred to as "vulgar."
- Pawn**- The term used by Hermetic magi to refer to a single unit of *vis*.
- Perdo** [PAIR-doe]- The magical technique of destruction.
- Pontifex**- The highest rank of magi at Doissetep, occasionally used at other covenants.
- Praeco** [PRY-koh]- "Herald." A magus who is the head of a Tribunal, usually the oldest in the region. Plural: "Praeconis."
- Primus** [PREE-moos]- "The First." A magus who is the head of a House. Each House has its own method for choosing its Primus, though technically the acting Primus has the full right to designate any member of the House as their successor. Plural: "Primi."
- Quaesitor** [KWEH-si-tor]- Any of the followers of Gernicus who preside at Tribunals and dispense Hermetic justice; keepers of the Code of Hermes and the Peripheral Code. Plural: *Quaesitoris*.
- Raw Vis**- *Vis* in physical form, highly prized by magi.
- Rego** [RAY-go]- The magical technique of control.
- Renunciation**- Being cast out from one's House or from the Order. A magus Renounced from their House must be adopted into another House within a year or be expelled from the Order altogether. A magus Renounced from the Order is no longer protected by the Code, and it is considered the duty of Hermetic magi to shun or even attack the outsider. A Primus may Renounce members from the House; only a Tribunal may Renounce a magus from the Order.
- Salve sodale** [SAHL-way soh-DAH-lay]- "Greetings fellow member." Traditional greeting between magi, never used for those outside the Order, not even amici. When greeting more than one magus, one uses the plural phrase "Salvete sodalete" [SAHL-way-tay soh-DAH-lay-tay].
- Sanctum**- The private area of a magus, marked with a circle inscribed within a square, with lines connecting the square's opposite corners. Anyone entering the sanctum without permission is considered to be threatening the owner. Plural: "Sancta."
- Seasons**- The four stages through which a covenant progresses over its lifetime.
- Sigil**- Definition 1: A noticeable, unique effect of a magus' magic; some detail that marks all or most of the spells that the magus creates. For instance, the spells of some magi have distinctive colors or sounds.  
Definition 2: A wand or other symbol of one's magushood, given upon completion of apprenticeship; one who holds a magus' sigil at a Tribunal can vote as that magus' proxy.
- Sodalis** [soh-DAH-lees]- "Comrade, fellow member of an organization." A fellow member of the Order. Plural is also "sodalis."
- Spontaneous Magic**- Use of magical skills without a formulaic spell; the result is variable.
- Technique**- One of the five arts in Hermetic magic which deal with how the magic affects things. These correspond to the verb in a sentence.
- Terram** [TAIR-rahm]- The magical form which deals with earth and stone.
- Tribunal**- A meeting of magi from various covenants, designed to address issues of concern to the covenants in the area and to the Order of Hermes in general. Also the name given to an area whose magi meet at the same Tribunal. E.g., representatives of covenants in the Roman Tribunal hold their Tribunals in Venice.
- Vim** [WEEM]- The magical form which deals with magic and demons.
- Vis** [WEES]- Magical force, directed by magi with their spells; the word from which the Form "Vim" is derived.
- Wizards' March**- The attempt by several magi to hunt down and kill a magus who has been Renounced from the Order.
- Wizard's Twilight**- A crisis in which a magus loses control over their own magic, possibly being devoured by it. Many magi pass from mortal existence because of Twilight.
- Wizard's War**- A legal, highly regulated, potentially lethal conflict between two magi.

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Brother Reginald of Avignon  
Year of Our Lord, 1182

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